

**THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF YOUNG MALE
SEXUALITY IN RELATION TO (THEIR PARTNERS')
UNWANTED PREGNANCY AND INDUCED ABORTION
IN VIENTIANE, LAOS**

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M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

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ABSTRACT

Induced abortion due to unwanted pregnancy is recognized as a major cause of sexual and reproductive health problems, but very little is known about this phenomenon. This problem occurs repeatedly despite availability of contraceptive methods. This problem happens not only to married women but also to unmarried women. Unwanted pregnancy followed by unsafe abortion often results in complications such as bleeding and serious infection. However, dialogue on this issue is often limited to contraceptive use; young females are blamed as being bad when male sexuality is, in fact, an important determinant of this issue that has not been explored.

This study was designed to look into young male sexuality and its construction in relation to unwanted pregnancy. The concept of socio-cultural construction from postmodern social theories was adopted for the conceptual framework. Fieldwork was carried out through an ethnographic approach. Several data collection methods—*Participant Observation, In-Depth Interview, Informal Discussion, Key Informant Interview, Non-participant Observation, Viewing Mass Media and Discussion, and Mapping Out* (entertainment venues)—were applied.

Research results suggest that there are multiple contextual factors contributing to and governing young male sexuality in regard to unwanted pregnancy. Young male sexuality is shaped and governed by both long-established discourses (from language use) and by recently-established discourses (from mass media, especially porn movies). Under the domination of these discourses, young males are allowed and encouraged to experiment with sex freely without responsibility, and their belief in and valuing of virginity remain strong. It means that they do not use condoms if girls are judged to be virgin. One of the young male informants in this study took photos of the blood ensuing from the loss of virginity, saved the photos on his mobile phone, and shared among their peers. This practice reinforces and sustains the value of virginity in their peer network. In the era of high technology, young males access porn movies. They start watching these materials at an early age, thereby leading to early sexual experiment. That is, they initiated sexual activities when they were 8, 12, and 14 years old. With this socio-cultural construction, young males develop themselves into a “hunting group”. However, the young male informants’ hunting of girls was not possible without entertainment venues and beer as a lubricant. Entertainment venues and beer together creates *a space* for the young males to hunt girls.

This research recommends that further studies should look at *female experience in unwanted pregnancy/induced abortion*. For interventions, underlying causes, for example, the socio-cultural construction between men and women in terms of gender and sexuality has to be discussed and redressed. Gender and rights should be introduced through the formal education system as early as kindergarten or primary school. And at the same time, the discourses that encourage boys to experiment with sex without responsibility have to be deconstructed and reconstructed with new discourses that promote and produce good health for both males and females.

KEY WORDS: SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION / YOUNG MALE
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