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Effects of a wisdom-based behavior change program on Islamic behavior among Muslim youth with risk behaviors in the three Southern border provinces of Thailand

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of a wisdom-based behavior change program on Islamic behavior among youths with risk behaviors in the three Southern border provinces. This experimental research using a true control group pretest posttest design was conducted with 120 youths from three communities selected through purposive sampling from those with the lowest and highest scores for an Islamic Behavior Test. The experimental group consisted of 20 subjects who participated in a wisdom-based behavior change program, and the control group consisted of 20 subjects who participated in masjid religious activities. The participants in the two groups consisted of subjects who had high scores and those who had low scores. The experiment was conducted as planned from September 2016 to February 2017. Independent sample t-tests and paired samples t-tests were performed with the data. The study found that before participation in the programs, the average scores for knowledge, attitude, and Islamic behavior of the two groups were not different. However, after their participation in the programs, the scores of the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group at the .001 level, and the average scores for their knowledge, attitude, and Islamic behavior were higher by 1.31, 1.30, and 1.11, respectively.

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Introduction

Thai Muslims have a unique way of life just like other Muslims worldwide who have adhered tightly to the Islamic practice from the past following the guidelines in the Quran and the examples set by the prophet Muhammad through different teachings and trainings as well as various institutions. Nevertheless, rapidly changing situations in the world have directly and indirectly affected the way of life among Thai Muslims. For example, parents have no time to closely teach their children. Teenagers are interested only in fun and exciting activities presented through

different types of media. Community leaders pay no attention to youth and allow all vices to take place in the community so much that they have become common. As a result, Muslim youth have begun to deviate from the correct way of life and cannot distinguish between good and bad; they do not know what is appropriate for people at their age, and become lost in the colorful world of Western cultures. They indulge in the modern colorful world of Western cultures and become slaves of taste and values of such cultures that keep flowing in the Muslim society so rapidly and immensely that is almost impossible to prevent their acceptance (Annadwee, 2004). These things happen even though Islamic principles are complete and detailed guidelines for life as they are the regime bestowed by Allah for people to accept and surrender to Him, and they give

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correct attitudes that humans should have towards themselves, the world, and all things (Anmunajid, 2010).

While Thai Muslim society has changed so rapidly along with the advancement of information technology and continuous development, Muslim youth have accepted, imitated, and applied foreign cultures that are not appropriate in their daily life without knowing that they have done so. They lack ability in thinking carefully and in making judgments; they cannot distinguish right from wrong. As a result, they go along with the crowd causing social problems and have un-Islamic behavior (Laeheem, 2012). Most Muslim youth do not lead their lives in accordance with the expectations of Muslim society and are in conflict with Islamic principles. For example, they are not interested in performing daily religious practice and in religious activities at all. They do not study the religion commit sins and break taboos habitually without feeling guilty about it. They use drugs and gamble, are involved in all vices, and do not dress according to Islamic principles (Anmunajid, 2010; Laeheem & Baka, 2010). Some Muslim youths become slaves to materialism paying no attention to religious principles, participating in nonsensical activities, dressing in such a way that reveals their body shapes, committing sins regularly and they have become accustomed to not participating in religious activities (Laeheem, Baka, Tahe, & Walee, 2015). Problems in Muslim society commonly seen are: having boyfriends and holding hands openly; not praying; not fasting, among others, and these have made the problems more complex (Annadwee, 2004; Anmunajid, 2010).

Most Muslim youths in the three Southern border provinces do not have a way of life that is in accordance with Islamic principles. They have friends of the same sex and do things together without limit; and they have friends of the opposite sex with whom they openly hold hands, kiss, and even have sex with before marriage. They give more importance to regular subjects than religious subjects. Moreover, they are involved in all vices, dress un-Islamically, give no importance to religious practice, avoid doing community services and do not participate in community activities (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). A majority of Muslim youths have a way of life that has deviated from the correct Islamic way. They indulge in and enjoy the advancements of the present society and have wrong values such as dressing un-Islamically, having boyfriends or girlfriends, being involved in addictive drugs and gambling, enjoying night life in entertainment places, having sex before marriage, not praying and not fasting (Annadwee, 2004; Mahama, 2009; Anmunajid, 2010; Laeheem & Baka, 2010).

The abovementioned problems can be solved by avoiding the causes and by promoting youths who have gone astray and whose behaviors are not in accordance with Islamic principles to behave in the Islamic way. Studies have found that Muslim youths who practice the religion tend to have proper behavior because religious practice consists of the following: 1) conducting oneself properly can help remind youth to think of Allah and His teachings; 2) praying can help Muslim youth to be calm and socialize their minds; and 3) fasting can help youth to practice patience and tolerance to temptations (Chaiprasit,

Chansawang, & Pergmark, 2005). Socialization is a process that gives youths understanding and encourages them to accept the values and norms of the society where they live by giving them knowledge and experience; parents, teachers, and religious leaders can influence the current behavior of children and influence their future potential (Grusec, 1992). One way to prompt and support Muslim youths to behave according to social norms is to prompt them to have knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles and to prompt them to be strict in their religious practice (Chaiprasit et al., 2005). This also requires cooperation from all involved as it is said that the problem of Muslim youths behaving un-Islamically is a chronic problem that needs the cooperation of all related individuals and organizations for its solution (Mahama, 2009). Muslim leaders, both religious and community leaders, must join hands to raise youth awareness of the Islamic way of life and the examples set by the Prophet Muhammad. Training on Islamic ethics must be provided regularly to all youths who must be prompted to study the religion along with regular school subjects. The government must allow provincial Islamic committees to fully play their role in matters related to youth having friends of the opposite sex in the wrong way, dressing un-Islamically, and being involved in all vices. Furthermore, Islamic laws must be allowed to be strictly enforced and to be used as the highest law such as the law governing dress codes, having friends of the opposite sex, and other behaviors that are not in accordance with Islamic principles (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). There are four factors significantly affecting Islamic behavior: level of religious knowledge, level of Islamic upbringing, participation in Islamic activities, and participation in training associated with Islam. Youth who had a high level of opportunity to behave according to Islamic principles were those who had a high and a medium level of Islamic upbringing (12.10 times and 3.41 times); those who had a high and a medium level of Islamic knowledge (3.61 times and 2.00 times); those who participated in Islamic activities regularly (3.45 times), and once in a while (2.35 times); and those who participated in Islamic training regularly (2.99 times), and once in a while (1.93 times) (Laeheem, 2012). Levels of knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings and principles, levels of Islamic upbringing, participation in Islamic activities, and participation in Islamic training are all significantly associated with receiving Islamic care of Islamic behavior. Youths who had a high level of care in the Islamic way also had a high level of knowledge and understanding of Islam (3.16 times), had a high level of Islamic upbringing (3.03 times), participated in Islamic activities regularly (1.43 times), and participated in Islamic training regularly (1.79 times) (Laeheem, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to seek ways to prompt Muslim youths to have Islamic behavior by emphasizing the admonition process and motivating them to adhere to Islamic principles to correct their misbehaviors (Baka, 2007; Laeheem & Baka, 2010). Youths must be prompted to adhere to good things such as morality, ethics, awareness of good and bad things, correct and proper behaviors, and being determined to lead a good life (Khagphong, 2004; Mahama, 2009; Laeheem & Baka, 2010).

Consequently, it was necessary to conduct a study on the effects of a wisdom-based behavior change program on Islamic behavior among youths with risk behaviors in the three Southern border provinces to see whether or not and how much youths who participated in activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program would have Islamic behavior. The results of this study would be useful for setting guidelines for promoting and supporting youths with risk behaviors, changing their behaviors to be more Islamic, and to prompt youths who already have Islamic behavior to be stricter in their Islamic behavior. The study needed to be conducted before the problems became more severe and develop into social problems that are difficult to solve as this is one way of helping to solve the problem in time.

Methods

Target Groups

The target groups for this study were Muslim youths with risk behaviors in the three Southern border provinces. Forty youths were recruited from each of three communities totaling 120. Of these, 60 youths, 20 from each of the three communities, were recruited in the experimental group to participate in activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program. For the control group, the same number (60 youths), 20 from each of the three communities, was recruited to participate in religious activities of masjids. The youths in these two groups consisted of those who had high and those who had low scores resulting from an Islamic Behavior Test. They were mixed so that the two groups had the same average scores. They were selected using purposive sampling from youths who had low scores and those who had high scores and were willing to participate in the activities of the study.

Research Instruments and Development of the Instruments

1. The Islamic Behavior Test had three aspects: knowledge of Islamic behavior consisting of 15 items; attitude towards Islamic behavior consisting of 15 items; and possession of Islamic behavior consisting of 20 items. This test was given to the youths to for self assessment of their levels of behavior during the past year. The criteria for scoring were as follows (Laeheem, Baka, Tahe, & Walee, 2012; Laeheem, 2014):
 "0" means Never knew it/Strongly disagree/Never did it
 "1" means Knew it a little/Disagree/Once in while
 "2" means Knew it enough/Not sure/Did it fairly often
 "3" means Knew it well/Agree/Often did it
 "4" means Knew it very well/Strongly agree/Did it regularly
2. There were six activities in the wisdom-based behavior change program used to promote Islamic behavior as follows: 1) knowing one another (At-Ta'aruf); 2) knowledge (Al-Ilmu); 3) self-inventory (Al-Muhasabah); 4) renewal behavior (At-Tajdid); 5) socialization of the

mind; and 6) last orientation (Al-Wadah). The study lasted six months from September 2016 to February 2017.

3. Religious activities of the masjids were guidelines for promoting Islamic behavior set by religious leaders and masjid committees and were conducted for six months from September 2016 to February 2017. Examples of these activities include: admonition after praying, listening to the weekly sermon, Islamic ethics camp, studying the Quran, studying the religion, and community development.

The Experiment

This study employed a true experimental research method with the true control group, pretest-posttest design, as follows (Cambell & Russo, 1999):

$$\begin{array}{cccc} R & O_1 & X & O_2 \\ R & O_1 & & O_2 \end{array}$$

where R is randomly assign subjects to Experimental group and control groups

O₁ is administer the pre-test to all subjects in both groups
 X is exposure to the treatment by using wisdom-based behavior change program of experimental group

O₂ is administer the posttest to all subjects in both groups.

Data Collection

The Islamic Behavior Test was given to the experimental and control groups before they participated in the activities. The tests were marked and after that the activities were conducted as planned in the wisdom-based behavior change program and religious activities set by the masjids for six months. The Islamic Behavior Test was given to the experimental and the control groups again after they had participated in the activities, and the tests were marked again.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the R program to compare differences of Islamic behavior between the experimental group and the control group using the independent samples t-test, and the differences in Islamic behavior between the experimental and the control groups before and after their participation in the activities were compared using a paired samples t-test.

Criteria and Interpretation of Means

The researcher used the criteria for interpretation of means of the levels of knowledge of Islamic way behavior, attitude toward Islamic way behavior, and behaving in an Islamic way as devised by Laeheem et al. (2015) where 0.00–0.49 = Lowest, 0.50–1.49 = Low, 1.50–2.49 = Moderate, 2.50–3.49 = High, and 3.50–4.00 = Highest.

Results

1. The Muslim youths with risk behavior in the three Southern border provinces in the experimental group (who participated in activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program) and the control group (who participated in religious activities of the masjids), before participating in the activities, had similar average scores for their knowledge of Islamic behavior (1.65 and 1.67, respectively), attitude towards Islamic behavior (1.73 and 1.76, respectively), and possession of Islamic behavior (1.79 and 1.83, respectively) as shown in [Table 1](#).
2. Muslim youths with risk behavior in the three Southern border provinces who participated in the activities of the masjids (the control group), after and before participating in the activities, had significantly different average scores at the level of .001. The average score for their knowledge of Islamic behavior after participating in the activities was 2.04 which was higher than that before participating in the activities (1.67); the difference in the average scores was 0.37. The score for their attitude towards Islamic behavior after participating in the activities was 2.12, which was higher than that before participating in the activities (1.76); the difference was 0.37. Their score for possession of Islamic behavior after participating in the activities was 2.25 which was higher than that before participating in the activities (1.83); the difference was 0.42, as shown in [Table 2](#).
3. Muslim youths with risk behavior in the three Southern border provinces who participated in the activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program (the experimental group) had a significantly different average score for their knowledge of Islamic behavior, attitude towards Islamic behavior, and possession of Islamic behavior after and before participating in activities at the .001 level. Their average score for knowledge of Islamic behavior after participating in the activities was 3.35 which was higher than that before participating in the activities (1.65); the difference in the average scores was 1.70. Their average score for attitude towards Islamic behavior after participating in the activities was 3.42 while that before the participation was 1.73; the difference was 1.69. Their average score for possession of Islamic behavior after participating in activities was 3.36

Table 1

Results before participating in the programs of the experimental group and control group

Group	Mean score	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Knowledge					
Experimental group	1.65	0.16	60	-0.680	.498
Control group	1.67	0.17	60		
Attitude					
Experimental group	1.73	0.17	60	-1.091	.278
Control group	1.76	0.11	60		
Behavior					
Experimental group	1.79	0.15	60	-1.601	.111
Control group	1.83	0.13	60		

p < .05

Table 2

Results before and after participating in the program of control group

Control group	Mean score	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Knowledge					
Before participating	1.67	0.17	60	7.124	.000
After participating	2.04	0.34	60		
Attitude					
Before participating	1.76	0.11	60	6.421	.000
After participating	2.12	0.41	60		
Behavior					
Before participating	1.83	0.13	60	14.594	.000
After participating	2.25	0.18	60		

p < .05

which was higher than that before their participation in the activities (1.79); the difference of the average scores after and before the participation was 1.57, as shown in [Table 3](#).

4. The Muslim youths with risk behavior in the three Southern border provinces in the experimental group (who participated in the activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program) and the control group (who participated in the religious activities of the masjids), before participating in the activities, had significantly different average scores for their knowledge of Islamic behavior, attitude towards Islamic behavior, and possession of Islamic behavior at .001. Muslim youths in the experimental group had an average score of 3.35 for knowledge of Islamic behavior which was higher than that of the control group (2.04); the difference was 1.31. Muslim youths in the experimental group had an average score for attitude towards Islamic behavior of 3.42 which was higher than that of the Muslim youths in the control group (2.12); the difference was 1.30. Muslim youths in the experimental group had an average score of 3.36 for possession of Islamic behavior which was higher than that of the Muslim youths in the control group (2.25); the difference was 1.11, as shown in [Table 4](#).

Discussion and Recommendation

The results of this study revealed important findings that the wisdom-based behavior change program and Islamic activities of the masjids could improve knowledge of Islamic behavior, attitude towards Islamic behavior, and possession of Islamic behavior among Muslim youths in the

Table 3

Results before and after participating in the program of experimental group

Control group	Mean score	S.D.	N	t-test	p
Knowledge					
Before participating	1.65	0.16	60	32.248	.000
After participating	3.35	0.37	60		
Attitude					
Before participating	1.73	0.17	60	60.353	.000
After participating	3.42	0.26	60		
Behavior					
Before participating	1.79	0.15	60	65.745	.000
After participating	3.36	0.12	60		

p < .05

Table 4

Results after participating in the program of the experimental group and control group

Group	Mean score	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Knowledge					
Experimental group	3.35	0.26	60	20.287	.000
Control group	2.04	0.34	60		
Attitude					
Experimental group	3.42	0.26	60	20.321	.000
Control group	2.12	0.41	60		
Behavior					
Experimental group	3.36	0.12	60	40.418	.000
Control group	2.25	0.18	60		

 $p < .05$

three Southern border provinces who had risk behaviors. Before participating in the activities, these two youth groups had approximately the same levels of knowledge of Islamic behavior, attitude towards Islamic behavior, and possession of Islamic behavior. However, Muslim youths after participating in the wisdom-based behavior change program had much higher levels of knowledge, attitude, and possession of Islamic behavior. The scores for knowledge, attitude, and possession of Islamic behavior among the Muslim youths who participated in the wisdom-based behavior change program increased by 1.70, 1.69, and 1.57, respectively, while those of the Muslim youths who participated in the religious activities of the masjids increased by only 0.37, 0.37, and 0.42, respectively. It was noticeable that the wisdom-based behavior change program could improve knowledge of Islamic behavior, attitude towards Islamic behavior, and possession of Islamic behavior among the Muslim youths who had risk behavior more than the religious activities of the masjids could.

The reason for this is that the activities of the wisdom-based behavior change program emphasized a process of promoting and supporting youth to have correct knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles, to have opportunities to positively adjust their attitude, and to eventually express themselves in the Islamic way according to the knowledge gained and attitude that has been improved. According to Mahama (2009) and Narongraksakhet (1997) giving importance to promotion of correct knowledge and understanding through training, socializing, and emphasizing positive attitude adjustment is a very important factor for applying knowledge of religious principles in doing activities. The process of doing activities to promote desirable behavior and behavior expected by society through giving importance to knowledge and understanding, building good attitude and continuous practice is important in enabling youths to apply what they have gained from doing the activities to develop and adjust their behavior to be good and desirable (Lhamlert, 2009; Ritnetikul, 2009). Conducting activities that focus on building a good attitude and enhancing knowledge and understanding influence social adaptation, habit change, and personality change to practice in accordance with rules, regulations, and social norms (Chatrasupakul, 2003; Khagphong, 2004). Moreover, activities that give importance to participants receiving knowledge of Islamic principles and developing a good attitude can help prevent them from becoming lost in undesirable environments and

through social trends; most Muslim youths who adopt Islamic behavior have knowledge and understanding of religious principles, practice the religion strictly, and have been instilled with Islamic ethics (Laeheem & Baka, 2012; Laeheem, 2013). In addition, doing such activities gives importance to good relationships among the participants to get better acquainted, to trust each other, and to have a good attitude toward each other. On conducting the activities, activity leaders can explain to the youths attending what the benefits are resulting from participation in the activities. Building good relationships and acquaintances is very important to building the sense of brotherhood among Muslims. This enables those who understand it to feel that they receive attention, love, and care and as a result they are ready to embrace the correct knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles which is the basis for holding the activities to join hands in solving behavioral problems among Muslims so that they can live happily together in this world and the next, and this is a significant factor contributing to the success of the activities (Mahama, 2009; Prayatsup, 2012). Promoting Muslim youth to seek knowledge for living is what Islam attaches importance to, especially for youths to develop their life goals and Islamic behavior by being earnest and having respect and hope for returns in this world and the next because seeking knowledge is the important foundation for making humans perfect in their faith and practice, as stipulated by the religion (Touthern, 2010; Kaypan, 2012). Behavior change is a mission that followers must complete for Allah, especially behavior change among Muslims with risk behavior and misbehavior to return to being perfect Muslims; to achieve this, must change their behaviors to meet the three principles of faith, practice, and ethics that they have neglected for a long time; and they must revive their correct Islamic knowledge, attitude, and practice (Upama, 2009; Karee, 2012).

Furthermore, the activities promote participants to appreciate Islamic values and principles with emphasis on Islamic behavior and social norms that are the roles and duties to perform, the rules to observe, and the skills that are necessary for life. According to Popenoe (1993) and Theodorson and Theodorson (1990) socialization of the mind is a process of learning, accepting values, and of observing rules and regulations as guidelines for practice and developing a personality that is desired by society. Likewise, Cohen and Orbuch (1990), Sereetrakul (2009) and Thitiwattana (2004) state that socialization of the mind is beneficial to setting up a behavior management plan and guidelines, creating inspiration, ideology, attitude, and beliefs so that social members have the knowledge and skills necessary for life, and play their roles appropriate for the place, time, and occasion. The system of giving knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles by training, socializing, and nurturing intelligence and the physical and mental features of being Muslims who have a determined faith is a crucial factor that makes Muslim youths into Muslims who have morality, ethics, and the discipline of being good followers of Allah, and they will be safe in this world and the next (Narongraksakhet, 1997; Mahama, 2009). Instilling and promoting behavior change to be in congruence with the Islamic way by giving

knowledge and understanding as well as building good and correct attitudes according to Islamic principles can motivate and support youths to adopt good practices and improved behavior (Arbu, 2006; Touthern, 2010). Moreover, promoting youths to change their behavior so that it is in congruence with Islamic principles by training is to create motivation among youth so that they can successfully meet the goals they have set (Bungatayong, 2009; Kaypan, 2012).

The results of this study could help individuals and organizations involved in looking after youth in the area as well as other areas in forming good policies and concrete strategies for solving, promoting, and supporting Muslim youth to have Islamic behavior. In addition, the results of the study can serve as important data for promoting and supporting the family institution, educational institutions, and religious institutions to concretely control Muslim youth who demonstrate risk behavior to change their behavior to be more Islamic using the wisdom-based behavior change program. This program focuses on the socialization process in which parents, guardians, teachers, and Muslim leaders can teach, train, advise, and instill in youths an awareness that is correct according to social norms and Islamic principles. In particular, youths with risk behavior should be helped to behave more Islamically. The results of this study show that all the methods provide care for youths and eventually enable them to be more Islamic. Therefore, related individuals and organizations should realize and give importance to the program and implement it earnestly in a timely manner before the problems become more severe and develop into social problems.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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