

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Recently, the number of universities in Thailand has dramatically increased as a result of the government's deregulation policy for university education. This situation has affected the demand for both dormitory services in the universities and private dormitory services located nearby universities throughout Thailand, especially the boundary provinces such as Pathumthani, Samutprakarn and Nakornpathom. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of universities in terms of increased student enrollment has consequently caused an increase in the number of students and also has thus resulted in a shortage of dormitory services at the majority of universities. As a result, private dormitory businesses are growing significantly, but there have been few efforts to assess the level of service quality of those dormitories.

The important mission of dormitory services at universities is to provide proper residences for students so that students can have a better learning environment. In general, dormitory services are hidden parts of the curriculum and an important tool to help students develop the necessary skills for their future careers. According to the Dormitory Act B.E. 2507, the dormitory service providers have to provide not only clean rooms that are convenient and safe for living but also the best facilities for students to promote their studies and strengthen their social skills. An appropriate dormitory should provide opportunities for students to participate in several activities by providing the students with a conceptual framework for their future lives, such as self-knowledge, self-confidence, self-worth, the clarification of goals, and interpersonal competence. Dormitory services are also important for creating better personal characteristics of students. All students will be trained to deal with the social behaviors. In addition, the experience of living in a dormitory will protect students from degenerate social behaviors.

In Thailand, dormitory service was first implemented at Siriraj Hospital in 2451 B.E. and expanded to other universities located far from Bangkok, such as Burapa University in Chonburi province, Silpakorn University in Nakornpathom

province etc, in order to provide residences for students who were from remote areas. Because one of the basic concepts of dormitory services is to prepare students for better social living both during their study lives and their future working lives: the implementation of dormitory services has to be concerned not only with the physical environment, but also self-regulation and procedures for handling all dormitory activities.

The Dormitory Act B.E. 2507 also indicates that both the dormitory in universities and private dormitories near universities have to set up a similar concept of a “Living and Learning center,” as well as generally provide several physical facilities including the development program. As a result, nowadays most dormitories tend to provide highly effective services, for example, secure accommodation, and reasonable rental rates. However, at present, there is little evidence to show whether dormitory service providers are able to achieve their objectives or succeed beyond students’ expectations.

At present, the numbers of universities in Nakornpathom province has expanded rapidly due to the recent government deregulation policy for university education. The numbers of students has significantly increased and has affected the demand for the dormitory services. According to the report of the office of Social Development and Human Security Nakornpathom province, in 2007, there were 144 registered private dormitories in Nakornpathom province, consisting of 58 male dormitories and 86 female dormitories, of which 69% were located in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province; however, there is no conclusive proof of the quality of these private dormitories. Consequently, aspects of the dormitory services, such as quality, pricing, marketing, facilities, and security should be investigated. The research question is what are the factors influencing the decision of students when selecting rental residences and whether the students in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province, are satisfied with private dormitory services.

In addition, the findings on satisfaction level of students will give the owners of private dormitories insight into their needs and help define what facilities are important for the students, as well as what students expect from dormitory services. All of this will enable private dormitory businesses to be improved.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays, with the rapid expansion of dormitory services in Mueng district of Nakornpathom province, existing dormitory operators can no longer rely on traditional service techniques. If students feel that they are receiving less quality, they will switch to another provider that can give them better service. Therefore, investigating the level of students' satisfaction could lead to a better understanding of student needs and increase their satisfaction.

1.2.1 Main Problem

1. What are the main factors influencing students' decisions on selecting dormitories in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province?

1.2.2 Sub-Problems

1. What are the characteristics of dormitories that the students are satisfied or dissatisfied about?

2. What are the problems/inconveniences that students face while living in the dormitories?

3. What are the suggestions/comments from students regarding improvement of the service quality at private dormitories?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

1. To find out the factors affecting the level of students' satisfaction with the service quality at private dormitories in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To measure the level of students' satisfaction with private dormitories in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province.

2. To identify existing problems, if any, and recommend changes to improve the conditions of private dormitories in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province.

3. To find out the students' suggestions/comments about how the services could be improved in the future.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

Student	A person who is studying at a college or university.
Satisfaction	The degree of feeling that a student has with the private dormitory services. This feeling can be measured by using the Likert 5 point scale: 1) extremely satisfied, 2) satisfied, 3) neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), 4) dissatisfied and 5) extremely dissatisfied.
Dormitory services	The expected standard of services or characteristics of private dormitories including helpful behavior, work, or service done by the staff for students living in private dormitories.
Equipment	Necessary equipment provided for students. These consist of: 1) bed, 2) mattress, 3) desk and chair, 4) dresser, 5) refrigerator, 6) television, 7) cable TV, 8) an appliance to heat water, 9) telephone, 10) Internet, 11) air conditioning, 12) fan, and 13) toilet within the room.
Facilities	Other services are available for students. These consist of: 1) lift, 2) convenient store, 3) food court, 4) salon, 5) newspapers or magazines 6) car park, 7) post office, 8) laundry service, 9) security service, 10) fitness, 11) book rental shop, 12) photocopy shop, 13) computer/Internet shop, 14) consulting staff, 15) vehicle access, and 16) non-resident access.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on students living in dormitories operated by private owners, near Silpakorn University, Sanarmchan campus in Mueng district, Nakornpathom province. This study covered two main aspects:

First, the factors influencing a student's decision on selecting a dormitory which refer to: 1) physical factors, 2) price factors, 3) location factors, 4) promotional factors, 5) staff factors, and 6) other factors.

Second, the extent of overall student satisfaction with private dormitory services which refers to: 1) cleanliness, 2) convenience, 3) comfort and appropriateness, 4) security service, 5) communication and computer services, 6) expenses, and 7) general services.

The main contents of the study consisted of questions related to general information given to 200 students living in private dormitories located around Silpakorn University, Sanarmchan campus on the level of their satisfaction with dormitory services, on problems/inconveniences that students may experience, and on suggestions/comments for improving service quality. However, the results of the study may not be generalized to show overall service quality of dormitories in Nakornpathom province.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 The results of this study can be used as a guideline for improving the quality of dormitory services in the future since the quality of dormitory service is one of the various important factors affecting student's learning performance.

1.6.2 The findings will be beneficial as the baseline for private dormitory businesses and the office of Social Development and Human Security Nakornpathom province to improve the social organization of private dormitory services in Nakornpathom province.

1.6.3 The outcomes of the study will show the problems and possible solutions to improve dormitory services in order to increase student satisfaction.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters:

Chapter one introduces the study's background, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter two illustrates a review of related literature and previous similar studies.

Chapter three illustrates a descriptive picture of the procedures undertaken to collect and analyze data.

Chapter four presents the findings as well as the analysis of data collected from the questionnaires.

Chapter five presents a summary, discussion, conclusions and recommendations for further study.