

ความรุนแรงในสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้: การอนุมานสาเหตุ และข้อเสนอแนะของผู้ที่มีการศึกษาสูงในพื้นที่

Violence in Three Southern-Border Provinces of Thailand: Attribution and Suggestions of Highly Educated Locals.*

ดร.ทิพวรรณ กิตติวิบูลย์ **

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาการรับรู้สาเหตุของความรุนแรงในสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้และข้อเสนอแนะเพื่อการแก้ไขปัญหาดังกล่าวในมุมมองของผู้ที่มีการศึกษาสูงในพื้นที่ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษาปริญญาโทที่อยู่อาศัยและทำงานในพื้นที่จังหวัดนราธิวาส ปัตตานี และยะลา จำนวน 66 คน ซึ่งมีคุณสมบัติของผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ (key informants) ข้อมูลเก็บภายในหลังเกิดเหตุการณ์ที่มีสัญคีประจำ (28 เมษายน 2547) 2 สัปดาห์ ผลการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาจากการเก็บข้อมูลพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนมากอธิบายสาเหตุของความรุนแรงตามทฤษฎีการเรียนรู้ด้วยการมีตัวแบบทั้งจากในและนอกประเทศ และการได้รับการเสริมแรงพฤติกรรมก้าวร้าว ด้านลักษณะส่วนบุคคลของผู้ก่อความไม่สงบ ซึ่งเป็นสาเหตุหนึ่งของความรุนแรง ที่กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนมากระบุถึงคือ การหลงผิด/การตีความคำสอนทางศาสนาอย่างบิดเบือน และการมีทัศนคติที่ไม่ดีต่อเจ้าหน้าที่ของรัฐ เมื่อพิจารณาถึงประเภทของการอนุมานสาเหตุ กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่นับถือศาสนาพุทธ ส่วนมากอนุมานสาเหตุความรุนแรงไปที่ลักษณะของปัจจัยบุคคล ในขณะที่กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่นับถือศาสนาอิสลาม ส่วนมากอนุมานสาเหตุความรุนแรงไปที่สถานการณ์/สิ่งแวดล้อม กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้เสนอแนะวิธีแก้ไขปัญหาความรุนแรงในภาคใต้ให้สำเร็จดังนี้ คือรับรู้สาเหตุความรุนแรง ให้เกิดความเข้าใจอันดีต่อกัน และการสนับสนุนให้คุณในพื้นที่ได้รับความยุติธรรมอย่างถ้วนหน้า เป็นต้น ความแตกต่างด้านความคิดความเชื่อและข้อเสนอแนะระหว่างกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่นับถือศาสนาพุทธกับอิสลามที่พบในการศึกษานี้ สนับสนุนแนวคิดทางจิตวิทยาสังคม ผู้ศึกษายังได้เสนอแนวทางปฏิบัติเพื่อให้เกิดความเข้าใจอันดีต่อกันและลดปัญหาในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว

*บางส่วนของบทความนี้ได้นำเสนอใน poster session at the 6th conference of the Asian Association of Social Psychology ที่ประเทศไทย วันที่ 4 เมษายน 2548

**อาจารย์ประจำคณะพัฒนาสังคมและสิ่งแวดล้อม สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to reveal the perception of the causes of the violence in the southernmost provinces and to seek better solutions. The participants were 66 graduate students who worked there. They served as key informants. Most of them explained the reasons for terrorism and aggression according to modeling and operant conditioning. The distinctive personal characteristics of terrorists were having false beliefs and holding negative attitudes toward government officers. Buddhists attributed violence more to dispositional causes than to situational ones; whereas Muslims attributed the violence to situations more than to disposition. For a better situation, the participants suggested that the government should rapidly improve social and economic development through education, enhance mutual understanding among people, and promote social justice for all, etc. Cognitive differences between Buddhists and Muslims were discussed. Also, the ways to achieve mutual understanding among people in that region were suggested.

Introduction

Thailand is an ancient and peaceful country in southeast Asia. People with various backgrounds and ethnics live together in harmony in this land. Unlike some countries, there is no discrimination as well as prejudice against any ethnic groups. About ninety percent of the population identified themselves as Buddhists. Muslims are minor religious group in Thailand. However, they are the majority in three southern border provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. Since two severe incidents, ‘gun-robbery’ at a military base in Narathiwat on January 4, 2004, and ‘Krusae mosque fighting’ in Pattani on April 28, 2004, the violence

induced by the unidentified group of people has been daily event in those areas. The terrorists have targeted Thai policemen, soldiers, school teachers, Buddhist monks, railways and market places. Their attacks have been likely to be increased because they have mostly succeeded in their plans. There has usually been no witness and evidence enough to arrest those who committed the violence. Consequently, innocent people there have lived with fear. For example, they had to stay home when it got dark. Their everyday life, mental health, even business and income have been apparently affected by the situations. Their needs for safety and security have been increased. Thousands of them, especially Buddhists, have moved out from those areas. The violence in three southern provinces has become a national problem. Thai people have waited for the better situations and longed for peace and happiness returning to that region. The ways to successfully solve the problem depend on whether the actual causes of the violence could be revealed. Highly educated people, who have lived and worked there since their young age, could be good key informants. They should know more accurate situations than do people in other regions.

The original purpose of this study was to apply social psychological theories and concepts to explain southern violence and provide some practical suggestions for better situations. Also, there were three aims of this study. They were, firstly, to reveal the perceived causes of violence in three southernmost provinces; secondly, to seek for solutions for the better situations according to the highly-educated local people's views. The third aim was to investigate differences in theoretical explanations, causal attribution, injustice perception and suggestions between Muslim and Buddhist participants in order to have a better understanding in intergroup stereotyping and cultural influence on cognition.

Method

Participants

A total of 66 graduate students (42 males and 24 females) who have lived and worked in three southern border provinces, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat were the sample. Of these, 47 (71.2%) were Buddhists, and 19 (28.8%) were Muslims. More than half of them (57.6%) worked on government service; whereas nearly twenty percent (18.2%) of them were policemen, soldiers or other officers. The rest (23.2%) had their own business or worked in private sector. The average age of the participants was 39.7 years.

Measures

An open-ended questionnaire with two main questions was used for data collection. Firstly, the participants were asked to theoretically analyze the important causes of violence, aggressive behavior, recently occurred in those three provinces. Secondly, the participants were introduced that due to their long experience in working and living or being local people there, they have known the situations thoroughly. Then, as the key informants, they were asked to provide suggestions for the better situations.

Procedure

The data were collected two weeks after Krusae mosque incident took place. All participants were asked to answer the questions and encouraged to explain and suggest as many as they wanted. They completed the questionnaire within fewer than an hour. The content of their answers was carefully analyzed, and rechecked with the same criteria, particularly for the first question. The data covered six issues, 1) reasons of violence

according to learning theoretical approach, 2) personal characteristic as a cause of violence, 3) groups of people who committed the violence, 4) types of causal attribution they made, 5) injustice concern, and 6) the suggestions for better situations.

Results and Discussion

Reasons of violence according to learning approach

Violence is a learned or social behavior. Most of participants (71.2%) explained reasons of the violence according to modeling theory. For instance, young people observed the violence of Islamic extremists in Iraq, from the media, as their models. In addition, some young Muslim perceived their religious teachers who involved in separatist movement as their role models. Therefore, they learned to commit violence through modeling or observational learning. The following was causal explanations according to operant conditioning or reinforcement theory (68.2% of the sample answered it). For example, those who committed the violence had received money, group acceptance or the admiration of others as reward for their conducts. When comparing the explanations of two religious groups, more Muslim participants (nearly 90%) than Buddhist ones (about 64%) explained the violence by modeling theory, χ^2 (1, N=66) = 4.34, p = .04 (Table 1). Also, more Muslims (36.8%) than Buddhists (10.6%) explained the reason of the violence by actors' experience in unfair treat of the government officers, χ^2 (1, N=66) = 6.24, p = .01 (Table 2).

Table 1 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants

Explained Causes of Violence by Modeling Theory

Religious group	Modeling	
	No answer (%)	Answer (%)
Buddhist	17 (36.2)	30 (63.8)
Muslim	2 (10.5)	17 (89.5)
Total	19 (28.8)	47 (71.2)

$$\chi^2 = 4.340, p = .037$$

Table 2 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants

Explained Causes of Violence by the Unfair Treat of Government Officers

Religious group	Unfair treat	
	No answer (%)	Answer (%)
Buddhist	42 (89.4)	5 (10.6)
Muslim	12 (63.2)	7 (36.8)
Total	54 (81.8)	12 (18.2)

$$\chi^2 = 6.245, p = .012$$

Personal characteristics as a cause of violence.

According to cognitive theoretical approach, individual characteristics and his/her interpretation on social stimuli are the important causes of social behavior. About sixty percent of the respondents mentioned the actors' false beliefs or misinterpretation about religious doctrine, as a personal characteristic of those who committed the violence. Other individual characteristics described by the participants were the actors' holding negative attitudes toward government officers, policemen and soldiers, (42.4% of the

sample), followed by their thought about not being Thai (25.8%), and their being easily persuaded (22.7%). When comparing two religious groups, Muslim participants mentioned the actors' false beliefs and negative attitudes toward government officers as the causes of violence more than did the Buddhist ones (73.7% vs. 53.2%, and 57.9% vs. 36.2%), $\chi^2 (1, N=66) = 2.35$, $p = .12$, and $\chi^2 (1, N=66) = 2.61$, $p = .11$ respectively, (Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants
Explained Actors' False Belief as a Cause of Violence

Religious group	Actors' false belief	
	No answer (%)	Answer (%)
Buddhist	22 (46.8)	25 (53.2)
Muslim	5 (26.3)	14 (73.7)
Total	27 (40.91)	39 (59.09)

$$\chi^2 = 2.351 \quad p = .125$$

Table 4 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants Explained
Actors' Negative Attitude as a Cause of Violence

Religious group	Actors' negative attitude	
	No answer (%)	Answer (%)
Buddhist	30 (63.8)	17 (36.2)
Muslim	8 (42.1)	11 (57.9)
Total	38 (57.6)	28 (42.4)

$$\chi^2 = 2.614, \quad p = .106$$

Group that induced the violence

Comparing the answers between two religious groups, 57.9% of Muslim respondents versus 27.7% of Buddhist ones mentioned the terrorist group as people who committed the violence. On the other hand, 36.2% of Buddhists versus 21.1% of Muslims for each category mentioned group of religious leaders and privately-run-religious-school teachers, and group of young and unemployed people were those who committed the violence, χ^2 (1,N=66) = 5.35 , p = .07 (Table 5).²

Table 5 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants

Mentioned Groups of People Committed the Violence

Religious group	Groups of people committed the violence		
	Young people was mentioned	Terrorists was mentioned	Religious leader/teacher was mentioned
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Buddhist	17 (36.2)	13 (27.7)	17 (36.2)
Muslim	4 (21.1)	11 (57.9)	4 (21.1)
Total	21 (31.8)	14 (36.4)	21 (31.8)

$$\chi^2 = 5.345 , p = .069$$

Causal attribution for violence

The southern violence in this study was a negative act of the others. For each respondent, the content of his/her answers for perceived causes of violence was examined and carefully analyzed whether it mainly focused on situational/external causes or dispositional/internal causes. On the one hand, if the participant strongly believed or put more emphasis on actors' dispositions, such as beliefs, attitudes, needs, motives and perception, as the important causes of others' aggressive behavior, he/she made internal

attribution. On the other hand, if he/she believed that situations, such as environment, conditions, training, group socialization and group pressure, were the more important causes of violence, he/she made external attribution.

The results showed that more than half of participants (54.5%) made dispositional attributions for others' aggression. Therefore, there was a slight tendency of fundamental attribution error, bias in attributing another's behavior more to internal than to situational causes (Ross,1977). Moreover, when comparing two religious groups, Buddhists and Muslims attributed for violence, bad act, in different ways. That is, about sixty-two percent of Buddhists made internal attribution, whereas sixty-three percent of Muslims made external attribution, $\chi^2(1,N=66) = 3.37$, $p = .07$ (Table 6). This finding revealed the ultimate attribution error, tendency to attribute bad outgroup behavior internally and to attribute bad ingroup behavior externally (Pettigrew, 1979). In addition, it was consistent with Tylor and Jaggi (1974) hypothesis of ethnocentric attribution. That is, group members make external attributions for the negative behavior of other ingroup member, whereas they make internal attributions for the negative behavior of outgroup members. It was due to affective bias, favoring members of their own group, rather than members of outgroup (Hewstone and Ward, 1985). Therefore, the result supported the notion of intergroup attribution, process of assigning the cause of one's own or other behavior to group membership (Hogg and Vaughan,2002). As a matter of fact, most of Thai Muslims in those three provinces neither agreed with the extremist ideology nor joined Islamic organizations working toward the establishing of an Islamic state in that region. However, they as well as

Muslim participants in this study perceived themselves and the terrorists having at least one thing in common; that is, they were Muslims in that region. The ultimate attribution error and intergroup attribution made us understand more about how sectarian and ethnic stereotyping has been formed.

Table 6 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants in Each Type of Causality Attribution

Religious group	Attribution	
	External (%)	Internal (%)
Buddhist	18 (38.3)	29 (61.7)
Muslim	12 (63.2)	7 (36.8)
Total	30 (45.5)	36 (54.5)

$$\chi^2 = 3.373, p = .066$$

Injustice concern

The content of the answers for causes of violence was reexamined and analyzed whether the participant had mentioned about injustice perception of those who committed the violence. If he/she had mentioned that, it could be implied that he/she believed that perceived injustice of actors was relevant to their aggression. In the word, he/she had an injustice concern. The finding revealed that about forty percent of the sample mentioned actors' injustice perception. Comparing two religious groups, Muslim participants (63.2%) mentioned about injustice perception more than did the Buddhist ones (29.8%), $\chi^2 (1, N=66) = 6.31, p = .01$ (Table 7). This finding might be implied that Buddhists, who were the majority of the nation, had less concern than did the Muslims about injustice in that region.

Suggestions for better situations

The participants were highly educated local people who lived and worked there for a long time. They had learned the history of that region and had direct experience in southern violence situations. In addition, they had interacted and communicated with people holding different religious beliefs in their everyday life. Therefore, they should be good key informants for the suggestions of solving this long-term problem. In this study, the participants were informed that they were the ones who knew the situations thoroughly and qualified to provide suggestions for better situations.

Table 7 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants

Mentioned about Actors' Injustice Perception

Religious group	Injustice perception	
	Not mentioned (%)	Mentioned (%)
Buddhist	33 (80.9)	14 (29.8)
Muslim	7 (36.8)	12 (63.2)
Total	40 (60.6)	26 (39.4)

$$\chi^2 = 6.311, p = .012$$

The results revealed that most frequent suggestions provided by the participants was that the government should promote social development, i.e, promote human resource development and improve local people's quality of life, by formal education; about sixty-five percent of the respondents suggested it. For example, the government should have definite plans to develop social life of young people through public education. Next, half of the participants (50%) suggested that the government should promote economic development, i.e, pay more attention to the local people's economic situation

and provide more budget and fund to develop their skill, especially for the youth, and promote their occupations. About forty-four percent of participants suggested that the government should be sincere to local people, and promote mutual understanding among people with different religious beliefs. Next, thirty-three percent of respondents suggested the government to promote justice to all people in the three provinces. Thirty-two percent of them suggested that the government officers should be reliable and use the existing laws to prevent and control violence. That is the law enforcement. They also suggested about improving familial relation and promoting healthy child-rearing practices, such as love and understanding technique to prevent the children from being criminals (28.8%). Lastly, applying knowledge about group process to strengthen their communities was suggested to solve the violence problems (27.3%).

Comparing the participants' suggestions between two religious groups, interestingly, Muslims suggested more than Buddhists about promoting justice to all, and in promoting mutual understanding among people with different religious beliefs (57.9% vs. 23.4%, and 68.4% vs. 34%, respectively), $\chi^2(1, N=66) = 7.24, p < .01$, and $\chi^2(1, N=66) = 6.49, p < .05$ (Table 8 and Table 9). However, Buddhists suggested more than Muslims concerning law enforcement in order to successfully solve the violence problems (38.3% vs. 15.8%), $\chi^2(1, N=66) = 3.16, p = .08$ (Table 10). Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference in number of suggestions between two religious groups. That is, Muslim participants provided more number of suggestions than the Buddhist ones, $t(64) = -2.21, p < .05$. (Table 11).

Table 8 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants*Suggested Promoting Justice to All*

Religious group	Promoting justice to all	
	Not suggested (%)	Suggested (%)
Buddhist	36 (76.6)	11 (23.4)
Muslim	8 (42.1)	11 (57.9)
Total	44 (66.7)	22 (33.3)

$$\chi^2 = 7.243, p = .007$$

Table 9 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants*Suggested Enhancing Mutual Understanding among People*

Religious group	Enhancing mutual understanding	
	Not suggested (%)	Suggested (%)
Buddhist	31 (66.0)	16 (34.0)
Muslim	6 (31.6)	13 (68.4)
Total	37 (56.1)	29 (43.9)

$$\chi^2 = 6.492, p = .011$$

Table 10 Frequency and Percentage of Buddhist and Muslim Participants*Suggested Law Enforcement*

Religious group	Law enforcement	
	Not suggested (%)	Suggested (%)
Buddhist	29 (61.7)	18 (38.3)
Muslim	16 (84.2)	3 (15.8)
Total	45 (68.2)	21 (31.8)

$$\chi^2 = 3.160, p = .075$$

Table 11 Means, Standard Deviations of Number of Suggestions and t-value for Difference between Two Religious Groups

Religious group	n	\bar{x}	SD.	t	p
Buddhist	47	2.96	1.06	-2.209	.030
Muslim	19	3.53	.96		

That is, Muslims had more ideas on problem solving than did the Buddhists. Also, the findings in this study demonstrated that Muslims had greater concern on injustice and misunderstanding problems than did the Buddhists, whereas Buddhists had greater concern on the control of illegal conducts by law enforcement (Table 8-10). Both groups may reveal the self-serving bias (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002; Baron and Byrne, 2003; Aronson et al., 2004) for their suggestions. They suggested those to protect themselves and enhance their self-esteem.

In order to achieve mutual understanding among people, a major technique of reduction in prejudice and discrimination against minority group in the society could be applied. It is the use of direct contact between people of two religious groups with three criteria of interaction, equal status, intimacy and interdependence (Feldman, 1985; Feldman, 2000). Therefore, Muslims and Buddhists in the southernmost provinces should be promoted to work together in the work places, both private and public organizations, with those three criteria of interactions. These conditions would increase the opportunities to learn and understand each other and accept

people as individuals, not as group membership. Consequently, stereotyping, a bias belief, and prejudice against each other could be reduced.

In sum, the major causes of southern violence explained by the participants was actors' observational learning of violent models from terrorists or extremists, both inside and outside country. In addition, some unemployed youngsters committed violence in exchange for money, social and psychological support. To solve the unrest in the southernmost provinces, the participants suggested that the government should promote social and economic development in that region. Particularly, promotion of young people's quality of life through education was needed. The differences found in theoretical explanations, causal attributions, injustice concern and suggestions between Muslim and Buddhist participants in this study all provided better understanding in southern violence problems, cultural influence on cognition, and ways to reduce the southern conflict. Moreover, the technique for prejudice and discrimination reduction could be applied to enhance mutual understanding among people in that region.

This study had some weak points. For example, a simple methodology, rather subjective measures, non-sophisticated statistical analysis, and small sample size were used. However, the measures for each variable were double-checked with the same criteria. In addition, its primary purpose was to apply social psychological theories and concepts in explaining real-life social behavior and events. Thus, this study may shed a little light of the better understanding in the perceived causes of southern violence, bias in attribution, intergroup attribution, stereotyping minority group, and providing alternative ways to solve problems of southern violence in Thailand.

References

Aronson, E., Wilson, T.D., and Akert, R.M. (2004). **Social Psychology**. (4rd ed.) New Jersey:Prentice Hall.

Baron, R.A. and Byrne, D. (2003). **Social Psychology**. (10rd ed.) New York : Allyn and Bacon.

Feldman, R.S. (1985). **Social Psychology : Theories, Research and Application**. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Feldman, R.S. (2000). **Social Psychology**. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hewstone,M., Ward, C. (1985) “Ethnocentrism and causal attribution in South East Asia”. **Journal of Personality and Social Psychology**, 48,614-623

Hogg, M.A.and Vaughan, M.G. (2002) **Social Psychology**. (3rd ed.) London: Prentice Hall.

Pettigrew,T.F.(1979). “The ultimate attribution error:Extending Allport’s cognitive analysis of prejudice”. **Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin**, 5, 461-476.

Taylor, D.M., Jaggi, V. (1974). “Ethnocentrism and causal attribution in a South India context”. **Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology**, 5,162-171.

Ross,L.(1977). “The intuitive psychologist and his short-comings”. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), **Advances in Experimental Social Psychology** (Vol.10 ,pp.174-220). New York: Academic Press.