Factors Related with Un-Islamic Behaviours of Muslim Youths in the Risky Groups in the Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors related with un-Islamic behaviours of Muslim youth in risky groups of the three southern border provinces of Thailand. This study adopts the quantitative research approach. The data was collected from 1,800 participants who were selected by a multi-stage sampling technique. Data analysis using the R: a language and environment for statistical computing was employed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regressions. The results showed that a lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders, lack of participation in Islamic activities, lack of Islamic knowledge, and lack of Islamic upbringing were statistically significant related with the un-Islamic behaviours. The lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders was clearly the most strongly related determinant in explaining the youths' un-Islamic behaviours (beta value = 0.32). Moreover, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, and lack of participation in Islamic activities also contributed to explain the variance in the youths' un-Islamic behaviours (beta values= 0.20, 0.11, and 0.10), respectively.

Keywords: Muslim, Un-Islamic behaviours, upbringing, supervision, youths

INTRODUCTION

Islam is not only a belief but also a way of life that combines belief and practice, worldly activities and Islamic religious activities into one inseparable entity. The way of life given by Allah is unique: Muslims all around the world strictly follow the text of the al-Quran and al-Hadith (Anmunajid 2010; Laeheem, 2013a). Islamic principles have signified

structures of behaviours and ways of living based on religious beliefs and principles for a harmonious life and these have been practiced vigorously among Muslims (Annadwee, 2004; Kaypan, 2014; Laeheem & Baka, 2010). At present, however, Muslim society is confronted with and adapting to the constant advancement of technology. Technology inevitably influences most Thai Muslim youth; they are no longer living their lives in accordance with conventional social standards or Islamic religious principles (Binkasun, 2001; Bungatayong, 2009; Laeheem, 2013b).

The above-mentioned situation is consistent with findings of past studies which revealed that Thai Muslim youths do not practice the principles of Islam and do not behave the way expected by Muslim society (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2013c). They are not interested in religious activities nor do they practice the daily religious rituals. Most are more fascinated with social entertainment broadcasts through various forms of media because these activities are more exciting and entertaining for them. It is almost impossible to protect Thai Muslim youths from indulging in Western culture and entertainment which is saturating present day society via all types of technological media (Din-a, 2008; Laeheem, 2012; Laeheem, 2014). As Laeheem and Baka (2010), and Mahama (2009) asserted, Thai Muslim youth had not led their lives according to Muslim social expectations and even contradict Islamic principles with their behaviour. This conduct turns into worse problems and is almost impossible to solve.

One should also bear in mind that Thai Muslim religion and culture co-exist with the majority Buddhist religion and culture in Thailand which is more liberal and the latter may influence the behaviour of Thai Muslim youth.

Moreover, the current Muslim way of living is no longer seen as being based on the principles of Islam. The current practices are based more on beliefs and ritual ceremonies which follow older generations. Thai Muslim youths' way of life is deprived of and even deviated from past practices. The generation gap is wider between parents and children because parents do not have time to teach and act as role model for their children regarding the Islamic way of life. Thai Muslim youth are therefore living a life led by the current course of fashion, influenced by media and friends. In this study, Thai Muslim youths living in this way are defined as "Thai Muslim youths with risky behaviours" (Laeheem, 2012; Rimpeng, 2008).

The un-Islamic behaviours in this study are the result of the action of Muslim youth that is not consistent with the expectations of Muslim society and their behaviours are incongruent with Islamic principles. For example, 1: Neglecting vital Islamic practices including obligatory daily prayers, almsgiving or *zakah*, fasting in the month of Ramadhan and recitation of the Qur'an. 2: Being involved in unbeneficial activities and activities harmful to others. 3: Unrestricted gender relationship that leads to promiscuity. 4: The tendency to value secular subjects more than Islamic subjects at schools. 5: Not

following Islamic dress code and preferring to imitate their idol pop stars. 6: Ignoring and giving no importance to religious activities, and 7: Giving no importance to and even avoiding doing community service and participating in community activities (Ayoub, 2004; Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Mahama, 2009).

There are many factors that can lead Muslim youth to behave in ways which are not in accordance with Islam. One important factor is not socializing via Islamic and family institutions. Past studies have shown a significant relationship between un-Islamic behaviours with Muslim youths who lack Islamic knowledge, have poor Islamic upbringing, have low interest in Islamic activities and lack supervision from Muslim leaders. (Laeheem, 2013a, 2014; Touthern, 2010). Most Muslim youths who have not been socialized with Islamic practices behave in such a way that weakens the faith by indulging in sins and taboos without feeling ashamed and doing it openly and behaving in many ways that are in conflict with Islamic principles. They lack knowledge and understanding of social norms and Islamic principles (Anmunajid, 2010; Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). If young Muslims do not study or understand, or are not advised about Islamic principles, are apathetic about studying Islam, lack close Islamic upbringing, lack interest in Islamic activities, have parents and leaders negligent in looking after youth, this obviously results in behaviour inconsistent with Islam (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2013b; Mahama, 2009). Muslim

youth who are not encouraged to understand Islamic principles and teachings, and who have not been initiated into the Islamic socialization process, do not behave in accordance with Islam or its social norms (Laeheem & Madreh, 2014; Mahamad, Thongkum, & Damcha-om, 2008).

The present study aimed to examine the factors related with behaviours of Muslim youths of risky groups in the three southern border provinces of Thailand which are not in accordance with the Islamic way, including lack of mothers' breastfeeding, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders. Identifying these Muslim youths could assist Islamic religious organizations, social and human development authorities, and the government sector to introduce better strategies to promote more Muslim youths to behave in accordance with the Islamic way of life.

METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were 1800 Muslim youths in the risky groups. The participants were from the three southern border provinces of Thailand; namely Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat because 85.16% of the population in these three provinces are Muslim. The participants were selected using multi-stage sampling as follows: Stage 1: Districts were stratified into three strata: (1) districts where density

loss per victims of the violent unrest situation was high and very high; (2) districts where density loss per victims of the violent unrest situation was moderate; 3. districts where density loss per victims of the violent unrest situation was low (Center of Deep South Watch, 2015). Then two districts per region were selected using simple random sampling, totaling 18 districts. Stage 2: Two sub-districts per districts were selected using simple random sampling, totaling 36 sub-districts. Stage 3: Two villages per sub-districts were selected using simple random sampling, totaling 72 villages. Stage 4: 25 Muslim youth from each village were selected using simple random sampling, totaling 1,800 youth. The age of the participants was between 16 to 24 years (mean = 19.33, standard deviation = 1.59). 50.9% of the participants were female and 49.1% were male.

Data Collection and Research Instruments

The field research data was collected by both the researcher and experienced research assistants who were all local people of the areas in which the data was collected, and were staying in the target village. The questionnaire items were explained to the research assistants who were trained in the process and techniques of the collection of field data.

This study used a cross-sectional study design involving surveys of villages of Muslim communities. Muslim youth in the risky groups in a sample selected from the target population were studied. Verbal consent to participate in the study was obtained from the participants after assurance of confidentiality. The research assistants were asked to take care not to rush through the questionnaire and also to record responses accurately. Each individual interview lasted approximately 35-50 minutes. The research instrument was a questionnaire consisting of three parts: Part 1: General information on the subjects. Part 2: Five factors which include: lack of mothers' breastfeeding with 6 items, lack of Islamic upbringing with 8 items, lack of Islamic knowledge with 10 items, lack of participation in Islamic activities with 10 items, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders with 10 items, each of which offered five response options: lowest, low, moderate, high, and the highest which were scored at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. The internal consistency was 0.81, 0.76, 0.78, 0.82, and 0.75, respectively. Part 3: Un-Islamic behaviours which consist of 20 items were scored on a five-point rating scale, the criteria for scoring from never, once in a while, rather often, often, and regularly (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively). The internal consistence of the questionnaire was found to be acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86).

Data Analysis

The five determinant variables in this study (include lack of mothers' breastfeeding, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic

activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders) and the un-Islamic behaviours outcome were both continuous variables.

The R: a language and environment for statistical computing was employed to analyze the data in order to determine mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regressions. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to describe the main variables of the study. Pearson's correlation test was used to analyze the correlations between the various determinant variables and the un-Islamic behaviours outcome. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine whether the correlations between the un-Islamic behaviours outcome and determinants variables, and variables were eliminated from the model by the stepwise method.

Interpretation of Mean Score and Correlations

In this study, the mean score of un-Islamic behaviours outcome and determinants variables were interpreted based on the Best's criteria (Best, 1981): mean of 1.00 to 1.49 scored as lowest, 1.50 to 2.49 scored as low, 2.50 to 3.49 scored as moderate, 3.50 to 4.49 scored as high, and 4.50 to 5.00 scored as highest. The correlations between five determinant variables and the un-Islamic behaviours outcome were interpreted based on Cohen's criteria (Cohen, 1988): correlations .10 to .29 as small, correlations 0.30 to 0.49 as medium, and correlations 0.50 to 1.0 as large.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics of the un-Islamic behaviours outcome and five determinants variables. The Muslim youth in the risky groups in the three southern border provinces of Thailand had the un-Islamic behaviours at a high level (mean= 3.73). The mean score of the five determinant variables, a lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders was at a high level (mean= 3.61) and a lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of mothers' breastfeeding, and lack of participation in Islamic activities were at moderate level (the mean scores were 3.41, 3.27, 3.23, and 3.19, respectively).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the determinants variables and the un-Islamic behaviours

Variables	Mean Score	S.D.	Interpretation
Un-Islamic behaviours	3.73	0.49	High
Lack of mothers' breastfeeding	3.23	0.55	Moderate
Lack of Islamic upbringing	3.27	0.53	Moderate
Lack of Islamic knowledge	3.41	0.93	Moderate
Lack of participation in Islamic activities	3.19	0.79	Moderate
Lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders	3.61	0.64	High

Table 2 shows the results of Pearson's correlation analysis assessing the correlations between five determinant variables and the un-Islamic behaviours outcome. The lack of mothers' breastfeeding, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders were statistically significant correlation with the un-Islamic behaviours (p value = .000). The un-Islamic behaviours were a positive and large correlation with a lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders ($r = 0.73$), lack of participation in Islamic activities ($r = 0.64$), lack of Islamic knowledge ($r = 0.62$), and lack of Islamic upbringing ($r = 0.53$), and was a positive and medium correlation with a lack of mothers' breastfeeding ($r = 0.43$).

Table 2

Correlations between the determinants variables and the un-Islamic behaviours

Variables	r	*p* value	95% (C I)	Interpretation
Lack of mothers' breastfeeding	0.43	0.000	0.40, 0.47	Medium
Lack of Islamic upbringing	0.53	0.000	0.50, 0.57	Large
Lack of Islamic knowledge	0.62	0.000	0.59, 0.65	Large
Lack of participation in Islamic activities	0.64	0.000	0.61, 0.67	Large
Lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders	0.73	0.000	0.70, 0.75	Large

Table 3 shows analysis results of the final model of factors related with un-Islamic behaviours of Muslim youth in the risky groups in the three southern border province of Thailand. The multiple linear regression analysis revealed that four factors significantly related with un-Islamic behaviours were a lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders (p value = .000).

Table 3

Reduced linear regression model of correlations between determinants variables and the un-Islamic behaviours outcome, final model

Determinants Variables	B	S.E.	*p* value	95% Confidence interval (CI)
Constant	1.23	0.05	0.000	1.12, 1.32
Lack of Islamic upbringing	0.20	0.15	0.000	0.18, 0.23
Lack of Islamic knowledge	0.10	0.01	0.000	0.08, 0.12
Lack of participation in Islamic activities	0.11	0.12	0.000	0.08, 0.14
Lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders	0.32	0.15	0.000	0.29, 0.35

Note: F-statistic = 816.259***; p value = .000; Multiple R-squared = 0.645; Adjusted R-squared = 0.644; Residual standard error = 0.294; Degrees of freedom = 1795

The four determinant variables explain about 64.40% of the variance in un-Islamic behaviours. The largest beta coefficient obtained was 0.32 for lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders. In other words the lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders made the strongest unique contribution in explaining the un-Islamic behaviours among Muslim youth in the risky groups in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, when the variance explained by all the other determinant variables in the model was controlled for. It suggests that one standard deviation increase in the lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders is followed by 0.32 standard deviation increase in the outcome of un-Islamic behaviours. The Beta value for a lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of Islamic knowledge were 0.20, 0.11, and 0.10, respectively. This means that the three determinant variables also made some contribution in explaining the variance in the un-Islamic behaviours among Muslim youth in the risky groups in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the correlations between un-Islamic behaviours among the Muslim youth of the risky groups in the three southern border provinces of Thailand and five determinant variables linked to a lack of mothers' breastfeeding, lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim

leaders. Results revealed that the un-Islamic behaviours had a statistically significant correlation with four determinant variables, namely a lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders, and the four determinant variables explain about 64.40% of the variance in un-Islamic behaviours. A lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders was clearly the most strongly related determinant in explaining the un-Islamic behaviours among of Muslim youth in the risky groups. Moreover, the four determinant variables have been found to be related to negative behaviours of Muslim youth. Indeed, all the four determinant variables were indicative of young people who were not closely related with Islamic principles.

The main responsibility for the problem seems to lie with parents and Muslim leaders. They failed to teach and advise Muslim youth regarding social ethics and norms. Consequently, they could not behave in the way they were expected to by society and exhibited behaviours not in accordance with the Islamic way of life. Notably, it is said that socialization is the process of transferring knowledge, thoughts, attitudes, ideologies, cultures and personalities to make individuals behave in the way the society desires and ways of living based on religious principles (Adivatanasit, 2002; Cohen & Orbuch, 1990; Popenoe, 1993; Thitiwattana, 2004). Socialization enables youth to understand and adopt the values and social norms of the society they live

in, and to behave in a way according to religious beliefs (Bhanthumnavin, 2003; Grusec, 1992; Sereetrakul, 2009; Thitirat, 2004). Muslim youths who are not studied in Islamic principles, who do not strictly adhere to religious activities and possess Islamic morality, who lack interest in Islamic activities, and whose parents and leaders are negligent in looking after youth cannot behave in accordance with Islam (Laeheem, 2013a; Mahamad, Thongkum, & Damcha-om, 2008). Muslim youths who do not study, or understand, and who do not receive advice about Islamic principles and social norms, who lack close Islamic upbringing, who lack interest in Islamic activities, and who lack sufficient guidance behave discordantly with Islamic principles and beliefs. Socialization in Islam, is the process of developing personality, habit, morality, and manner according to Islamic principles and beliefs in order for Muslim to have the right way of life, behave in accordance with the Islamic way, and to build a peaceful and happy society, and to bring in true happiness based on Islamic morality and ethics (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2013b; Mahama, 2009). Therefore, when Muslim youths are not exposed to socialization from parents and Muslim leaders it has a negative influence on their behaviour.

In addition, Muslim youths of the Southern provinces might imitate their peers' behaviour and might then fall into the risky behaviour group in order to gain acceptance. Muslim youth often use the same behavioural tactics when observing their peers; thus they model the behaviour which is not in accordance with Islam. This is consistent with the studies which found that peer modeling of un-Islamic behaviours promotes the development of youths' negative behaviour (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2013c; Mahama, 2009). Most human behaviour is learned observationally through copying: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Youths pay attention to what their peers are doing and saying in order to reproduce the model's behaviour (Allen & Santrock, 1993).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lack of Islamic upbringing, lack of Islamic knowledge, lack of participation in Islamic activities, and lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders had a statistically significant correlation with the un-Islamic behaviours. A lack of youth supervision by Muslim leaders was clearly the most strongly related determinant in explaining the un-Islamic behaviours among of Muslim youth in the risky groups.

Findings from this study should help in the development of prevention and intervention policies in Muslim society and assist Islamic religious organizations and the government sector to introduce better strategies for reducing the problem. Parents are most important in providing leadership and direction for the successful prevention and intervention of behaviours

in accordance with the Islamic way. They should provide close attention and talk regularly with their children about their feelings and relationships with friends. They should work in partnership with Muslim leaders to encourage positive behaviour. Muslim leaders are the next most important actors for preventing the prevalence of behaviours not in accordance with the Islamic way. Muslim leaders have to be positive in forming concrete policies and strategies for promoting and supporting Thai Muslim youth to behave in accordance with Islamic principles. For example, these should be a policy on instilling awareness in Thai Muslim youth to behave according to the Islamic way of life and follow the Prophet, and/or a policy on Islamic moral training camps to be held regularly and continuously in different communities; a policy on organizing activities and training to give knowledge about the religion and practice according to Islamic principles for youth and their parents; and a policy on promoting and developing the family institution to strengthen it so that it can control children and keep them in the Islamic frame of reference.

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