



Factors Affecting Marriages between Thai Women and Foreign Men: A Case Study of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to examine the factors affecting marriages between Thai women and foreign men, including those that have had a long married life. The target group was Thai women living in Udon Thani Province, Thailand. This was a mixed-methods research that used questionnaires in order to obtain the quantitative information and a protocol of semi-structured interviews for the qualitative research. In order to collect the data, snowball sampling was utilized for distributing the questionnaires. Together with multiple regression analysis, statistical methods such as means, percentages, and standard deviations were used. The result revealed that the average age of Thai women under this study was 35.84 years old and they possessed the average incomes of 14,230 baht per month. The average income of the foreign spouses was 82,420 baht per month. More than 76% of the Thai women had gotten married twice or more. Analyzing the correlation co-efficiency in order to test the variable relationship, it was found that the age and the number of children were positively correlated with the years of marriage. These factors were statistically significant at the 0.05 level with a correlation level of 0.348 and 0.497. Locus control had a positive correlation with the years of marriage and was statistically significant at a level of 0.02 with a correlation level of 0.019. On the other hand, the levels of education and income were negatively correlated with the years of marriage, which were statistically significant at the 0.02 level with a correlation level of 0.377 and 1.500

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respectively. All of the independent variables in this study explained 50.01% of the variation of years of marriage ($R^2 = 0.5001$).

Keywords: Affecting Marriages, Thai Women, Foreign Spouses, Foreign Men.

Background and Significance of the Research Problem

Marriage is the agreement of a man and a woman to have a relationship with each other as husband and wife. It is the life of the two people being honest with each other and helping each other. It is a close relationship between spouses. It is also the adaptation to live together happily, to be satisfied in life and to stay together for a long time. If the spouses have a good marriage quality and a warm family, the problems in the family will be reduced and the family is happy (Department of Mental Health, 2012). Marriage is a culture and tradition that have long been practiced in all countries. It also changes to suit each era. It is the beginning of a family life which aims to produce new members to society. The family institution is the smallest unit of society. It is a group of people living together with emotional and mental bonds. It is also connected by economy, blood or marriage. The family institution plays an important role in training and teaching family members as well as creating personal values, behavior and personality (ASEAN Institute for Health Development, Mahidol University 2009).

At present, Thai society has created a new type of family. It is the creation of a family with Westerners, or across cultures. This is a phenomenon that reflects the complex interactions of economic, social, cultural and attitudinal structures. This phenomenon often occurs in Thai women living in rural areas having foreign spouses. This phenomenon is considered a new value in family building in Thai society and this trend is increasing (Prapomwisut Chantathammo 2018).

Some women with cross-cultural marriage have migrated to foreign countries and lived in Western cultures for many years, but they are still finding ways to support their families to have a better quality of life. Most of these women used to marry and got divorced from Thai husbands, so their burden is to raise children alone. For these reasons, they often seek good opportunities for their children (Ratana Boonmathya, 2005).

Research Objective

According to the reasons mentioned above, Thai women marrying foreigners is common in Thai society. Therefore, this study focused on the factors affecting the cross-cultural marriage of Thai women and foreign men in order to analyze the factors affecting the duration of marriage between Thai women and foreign men.

Scope of Research

Cross-cultural marriage refers to the marriage between two people from different countries with different nationalities, languages and cultures.

Lee Yean Ju et al. (2006) studied on the cross-cultural marriage in South Korea and found that cross-cultural marriage in South Korea was tripled in 2001-2005, both in men and women. Men are more likely to marry cross-cultural two to three times than women. The demand for having foreign spouses was very high among men living in the rural areas and in the group of men who had been divorced. Lee Hye Kyung (2008) also studied on the cross-cultural marriage in South Korea. In this study, men in South Korea mostly married women from developed countries. They mostly used a marriage broker for finding spouses. This was similar to some spouses in Thailand that met with each other through the dating sites. The study also found that most men in South Korea having cross-cultural marriage were not wealthy. Most of them lived in rural areas like the women having cross-cultural marriage in Thailand.

Cross-cultural marriage mostly found in Thai society is a marriage between Thai women and foreign men. It is a phenomenon that has been going on since the Ayutthaya period. Nowadays, it is evident that there are a growing number of cross-cultural marriages in Thai society, creating new values for the family in Thai society. Ratana Boonmathya (2005) conducted a study on the experiences of Isan women with cross-cultural marriage. The research found that women from rural villages in the northeastern region had cross-cultural marriage. Based on the research results, these women often sent money back to help their poor families living in the old village. They also tried to find ways to support their families to have a better quality of life.

The values that make Thai women choose to marry foreign men are as follows. Thai women believe that foreigners are wealthy so that they and their families can have secured and stable life. This belief has been cultivated for a long time. However, women should realize that having long and happy marriage life starts from “love”, and language literacy must be considered for the main element. Sutin Saisanguan (2011) also studied on the factors affecting Thai women marrying foreigners. The key factors that influenced cross-cultural marriages were economic incentives, family debt, failure of former marriage, starting a new life, imitation behavior and values.

Jessica Halliday Hardie & Amy Lucas (2010) conducted a study on economic factors and relationship of young couples, comparing between cohabitation and marriage using logistic regression analysis to assess the relationship between economic factors and affection using

ordinary least squares regression. The results showed that the importance of the economic factor consideration affected the relationship quality and well-being. Apart from the economic factor, family support and hardship were also important in predicting relationship quality. This research showed that the economic well-being affected the quality of relationships and economic hardship can cause conflicts for spouses. Similarly, Usep Suhud et al. (2014) studied the motives of women in Indonesia who married Middle Eastern men. Mixed method was used. The results of this qualitative research were then transformed into the quantitative research tools. The study revealed that the motives influencing Indonesian women to marry Middle Eastern men were the factors related to their benefits

Research Methodology

This research was conducted to investigate the factors affecting the duration of marriage of Thai women and foreign men in Udon Thani. The Snowball Sampling method were employed to collect the data through establishing the samples' networks in order to access the samples who were willing to participate in this study. It is the sample selection method that the first group of the samples introduces the next samples with similar qualifications to the first group. There were 50 samples in this study. The questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data. The data were collected from August to September 2018.

The data analysis was divided into 3 steps as follows.

Step 1: Content validity: it was the verification of the content validity of the questionnaire. The experts considered each question in the questionnaire to see how much it assesses the content or the purpose of the research. The criteria were as follows.

+1 = It is certain that the question assesses the purpose/the content.

0 = It is uncertain that the question assesses the purpose/ the content.

-1 = It is certain that the question does not assesses the purpose/ the content.

Then, based on the expert judgment, the consistency of each question with the purpose or content (Index of Item-Objective Congruence or IOC) was checked by the following formula.

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N}$$

When

$\sum R$ is the total score from the experts' judgment.

N is the number of the experts.

If the IOC value is 0.05 or higher, the question can be assessed in accordance with the purpose or the content.

Step 2: Factor analysis: it was conducted to collect the related variables or factors in the same factor.

Step 3: The factors derived from the factor analysis were analyzed by multiple regressions analysis to find out the relationships of the demographic data and the pre-marriage and post-marriage factors affecting the duration of the marriage. The equation used in the multiple regression analysis was as follows.

$$\ln Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Edu} + \beta_3 \text{Income} + \beta_4 \text{Baby} + \beta_5 \text{Style} + \beta_6 \text{F3} + \beta_7 \text{F4} + \beta_8 \text{Diffdisc} + \beta_9 \text{Selfesteem} + \beta_{10} \text{Locus_control} + \epsilon$$

When

Y = duration of marriage (year)

β_i = regression coefficient

Age = the age of a Thai woman married a foreign man

Edu = the educational level of a Thai woman married a foreign man

Income = income (husband)

Baby = Number of children having with the current spouse

Style = couple's lifestyle

F3 = post-marriage factors causing long relationship

F4 = financial status

Diffdisc = personality

Selfesteem = self-esteem

Locus_control = locus of control

ϵ = Error Term

Results

According to data from 50 respondents, the average age was 35.84 years. The average respondents' salary was 14,230 baht per month. The average salary of the respondents' husbands was 82,420 baht per month. The average years of marriage was 6.845 years. The average duration the respondents living in Udon Thani was 17.3 years. Most respondents finished high school or higher, accounting for 54%. Most respondents used to marry and got divorced,

accounting for 76%. In terms of the number of children, most respondents had children with their ex-husbands (52%). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents' husbands had no children, accounting for 62%. Most respondents had no children with their current husbands (52%). Most of respondents lived together with their husbands after marriage, accounting for 60%. Moreover, 68% of the respondents operated their own business; 18% were the employees in the public and private sectors; 14 % were farmers and housewives and 14 % were retirees, respectively. For the occupations of the respondents' husbands, 60% were househusbands, farmers and retirees; 24% operated their own business and 16% were the employees in the public and private sectors as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 General information

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	%
Age	35.8	8.7	19.0	55.0	
Income_f	14,230.0	9643.2	0.0	50,000.0	
Income_m	82,420.0	121,844.5	6,000.0	900,000.0	
Y	6.8	6.1	1.08	27.0	
Years_ud	17.3	11.7	1.0	50.0	
Edu					
junior high school or lower					46.0
high school or higher					54.0
Num_marr					
1 time					24.0
two times or more					76.0
Baby_f					
having no children with ex-husband					48.0
having children with ex-husband					52.0
having children					48.0
Style					
living together					60.0
separated but still in touch with each other					40.0

Table 1 (Continued)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	%
Baby_m					
having no children with ex-wife					62.0
having children with ex- wife					38.0
Baby					
not having children					52.0
Career_f					
employees of public and private sectors					18.0
own business					68.0
housewives, farmers, retirees					14.0
Career_m					
employees of public and private sectors					16.0
own business					24.0
househusbands, farmers, retirees					60.0

Source: Authors' Study

Since the researcher collected the questionnaire from 50 samples (IOC=0.73), the confidence level was set at 80% or the level of significance at 0.2. The results of OLS analysis was used to find out the factors affecting the duration of the marriage of the respondents. The results of the relationship were shown in Table 2. The demographic factor positively affecting to the duration of marriage with statistical significance was the age of the respondents. That is, when the age of the respondents increased by 1 class interval, the duration of the marriage increased by 34.83%. In terms of the number of the children having with the current husbands, it significantly affected the duration of marriage. That is, having one child increased the duration of marriage as of 49.68%. When considering the locus of control, it also affected the duration of the marriage. When the confidence's score of the woman increased 1 point, it increased the duration of marriage at 1.9%. The demographic factor negatively affected the duration of marriage was the educational level of Thai women. When the educational level of Thai women in-creased by 1 class interval, the duration of marriage decreased by 37.71%. When considering the current husbands' income, it was found that when the current husbands' income increased by 1 class interval, the duration of marriage decreased by 0.00015%. The equation of the duration

of marriage was tested for the possible interrelationships of independent variables. The measured VIF values were not multicollinearity. In addition, the test of completeness of the independent variables confirmed by $\text{Prob} > F = 0.6006$ of Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of years of marriage was done to conform that some variables in the equation were not forgotten to put in. However, when testing the stability of the distribution of the error term through the measurement of homogeneity of variance by Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity, it was found that $\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = 0.3103$. That is, the error had homoscedasticity. Overall, the reliability of this equation was about 50.01%, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Analysis of factors influencing the years of marriage

Independent Variables:	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Stat
Age	0.34837**	0.17526	1.99
Edu	-0.37712 γ	0.26276	-1.44
nIncome_m	-1.50E-06 γ	9.10E-07	-1.65
Baby	0.49683**	0.23890	2.08
Style	- 0.24235	0.22749	-1.07
F3	- 0.03151	0.04489	-0.7
F4	- 0.00145	0.02288	-0.06
Diffdisc	- 0.04915	0.21904	-0.22
Selfesteem	0.01312	0.02414	0.54
Locus_control	0.01958 γ	0.01253	1.56
Constant	- 1.05128	1.65121	-0.64
R-squared	0.50010		
Adjusted R-squared	0.37190		

Obs. = 200, Mean VIF = 1.46

Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of years of marriage

Ho: model has no omitted variables

$\text{Prob} > F = 0.6006$

*** Statistically significant at 0.01 level

** Statistically significant at 0.05 level

* Statistically significant at 0.1 level

γ Statistically significant at 0.2 level

Source: Authors' Study

Discussion

The results of the study on the factors affecting the marriage of Thai women and foreign men revealed that the factors related to the duration of marriage were as follows. 1) Age of the respondents: this was consistent with the study by Mayura Kraikrueng (2013), which stated that age of Thai women was not a matter for foreigner men. Therefore, being older had a positive effect on the duration of marriage. 2) Educational level of the respondents: this was opposed to the study conducted by Thinnawat Sroikudrua (2012). The study found that the high educational level of Thai women did not shorten the duration of marriage because the language-based communication depended on the educational level of the women. When there were no barriers to communication, the couple had a long duration of marriage. 3) Husband's income: this was opposed to the study by Mayura Kraikrueng (2013). It was found that husband's income had a positive effect on the duration of the marriage. When the husband's income increased, the length of the marriage would also increase. This was because the economic status was an important factor making Thai women decide to marry foreigners as foreign husbands can respond to the meet the material needs of Thai women. They can also be responsible for the expenses of a women's family. This made increased the duration of the marriage. 4) Number of children was consistent with a study by dr. Paiyong Maniraj et al. (2009). The study found that having children together improved husband and wife loyalty to each other because children increase couple bonding. 5) Locus of control which was supported by a study by Miller, Philip Carnegie et al (1986). The study found that locus of control was positively associated with marital satisfaction. A married couple was more willing to solve problems and communicate to avoid family conflicts resulting in an increase in longevity of their relationship.

Recommendations

Although the number of Thai women getting married to foreign men is not relatively large compared with the number of ones getting married with local men of the same national origin, getting married with the same nationality is not considered the crucial factor to create the strong-relationship families. The research results will benefit cross cultural marriage couples and provide guidance on how to build a family with healthy and strong relationship. The examples of guidance include having children after marriage, believing in one's own competence more than relying on fortune and destiny, etc. Not only the Thai women who are making decisions to get married with foreign men but also the Thai transnationally married women can make good

use of the guidance to strengthen their family bonds. This guidance will prevent any plausible family problems, such as divorces, which will affect the children later.

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