

ABSTRACT

DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF LEGAL MARRIAGE DISSOLUTION AMONG THAI WOMEN

by

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This study investigated the levels and trends of marriage dissolution and analyzed the factors affecting legal marriage dissolution and duration of marriage among Thai women. In addition, the study identified and evaluated the consequences of marriage dissolution among divorced women.

Multi-stage sampling was used to select a sample of 463 legally divorced and 926 non-divorced women who were still living with their spouses in various regions of Thailand. By using a standardized questionnaire, the data about marriage history, attitudes, socioeconomic, demographic, situational-within-marriage and characteristics of the women were collected.

Discriminant function and multiple regression analysis were used in analyzing the factors affecting the legal marriage dissolution and duration of marriage among the divorced Thai women, while descriptive methods consisting of frequency tables, graphs, percentages and proportions were used in analyzing the levels, trends, and consequences of marriage dissolution.

The results of the analysis of marriage dissolution tendency indicate that 17 variables emerged as important factors that affected the legal marriage dissolution. These were attitudinal differences between the spouses, beliefs and motivation to comply with social norm about divorce, love and understanding between

the spouses, husband's adultery, beliefs and values about divorce, family structure, time spent together with spouse, place of residence, husband's selfishness, husband's cruelty, husband's gambling, marriage patterns, number of children, age of youngest child, husband's negligence of wife, relation with spouse's kin, and educational differences between spouses.

The results of the analysis of duration of marriage among divorced women revealed that 8 variables are statistically significant. These are the number of children, the age of youngest child, husband's cruelty, sexual relations, love and understanding between spouses, husband's rudeness, family income, and family structure.

The results of marriage and divorce trend analysis indicate that marriages are likely to decrease, while divorces are likely to increase in every region of Thailand, with the Bangkok metropolis having the highest rate, followed by Central, Northern, Southern, and Northeastern regions, in that order. In addition, rates of divorce are likely to increase more rapidly in urban regions than rural regions. Furthermore, the divorces are likely to double in fast growing provinces serving as regional centers for economic, industrial and tourist activities.

Also, the analyses of the consequences of marriage dissolution reveal that a divorce is likely to have varying degrees of psychological, economic, social environment, and child-care impacts on divorced women.

The findings of this study suggest a number of possible government policies and measures to cope with the fast growing divorces and marital breakdowns among Thai women. First, improvements in marriage and divorce registration and record systems should be revised to include more information and details about those married or divorced couples. Second, appropriate publicity and educational efforts should be initiated to promote public awareness of the importance of registering marriage and divorces, to assist those preparing to get married or re-married, to promote family life, to promote in-school and out-of-school sex education, and to promote the

preservation of traditional Thai cultural values, customs, and ways of life among the population. Third, existing marriage laws should be revised to cover more comprehensive aspects of marriage dissolution. Lastly, a government unit solely responsible for handling marriage and divorce matters should be set up. Also, those intending to get married or re-married should personally select their own mate, absolutely avoid sexual dishonesty, avoid gambling, avoid physical violence, spend more time with the family, maintain good relations with in-laws, and maintain an atmosphere where love and affection can grow.