

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Historically Thai people have given great importance to married life. Many women began their married lives as teenagers. Moreover, men were dominant and permitted to have several wives. Even though men were allowed to have several wives simultaneously, it was generally acceptable and that did not pose a problem to the family unit. More recently the statistics of divorce in Thailand have been increasing every year, especially in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand where people from more rural areas are trying to relocating to cities to settle down and seek better financial opportunities. Some migrate to Bangkok with their spouses while others marry after moving to urban areas. Living together as a couple in rural areas as compared to urban areas presents unique challenges because survival in a big city often entails more financial struggles due to a higher cost of living. Migrants and Bangkok natives both face the same tough economic challenges. Bangkok holds Thailand's highest rate of divorce among 76 provinces in Thailand. The divorce rate of the latest year (2552 or 2008) is up to 16,884 which is far ahead than the second province: Chon Buri, and the third province: Nakorn Ratchasima with the rate of 4,356 and 4,064 respectively. The table below presents the overall statistics of marriage and divorce rates in Thailand from 2536-2550 (1993-2007). The marriage rate has been decreasing while the divorce rate has been increasing dramatically. The last column shows the percentage of the marriage as compared to that of divorce. According to the referenced information, it can be implied that couples in Bangkok are not satisfied with their married lives.

B.A	Marriage	Divorce	Percentage (%)
1993	484,569	46,953	10
1994	435,425	46,903	11
1995	470,751	53,560	11
1996	436,831	56,718	13
1997	396,928	62,379	16
1998	324,262	67,551	21
1999	354,198	61,377	17
2000	337,140	70,882	21
2001	324,661	76,037	23
2002	291,734	77,735	27
2003	328,356	80,886	25
2004	365,721	86,982	24
2005	345,234	90,688	26
2006	347,913	91,155	26
2007	307,910	100,420	33

The increase in divorce rate could potentially be due to the aforementioned difficulties of living in urban areas as stated earlier, or some other factors which are deemed in this study as causes of divorce including: financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal treatment, and spouse's relatives. However, a study by สุวรรณี พุทธิศรี และ นงพนา ลิมสุวรรณ (2546) revealed that the majority of couples in Bangkok were happy with their married lives. Surprisingly, men were more satisfied with their married lives than women according to the research. The important factors that supported the Department of Mental Health research's output to become positive are: speaking mannerisms, spousal fidelity and trust, household chores, babysitting, time management, and sexual fulfillment.

Therefore, this study was conducted in order to examine couple's attitudes toward married life. Attitudes toward marriage are key in forming a foundation of

marital happiness. Consequently, this study was conducted to compare and investigate the difference of attitudes between men and women with regard to marriage. This study was also conducted to reveal the factors that affect men's and women's attitudes toward marriage, with particular regard to financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal behavior, and spouse's relatives.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1.2.1. Are men's attitudes in married life different from women's?

1.2.2 Which of the following factors tend to affect men's and women's attitudes in married life: financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal treatment, and spouse's relatives?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research has the following objectives:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To reveal and compare whether the attitudes toward marriage vary between men and women.

1.3.2 Sub-Objective

To investigate factors affecting men's and women's attitudes toward marriage; specifically with regard to: financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal behavior, and spouse's relatives.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

1.4.1 Attitude is a person's perspective toward a specified target and way of saying and doing things.

In this study, attitude was measured by 5-point Likert-Scale ranging from:

1	=	Strongly disagree
2	=	Disagree
3	=	Uncertain
4	=	Agree
5	=	Strongly agree

1.4.2 Married life (or marriage) is a social union or legal contract between individuals that creates kinship. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged by a variety of ways, depending on the culture or demographic.

1.4.3 Factors affecting married life refer to the elements that provide positive or negative influences to married life.

In this study, only five aspects of married life were investigated. These five factors are as follows:

1.4.4 Financial management is how a couple manages to control spending money in their family either regular expenses or irregular expenses, including personal expenses. The regular expenses refer to the expenses that are incurred every month and a couple needs to pay i.e. electricity expense, water expense, rental expense, etc. The irregular expenses refer to the expenses that are incurred occasionally i.e. maintenance cost, medical expense, etc. Personal expenses refer to the expense incurred separately by a husband or a wife such as clothes, cosmetic, entertainment, etc.

1.4.5 Household chores are the tasks that need to be performed in housekeeping within a place where a couple lives together for example, cleaning and cooking.

1.4.6 Babysitting is taking care of or watching over a child needing attention or guidance.

1.4.7 Spousal treatment is how one interacts or behaves to another.

1.4.8 Spouse's relatives are persons related by blood or marriage to a marriage partner.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted to study whether the men's attitude toward married life is different from the women's. It focused on the 5 spheres: financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal treatment, and spouse's relatives. The subjects were men and women that live together in Bangkok (representative of a major urban area). They could either be born in Bangkok or have migrated. However, the study would mainly focus on Thai couples rather than foreign couples and the study would not cover the attitude in other areas, including only the 5 stated areas.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of attitudes between men and women toward marriage in Bangkok is significant in several aspects.

1.6.1 It is beneficial for married men to understand factors that influence their spouses to have increased marital fulfillment.

1.6.2 It is beneficial for married women to understand factors that influence their spouses to have increased marital fulfillment.

1.6.3 It is useful to identify solutions regarding the 5 factors: financial management, household chores, babysitting, spousal treatment, and spouse's relatives.

1.6.4 It can potentially reduce the divorce rate because couples will better understand each other's needs. Once they [couples] better understand each other's needs, they will learn to compromise and communicate to improve their marriages..

1.6.5 It is useful for unmarried couples to study the factors that affect the married life to be better informed prior to entering marriage so that they can better understand and avoid potential issues and problems.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This research is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction of the study which presents the background, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, and scope, significance, and organization of the study.

The second chapter, review of literature, discusses theories related to family relationships, the related studied, and relevant articles and journals.

The third chapter delineates the methodology of the study, including subject selection, materials, procedures, and data analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the study.

Finally, the fifth chapter provides conclusions, discussion and recommendations for further research.