The Influence of Social Factors on Cohabitation in Thailand: Does It Affect Teenagers?

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Abstract
The phenomenon of two individuals living together as life partners without having been through a legal marriage service (cohabitation) has always existed in many communities worldwide. The conceptualization of cohabitation varies depending on the attributes of each society. This qualitative and quantitative research investigated the social factors influencing cohabitation among Thai teenagers. The results were obtained by drawing on 1,328 first-to-fourth-year students selected using a stratified random sampling technique and 28 in-depth interviews. The survey was conducted using questionnaires to gather information from the respondents. The discussion is based on intensive interviews with junior and senior students who had experienced cohabitation and some who had not. Most respondents (50.42%) agreed that sex education among Thai families has been overlooked and not included in the domestic discussion. However, cohabitating is considered to go against Thai tradition, resulting in teenagers dating each other secretly (47.20%). The survey revealed that 36.62 percent of participants indicated that a lack of affection and intimacy within their family could lead to cohabitation. Both teenage boys and girls were living a modern lifestyle influenced by society (53.19%), of which 52.16 percent revealed that independence could fuel their desire to participate in a sexual relationship. Living in a private dormitory gave them more opportunities to live with their partners (53.06%). In addition, 42.29 percent of the participants agreed that their behavior while in a relationship was similar to that of their parents. This study also employed Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient to analyze the significance of the factors under consideration.

1. Introduction
Due to social changes, it cannot be denied that most married partners have participated in cohabitation prior to a traditional-legal
marriage. This is a way of learning how to live with a life partner and adjust to each other's living styles. We all know that living together is not always easy. More importantly, if the relationship fails to reach a mutual goal, it can be easier for cohabitating partners to separate. There has yet to be a religious or socially accepting ceremony (marriage), and their related conditions have not been legally and socially complex. Although most marriages begin with cohabitation, as cohabitation has become more common, it has become less associated with marriage. The number of cohabitations ending in marriage has fallen, and "serial cohabitation" has become more widespread (Sutherland, 2014).

Regardless of the time, Thai society and family beliefs have potentially influenced individual Thai teenagers differently from teenagers in Western or other countries. The critical components of a family institution are parents – a father and mother – who have different perspectives on the sexuality of their teenage children. This is because parents’ perspectives on sexuality had been influenced and shaped by the traditionally oriented values of sexuality or their family in the past, to which they could not explicitly express their feelings. Tolerance and acceptance may be social controls through families, schools, or colleges (Jampaklay & Lucktong, 2015). This differs from today's young teenagers, who must deal with biological changes and development regarding feelings, emotions, and society. They need love and attention from members of the opposite sex and accept their sexuality from their peers. Additionally, unconventional festivals or parties can be involved in factors influencing the possibility of sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

A study conducted in Thailand by Samart (2007) suggests that cohabitation is either a prelude to marriage or an alternative lifestyle, similar to American and European societies. Furthermore, most couples still wish to marry afterward, meaning they do not necessarily reject marriage as a social institution. This research aimed to study the factors influencing cohabitation in Thai teenagers through an empirical and comparative exercise.

2. Methodology

This study was designed as exploratory research. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews, while quantitative data were collected via questionnaires. The population size accounts for 3,423 students, ranging from first-year to senior students, studying at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Mahasarakham University, Thailand. The sample consisted of 1,328 students.
The data collection procedure involved the distribution of a questionnaire that included “Open Questions” with a rating scale format.

All participants were required to complete the questionnaire to ensure high truth and reliability. Qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with 28 people, including cohabitating and non-cohabitating partners.

2.1. Validity of research instruments

All research instruments – questionnaires and interview questions – were proven valid, especially their contents, by three experts from relevant disciplines. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated and found to be 0.86, which was statistically significant. The research instruments were piloted on 60 students.

2.2. Data Collection

The data was collected from 1,328 participants from 15 majors enrolling in the first semester of the 2016 academic session at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The researcher kindly requested special time allowances from other lecturers to distribute the questionnaire and conduct the interviews. Data collection was performed after classes and lasted only 10-15 minutes. The 28 participants who agreed to an in-depth interview were provided a timetable for their preferred duration and availability. The interview took approximately 40 minutes. After the data collection, the researcher rechecked all the questionnaires; at the final stage, there were only 1,328 questionnaires that were valid for further analysis.

2.3. Data analysis

Three social factors were used to distribute frequencies and percentages using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows” (SPSS). Correlations between independent variables (social factors) and dependent variables (cohabitation) were assessed using Pearson’s correlation analysis and curve-fitting via linear regression. Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) is a statistical metric that measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two random variables (J.L. Rodgers and, W.A. Nicewander, 1988).

3. Results and discussion

This study investigated the social factors influencing cohabitation among Thai teenagers. The demographic figure of the participants can be accounted for as follows: 76.51 percent of all participants were women, 19 years old (accounted for 27.33%), and the participants were currently studying in the first to fourth year of
study, majoring in the Thai language, accounting for 22.36 percent. The findings show that the key social factors include:
• Having parents living together (76.66%)
• having no sexual experience (65.74%)
• living in a private residence (63.10%)
• having no boyfriend/girlfriend (61.75%)
• monthly income 4,001-5,000 THB (40.14%).

For attitudes towards cohabitation, 42.55 percent of the participants agreed that cohabitation was inappropriate and unnecessary.

Section 2: Social factors influencing cohabitation in Thai teenagers

Table 1 The percentage of participants’ perspectives on social factors influencing cohabitation in Thai teenagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social factor influencing cohabitation in Thai teenagers</th>
<th>Attitudes’ level of being influential</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considerably low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Family Factors</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Thai families tend not to include sex education in their discussions and this leads to self-education of their children.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thai Tradition considers that Sexual behavior of women, before marriage should be restricted, meaning that cohabitation is conventionally considered as misconduct. This leads teenagers to having secret relationships with their sexual partner.</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teenagers tend to imitate their parents’ behavior causing them to act in a similar manner with their own partner.</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The lack of affection and intimacy in a family motivates teenagers to share their lives with a partner as soon as they are free to do so.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Living a life of “freedom”, away from the family, fuels</td>
<td>87</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Social factor influencing cohabitation in Thai teenagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes’ level of being influential</th>
<th>Considerably low</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>high</th>
<th>Considerably high</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
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</table>

6. When Peers’ cohabitating relationships appear to be very successful, it influences other individuals to have one.  
7. Classmates who have already had a conjugal relationship, influence other individuals to find a sexual partner.  
8. Peers are a key influential factor when students decide to have a sexual relationship or to cohabit, during their education. This is because teenagers are more influenced by their friends than by other social groups.  
9. Thai teenagers follow an ongoing modern lifestyle in a society.  
10. Peer pressure plays a vital role in cohabitation before a legal marriage.

Environmental Factors

11. Social environments make it easy to have sexual intercourse (i.e., night clubs, loneliness etc.)  
12. Living an independent life without parental control, makes teenagers want to cohabitate with their partners.

13. Staying in a private residence provides more opportunities and freedom for teenagers to live with their partners.

14. Living together is common for partners.

15. Current conditions within
According to the table, the overall attitude of young university teenagers towards the social factors influencing cohabitation in Thailand was considered neutral. When considering each individual item, the top three items were as follows:

- Staying in a private residence provides more opportunities and freedom for teenagers to live with their partners (53.06%)
- Social environments make it easy to have open sexual intercourse (51.55%)
- 50.42 percent confirmed that Thai families tend not to take sexuality into a discussion and this leads to self-learning

The item with the lowest rating of opinion was that classmates who already had a conjugal relationship influenced other individuals to find a partner (38.37%).

3.1. The role of parents in shaping sexual knowledge

Problems associated with teenagers can have several causes. One of the key causes is the breakdown of family relationships and the lack of discussion about sex within the family. One of the main benefits of open family discussion is the adjustment of parents’ perspectives, beliefs, and gender myths, which have long been embedded in Thai society. In the past, parents tended to moralize their children according to their beliefs and upbringing instead of being open to sharing different perspectives, especially those of their children. Parents must also be knowledgeable about sexual matters and advise their children on the difficulties associated with cohabitation. Consequently, this aspect of education needs to be highlighted in Thai society.

The current study found that participants' understanding that Thai families currently lack sexual knowledge and avoid talking about sexuality was high (50.42%). This reflects that discussing sex and sex education is not regular, which answers why Thai teenagers prefer to indulge in self-education or peer consultation. This phenomenon contributes to trust among peers rather than among family members. The consequences of this issue create a distance between...
Teenagers and their families and cause future problems in living an independent life, regardless of their parent's involvement.

Transferring knowledge about sex and sexuality rarely occurs in the Thai context. Parents should understand that sex is natural and normal to everyone, especially during a developmental period when behaviors, emotions, attitudes, and values change. This supports Advocate for Youth's (2002) statement that parents must understand the importance of discussing sexuality with young people. Discussing condoms before first sexual intercourse does not "give kids permission" to have sex; it permits them to behave responsibly. Leaving sons from conversation does not promote their maturity; it handicaps them.

Other scholars further point out that adolescents whose parents monitor them are more likely than others to initiate intercourse at later ages (Sieverding JA, Adler N, Witt S, Ellen J., 2005) and to have fewer partners and use condoms if they are sexually active (Huebner AJ, Howell LW., 2003). Two participants highlighted the importance of being open to their parents.

Natthaphong (a fourth-year student) stated that:

"I have never. I have never talked about sex with my parents. I do not think that my friends discuss about sex with their parents. My parents have also never asked me about that. I think it is too personal"

Pattama (a second-year student) pointed out that:

I have never had a boyfriend. When I have, I will talk to my peers instead of my parents. My parents are strict. My sisters and brothers do not want to talk to my parents"

In addition to love and understanding, parents should provide an opportunity to educate their children about sexuality. When a family has a more democratic outlook, embracing different attitudes might contribute to a good characteristic of society and self-value establishment. Parents’ knowledge of their children depends not entirely on directly asking for information or exercising parental control but on their willingness to share information with their parents (Siennick, 2014, p. 3). Moreover, cohabitees who did not disclose their relationships to their parents were more likely not to consult them when they experienced relationship distress.

3.2. Traditional and modern cohabitation

Thai customs and culture have always been vital indicators of people’s ways of life and are associated with their values of sexuality. Specifically, being a virgin without having experienced sexual intercourse before marriage is considered good for a woman.
appropriate behavior is considered a worthwhile attribute for Thai women. Behaving oneself with a member of the opposite sex, is essential. Social norms constitute behavior rules enforced by social sanctions (Cartwright, 2009, p. 403). Hence, cohabitation can be characterized as individual-oriented, risking disapproval from other members of society (Manning et al., 2015, p. 118). This study found that when a woman’s sexual behavior conforms to these social norms, various forms of secret relationships can occur. This was considered to be at a high level (47.20%). Although most participants revealed that behaving oneself based on cultural and social norms is appropriate, external factors – such as being too intimate with a member of the opposite sex and having a distant relationship with parents – could result in an unintentional sexual desire. Teenagers eventually do not openly talk to their parents, believing that parents cannot accept this sexual relationship during schooling. This can eventually lead to cohabitation and secret conjugal relationships. Therefore, the transition to cohabitation is fraught with uncertainty for cohabitees, especially young adults (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012, p. 1179). Parents should continually adjust their children’s expectations about marriage and become more accepting of non-traditional family formation (Kgadima, 2017). One participant shared his response on his parents’ concerns as follows:

“If we can accept social changes, I think young adults will not keep their relationship as a secret to parents. I think there are also some who do not normally tell whether or not they have had sexual intercourse with their partner, especially women”

Those who feel guilty in front of their parents when they have been in a cohabitation relationship, do not think that cohabitating is acceptable within Thai tradition.

Kritsada (a fourth-year student) viewed that:

“I view that many couples who have relationships in which they have been cohabitating, keep them hidden from their parents, because their parents are not open to reality. Cohabitation does not do anything to ruin Thai Traditional beliefs. It’s a private matter for the people involved”

In certain Thai cultures, once a single woman lives with a boyfriend, she is expected to disclose her cohabitation. Moreover, religious practices form part of the family's social conscience and are transmitted from parents to children to ensure that children conduct themselves according to tradition. Most religions do not approve of cohabitation. As unmentioned in Buddhism, cohabitation is not socially acceptable in Thailand. Due to the fear of disapproval, some cohabitees choose not to disclose the state of their relationship with their families (Huang et al., 2011: 899).
3.3. Lack of affection and intimacy – family issues

A healthy family relationship is important; once family members cannot feel affection and understanding from within the family, they tend to search for fulfillment from other sources. It is important for parents to establish an environment in which they can express love, warmth, and a sense of security to younger family members.

Apart from warmth and a loving environment within a family, the acts of listening to and respecting each other are also significant. Having an opportunity to transfer attitudes and discussing topics related to sexuality is more likely to encourage children to disclose their own sexual encounters with their parents. This would be an opportunity for parents to listen to their child’s point of view, understand them, and take it into consideration. The current study further showed that a high level (36.62%) of teenage participants agreed that the lack of affection and intimacy within the family potentially encouraged teenagers to have a cohabitation relationship.

A healthy relationship between parents and children and good communication affect children’s behavior; unfortunately, many modern families do not have sufficient time to nurture their children. Consequently, teenagers have more activities outside of the family and parents cannot “Connect” with their children, ultimately, in some cases, leading to teenagers having a cohabitation relationship.

Building a healthy relationship between family members needs to start with family elders by discussing morals, lessons in life, and consulting about sexual relationships. This supports Suthin’s (1999) argument that young children who grow up within an unhealthy family relationship tend to encounter mental health issues, self-adjustment to problems in society, and difficulty in controlling emotions. On the other hand, children raised in stable families tend to be healthier, better educated, and more likely to avoid poverty than those who experience transitions in family structure (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007), as demonstrated by the following extracts:

If parents teach their children about responsible sexual intercourse and self-sex, it is more likely to prevent school pregnancies in teenagers than how to avoid sexual activities (Jirawatnakul et al., 2012). However, they ultimately make independent decisions regarding their relationships.

“Surely, I think there is an impact on the teenager when parents do not have enough time for them. In such cases, it is normal for teenagers to seek comfort from their peers. At least they have someone to talk to and discuss their problems.” Supansa (a third-year student).
“I think it depends; In some warm and loving families, children still go out and have their own relationship with their loved ones. However, children form families where there is an unhealthy relationship, can still live their lives alone without having any relationships.

A healthy family relationship is essential when teenagers need to decide on cohabitation. To establish a loving environment within a family, all family members need to adjust to each other and maintain the equilibrium between individuals’ independence and good family connections. In the case of domestic conflicts, teenagers can sense these conflicts more quickly than others can. It can be concluded that the quality of family relationships can influence teenagers’ behavior.

3.4. Cohabitation and the living arrangements

More colleges allow men and women to share dorm rooms, but no one expects this to become the norm; where students reside is an influential factor that affects teenagers’ cohabitation. Several university students leave their hometowns to stay in condominiums, houses, or private dormitories close to their university. The current study indicated that many participants (52.16%) thought living independently encouraged teenagers to stay with their partners before marriage. A similarly high proportion (53.06%) of the participants agreed that staying in a private dormitory provided teenagers more freedom to try to live a cohabitation relationship. The overall attitude towards this factor was considered high. That is, the freedom of teenagers to live an independent life will increase when entering education, a long way from their hometown. Most participants confessed that living an independent life (or living alone) presents difficulties, especially when making decisions relating to sexual relationships, experiencing loneliness, or needing to consult with someone else on essential matters. This also supports the findings of Atthisen et al. (2006), who studied the attitudes of students at Rajabhat Sakonnakorn University toward cohabitation. They found that university students who lived far from their parents had more freedom to cohabitate with someone of the opposite sex. The factors influencing cohabitation were as follows: students lived an independent life that their parents did not control, did not have parents to advise them about sex, and social trends made university students live together as partners while studying. However, this study conflicts with Malasarnt (2006), who compared sexual behaviors and sexual deviation behaviors. The study divided student participants into two groups: 281 students who stayed at home with their families and 337 students who stayed in dormitories. The study showed that those who stayed in dormitories indulged more alcoholic drinking and drug intake than those who lived at home with their parents. The comparison of sexual behaviors between the two groups was not significant.
“I do not think that being away from a family really makes me want to have a relationship with any ones. But, I think that to be in a relationship with someone is to be fulfilled with what we lack from a family”

Varinthorn (a third-year student) supported the above view:

“It could be possible. The more freedom you get, the more you want to have a relationship with someone”

And Wittaya (a third-year student)

“Staying at home, I feel uncomfortable with my parents. Staying at dorm really provides me with more independence but, I don’t necessarily mean to have freedom to live with a girlfriend”

Staying at a private residence that is remote from parents is, in fact, not considered unusual, as traveling back and forth from home to a college might take a long time, resulting in demotivation in students. Staying in a dormitory is a good alternative. Several factors have caused these problems. For instance, students from warm family backgrounds tend to face fewer problems than those from unhealthy families. Once exposed to external stimulators, teenagers misbehave and become involved with people who assert their wrong influence.

3.5. Parenting role model

“Children are like the reflection in a mirror of their Parents.” If parents behave as good role models, children are like a white cloth absorbing whatever they see to colour themselves. If parents are always angry, arguing with each other and their children, this will also be reflected in or inherited by their children.

Imitating behavior in teenagers might not cause problems and concerns to parents; however, this behavior might gradually escalate and become a problem in later life. This study further indicated that teenagers tend to imitate their parents’ behavior as they develop into adults. In this aspect of the research, the overall level of participants’ attitudes was considered neutral, accounting for 42.29 percent. This suggests that some teenagers may treat their partners according to the way their parents treat each other. The imitation of behaviors in teenagers constitutes the roles of men and women and shapes certain gender characteristics. Parenting styles and behaviors affect gender practices among teenagers. Parents’ conceptualization of sexuality responded significantly to that of teenagers. The findings also support Smetana (1997), who mentioned that in childhood, parents are considered the primary influence on their offspring’s cultural development, but the role of parents is believed to become more differentiated during the transition into adolescence and young adulthood. Additionally, the current study is also supported by Jackson et al.’s (2011:635) which suggest that cohabitees’ attitudes
towards family formation are often shaped by their family experiences, and they are more likely to discuss their relationships with and seek the views of people within their networks. Some participants demonstrated behavior contrary to their parents’ preferences as follows:

“My parents love each other so much. They stick together most of the times. My father drops my mom off at her office and return home together every day. I also want my boyfriend to do the same with me” Supunsa, (a third-year student)

However, adult children in cohabitating relationships do not simply absorb their parents’ beliefs about family formation (Funk & Kobayashi, 2014:1103). One sensible explanation for this deviation is that:

“in different generations and periods, virginity in my parents’ period did matter but in today’s world it might not matter”

Traditionally, students of socialization have directed their primary energies toward understanding processes whereby parents’ child-rearing strategies and behaviors shape and influence their offspring’s development (Belsky, 1984). Therefore, parents’ behaviors are represented by the reflection of the explicitness of the notion of sexuality in teenagers. However, Flett et al. (2002) argued that perfectionist parents have distinct characteristics that may put their children at risk for negative outcomes.

3.6. Cohabitation: trend and patterns

Thai society has been influenced by communication across cultures in which there are flows of information and, at the same time, other cultural influencers – the influx of Western goods, the notion of Americanism, the mainstream of J-pop, and Korean waves – have also influenced the young generation’s way of life.

This study indicated that male and female teenagers live their lives according to the influence of modernity (53.19%). It cannot be denied that cross-cultural influences from America, Japan, and Korea played a vital role in the development of teenagers in the modern era. Access to various media platforms encourages young adults in Thailand to live modern lives. Thus, a transformation can easily occur in teenagers due to these influences. Sometimes, teenagers must be more critical about whether some trends cannot be modified to include certain aspects of their lives. This supports Lampao’s (2013) paper that the conceptualization of popular culture can be defined as cultures that have been socially accepted, mentioned, and influenced people’s lifestyles. It is based on the concept that human morality is diverse and equal and that everything has its conditions. Perspectives
on pop culture can be justified as a way to appreciate the diversity of life. Some participants also raised the following relevant issues:

“K-pop has really become a trend at the moment. I adore K-pop singers but I am not going to imitate their behavior of cohabitation

Nutthapong (a fourth-year student)

“Regarding being crazy about the trend of K-Pop and Western Music; I think that it is likely to influence females more than males, especially in terms of fashion and plastic surgery”

Singha (a fourth-year student)

“I have been in a relationship with my girlfriend for two years. I would say I am not following any trends but surprisingly it seems similar to the Japanese and Korean trends. Two of my close friends have also had their own relationships. It is not a trend, though. If so, I consider this not harmful. I think the important thing is we learn to protect whatever may ruin our relationship”

The trends initiated by new popular cultures are essential in influencing the new generation’s ways of life in the modern world. Influences established by international mainstream media from Japan, Korea, and the United States have always influenced Thai teenagers’ behavior. These influences contribute to becoming a “value” and then becoming “nominalized” as a social norm without being critical of whether it is “suitable” to coexist with local traditional culture.

3.7. The role of friends

During the teenage years, interest in the opposite sex typically increases. The Adolescent development period encourages teenagers to remain in stable partnerships, which may develop into more intimate relationships. (Jundeeying and Hanprasertpong, 2006). The current study suggested that the level of attitudes towards the aspects of “stimulators” or “peer pressure” in cohabitating with someone was at a high level (35.75%). In other words, peer pressure affects cohabitation in teenagers. This is because the physical development period during the teenage years is an internal factor that significantly influences emotions and mental status. This might imitate the behavior of others, as teenagers are susceptible to whatever behavior to which they have been exposed. This finding also corresponds to Ravoira and Cheery’s (1992) work investigating social relationships and adolescent pregnancy. Their study suggested that peers influence both premature sexual intercourse and adolescent pregnancy.

Teenagers have more time for socializing with peers than communicating with parents. Plus, due to physical and mental
changes, teenagers need acceptance from others, especially their peers. The more acceptance they receive from peers, the more confident they become.

On the other side of the coin, although peers influence an individual teenager, some raised that family morals and education are even more influential. Some participants thought that peers were less influential in promoting cohabitation or imitating behaviors among peers. One student described their reaction when she found her friend cohabitating that:

“Many of my friends are cohabitating and acting as if they are husband and wife. When I came to their residence, I saw their shared belongings. They normally come to study and get back together. I do not object to this but just feel odd” Ujchara (first-year student)

Two participants shared their views on how they developed conflict-resolution skills with their cohabitees’ friends:

“I do not mind if my roommate has a boyfriend. Sometimes she brought him into our room. We had talked about this earlier, that in case she wants to have her boyfriend stay overnight, it would not be in this room while I was in. Arpassara (a third-year student)

“When I was a first-year student, I shared my room with a newcomer’s friends. But, when they got their girlfriends, I decided to move out. Having my own room with only myself is more comfortable even though the rent is a bit high” Pokpong (a third-year student)

Peers are indeed influential to teenagers in terms of both attitudes and individual behaviors. The need to be accepted by others can be attributed to a cause of imitating behaviors. Nevertheless, considering a group of teenage friends, the extent to which an individual teenager’s behavior is different from that of others can form a discussion point on teenage behavior or act as accepting there are differences between individuals.

Table 2 Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis between the factors on cohabitation in Thai teenagers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thai family tends not to take a sex education into a discussion and this leads to self-education.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sexual behaviors of women has been restricted in the value of conventionality, meaning that cohabitation is conventionally</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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misconduct. This leads teenagers to have a secret relationship with his/her sexual partner.

3. Teenagers tend to imitate parents’ behaviors and then do the same with their own partner.  
   0.24 0.1 0.2 1.0 0.00

4. The lack of affection and intimacy in a family motivate teenagers to live their life with their partner.  
   0.22 0.1 0.3 0.7 0.00

5. Living a freedom life or being distant from a family fuels the desires in having a sexual relationship.  
   0.19 0.1 0.3 0.5 1.0 0.00

6. Peers’ cohabitation relationships seem very successful and that influence individuals to have one.  
   0.14 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.4 1.0 0.00

7. Classmates have already had a conjugal relationship and that influences individuals to find a partner.  
   0.11 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.5 0.5 0.04

8. Peers are a key influential factor which makes students wish to have sex during schooling and to have a cohabitation relationship. This is because teenagers are close to each other, compared to other social groups.  
   0.11 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.5 0.5 0.49 0.76 0.1 0.00

9. Thai teenagers follow an ongoing modern lifestyle in a society.  
   0.16 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.4 0.4 0.4 1.0 0.00

10. Peer pressure plays a vital role in cohabitation before a legal marriage.  
    0.13 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.6 0.4 0.4 1.0 0.00

11. Societal environments are facilitative to have an open sexual intercourse (i.e., night clubs, loneliness, and etc.)  
    0.18 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.1 0.00

12. Living an independent life without parents’ control makes teenagers dear to cohabitate with the loved one.  
    0.19 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.3 0.3 0.4 0.4 0.5 0.1 0.00

13. Staying in a private residence provides more opportunities and freedom for teenagers to live with their partners.  
    0.14 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.1 0.00

14. Staying indoor together is common for partners.  
    0.12 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.1 0.1 0.1 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.1 0.00

15. Current condition of a society makes teenagers wish to be in a relationship. For instance, others have an open relationship with his/her  
    0.16 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.1 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.3 0.4 0.1 0.00
According to the analysis of the relationship between social factors, including family, peer, and environment, and cohabitating behaviors in Thai teenagers via Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, Table 2 indicates that all independent variables (social factors) were found to be positively correlated with cohabitation. That is:

1. Staying indoors together with a partner.
2. Classmates have already had a conjugal relationship, and that influences individuals to find a partner.
3. Peers’ cohabitation relationships seem very successful, influencing other individuals to have one.
4. Current conditions of society make teenagers wish to be in a relationship.

For instance, others have an open relationship with his/her partner, and (5) Peers are an influential critical factor that makes students wish to have sex during schooling and cohabitate. This is because teenagers are close to each other, compared to other social groups, are the first five most influential factors to cohabitation in Thai teenagers ($r = 0.436, 0.392, 0.387, 0.326, 0.274$ respectively, $p < 0.05$)

**Multiple linear regression analysis**

**Table 2 Analysis of multiple linear regression to predict the cohabitating behaviors in Thai teenagers (n= 1,268)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staying indoor together with a partner is common.</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.151 to 0.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Classmates have already had a conjugal relationship and that influences individuals to find a partner.</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.405 to 0.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peers’ cohabitation relationships seem very successful and that influence other individuals to have one.</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.050 to 0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sexual behaviors of women are limited to social norms and tradition. Cohabitation is considered a traditional misconduct, resulting in the formation of secret relationships</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.030 to 0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Current social environment influences teenagers into having a relationship (i.e., everyone has their partners).</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.020*</td>
<td>0.006 to 0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The lack of affection and intimacy in a family makes teenagers wish to have a partner.</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.038*</td>
<td>-0.051 to -0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The multiple linear regression equation can be justified as $Y = 0.181$ (staying indoors together with a partner is common) + 0.086 (classmates have already had a conjugal relationship, and that influences individuals to find a partner) + 0.093 (peers’ cohabitation relationships seem very successful and influence other individuals to have one) + 0.061 (Sexual behaviors of women are limited to social norms and tradition. Cohabitation is considered traditional misconduct, resulting in the formation of secret relationships) + 0.038 (Current social environment influences teenagers into having a relationship (i.e., everyone has their partners) - 0.026 (The lack of affection and warmth in a family makes teenagers wish to have a partner).

The influence of social factors on cohabitation in Thailand is an important topic that affects teenagers. Social factors such as class, religion, and ethnicity have all been linked to patterns of cohabitation not only in Thailand but also in many other countries around the world. In Thailand, a country with a strong cultural emphasis on family values, cohabitation is still considered taboo and not widely accepted. This can be attributed to the fact that many Thai people highly value marriage and family traditions. As such, social pressure from family, friends, and society can significantly impact the decision to cohabit. Teenagers, in particular, may feel pressured to conform to societal norms and expectations, resulting in a decrease in cohabitation rates among this population. The influence of social factors on cohabitation in Thailand was significant. The country’s strong cultural and religious influence influences how couples decide to live together. In traditional Thai society, cohabitation is socially unacceptable and not encouraged. This is mainly due to the traditional values of the Thai people, which emphasize the importance of marriage and family units.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

There are no strict rules on the length of teenagers’ relationships until marriage; however, in all marriages, teenagers cohabit. The social factors influencing teenagers’ cohabitation in Thailand include family, peer, and environmental factors. Additionally, the current study shows that the Thai family seems to ignore discussions about sexuality within the family, resulting in teenagers experiencing self-sex education or peer consultation. The limitations of Thai culture significantly shape the formation of a secret relationship since families do not accept the act of cohabitation. Moreover, staying in private residences remote from teenagers’ family homes also contributes to the decision to live an independent life and cohabitation. Additionally, mainstream media about Western and
Korean series, pop music, and other lifestyle fashions also play a role in influencing teenagers’ way of life.

The current study further indicates that most participants agreed that extra-curricular activities and campaigns to prevent sexual activity within a college might establish a better understanding of this matter in young adults. These activities should also highlight youth collaboration and be designed to facilitate an idea-transferring process to identify solutions and establish self-solutions. There must be various activities to invite more teenagers to participate in campaigns. This provides a variety of options and alternatives according to individual interests. College administrators and parents should develop positive attitudes towards sexuality – being open-minded and accepting different behaviors – by taking the basis of Thai culture to account for cohabitation. Therefore, teenagers should be encouraged to be more careful and critical in deciding on cohabitation while studying.

Acknowledgement

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mahasarakham University, Thailand, funded this research. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all invited specialists for their supportive suggestions and comments throughout the research project. I also would like to thank all lecturers from all majors for their support in allowing me to administer the questionnaire during the data collection period. I also wish to thank all student participants for their valuable time in answering the questionnaires and interviews. Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to my parents, son, and friends for their support and motivation throughout the time conducting this research project.

Bibliography


