SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS
LIVING IN THE GOVERNMENT DORMITORY
IN VIENTIANE, LAOS

PHOMMACHANH PHYAKEO

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PHOMMACHANH PHYAKEO 4737921 SHHS / M

M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

THESIS ADVISORS: ORATAI RAUYAJIN, Ph.D., MULLIKA MUTTIKO, Ph.D.,
SUCHEELA TANCHAINAN, M.A.

ABSTRACT

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, have emerged as a
worldwide threat in the medical, socio-cultural, and psychosocial spheres. In the
context of the increased mobility of people inside Laos, people’s vulnerability to
being exposed to HIV infection and the transmission of HIV/AIDS is an important
issue. An in-depth exploration of sexual behavior of young male college students
living in the government dormitory in Vientiane City was undertaken.

To gain an understanding of their actual sexual behavior with regard to
STIs and HIV/AIDS prevention and the influential factors, this qualitative research
was conducted by using in-depth interviews with 18 young male college students
living in the dormitory. Data was collected from July 2005 to the end of October
2005. Data were transcribed, coded, grouped, and interpreted based on the conceptual
framework and environment around the research site.

The results reveal a variety of sexual patterns ranging from no risk to
high-risk behaviors. The majority of informants reported having had their first sexual
intercourse with their girlfriends when they were studying in the high school. Some
engaged in sexual intercourse as early as age 14, and the first sexual intercourse was
typically unprotected. Using condoms during sexual intercourse appeared to be the
preventive measure of choice for sex with sex workers but not so common in the case
of girlfriends. All of the informants practiced multiple sexual partnerships and they
accepted premarital sex. Being far away from the family and bored let them have
friends and sexual intercourse as a source of relaxation. Finally, the sexual behavior
of young male students was seen to be affected by social influences. Peers and
partners were found to influence informants’ behavior via direct action while parents
appeared to affect their behaviors by shaping their thinking. Direct communication
with more attractive and clearer presentations was shown to have a strong influence
on young males’ idea which encouraged them to practice safe sex.

Recommendations are made for policy makers concerned with organizations
working with these young male students issues for providing appropriate sex
education and creating new values of gender roles for control and protection of the
sexual life of the target group.

KEY WORDS: YOUNG MALES / SEXUALITY / LAO / SEXUAL BEHAVIOR
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