

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

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GOAL

Goal of the investigation is to gather information regarding number of students with school refusal (phobia) in Taipei, prevalence in the three educational stages- elementary, junior and senior high school, and some usually concerned characteristics about school refusal (phobia) of these students. Further more by the way of interviewing some institutions and analyzing multiple informations, the investigation try to find some education resources that can supply appropriate programs to students with school refusal (phobia) in Taipei.

METHOD

1. Questionnaire survey of three educational stages.
2. Visit and interview 4 intermediate education classes.
3. Analyze multiple informations about these 4 classes.

PROCEDURE

1. The questionnaires were sent to 290 schools including elementary, junior, senior and vocational schools of Taipei in the summer of 2006. In the questionnaire school refusal(phobia)(SRp)was defined as behavior or symptom of inability to attend school under the mental state of irrational phobia, dislike, rejection and resistance to school. It is originally owing to some internal (spiritual or psychological disease) or external (school, teacher, classmates or family phenomenon) causes.
2. Four alternative education programs including 2 collaboration transition classes (Taipei Shan Mu Syue Yuan and Cheng Fong Youth Syue Yuan) and 2 emotional disturbance classes established in hospital (Lan Ting Shu Yuan of Song De Branch of Taipei City Hospital and Siang Rih Kuei Syue Yua of Taipei Veterans General Hospital) were visited.
3. Assemble and analyze related informations about the 4 alternative education program such as brief introduction, implement project and website pages.

RESULTS:

Part I Result from questionnaire survey

- A. There were 262 schools replying back. The response rate is 90.34%.
- B. Data gotten from the questionnaires

Table 1 Numbers and prevalence in the three educational stages

Item \ Educational Stage				
	Elementary	Junior High	Senior High	Total
Number of students with SRp	24	67	57	148
Number of students in Taipei in 2006	166,754	88,111	123,381	378,246
Prevalence	1/10000	8/10000	5/10000	4/10000

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

Table 2 Number and rate of students with school refusal that had ever gotten medical service, had gotten special education qualification, cause of school refusal (phobia) and frequency of attending school.

Educational Stage Number (percent)		Elementary		Junior High		Senior High		Total	
Number of students with SRp		24		67		57		148	
Had ever gotten medical service		5(20.8%)		38(56.7%)		40(70.2%)		83(56.1%)	
Had special education qualification		6(25%)		16(23.9%)		13(22.8%)		35(23.6%)	
Cause of school refusal (phobia)	Cause From School	Fear of school		7	26		26		59
		Dislike school curriculum	11 (31.4%)	3	45 (42.5%)	18	38 (53.5%)	7	94 (44.3%)
		Academic stress		1	1		5		7
	Influenced by friends		0		7		0		7
	Cause of family		16 (45.7%)		23 (21.7%)		6		45 (21.2%)
	Sick		3		19		17 (23.9%)		39
	Unspecified cause		3		6		5		14
	Another cause		2		6		5		13
	Total		35		106		71		212
Frequency of attending school.	Absent from school completely		0		15		12		27 (18.2%)
	Attending school sometime		8		36		24		68 (45.9%)
	Absent from school sometime		14		12		16		42 (28.4%)
	Attending school but not entering classroom		2		3		0		5 (3.3%)
	Attending institution		0		1		5		6 (4.1%)

Table 3 Data about the activities that students with school refusal (phobia) were engaged in when they were absent from school.

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

Educational Stage		Elementary	Junior High	Senior High	Total
Item					
Number of students with SRp		24	67	57	148
Activities that students with SRp were engaged in:	Browsing websites, addicting to on-line game and watching TV	5	40	28	73 (47.1%)
	Sleep or lethargy	1	0	11	12
	Individual study or get private teacher	0	11	7	18
	Attending institution activity	0	1	1	2
	Take refresher outside	0	0	2	2
	Accompanied by parents	8	6	3	17
	Idle about outside	0	0	1	1
	Dimness	6	9	6	21
	Other	3	4	2	9
	Total				155

C. Information about visiting, interviewing and multiple information analysis

Classroom appellation	Taipei Shan Mu Syue Yuan	Cheng Fong Youth Syue Yuan	「Lan Ting Shu Yuan」 and 「Siang Rih Kuei Syue Yua」
Auspices	1. Department of Education of Taipei City Government 2. Catholicism Shan Mu social Welfare Foundation	1. Department of Education of Taipei City Government 2. Juridical Personal Taipei City Christianity Communion Convention	1. WenShan School of Special Education 2. Song De Branch of Taipei City Hospital and Taipei Veterans General Hospital
Location	Located in community	Located in a Christianity meetinghouse	Located in hospital
Admissibility	1. Dropouts of junior high school 2. Be willing to attend 3. Pass the assessment	1. Dropouts or at-risk students of junior high school 2. Agreement from parents and student	1. Students of basic education and Intermediate education in Taipei 2. Get chronicle psychiatric disorder 3. Diagnosed by Committee Responsible for Identification and Placement of Gifted and Disabled Students as serious emotional disturbance 4. Age below 22
Enroll procedure	Teachers of guidance and counseling office fill out the application form under the agreement of	1. Teachers of guidance and counseling office fill out the application form under the agreement of parents 2. Two weeks of	Students with serious adaptation difficulty in school and problem of dropout are referred by school staff under the agreement of parents and then assessed by child psychiatrist. The one that meet

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

	parents	probation	the criteria will be arranged to enroll in the class.
Curriculum	Multiple curriculums including required and optional course, courses connecting with original school and those that the students are interested in	1. Multiple curriculums including academic, social and living skill. 2. All students attend together.	1. Flexible, multiple, functional and integrated curriculum 2. Students attend in the mode of whole, group or individual 3. Leisure and living skill courses are the major part of curriculum.
Time-limit	A semester	One year	1. No time-limit 2. Back to original school gradually when rehabilitate 3. Leave the class anytime when students or parents are unwilling to continue. 4. Student is referred to all day emergency wards when he is in the worse way or in the crisis of hurting himself or others. Special education service is stop temporarily. The absence is dealt as sick leave. He will be referred back to EBD-class when condition is better.
Number of classes and students	15students per class	15students per class	No limitation
Number of teachers	1. About 4 to 5 social workers serve as full-time teachers 2. Part-time teachers take charge of special skill teaching.	1. Staff of church serves as principal, vice-principal, manager, administrative personnel, and head teachers. 2. Social workers serve as full-time supervise, head of curriculum subsection, head of disciplinary subsection and head of guidance and counseling subsection	1. 1 psychiatrist and 2 nurses 2. 3 full-time special education teachers per class and some part-time teachers
District	Wanhua, Zhongzheng, Zhongshan, Beitou, Shilin, Datong	Neihu, Nangang, Xinyi, Songshan, Daan, Wenshan	All districts

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

Tuition	Free except for lunch expense	No tuition Receive class fund, activity expense and lunch fee	Deliver registration fee to original school and copayment to hospital.
Expenditure	1. Apply expenditure to Department of Education of Taipei City Government 2. Recruit from society.	1. Apply expenditure to Department of Education of Taipei City Government 2. Recruit from society.	Part from Department of Education of Taipei City Government and part from hospital.

DISCUSSION

- I、 In our investigation the total prevalence of three educational stages is 4/10000, much lower than the result, 2.3%, of Stickney et al. (1998). Cause of this phenomenon may be that the heterogeneity of school refusal (phobia) makes it difficult to supply a clear-cut definition to teachers. Another reason is that the writers were teachers of guidance and counseling and special education teachers which are not the straight master of students. If the straight master, head teachers, do not refer students to ccounseling division the teachers of guidance and counseling and special education teachers will not be able to control the true number of students.
- II、 The rate of getting medical service is higher in senior high students with school refusal than in senior and elementary school. It seems that students with school refusal are late to get medical service. We suggest that the future research may be designed to find 1.the relation between time of getting medical service and occurrence of school refusal (phobia) , 2.cause of delaying to get medical service and 3. probability of helping students getting medical service by teachers.
- III、 The result that family phenomena is the most frequent cause of school refusal(phobia) in elementary school but school phenomena is the most frequent cause in junior and senior high school is the same as investigating result of Yan JIA CI(1988). So how to deal with academic presser flexibly is a considerable work for assisting students with school refusal.
- IV、 The most frequent activity that students with school refusal(phobia) engaged in is browsing websites through Internet, addicting to on-line game and watching TV (47.1%).The result shows that except for regular education being interfered the general living and social skill learning are all blocked after school refusal. Their lifespan extending must be obstructed. We need more energetic program to help them.
- V、 The collaboration transition classes (Taipei Shan Mu Syue Yuan and Cheng Fong Youth Syue Yuan) could not take care of students with school refusal (phobia) for below reasons:
 1. The classes exclude students that cannot attend stably.
 2. Students with school refusal (phobia) are always introrse and withdraw. It is hard for them to be together with impulsive and choleric dropouts.
 3. Teachers without special education major cannot deal with emotional and behavioral problems of

Investigation on School Refusal (Phobia) of Taipei Students and Related Alternative Programs

special students.

4. The time limitation is half to one year. If students cannot return to their original school in the duration they will be asked to leave. The rule is not just for students with school refusal (phobia) for that they always need longer time to rehabilitate.
 5. The two classes do not recruit students of elementary and senior high school.
- VI、 The two emotional disturbance classes ("Lan Ting Shu Yuan" and "Siang Rih Kuei Syue Yua") could not meet the need of students with school refusal (phobia) for below reasons:
1. Students who are willing to attend these classes should be assessed by psychiatrist in the hospital. But because students with school refusal (phobia) generally refuse to go to hospital, it is hard for them to have enough assessment to get entrance permission.
 2. Students with school refusal (phobia) always avoid attending the classes because they often consider members in the two classes are similar to psychotic patients. They do not want to be labeled as psychopath.
 3. Students are asked to leave if they are not present steadily or unwilling to accept continue therapy. The classes do not supply intervention programs to help students enter classes step by step.
- VII、 Multiple middle way educational placements are necessary for assisting students with SRp.
1. According to "Principle of Ministry of Education about supplying dropout with guidance, placement and rehabilitation" city government should supply multiple middle way educational placements to students with school attending difficulty. But the middle way educational placements in Taipei now, Shan Mu Syue Yuan, Cheng Fong Youth Syue Yuan, Lan Ting Shu Yuan and Siang Rih Kuei Syue Yua are all designed for general dropouts. There is no middle way educational placement in Taipei is designed for students with school refusal (phobia) .
 2. According to the experiences of "Taipei City Emotional and Behavioral Professional Supporting Group" students with school refusal (phobia) need to back their original school by the mode of step by step. They cannot be present steadily at the beginning. But intermediate placement program existed in Taipei now do not supply this kind of service.
 3. After reviewing relevant researches we know that multiple intervention programs are necessary for helping students with school refusal (phobia) . Only medical intervention is not enough. Although some students with school refusal (phobia) have gotten medical service, they cannot back to school yet. The better intermediate educational program may be integrating resources of medical, education and family.