



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thai soap opera TV actresses were questionable of having risk of eating disorders. Because of public perception on beauty as well as occupation competition, they made high afford to control their weight and shape seriously in order to meet their body image satisfaction level. This research aimed to investigate body image satisfaction levels and disordered eating behaviors among Thai soap opera TV actresses. 246 actresses who performed during 2001-2005 were subjected of interviewed with 15 actresses who were classified by EAT-26 score with having eating disorders, were later interviewed.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The level of body image satisfaction and disordered eating behavior of Thai soap opera TV actresses

Referring to BSQ score which can be used to classify eating disorder behavior in order to indicate clinically significant body dysphoria (Cooper et.al, 1987), the body image satisfaction level in this study can also be classified into 2 groups as group 1 normal body image satisfaction if BSQ score is less than 110 and as group 2 low body image satisfaction if BSQ score is more than or equal to 110. Results show that

Thai soap opera TV actresses had mean BSQ score of 84.88 (SD = 30.96) with minimum BSQ score of 34 and maximum BSQ score of 181. The majority of Thai soap opera TV actresses had normal body image satisfaction (81.30%) even though most actresses were under weight (77.64%) with the mean current BMI of 17.87 (SD = 2.75).

Even though Thai soap opera TV actresses were classified themselves to have normal satisfaction level with their body image, the results show that significantly, in underweight group, almost two-third (64.40%) of Thai soap opera TV actresses wanted to be thinner, while, in normal weight group, about 9 out of 10 (92.16%) Thai soap opera TV actresses showed a thirst for being thinner. These findings were consistent with the findings studied by Kullaya Dejithirat and Armond Sakworawich (2004) that Thai female adolescents desired to be thinner. The perception of people around the actresses, especially those who had influenced on audition for the role and TV production to meet public demand, had a strong influence on the actress's weight and body shape control. The actresses were used to maintain their weight at least possible to satisfy their appearance to the public. They also saw their thinner body as the proper shape mostly seen in the TV.

For the disordered eating behavior level of Thai soap opera actresses, this study showed that Thai soap opera TV actresses had mean EAT-26 score of 10.97 (SD = 9.61) with minimum BSQ score of 0 and maximum BSQ score of 44. The mean EAT-26 score of 10.97 were slightly higher than the recent study in Thai college girls (EAT-26 score = 10.4) (Jennings et al., 2006). However, comparing EAT-26 score of 'Teen'

actresses group (12.12) to Jennings et al.'s EAT-26 of Thai college student (10.4) showed higher different. It is important to note that the mean EAT-26 score of Thai females (this study and Jennings et al's) were higher than of Japanese females (5.3) (Makino et al., 2006).

Using published cut-of score at 20, EAT-26 can be used to determine risk of being eating disorder. Subjects with EAT-26 score equal to or higher than 20 were assigned to 'risk of being eating disorder' group (seriously disturbed eating behaviors), while the rest were assigned to 'normal eating behavior' group. According to this classification, this study found that 17.89% of Thai soap opera actresses were risk of being eating disorder, especially the 'Teen' group which 21.21% of them were being risk. This is higher than Thai college students (Jennings et al., 2004), Thai students age between 12-19 years (Titawee Kaewpornsawan, 1994), Hong Kong adolescents age between 14-19 years (Lee & Lee, 1996), Japanese high school students (Nakamura et al., 1999), and Japanese college students (Makino et al., 2006), which were 12.87%, 8.96%, 6.5%, 5.4%, and 5.1%, respectively.

5.1.2 The association between disordered eating behavior and body image satisfaction level of Thai soap opera TV actresses

The main finding of the study showed that Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) did measure a significant high positive correlation of 0.782 with eating disorder behavior by EAT-26 score. This finding was consistent with the high Pearson correlation coefficient at 0.53 between BSQ score and EATS score studied by Kullaya Dejithirat and

Arnond Sakworawich (2004). This correlation also supported the association between body image satisfaction and eating disorder found by other studies (Thompson & Smolak, 2002; William et al. 1993; Brenner & Cunningham, 1992; Mintz & Betz, 1986; Shisslak et al., 1998; Stice et al., 1999).

Significant number of Thai soap opera TV actresses (18.70%) was classified themselves as low body image satisfaction to their current weight, size and appearance. Thus, these actresses had risk of eating disorder or subclinical eating disorder which could have their eating behavior reflecting how the actresses perceive their body image distortion and fear of gaining weight, varying from refusal of eating to excessive exercise or self-induced vomiting.

Most eating disordered actresses realized that their eating disordered behavior was not a right tool to control their weight and body shape but they must continue to have eating disordered behavior if they want to be in TV entertainment business in Thailand, especially to meet the public expectation of actresses beauty of which every roles were required a thinner figure.

5.1.3 The effect of socio-demographic factors and occupation variables on Thai soap opera TV actresses' body image satisfaction level and their eating behavior

It was found that socio-demographic factors and occupation variables influenced on the body image satisfaction level of Thai soap opera TV actresses and their

eating behavior. The results showed that elder actresses had normal body image satisfaction level more than younger actresses did ($p=0.239$) as well as they had risk of having eating disorder lower than the younger one ($p=0.030$). This was consistent with the result of the study of Nakamura et al (1999) which showed that Japanese women in their thirties were have disordered eating behavior lesser than women in their twenties.

The direct effect of age on Thai soap opera TV actresses' body image satisfaction level and their eating behavior, also showed through out these following variables; educational level, marital status, maternity status and duration of being in entertainment business. The actresses who graduated Bachelor degree had body image satisfaction level less than the actresses who had qualification under Bachelor degree in the sense of difference of BMI ($p=0.004$). The actresses who were divorced or widowed or separated had body image satisfaction level less than the single actresses measured with FRS ($p=0.014$). The actresses who had children tend to have more chance to have disturbed body image satisfaction measured by dBMI and FRS ($p=0.012$, $p=0.001$), but they tended to have normal eating behavior ($p=0.013$) than the actresses who had no children. Most Thai soap opera TV actresses have children at the later age (mean age of having children = 27 year old). Therefore, they are likely to take a role of older or elder people such as aunty, old mother or grand mother role which do not need a thin or low weight actress to look young or beautiful. It was also found that the longer actresses in entertainment business, the more they tend to have normal body image satisfaction level ($p=0.012$) and the less they risk themselves of having eating disorder behavior ($p=0.005$) because of their role as the elderly persons do not required thinner figure.

Moreover, the study found that the more the actresses concern on body image satisfaction level and the more she concern on eating disorder behavior, the more she spends on body care. From the in-depth interview, most eating disordered actresses agreed that they spent most of their money on weight control especially the short-cut new methods which are always expensive and not yet obtaining medical approval.

The in-depth interview found that Thai-East-Asian actresses tend to have more chance to have risks of eating disorder or sub-clinical eating disorder than the Thai actresses and Thai-European actresses due to their culture of having family dinner together and encouraging of taking more home-made rich Chinese food. Therefore, the Thai-East-Asian actresses felt more compulsory to lose weight after taking food.

The main finding of the study was that the effect of socio-demographic factors and occupation variables on Thai soap opera TV actresses' body image satisfaction level and their eating behavior was the occupation status. The actresses who were in entertainment business during the past one year had lower body image satisfaction level than the actresses who did not perform in the show during the past one year ($p=0.039$). They more concerned on their body image as a result of the self-motivation to control their weight to meet up with their occupation role. From the in-depth interview, most actresses admitted that every role in soap opera TV show preferred a thinner figure. They must keep their weight as lower as possible to compete in the role audition.

5.2 Conclusion

The key finding of this study is that while (a) the majority (81.30%) of Thai soap opera TV actresses had normal body image satisfaction and (b) the majority (82.11%) of Thai soap opera TV actresses classified themselves as having normal eating behavior, *in fact* the majority of the same group of Thai soap opera TV actresses (77.64%) were underweight according to their BMI scores. This leads to the alarming conclusion that a significant number of Thai soap opera TV actresses may indeed have eating disorders or at least are underweight while not having this self-realization. However, this study was one of the first studies to focus on the potential issue of eating disorders amongst Thai soap opera TV actresses, the findings of this study showed that indeed there may be eating disorders prevalent in this segment of the Thai population which may lead to future serious health impact on the whole population who perceived the TV actresses as role model of beauty. This health risks may become dominantly that neither they nor those work in the entertainment business are aware of.

5.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study had conducted during a short period of survey so the participants were limited to Thai soap opera TV actresses. The results did not necessarily represent other entertainment occupation such as singers or catwalk models.

As most participants of the study were actresses being in entertainment business, their incomes are varied. Thus, some of them were uncomfortable giving information on their income. Because of this problem, some participants were excluded when performed statistical computations related to income.

Another limitation is that the researcher has been working in the entertainment business. Most of the participants know the researcher, some of them used to work with the researcher in the past. This might lead to biasing in the questionnaire fillings and the interviews.

The study was one of the first studies in Thailand on body image satisfaction level and eating disorder behaviors of entertainment occupations so there are no significant comparing study. Apart from that it was a cross-sectional study, especially the confounding on the effect of age, therefore the results could not rule out confounding among variables on the body image satisfaction level and eating disorder behaviors. Moreover, there methods of data analysis using t-test, one-way ANOVA and correlation coefficient can not fully assess relative importance of independent variables found in the study.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Provide education by practical approach for body image satisfaction and the risk of eating disorder behavior

5.4.1.1 Provide education of eating disorders and the current social perceptions of beauty and body image, particularly in the group of Thai soap opera TV actresses.

Given the correlation between body image satisfaction and eating disorders of the Thai soap opera TV actresses in the study, along with the finding that the majority (81.30%) of the participants had normal body image satisfaction *but* in fact the majority (77.64%) were underweight leads to the recommendation that there needs to be better education on health and eating disorders for such group. Specifically, they need to be aware of what the healthy BMI ratio of weight to height should be, and that in fact their group are generally underweight per this scale. They need to then fully understand the health risks, both short-term and long-term, that they are subjecting themselves to in being underweight, and that clearly their peers tend to be subject to similar risks given the current social norms in their group and the entertainment business in general which have the misconception of beauty being in such underweight category and perception of beauty.

The practical approaches to educate the soap opera TV actresses may be the direct distribution of informative brochures on appropriate weight control methods. The magazine interviewing healthy actresses or celebrities and their methods of

proper self-satisfaction on their body image as well as the medical advice on health risk of eating disorder behaviors in a column of fashion magazine will be a synergy effect on providing appropriately conceptual view of beauty.

5.4.1.2 Education of eating disorders and the current social perceptions of beauty and body image in the entertainment business and society in general.

In addition to education for the TV soap opera actresses themselves, there also needs to be education for the key influential people and decision-makers in the entertainment people such as directors, producers, costume designers, and others involved in the entertainment business environment. These are the significant people who interact with the TV soap opera actresses and to a large extent influence their perception of ideal body image and hence body image satisfaction amongst. They need to realize the potentially serious health risks involved with being underweight in the longer-term. To a large extent, of course, these people's perception of ideal body shape and hence decision-making and pressure on actresses to fit this ideal body shape are based on what they perceive society in general values as the ideal body shape, and inevitable, change in such beliefs and pressure will involve education and awareness amongst Thai society in general about the serious health risks involved in being underweight to fit the current body shape deemed ideal by this society today. It is interesting to note that there seems to be increasing awareness and education in Thai society today related to the health risks associated with being overweight given the

alarming trend of obesity in Thai children due to an increasingly Western lifestyle and diet of fast foods and snacks. However, there still has yet to be much awareness or education related to the prevalence of eating disorders and their health risks in Thai society and particular in the entertainment business and with TV actresses.

The practical approaches to educate the key influencing people in business and the public may be the advertising media by government organization or non-profit organization to increase public awareness on health risks of eating disorder behaviors and direct cost of public expense on medical treatment on eating disorder behaviors patients. Moreover the distribution of medical advices on weight control and fatality cases on unproven-medical weight control methods by brochures or column in the daily newspaper will boost public awareness on risk of eating disorder behaviors.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Study

5.5.1 Increasing number of study population on complementary qualitative studies

Further study should be done to with an increased sample size of qualitative subjects to confirm the findings of this research. An increased number of in-depth interviewed actresses who were subjected of low level of body image satisfaction level will be benefit for a deeper analysis into the potential degrees of eating disorders,

perception (or mis-conception as the case may be) of body image, and awareness of associated health risks that exist

The in-depth complementary qualitative studies on health risk of eating disorder behaviors should be conducted on significant persons such as those in the entertainment business that have a strong influence on Thai TV soap opera actresses. Participatory research with this group would also be helpful as part of educating them of the prevalence of eating disorders that exists and the health risks involved, and having them become aware that they may in fact be contributing to the problem. The outcome of this further in-depth research will allow Thai TV actresses, the Thai entertainment industry, and Thai society in general to become increasingly become aware of eating disorders and their health risks, and that thinness and being underweight is not beauty but potentially fatality.

5.5.2 Further research on underweight actresses

Further research could be made that the Thai soap opera TV actresses who are even more underweight or particularly perceive themselves as having normal eating behavior may in fact have increasing degrees of eating disorders.

5.5.3 Further research on satisfaction of specific parts of body

The further research can be conducted to explore in more depth in body image satisfaction. The study can be further broken out and studied by parts of the body;

for example, some actresses desire smaller waists and bigger breasts as the ideal body shape.

5.5.4 Further research on ethnicity and culture influencing in eating behaviors and beauty concept

Also, there could be further study done on the cultural aspects of eating as this study has revealed that there may be differences in eating disorders based on the factor of ethnicity. Such a cultural-based study could focus on potential variables as food or diet and social norms and behaviors on beauty e.g. figure, life styles and fashion.

5.5.5 Further research on gender influencing in eating behaviors and perception of beauty

The increasing of products related to beauty and health which focus in men indicates that men tend to concern of their beauty and health. Actors, who work and depend on their images, are one of the first groups that have reacted to this phenomenon. There could be further study done on the gender aspects of eating behavior and beauty. The study in this aspect could focus on genders and behaviors on eating and the perception of beauty.