Factors Associated with Illegal Motorcycle Street Racing and Help-Seeking Intention

Li Ping Wong

Department of Social and Preventative Medicine, Faculty of Medicine; Julius Centre University of Malaya (JCUm), Faculty of Medicine; and Centre of Population Health (CePH), University of Malaya

The study aimed to identify the factors associated with street racing among the illegal motorcycle racers in Malaysia also known as the Mat Rempit, and their help-seeking intention. A total of 2,022 Mat Rempit were surveyed. The findings support the notion that experience-seeking, prestige-seeking, excitement-seeking, self-satisfaction, underestimate risk, and social influence were factors influencing illegal motorcycle street racing. The overall intention to seek help was extremely low. The majority (77.9%) reported that they would solve the problem themselves and 75.5% thought that illegal street racing is not big deal and would go away in time. Participants with neither (OR 0.41; 95% CI 0.27–0.62) or at least one parent who is strict (OR 0.52; 95% 0.37–0.73) were less likely to have high help-seeking intention than those with both parents who are strict. Study indicates a need for family-centered intervention to curb illegal street racing.

Keywords: illegal motorcycle street racing, help-seeking, intention

Street racing causes harm and is a nuisance to communities, as well as having a significant devastating effect on civilians. Street racing occurs across many countries in the world. In the United States, casualties involving street racing caused alarm in all segments of society and the region. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Fatality Analysis Reporting System, of the total 149,568 fatal crashes between 1998–2001, 315 (0.21%) involved street racing and 399 fatalities occurred in these crashes. In Australia, street racing was prevalent among youths as young as 16 years old, where many features the characteristics of youth gangs and was associated with delinquency and crime activities. Likewise in New Zealand, the evidence that street racing is prevalent among adolescents is raising concern.

Despite tremendous harm from illegal street racing, empirical research on this issue is limited. In Malaysia, motorcycle street racing is a very popular racing activity, mainly among the youth. The motorcycle street racers in Malaysia are known locally as “Mat Rempit” in the Malay Language. They are famous for their “Superman” stunts and other feats performed on their motorcycles. They are also notorious for their “Cilok” or weaving in-between moving traffic at high speeds. In recent years, an increase in motorcycle street racing and its associated risk behaviors has seriously concerned the Malaysian public and legal authorities.

Numerous frameworks have postulated risk-taking behaviors of adolescents and young adults. Adolescents partake in problem behavior to (1) take control of their lives, (2) express opposition to adult authority and conventional society, (3) gain admission to peer groups and demonstrate identification with a youth subculture, (4) confirm personal identity, (5) affirm maturity and mark a developmental transition into young adulthood, (6) pleasure-or thrill-seeking experience, and (7) low perceived severity of negative consequences.

Adolescent risk-taking behaviors have also been associated with a variety of demographic, parental, social and environmental factors. According to Jessor’s Problem Behavior Theory of risk behavior in adolescence, the tendency in adolescents to involve in deviant behavior stems from five domains (biology/genetic, social environment, perceived environment, personality, and behavior). A number of studies have presented evidence for this theory. Adolescent problematic behaviors were found to be associated with family-related variables. For instance, low household socioeconomic status, measured by family income, was reported to be associated with adolescent substance use. Family structure such as marital disruption has also been associated with...