

SEXUAL THREAT AND SELF-PROTECTION OF NIGHT SHIFT FEMALE WORKERS

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Crimes and sexual threats in different forms, such as violence on life and property, rape, and indecency are increasing rapidly. It is also the problem of interest. There is crime tendency index of Thai society. From the statistic collected during January – September 2010 by Metropolitan Police Bureau, there were 10,820 cases of violence on property, robbery, theft, snatching, stealing, and threatening and 3,428 cases of violence on life, body, and sex, killing attempt, battery, and rape. This research aims to examine behaviors perceived by night shift female workers as sexual threat, sexual harassment experience, and self-protection.

Methods: The sample group includes 327 female workers in the Telecommunication Company, Bangkok, Thailand who work during 18.00 – 06.00 hours. The data were collected by a self-administrative questionnaire among female workers working at night shift. The questions were sexual harassment experience, and self-protection behavior. The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistic, chi-square test, and content analysis.

Results: It was found that about 40% of female workers have ever had sexual threats. Females at the age of 20 – 24 years had highest self-protection behavior. Sexual threat of most experienced by female workers includes touching, holding hand, and bumping. Symbolic threat mostly experienced by female workers includes being stalked, being stared for a long time, and one of female workers being forced to have sex. The three most frequent practices to avoid sexual threat are; do not be with a man at a blind spot, if walking alone in a desolate place, try to be accompanied by a friend, and choose a bus stop with street lamps.

Conclusion: At present, the economic crisis makes females work as night-shift workers. The study reports these workers frequently have met sexual threat and harassment during travelling back home. Therefore, the prevention program for the situation should be concerned.

Keywords : Sexual harassment, Sexual threat, Self-protection, Night shift female workers, Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

Crimes and sexual threats in different forms, such as violence on life and property, rape, and indecency are increasing at high rate. It is also the problem of interest. There is crime tendency index of Thai society. From the statistic collected during January – September 2010 by Metropolitan Police Bureau, there were 10,820 cases of violence on property, robbery, theft, snatching, stealing, and threatening and 3,428 cases of violence on life, body, and sex, killing attempt, battery, and rape [1]. The statistic shows that the cases of violence on property and sexual causes must be solved urgently

because threat and indecency affect people's mental condition and livelihood. Sexual threat is one violence problem that can occur everywhere in Thai society, especially for women, who work at night. This group is at risk of sexual threat. Nowadays, Thai women work outside like men. They confront social environment. Women are weak in their physical aspect, so they can easily be targets of the criminals. Women must be aware of such threat that might happen to them and know how to defend themselves in such a situation.

There are research in different aspects, for example, the survey of people's attitude on sexual threat perception by Dharmapreecha [2], sexual violation interpretation by Auengkanuengdaecha [3], sexual threat perception by Lausunthasiri [4]

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Table 1 Sexual threat experiences of the samples

Sexual threat experience	Number	%
Never	190	58.1
Ever	137	41.9
Total	327	100.0
Type of threat:		
- Bumping	50	36.5
- Expressing sexual organ/ masturbation	44	32.2
- Wink, whistle	38	27.7
- Follow	5	3.6
Total	137	100.0

and Phupearlert [5]. However, there are very few studies of sexual threats happening to night shift female workers. Thus, this non-explored matter is interesting to study about how night shift female workers perceive and protect themselves against sexual threat. This research aims to examine the female workers' experience and self-protection from sexual threat of female workers on the way home at night. Sexual threat concept, adaptation psychology and self-protection are applied for explanation. This research will provide knowledge about sexual threat and self-protection leading to appropriate solution for such problem.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population and samples

This research was a cross-sectional study among female workers in customer care service department (call center) in the Telecommunication Company, Bangkok, Thailand who worked from 18.00 – 06.00 hours. About 327 from 1,705 staff were randomly sampled. A self-administrative questionnaire was distributed to the samples. It took 30 minutes to answer the questions about socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge, sexual harassment experience, and self-protection behavior to avoid sexual threat.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistic was applied using frequency and percentage. Correlations between category variables were calculated by using chi-square test.

RESULTS

Regarding socio-demographic characteristics, most samples were 25 – 29 years old (42.2%) followed by 20 – 24 years olds (31.8%). About 38% lived with their spouse while 21% lived alone. About 40% has serviced less than a year. About a half of them left the office during 18.01 – 21.00 hours while 29% got off after midnight. It is noticed

that most staff tended to live near their workplace as 44.3% took less than 30 minutes from workplace to their residence while 22.6% took more than one hour. Only 15.6% has their own vehicle while the majority (49.5%) took a bus.

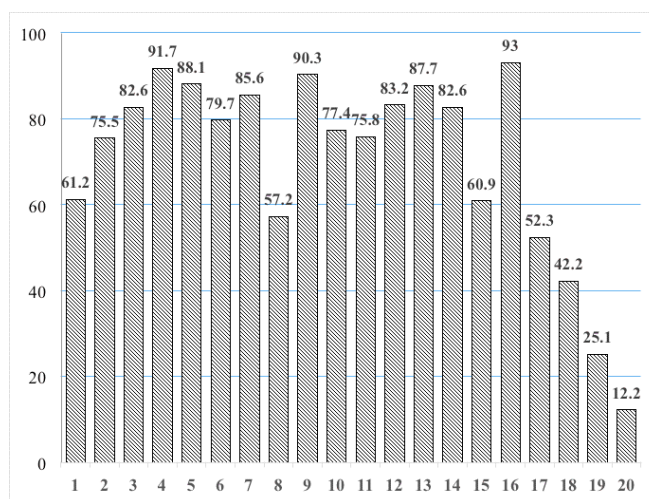
It was found that 41.9% has experience of sexual threat on the way from workplace to their residence. Among experienced samples, most reported bumping (50/137 or 36.5%) and expressing sexual organ (44/137 or 32.2%) (Table 1).

Regarding sexual threat experience, it was found that the samples at the age less than 29 years had the most sexual threat experience (70%). The samples at the age of 35 – 39 years had the least sexual threat experience (8.8%). The samples who stayed with friends were mostly threatened (48.5%). The samples who lived with spouse were minimally threatened (40.9%) followed by living alone (20.4%). About a half of the samples who left their workplace during 03.01 – 06.00 hours were mostly threatened. The samples who took more than 30 minutes from workplace to residence were mostly threatened (49.6%). It is noticed that the samples that traveled by bus were mostly threatened (43.1%). However, there was no statistical significant among all socio-demographic data and experience of sexual threat (Table 2).

About self-protection method against sexual threat of the samples from the questionnaire consisting of 20 questions about self-protection method against sexual threats, it was found that the samples had high level of self-protection in almost all items. For instance, they usually dress properly, not too exposed i.e. wear short skirt, thin strap top. Moreover, they try to choose the safe environment while travelling back home, such as avoid walking alone in a desolate place (82.6%), choose a bus stop with street lamps (90.3%), do not be with a man at a blind spot (93.0%) etc. (Figure 1). However, not many of them report of carrying protecting devices and practicing martial arts.

Table 2 Socio-demographic characteristics classified by sexual threat experience

	Never n=190	Ever n=137	Total n=327	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)		
Age (years)					
20 – 24	62(32.6)	42(30.6)	104(31.8)	7.734	.052
25 – 29	84(44.2)	54(39.4)	138(42.2)		
30 – 34	40(21.1)	29(21.2)	69(21.1)		
35 – 39	4(2.1)	12(8.8)	16(4.9)		
Living					
Parents	34(17.9)	21(15.3)	55(16.8)	3.075	.799
Relatives	29(15.3)	15(11.0)	44(13.5)		
Spouse	69(36.3)	56(40.9)	125(38.2)		
Friend	18(9.5)	17(12.4)	35(10.7)		
Alone	40(21.0)	28(20.4)	68(20.8)		
Leaving time					
18.01 – 21.00	98(51.6)	66(48.2)	164(50.2)	4.075	.255
21.01 – 24.00	44(23.2)	25(18.2)	69(21.1)		
24.01 – 03.00	32(16.8)	26(19.0)	58(17.7)		
03.01 – 06.00	16(8.4)	20(14.6)	36(11.0)		
Distance of travel from workplace to residence					
Less than 15 minutes	32(16.8)	29(21.2)	61(18.6)	4.121	.249
15 – 30 minutes	44(23.2)	40(29.2)	84(25.7)		
30 minutes – 1 hour	65(34.2)	43(31.4)	108(33.0)		
More than 1 hour	49(25.8)	25(18.2)	74(22.6)		
Traveling mean					
Walk	24(12.6)	21(15.3)	45(13.8)	4.288	.368
Bus	103(54.2)	59(43.1)	162(49.5)		
Railcar BTS, MRT	21(11.1)	20(14.6)	41(12.5)		
Motorbike taxi	16(8.4)	12(8.8)	28(8.6)		
Personal car	26(13.7)	25(18.2)	51(15.6)		

Figure 1 Percentage of frequent practice to avoid sexual threat among females working at night shift

1. Dress properly, do not too exposed
2. Notice the surrounding while travelling
3. Avoid walking in a desolate place
4. If walking alone in a desolate place, try to be accompanied by a friend
5. Choose the place with sufficient lights or people around
6. Choose a taxi with clear license plate
7. Do not take a nap in a taxi
8. Note a taxi's name and license plate and phone home
9. Choose a bus stop with street lamps
10. Avoid being at the bus stop alone
11. Do not take a bus without passengers at night
12. Call family or friends, if waiting for a bus too long
13. Do not go with an acquaintance alone
14. Be aware when accepting a car lift from a male friend
15. Do not take the elevator alone with strangers at night
16. Do not be with a man at a blind spot
17. Make a quick decision if a friend offers a car lift
18. Be aware of any unforeseen events
19. Practice martial arts
20. Carry protecting devices

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

About the difference of age of night shift female workers, they had different self-protection against sexual threat. All night shift female workers at every age had self-protection behavior against sexual threat regardless of age. This is because working on night shift is at higher risk than working on day shift. From the research, it was found that female workers at the age of 20 – 24 years had the highest self-protection behavior against sexual threat. From the study of Dharmapreecha [2] on sexual threat, she found that the most important factor causing sexual threat was beautiful physical characteristics of female, including age, appearance, and dressing. Women at the age of 20 – 24 years are at risk of sexual threat.

About living, it was found that night shift female workers that lived with their relatives had higher self-protection behavior than the others do (90.9%). It is possible that the samples were informed about sexual threat experience by their relatives. Therefore, the samples had more self-protection behavior than the others do. Moreover, having no statistical significance means night shift female workers usually have self-protection behavior against sexual threat no matter whom are they living with because they are at risk of sexual threat when leaving workplace. Regarding sexual threat, many studies found that the places where sexual threat occurred were nearby the victims' residences. Corresponding to the study of Chuchom, et al. [6], they studied on sexual assault perception of university students in Thailand. They found that the environment and surrounding situations contributed to sexual threat.

About living time of night shift female workers, it was found that female workers that left workplace at 18.00 – 6.00 hours had sexual threat experience at every time period. However, the period with the most sexual threat experience was at leaving time 03.01 – 06.00 hours. It is possible that there are not many people traveling in such period. Therefore, this is the risky time for crime about sexual threat. However, from the survey by the Office of Justice Affair, Ministry of Justice [7], it was found that the crime time on lives usually occurred was at 18.01 – 21.00 hours and crimes on properties usually occurred at 24.01 – 03.00 hours. Whether what characteristic the crime is, it certainly affects female workers' daily living.

About the distance from workplace to residence and self-protection behavior against sexual threat, the difference was found. From this study, it showed that the samples, who take 15 – 30 minutes to travel from workplace to residence, had higher self-

protection behavior against sexual threat than the others, 73.8%. Although the duration of travel was not very different, night shift female workers had high level of self-protection behavior against sexual threat. Corresponding to the study of Dharmapreecha [2], who studied on sexual threat, she found that the samples had sexual threat experience outside their workplaces. It usually happens on the way to workplace or on the way home. The intimidators are always strangers. As well as the study of Seethip [8], she studied on sexual threat against nurses, case study of Maharaj Nakhon Chiang Mai Hospital. She found that physical factors, such as pathway, lighting, security system, and distance from residence to workplace affected sexual threat.

About travelling means, night shift female workers had higher level of self-protection behavior against sexual threat than the others, who travel by other means, 90.0%. Traveling, regardless of any means, night shift female workers consider them at risk of sexual threat. Since their leaving time is at risk of threat, night shift female workers had non-different self-protection behavior against sexual behavior. About other research, the factor of traveling means regarding sexual threat was not found.

RECOMMENDATION

Although the study was among women who work at Telecommunication Company, it found significant of risk during their travel. At individual level, women who have to attend night shift should primarily prepare themselves by carrying weapon or spray. Moreover if it is possible, they should be trained to protect themselves. The company should provide the facilities such as accommodation near by the workplace for night shifts, arrange vehicles for these workers with free of charge.

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