

*Behavioral Relationship between Sexes and Sexual Relations of Male Students in
Silpakorn University, Thailand*

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Abstract

This study is qualitative research, which aimed to make an understanding on behavioral relationship between sexes and activities related to sexual relations of male students, as well as to reflect how issues caused by their behavior was. The researcher applied ethnomethodology approach of Michael Angrosino by doing participant observation and in-depth interview to 9 male students at 3rd to 4th year in bachelor degree who were studying in Silpakorn University which was located in Petchaburi province, Thailand. The researcher used descriptive analysis in order to interpret data and make a conclusion. Results showed that in case of same-sex relationships, it would be rather friendships because of male gender which meant they were not infatuated with the same sex but they chose their friends by consistency of thought, preference, and attitude. The relationship between sexes and sexual relations could be easily happened because there were noticeable stimulus which supported the behavior. These permitted male students to connect with satisfied female and eventually cause sexual relations. It was found that most relations were primarily created by female. Most male students used to have sexual relations with female in dormitory or in hotel and did not use a condom even though they had never met with each other before. Male students who already had lover, it was not a problem for them because of distance. They saw that it was personal feeling which could not be restrained, and became a challenge thing to have someone else while their lover was not able to know. This sexual interrelation behavior was considered “right” to the students because it was personal issue, it did not cause any problem, and saw that other male students did so.

Keywords: Behavioral relationship, sexual relations, male students

Introduction

Teenage is a stage which curiosity is enthusiastically expressed. It is the period of growth, both physically and mentally, therefore is the period of learning and adjustment in every dimension, which cause teenagers and their parents to face some problems from the mentioned changes. Teenagers also have to be under pressure of expectations and the transition from a child who used to rely on their parents to an adult, which cause teenagers to have to adjust their behavior, emotions and social lives by creating an identity, attitude, and values they see fit for themselves. Friendship is one of the most important things for teenagers, and when combined with physical changes, sexual development and hormonal changes, can create sexual drive, curiosity and interest in the opposite sex, which put teenagers in a stage where they are ready for intercourse (Suchart, and Wanee Somprayool, 1998).

The transition from a teenager who relies on adults to the age where they need to be responsible and live life by themselves, together with social value in the present days, cause an impact on the teenagers' expression, especially on their sexual behavior. Today, the society focuses on economic and technological development, which contributes to fast information sharing, absorption of thoughts, values, and behavioral imitation. Materialism makes the society become comfort-oriented and its values changes according to present social and familial conditions. As a result, parents need to earn more to sufficiently provide for their families; therefore they have fewer chances to closely take care of their children. This allows teenagers today more freedom and higher possibilities to bond with someone than in the past. Also, situations where they are alone together, which can cause natural sexual tension, can occur more easily. Technological advancement and the nature of teenagers: curiosity, the urge to try new things and behave in a different way, including the need to be accepted among friends rather than their parents; can formulate the idea of wanting to break rules or warnings set by adults, particularly the issue of sexual relations before an appropriate age, which is the biggest concern among parents and adults. Therefore, teenager is the group of people who react to and are influenced by social and technological changes most rapidly and obviously (Terdsak Dejkong, 2001).

Sexual behavior, therefore, is related to thoughts and beliefs about sexual relations among teenagers and adolescents. Because of the social and economic changes at present, teenagers tend to have diversity in thoughts, beliefs and values, e.g. having an intercourse with their partner or someone else even though they already have a lover, intending to have an intercourse with an opposite sex, having sex without protection with a familiar opposite sex (Jirangkool Natrangsee, 2006). Part of these sexual behaviors comes from the difference in sexual value perception in each person, depending on the environment. When facing social changes, how they are raised in their family, school, and the society, together with the thoughts, beliefs and values on sexes of these teenagers can be a big influence on their sexual behavior. Furthermore, the influences from the media such as television, movies and internet can stimulate teenagers to start having sex at young age? Consequently, there would be impacts on

both the teenagers themselves and their families, e.g. school-age pregnancy, abortion, child abandonment, sexual transmitted diseases, bad grades, shame, low self-esteem, etc., which might cause depression or heartbrokenness and lead to teenagers hurting themselves, committing suicide, or sexual violence.

University students are considered to be in an educational environment, as they are in higher education institutions. However, all university students are in their teen years and at present, social changes, values and western ways of thinking cause the behavior of today's students to be different from students in former time. Therefore, the researchers aim present occurrences on behavioral relationship between sexes, including activities which lead to sexual relations of male students in the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University who stay in a dormitory, both inside and outside the of the university. This research can be considered as an echo of teenagers' opinion, for a better understanding of behavior pattern, attitude, and problems that occur.

Research Boundary

The researchers designed and divided research boundary into different dimensions, as follows:

1. Demographic: information is gained from interviewing male students in the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University.
2. Geographic: Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University, Phetchaburi IT Campus, Cha-Am, Phetchaburi.
3. Time: the researchers started doing field survey to collect data to analyze and make a conclusion from December 2012 to January 2013, which is two months altogether.

Research Methodology

As qualitative research requires in-depth data to show actual occurrences and issues, the researchers choose to apply ethnomethodology approach by Michael Angrosino (2007) as a methodology in the research which focuses on a group of people in order to try to understand their specific behavior, which is meaningful and worthy, which occurs under a boundary of time and place (Bruce Curtis and Cate Curtis, 2011: 80). The researchers applies the techniques of informants observation and in-depth interview with junior and senior male students in the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University, by getting to know them to develop trust so as to obtain the most honest data. The researchers have chosen the informants at random with the snowball technique. After obtaining enough information, the data is then analyzed by a descriptive analysis to generate results. In addition, the researchers have also performed literature review of related theories from text books and papers to verify and support the results.

Results

After the researchers have developed familiarity with a group of male students and have collected data by observation and interview, the findings can be categorized into different dimensions as follows:

1. Personal information and family background

From the interview, the researchers have found that most male students come from a moderate to a fairly well-off family that live away from the university, which are Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Ratchaburi, and Nakhon Pathom. Most of the students' parents live together; only a few are separated, and most of them are business owners. As for the students' spending behavior, they get approximately 4,000 – 8,000 Baht per month. During a semester, parents would take care of all expenses by giving them cash or making a deposit through bank account. Most expenses involve food, cloths, tools and equipment, including alcohol in pubs or bars. Students usually do not have savings because they think they are financially supported from their families. However, these male students do not have the behavior of borrowing money from their friends, and have a middling grade point average.

2. Dwelling

Students need to stay at dormitories, as travelling back and forth from their home is a long distance and takes a long time. Many choose a private dormitory situated at the back of the university if their family is quite well-off, as they think it is more convenient to go in or out of the dormitory to do their personal business, there is air conditioning and more accommodations than a dormitories in the university. Moreover, they can bring friends to their room, male or female. At the same time, some of the students who stay at a dormitory inside the university might sometimes stay over at a friend's room in a private dormitory outside. The reason is because the ones in the university has an opening and closing time, and the caretakers are very strict, which makes it inconvenient for them to hang out with their friends. As for going home, students take a private van services at the back of the university, but it is found that male students do not go home very often. Most of them go home not more than 1-2 times a month. They explained they do not feel the need to go home every week; they feel bored and there are not a lot of activities to do. They would rather stay at the dormitories to see their friends, hang out, or do their assignments.

3. Specific features and behavior with friends of the same sex

From the interview and observation, informants are male students in their junior and senior year, at the age of 20-23. Everyone's gender is male. They want to see and have a relationship with the opposite sex. Most of them have a girlfriend who is not in the same university. Some of them have never had a sexual experience with their partner before. The students tend to try to befriend other male students in the same year with the same gender, character, thoughts and interests. In the classroom, they

tend to sit together in the middle or at the back of the room and chat, make loud noises, play on their phones, or doze off because they did not get enough sleep; which creates a negative image on the whole group. After school, they usually go back to their dormitories together to chat and exchange their opinions on random topics such as good looking girls they have seen, football news, cars, hot news issues, etc. Nevertheless, it is found that most students do not watch pornography, but tend to discuss about sexual relations with girls or exciting direct sexual experiences to keep the talk interesting and fun. In addition, they tend to go out at night to eat or go to pubs or bars at the back of the university to meet friends or ask a close female friends to come and have a drink with them, and usually stays until 2.00-3.00 am before they separate and go back to their dormitories.

4. Relationship with the opposite sex

The informants revealed about their relationship with the opposite sex that mostly, the female tends to be the first to start the interaction, though a friend of the male student. Then, they would find an opportunity to exchange phone numbers or social network ID. A meeting place is usually a café or pubs outside the university. Most of the female who come to befriend them are students in the same faculty who they knew, are in the same year or are younger: a freshman to a junior. Things that girls find attractive are their characters, how they talk or their talents such as playing an instrument, football, acrobatic dancing, etc. rather than their looks or their financial status. Both parties usually meet during well-known student activities in the university such as an annual music competition or a department activity. After that, they would first talk on social network media, and then when they have become more familiar with each other, they would start talking on the phone occasionally. Male students who have a feeling for one of the opposite sex will have a change in their behavior; they often excuse themselves from their group of friends to go on a date with the girl to have a meal, watch a movie, go shopping at a department store, or just go out. However, if they go to a pub or a bar, both parties usually invite their friends along for a more reveling atmosphere.

5. Initiation of sexual relations

Students explained that after the male students have known a girl for only a period of time, which is from a day up to two weeks, they would start having sex. The first night of their sexual relations is mostly the night the male students ask a girl out for a drink late at night, then they would separate from their friends to take the girl back to their dormitory. If the pub is quite far from the university, they would rent a hotel, and the male party will pay the fee, even though the female party is a stranger who they are not familiar with. It is found that there are only a few who use condoms every time they have an intercourse to prevent pregnancy and sexual transmitted diseases. Most of them think they get more pleasure and excitement not using condoms. In some situations, they did not carry or ran out of one, so they had to have sex without

protections. However, they do not worry about sexual transmitted diseases or pregnancy, as they think both parties are students, so there should not be a problem.

6. Ending the relationship

After the sexual activity is over, they would spend a night together, and then the next day they would go their separate ways to do personal businesses or go to classes. It is found that some partners still stay in consistent contact with each other and engage in intercourses time and again. Nevertheless, most male parties decide to end the relationship after the first time because they do not want things to escalate. They would not answer their phones and not reply to online messages. If they do, they would claim to be busy, be in a class, or have a bad phone signal. Should they come across the girl in the university, they would pretend not to see them. In case the female party is in the same department or the same year, in classes, they will try to sit away from the girl to avoid conversations and the observation from classmates. The male students will continue doing these behaviors until the female parties sense the signs of them breaking off. The girls whom the male students had intercourse with tend not to demand or react, fearing that their friends will find out and they will be gossiped about. Many do not care, as they do not stick to only one man. Regardless, it is found that throughout all the university years, male students have been through this kind of experience for more than 1-2 times.

7. Opinion on the behavior

When the researchers ask of their opinion on their sexual behaviors, the male students say they think it is a personal issue and is a normal behavior of today's teenagers. They think they did not do anything wrong and did not cause others any troubles. Also, both the male and female parties are pleased with each other and the sexual relationship is consensual, so there is no problem about petition filing or press charging. They also view it as a way to release their emotions and feelings to the opposite sex. Their attitude towards sexual relationship at school-age is that it is a normal thing, as they have come of age and become sui juris, therefore they are mature enough to learn and make their own decision. It is in the nature of human to have sexual needs, and they understand that other students also behave the same way. If they have a chance, they would do it again. In addition, though they had a lover who is far away, they think what they did is exciting and is a personal secret that their girlfriend cannot know of.

Analysis, Results and Conclusions

From the study on the occurrences in male students who are teenagers in the dimensions of thoughts, attitudes, and behavior towards opposite sex, the researchers have performed a descriptive analysis and will conclude and present three important aspects:

1. Access to sexual relations and activities is a social analysis in the aspect of behaviors which shows the relationships between the same sex, the opposite sex, and sexual relations. For the same sex behavior, the relationship is a friendship one, as students of male gender do not have affection for the same sex. They tend to befriend a group of people who share the same thoughts, passion or attitudes, including sexual preferences. On the other hand, building a relationship between opposite sexes can be easy, because of the contributions from the environment, e.g. staying at a private dormitory outside the university, the convenience of internet access and the use of online social network to get to know the opposite sex, being away from home which makes parents unable to teach them of the right behavior, etc. Staying at a dormitory with friends and building a relationship with an opposite sex make the students have activities to do in their free time, have a way to satisfy their personal sexual needs, and can be a topic to chat with their friends for fun. The relationship and feelings between a male and a female student who are attracted to one another is personal and there is nothing to be ashamed of. However, they have to keep it from their parents or lover to avoid any problems that might follow. Therefore, the female party they have a sexual relationship with is cannot be called their girlfriends, but merely a partner to ease their loneliness, while the male students have their own ways of making the female party acknowledge of their partings. The research shows that female plays more roles in starting the relationship between sexes by approaching and starting a conversation first, even though the male party already has a lover. Having girls trying to win over their heart or attention is what arouses male students, and together with their needs to seek for challenges and excitement, they did not refuse those girls, but responded to their needs.

2. Attitude towards sexual behaviors is what reflects and represents the thoughts of Thai teenagers today towards behavioral actions between sexes, communication processes, sexual behaviors and ending the relationship with their partners. The researchers have interpreted and divided their behaviors into two dimensions. First, their attitude on actions with the opposite sex to school-age sex is that is its acceptable for male students because of the cultural and value influences from the western nations, and an easy access to different media including television, internet, online social network, which present leading information and create the understanding that such behaviors can be done freely as they depend on personal judgment and do not cause troubles to others. Male students think they will have sexual relations again if chances allow them. Second, their attitude on protections is that they tend not to use condoms during sexual relations, as it gives more excitement and it should not cause them a problem. This occurrence happens because of the careless and impulsive actions of students in their teen years who do not neglect the risks of sexual transmitted diseases and pregnancy, which can turn into a major social problem for both parties, in the aspects of both education and family. Relationship between sexes in the new generation's teenagers seems to be focusing more on personal feelings than the effects on their future education, profession, or their family that might come after they have settled their affairs.

3. *Pragmatic policy.* Findings from the research present the occurrences of male teenagers who are university students in different dimensions. These findings create expectations on institutes who are related, including government sectors and the university, to inculcate teenagers to grow up qualitatively as a university student by constantly outlining a conforming policy in the management level and introducing projects and rules in the operational level, to control their behavior and promote proper sexual knowledge and understandings. For example, implementing a policy to control public media contents, especially online, to provide more guidance on sexual issues; launching commercials for teenagers to create a value on using protection; establishing educational fairs to acknowledge teenagers on sexual relations and the danger of unprotected sex; and encourage the dormitories both inside and outside the university work together to design a discreet control measure on going in and out of the dormitories for both male and female students to reduce the risks of sexual relations in dormitories. Furthermore, each family, which is the closest unit to the teenagers, should educate and guide their children on an appropriate way to approach the opposite sex according to Thai practice.

Teenage is the age of growth and curiosity. Under the consumerism environment, it is hard to forbid teenagers from learning by their own experiences, especially with the media surrounding them. Nevertheless, if there is an integration of inculcation and education in each unit, it will provide a correct understanding, which will help them grow up physically and mentally at the same time, to improve the quality of teenagers and provide benefits for the society.

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