

# FACTORS RELATED TO EXTRAMARITAL SEX AMONG THAI MALES IN NAKHON SAWAN PROVINCE, THAILAND

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this research was to study the incidence of extra marital sexual behavior and factors related to the extramarital sex life of Thai males in Nakhon Sawan province, Thailand. The sample includes 381 married males of aged between 30-60 years old. Data was collected by using self-administered questionnaires. The results of this study revealed that 46.7% of the sample had extramarital sex and of these 22.3% had more than two extra marital sex experiences in the past year. The habit of having extra marital sex was reported by 43.8% of these. This study shows significant associations ( $p$ -value $<.01$ ) between extramarital sex and marital status, level of education, occupation, duration of marriage, stress level, the searching for excitement, sexual value toward extramarital sex, and conflicts among couples. Age, religion, income, and loneliness were not associated with extramarital sex.

**Keywords:** Sexual behavior, Extra marital sex, Sexual desire, Sexual values, Thailand

## INTRODUCTION

The influence of social changes that affect the lives of people in society is inevitable, in particular the problem of domestic violence. The fact that Thai men use violence against their female partners causing them to suffer both physically and mentally, or have extramarital sexual relationships can lead have serious repercussions and result in divorce and family break up. Data from the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand shows that on average one in ten divorced couples or one in four couples is affected by this [1, 2]. Domestic violence is seen as the main reason for divorce according to a report by the National Police Agency [3]. The nature of domestic violence is mainly physical and mental abuse, with up to 16,179 people across the country registered as being victims of such violence [3, 4].

In addition, the effect of having extramarital sexual relationships also leads to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and others consequences especially family break up [1, 2]. The previous studies on extramarital sex in Thailand using qualitative approach which were

focused on social structure, cultural and peer pressure [5]. There are some study in the US has found that extramarital sex are linked with individual characteristics, including refers to quality and length of the marriage, feelings of isolation and opportunities for extramarital sex [6]. For this study extramarital behavior refers to men who are married, having sexual intercourse with other women, other than their wives, whether their marriage is registered at the time or not. Therefore, the study's objective was to explore the behavior of extra marital sex, and find out factors related to the extramarital sex behavior, of Thai males in Nakhon Sawan province, Thailand.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study design

This study is a cross-sectional survey in one province of Thailand. The population in this study was Thai married men aged 30-60 years old in Nakhon Sawan province were enrolled. Nakhon Sawan province is located in the lower north of Thailand which is around 240 kilometers from Bangkok.

Samples were selected by a convenience sampling from various groups, companies, public

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**Table 1** Number and percentage of the participant's characteristics

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N = 381</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
30 - 40	185	48.5
41 - 50	123	32.3
51 - 60	73	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
x = 42.14 S.D. = 8.38 Range = 30 - 60		
<b>Religion</b>		
Buddhism	321	84.3
Islam	37	9.7
Christ	23	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary school	24	6.3
Secondary school	74	19.4
High school	71	18.6
Diploma	85	22.9
Undergraduate	127	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married (register)	209	54.9
Married (Non-register)	142	37.3
Widowed	30	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Government officials	189	49.6
Private sector employees	77	20.2
General contractor	44	11.5
Vendor	71	18.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Income/month</b>		
5,001 - 10,000	98	25.7
10,001 - 15,000	86	22.6
15,001 - 20,000	80	21.0
20,001 - 25,000	82	21.5
25,001 - 30,000	25	6.6
More than 30,000	10	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Duration of marriage</b>		
Less than 5 year	86	22.6
6 - 10 year	133	34.9
11 - 15 year	60	15.7
16 - 20 year	51	13.4
More than 20 year	51	13.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>

areas, markets and as well as with the cooperation of the agency (organizations/ companies) to collect data, questionnaires and sealed. Until the query and gathers the group for every 381 full time series data.

A self-administrated questionnaire was used. The content validity of questionnaire was examined and approved by 3 qualified persons, and the reliability was tested by pretesting the questionnaire with 50 people in another province, for which Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is 0.96 for

the stress questions. For isolation/loneliness test is 0.76, the search for excitement tested 0.91, a value of gender is 0.67 and conflict test is 0.73. SPSS licensed version 17 software was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics (percentage, mean and standard deviation) was presented. For analyzing the relationship between demographic characteristics and related sexual variables were tested by chi-square.

This study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research

**Table 2** Factors associated with extramarital sex behavior are seven variables as follows (n=381)

Variables	Extramarital sex behavior				Total		p-value
	No (203)		Yes (178)		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
<b>Age</b>							> .05
30 – 40years	90	48.6	95	51.4	185	48.6	
41 – 50 years	68	55.3	55	44.7	123	32.3	
51 – 60 years	45	61.6	28	38.4	73	19.1	
<b>Religion</b>							> .05
Buddhism	174	54.2	147	45.8	321	84.3	
Islam	15	40.5	22	59.5	37	9.7	
Christ	14	60.9	9	39.1	23	6.0	
<b>Education level</b>							<.01
Primary school	19	79.2	5	20.8	24	6.3	
Secondary school	46	62.2	28	37.8	74	19.4	
High school	36	50.7	35	49.3	71	18.6	
Diploma	44	51.8	41	48.2	85	22.3	
Undergraduate	58	45.7	69	54.3	127	33.3	
<b>Marital status</b>							<.01
Married (Register)	129	61.7	80	38.3	209	54.9	
Married (Non- Register)	64	45.1	78	54.9	142	37.3	
Widowed	10	33.3	20	66.7	30	7.9	
<b>Occupation</b>							< .01
Government officials	110	58.2	79	41.8	189	49.6	
Private sector employees	27	35.1	50	64.9	77	20.2	
General contractor	28	63.6	16	36.4	44	11.5	
Vendor	38	53.5	33	46.5	71	18.6	
<b>Income/ month</b>							> .05
5,001 -10,000 Baht	42	42.9	56	57.1	98	25.7	
10,001-15,000 Baht	44	51.2	42	48.8	86	22.6	
15,001-20,000 Baht	45	56.2	35	43.8	90	21.0	
20,001-25,000 Baht	51	62.2	31	37.8	82	21.5	
25,001-30,000 Baht	16	64.0	9	36.0	25	6.6	
More than 30,000 Baht	5	50.0	5	50.0	10	2.6	
<b>Duration of married</b>							< .01
Less than 5 years	47	54.7	39	45.3	88	22.6	
6 – 10 years	61	45.9	72	54.1	133	34.9	
11 –15 years	29	48.3	31	51.7	60	15.7	
16 -20 years	30	58.8	21	41.2	51	13.4	
More than 20 years	36	70.6	15	29.4	51	13.4	

significant level *p-value* = <0.05

Subjects, Health Science Group, Chulalongkorn University in April 2012 which concern on the rights to confidentiality and privacy. Participants were fully informed of the objectives as well as the significance of this study, so that they would be participating in the research voluntarily. They were given the choice to withdraw if they did not wish to participate at any time. Respondents were also informed that the collected data would be used only for academic purpose and that it would remain confidential.

## RESULTS

All participants in this study were men, 48.5% of them were aged between 30 and 40 years old,

32.3% were between 41 and 50 years old, with mean age of  $42.14 \pm 8.38$  years. A half of them (54.9%) had their marriage registered, while 37.3% were married but not registered. Around half of them work for the government (Table 1). There are 178 men or 46.7% had experience of sexual marital sex in the past year.

### Factors associated with extramarital sex behavior

This study found educational level, marital status, occupation, duration of married is associated with extramarital sex behavior statistically significant at  $p < .01$  as age, religion, income per month no correlation with extramarital sex behavior statistically significant in Table 2.

**Table 3** The relationship between extramarital sex behaviors and level of different variables (n = 381)

Variables	Extramarital sex behavior				Total		p- value
	No		Yes		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
<b>Level of stress</b>							
Low-level of stress (0-24)	15	44.1	19	55.9	34	8.9	p > .05
Moderate levels of stress (25-42)	67	53.2	59	46.8	126	33.1	
High levels of stress (43-62)	112	55.7	89	44.3	201	52.8	
Very high levels of stress (63-100)	9	45.0	11	55.0	20	5.2	
<b>Level of loneliness</b>							
Low-level of loneliness (0-34.91)	24	43.6	31	56.4	55	14.4	p >.05
Moderate levels of loneliness (34.92-52.32)	155	55.2	126	44.8	281	73.8	
High levels of loneliness (52.33-80)	24	53.3	21	46.7	45	11.8	
<b>Level of searching for excitement</b>							
Low-level of searching for excitement (0-18.8)	40	74.1	14	25.9	54	14.2	p<.001
Moderate levels of searching for excitement (18.82-33.06)	154	55.6	123	44.4	277	72.7	
High levels of searching for excitement (33.07-56)	9	18.0	41	82.0	50	13.1	
<b>Level of sexual values on extramarital sex</b>							
Low-level of sexual values (0-17.16)	32	44.4	40	56.6	72	18.9	p <.05
Moderate levels of sexual values (17.17-22.33)	138	52.9	123	47.1	261	68.5	
High levels of sexual values (22.34-28)	23	68.8	15	31.2	48	12.6	
<b>Level of conflict (with wife)</b>							
Low-level of conflict (0-11.76)	31	77.5	9	22.5	40	10.5	p < .01
Moderate levels of conflict (11.77-17.53)	151	51.0	145	49.0	296	77.7	
High levels of conflict (17.54-32)	21	46.7	24	53.3	45	11.8	

significant level *p-value* = <0.05

### Factors affecting the relationship between extramarital sex behaviors

Table 3 can be explained by the search for excitement, sexual values on extramarital sex and conflict with wife, are associated with extramarital sex behaviors and are statistically significant. The stress and isolation or loneliness are not correlated with extramarital sex behaviors.

### DISCUSSION

This study found 46.7% of participants had experience of extramarital sex. This figure was higher than that of any other studies in the western context including Wiederman [7] who discovered that 22.7% of men had the same experience. Choi et al. [8] studied from National AIDS Behavioral Survey in the United States reported that 2.5% male had sexual partners other than their wives. Buunk's study [9] based in the Netherlands found that 17 % of male had at least one sexual partner and 26.0% had extramarital sex in the past year. This study shows that the Thai sexual and cultural context, especially in Nakhon Sawan province and Bangkok as Yamarat [10] found over 50% men engaged in extramarital sex, gave men the opportunity to have more sexual exposure than men in the western world.

The study shows that the factors that affect the

extramarital sex behaviors can be summarized as follows. There is no correlation between age, religion, income, stress, isolation/loneliness, and extramarital sex behaviors. The conclusion of this correlation does not corresponded with other studies such as the study of Wiederman [7] who found lifetime incidence of extramarital sex increased with age for men. However, no study identified a link between income or economic status with extra marital sex. However, some studies did show a link between stress or loneliness and marital problems, and how these problems together with some personality traits have an impact on extramarital sex life [11].

This study's conclusion show that the level of education, marital status, occupation, and length of married life, the search for excitement, sexual values and conflict within the marriage are associated with extramarital sex behaviors; they are in fact statistically significant. These results concordance with the study carried out by Spanier and Margolis [9] and which indicated that the length of marriage, the quality of marital sex, lifestyle attitudes or sexual attitude towards external marital sex were related to sexual activities outside marriage. Another study by Thompson [6] stated that characteristics of the marriage, attitude continuum of extramarital sexual and

permissiveness related to extramarital sex behaviors. Moreover, Winking [12] discovered that marital satisfaction and length of marriage are related to this sexual behavior.

Wiederman [7] found those with greater attitudinal acceptance of extramarital sex had higher incidence of extramarital sex compared to those who do not approve of extramarital sex. Furthermore, Buunk [9] determined that the level of education, low self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with married life all have a bearing on his study.

This report does not include some variables that can be linked to extramarital sex behavior. They include physical attractiveness, approval of spouse, alienation and powerless. However, personality traits like narcissism, psychoticism, low conscientiousness and church attendance were all found to be related to extramarital sex [9, 11, 12].

## CONCLUSION

This study also shows that men who experience a high level of conflict with their female partners/wives are more likely to have extramarital sex as opposed to men who have low level of conflict in their married life. These findings recommend an improvement in communication between the spouses/partners especially around the issue of sexuality as this is likely to help the couple develop a healthier and more sustainable marriage and family life. Men's extramarital sexual behavior is one of the most important factor for introducing HIV/STI into marital life. Husbands' extramarital sex has been seen as closely linked with the marital relationship and marital satisfaction [13].

This study discovered here important differences in cultural and social norms between Thailand and Western countries. It is of course difficult to conclude on the basis of the present data that Thai men engage more often in extramarital sex than Western men. It is quite possible that in Thailand more people have a positive attitude toward extramarital sex than in the western world. Thai social context is highly acceptance for commercial sex and noncommercial sexual relationships as entertainment or socializing, these showing evidence by peer group gatherings for sexual activity [5].

Engagement in extramarital relations is not the domain of men only men but women too. Further studies need to consider other respects, too, including the difference between men and women's perspectives of extramarital sex.

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