

Chapter V

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

The purpose of this chapter is to present the discussion, to summarize the present study and to formulate recommendations for further research on this topic, as well as to suggest policy recommendations.

This study has attempted to determine factors that influence students to cohabit, what satisfaction they gained during the cohabitation period, and what they anticipated would happen to their cohabiting after they graduated. The study surveyed 100 cohabiting students who completed the questionnaires and 30 cohabiting students who participated in the interviews.

5.1 Discussion

One finding from this study points to the factors causing the students to cohabit. Almost half of the respondents stated that love and affection was their first reason. According to studies in human development, people feel interested in the opposite sex once they reach late adolescence. They always show their interest in seeking for love and understanding in looking for 'special friends' (เรไร ธรรมชาติกรกุล, 2541). While โสพิน หนูแก้ว (2544: 99) stated in her thesis that college students' first reason to cohabit was sexual needs. Sexual needs as factors causing them to cohabit are in accordance with what Whalen said. Whalen (1971) noted that a man has a psychologically based sexual drive which leads to sex needs. (Sukrung, 2004) discusses the idea that sexual needs are one of the causes that lead some people to cohabit. เมอติณ (2544) noted that only one benefit of living together without marriage is for sexual pleasure. The other factors: loneliness, educational support, economic reasons, and imitating friends were not significant causes to cohabit.

The qualitative approach explores some more factors. As some women think that men and women are equal, they express their interest to men. They like what boys do to girls.

Some boys were pestered, while some students felt bored with their ex-lovers because they parted to further their study or to work somewhere far away. This situation may explain the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'. It was found that students with the same interests and being insulted by their friends were other causes leading them to spend their lives together. One female student stated that because of being raped, she had to spend her student life with that male student. Such a case as this should not have been happened amongst college students who should have been mature and thoughtful.

Though cohabitation is deviant in some people's opinion, almost all of the respondents remarked that they felt satisfied with cohabitation. It may be assumed that students' cohabitation was not totally bad. It was found in previous studies that cohabitation contributed some advantages to them in many aspects. For example, meaningful commitment, money saving, no ill effects on grade, and sexual pleasure. Moreover, cohabitation provided them an increase in self esteem and self confidence with which the students felt most satisfied. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are two types of esteem needs: the first one results from competence or mastery of tasks, the second is from others (Simons, Irwin and Drennen, 1979). The 'others' in this study means their lovers. It was their lovers who increased their self esteem and self confidence. Two more aspects of satisfaction were collected from the interviews: his lover was like his mother, and her lover was like her deceased father. Anyway, despite their satisfaction, it was reported that only one-third of the respondents' parents and their partners' parents accepted their cohabitation.

According to the respondents' expectations from cohabitation after they graduated, more than half of them were not sure whether to marry their partners or to end the relationship, because things kept changing. It seems that the attitude of adolescents as a group is 'easy love, easy leave'. Some students intended to marry their lovers while a few of them would not further their relationship. From the interviews, 2 male students stated that it was their lovers' decision to set what their future lives would be like. It may mean that they did not want to have their accountability in cohabitation. The respondents' answers were not different from those of famous

Thai stars who cohabited - some of them planned to marry their lovers, some did not care what would happen.

From an interview, one student reported that she was raped by her friend. Male students should have been taught how to be polite and female students should have been taught how to stay alone safely. All students who are Buddhists should follow 5 precepts, especially male students. If they break the fifth commandment – no alcohol consuming – they may commit bad behavior. Though only one student was raped, it was not a good indication of that male student's morality, mental maturity and critical thinking.

The results of the study disclose that what happened to the respondents is in accordance with three stages of relationship (Devito, 1997). The relationship started from initial contact when they first got to know each other – a period of awkwardness, casual friendship when they expressed themselves openly and became involved in the other persons' disclosures. The last stage - intimate friendship - when they knew each other so well that they expressed their affection, fondness, love and care openly. The respondents spent some time, from less than one year to longer than four years, before living together.

It was also found in previous studies that there were 8 advantages and 6 disadvantages of sharing lives together without getting married. In contrast, almost all of the respondents to this research were satisfied with it, except the one who was raped. An explanation may be that their cohabitation had not continue long enough to express their 'real person'. Were their 'real selves' to perform, some disadvantages may emerge. The disadvantages may cause trouble for those students and may affect their study, which both parents and teachers are worried about. Some teachers at RIT Lampang campus suggest that the campus have a strong rule like Chongqing Institute of Posts and Telecommunication of China. According to key informants' answers: the student residences' owners, the seniors and the village heads, they were not happy with the students sharing their lives. They found it was not only deviant but also 'rotten' behavior which may not be good and suitable models for young kids in their society.

5.2 Summary of the major findings

Love and affection, loneliness in a new environment, educational support, fulfilling sexual needs, economic reasons, and imitating peers – these six factors were listed in the questionnaire for the students to choose as their priority for the reasons that encouraged them to cohabit. The results of the study showed that love and affection were their first priority, while not many respondents stated that imitating friends was their first priority. Some students gave loneliness and educational support as the second priority causing them to share their lives together. The rest nominated fulfilling sexual needs and economic reasons.

Five more factors causing the students to cohabit arose in the interviews. These were: being pestered by a girl, having the same interests, boredom with sex, being insulted, and being raped. Though only one student was raped, it was not a good indication of that boy's morality, mental maturity, and critical thinking.

The second objective of this study was to examine their satisfaction while cohabiting. The results of the SAQ revealed that most of the students felt good about cohabiting. They gained advantages while they shared their lives together. For example some felt loved and secure, some were happy with their study and GPA, some had self esteem and self confidence, some were financially supported, and so on.

There were two answers from the interviews that were not the same as the choices in the questionnaire. One girl stated that she met a man who was like her deceased father. Moreover, her mother loved him dearly. The other answer came from the girl who was raped. She said that she had no gratification from cohabiting since she always felt disgusted from the worst event that had happened to her.

The last purpose of this study was to ascertain what the students expected from cohabitation after graduation. The result of the questionnaire showed that more than half were not certain about their relationship because they might meet someone new who they liked in the

workplace or somewhere else. Still, there were a lot of students who were sure they would get married to their partners. The rest would end their relationships as they found that they could not get along well with each other. The girl who was raped stated in her interview that she would never marry that man, and that she wanted to erase that 'nightmare' from her memory.

5.3 Recommendation for implication

This study was about cohabitation, which involved individual privacy. It was difficult to collect data by using SAQ as cohabiting students did not want to discuss their private lives with a stranger, even though the researcher was their instructor or their advisor. They felt uneasy and uncomfortable about answering the questions and stating their secrets. Moreover, a lot of the SAQ distributed were not completely filled in. These were discarded. A different methodology to get suitable answers according to the purpose should be employed.

The campus where the research was conducted was a small one with about 1,500 students. After the first student was interviewed, he told what happened to his friends. Though the researcher promised to keep their stories secret, it was harder to make appointments with other students as they already knew what they would be asked. Thus, further study should be concerned about the respondents' worry.

Since there are increasing proportions of Thai youth who feel that pre-marital intercourse is acceptable between committed and loving partners (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1996:151), a study on how to prevent or lessen the numbers of students involved in cohabitation should be conducted. Therefore, a further study should examine an effective method to guide them in critical thinking and how to lead their lives in a traditional way in a modernized world.

Moreover, these research findings should be disseminated to school and university executive staff to encourage them to take the issue of cohabitation into consideration. Teaching sex education is both useful and dangerous. Therefore, sex education curricula must be well –

prepared and well – designed for teenage and adolescent students. In addition, the instructors of the mentioned courses have to be properly trained about methodology and teaching aids.

Apart from what gratification the respondents had during cohabiting, a future study should be about what worried them during their shared lives.

Based on the findings discussed, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The increasing incidence of sexual intercourse between students suggests the importance of the way the students were brought up, as well their ethical and moral attitudes. Moral issues must be of primary consideration to restrict premarital coitus (Lieberman, 1971:154).
- Attention to sex education, guidance and counselling on sex should begin as early as possible. Sex education at school now seems too late for the present sexually active generation but may help the next generation.
- Individual adolescents may be either unwilling or unable to reveal their innermost feelings despite their detailed responses to the issues introduced to them. There should be some other methods devised to encourage them to reveal more of their feelings about this matter.
- Though only one girl admitted being raped in this study, it indicated that some men treated women very badly.
- Students should be taught some more life skills rather than emphasizing academic excellence.
- There is a saying that ‘Prevention is better than cure’. To achieve this, three parties in each community: home, a temple or a church, and a school, must join in developing a policy of preventive measures and collective solutions to prevent such problems as those outlined in this study.
- There should be a ‘Teen Hotline’ in every province. It should be a 24-hour service and free of charge. The service ought to be about psychological and physical development and related topics, such as counselling services.