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Approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths in Pattani province, Southern Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths. Data were collected through brainstorming meetings, focus group discussions, and critique meetings with 10 representatives from each group of religious leaders, local leaders, core youth leaders, and parents, totaling 40 representatives. Then, content analysis was performed on the data using comparative logic of concepts, theories, research reports, and context. The study found that the approach to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths was to use a program for promoting Islamic ethics for faith-based socialization, which is a program that applies Islamic principles in modern activities that correspond to youth interests. The program places emphasis on religious practice, providing opportunities for parents to participate, creating motivation, arranging Islamic environments that contribute to Islamic ethical promotion, and conducting activities step-by-step regularly and continuously. The results of this study would be beneficial to promoting Muslim youths to have stronger Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith and would be one way of solving, preventing, and reducing the problems among youths of a lack of Islamic ethics in devotion to the faith.

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Introduction

Having Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith is superb; it is the main goal and an ultimate foundation that Islam uses as principles in arranging the Muslim living system and measuring being a Muslim. Having Islamic ethics will make religious practice complete for the person and will result in individual happiness and a true winner in this world and the next. One Islamic principle that is emphasized and Muslims are urged to adhere to and practice in their everyday life to the best of their ability, concerns respect to Allah. This means putting yourself under Allah's

protection to protect you from all frightening events, sins, and taboos and to abandon them all because He sets all the principles for Muslims to have faith in and to perform religious practice accordingly with sincerity, consistency, gratitude, and love for each other (Binkasun, 2001; Bungatayong, 2009; Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Rimpeng, 2008). To have Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith is a principle for Muslims to practice with a purpose. Muslims are taught to behave well and be of good conduct, taking the Prophet Muhammad as their role model with hope in the mercy of Allah neither because they want to be praised and recognized by others nor to be awarded with any prize (Annadwee, 2004; Kaypan, 2012). Nowadays, Muslim society is faced with problems concerning some Thai Muslim youth lacking Islamic ethics, especially in adherence to the

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faith. For example, they abandon praying and fasting, they dress against Islamic principles, use drugs, gamble, go to entertainment places, and involve themselves in all vices. These problems have evolved in the same way as modern technological changes that happen so quickly that they become complex and more severe; they are chronic and difficult to prevent and solve completely (Anmunajid, 2010; Annadwee, 2004; Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Suramethee, 2007). Due to quick changes and technological advancement that are related positively with youths receiving information and unsuitable foreign culture, youths are not aware that the information and such culture have entered and mixed with their way of life, and they actually have applied them and imitated them because of their popularity (Juajan, 2005; Suramethee, 2007).

Data collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders and local leaders from Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province, in the pilot study period before the start of this project, revealed that some Thai Muslim youths in that village lack Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith in many ways. For example, they do not pray and do not fast; they lead their lives in the way they want and in so doing, violate Islamic principles; they have friends of the opposite sex and hold hands and kiss freely, and some even have sexual relationships before marriage. Moreover, some of them do not study the religion; they are involved in illegal football betting, drug abuse, going to entertainment places, and dressing in a way that is against Islamic principles. These are problems that need to be solved promptly, and they are forms of youth behavior that urgently need to be changed before the problems become more severe and more difficult to solve. People in the community agree that they should use religious principles as the mainstream approach to solve the problem of youths lacking ethics in adherence to the faith (Laeheem, 2015a). Studies have found that Islamic religious socialization is a process that encourages youths to practice and behave according to social norms and enables Muslim youths to live an ethical way of life in accordance with Islamic principles. This reflects the truth of life that can make these youths happy based on Islamic morals and ethics (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2014; Mahama, 2009). Muslim youths who practice the religion or do religious activities continuously tend to behave more suitably because religious practice helps remind them of Allah and His teachings which calm and socialize their minds and help them refrain from bad behaviors (Chaiprasit, Chansawang, & Pergmark, 2005; Mahama, 2009).

Reviewing related literature, five studies were found that related to instilling Islamic ethics in Thailand. They are: a study of the promotion of Islamic ethics as practiced in private Islamic schools in Mueang district, Yala province (Arbu, 2006); activities for inculcating Islamic ethics in secondary school students at Islamic private schools in Educational Area I, Yala (Bungatayong, 2009); states, problems, and inculcation of Akhlaq into Islamic private school students under the Private Education Office, Pattani province (Touthern, 2010); state of problems and inculcation of Islamic ethics and morals in students at secondary schools in Satun province (Kaypan, 2012); and inculcation

of ethical values and discipline into children and youths in the three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat (Jindara, Waiwannajit, Ananta-apipong, Chobwhan, & Chareonwong, 2012). Nevertheless, none of these studies are suitable for an area context and content where emphasis is on only Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. Moreover, they do not meet the needs of the community, and have not been piloted, experimented, or concretely practiced.

Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a study on approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youth in Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province. The study explored suitable approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among the Thai Muslim youths of Ban Kha Ling. The results of this study would be beneficial to all parties to use in solving, preventing, and reducing the problems of youths lacking an Islamic moral code. In addition, the results of this study would also be useful for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths. The problems need to be tackled before they become more severe and become social problems that are difficult to prevent and to solve, and for all parties concerned to help solve them in time.

Research Objective

To investigate approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths.

Methods

This qualitative study aimed to search for a body of knowledge and new concepts on approaches to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Muslim youths. The data were collected from brainstorming meetings, focus group discussions, and critique meetings attended by 40 informants consisting of 10 representatives from each of four groups: religious leaders, local leaders, core youth leaders, and parents. These informants were selected by the researcher and the Mosque (Masjid) Committee, as those who were directly responsible for youth supervision and promotion. The brainstorming meeting and focus group discussions were organized to determine out how to apply Islamic principles as the main framework for ways to promote Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith, and a critique meeting was organized for the informants to criticize and give comments to make the approaches complete, concrete, and feasible. The data were primarily analyzed by categorizing them according to the issues stated in the objectives. Then, content analysis was performed using logic principles to compare them with concepts, theories, and research reports along with the contexts. This study used methodological triangulation to confirm the findings, to provide more comprehensive data, and to increase validity.

Results

A brainstorming meeting, focus group discussions, and critique meeting with the representatives of religious

leaders, local leaders, core youth leaders and parents were organized to jointly identify and analyze approaches for the promotion of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths in Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province. It was found that there should be a program that was specifically for the promotion of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths called “The Program for Promoting Islamic Ethics for Faith-based Socialization” with details as shown below.

1. It is a program that applies the concepts of Islamic principles.

Activities in the program should be diversified and should clearly focus on the promotion of ethics. The content and time of each activity should be in congruence. Activities must be up-to-date and correspond with the interests of the target group focusing on allowing youths to conduct religious activities, especially in their daily living. These activities include Halaqah or Islamic study group (twice a week), Qiyam-ul-lail or conducting together evening praying (once a month), voluntary fasting together (once or twice a month), attending a religious lecture (once a month), and Halaqah Al-Quran (once a week). As can be seen, this program applies Islamic principles to socialize the minds of youths for them to adhere to the faith through training, teaching, knowledge exchange, understanding, reminding, building concepts and good attitudes, and changing behavior in line with social norms. Some studies have found that using Islamic principles in the socialization and behavioral promotion process through building knowledge, understanding, experience, training, and nurturing is regarded as a process that can provide youths with ethics to apply in their everyday lives (Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). These activities apply Islamic principles to instill awareness in youths by encouraging them to know what is right or wrong, to be ashamed of doing whatever is against social norms lead youths to knowledge and understanding of how to live and practice by themselves within the framework designated by Islam (Laeheem & Baka, 2009). Youths who have Islamic ethics and behave in accordance with Islamic principles have acquired knowledge and understanding of religious teachings and they strictly practice the religion because they have continually and regularly been inculcated with morals and ethics that develop their personality (Khagphong, 2004; Mahama, 2009). Furthermore, all activities that apply Islamic principles in helping youths to behave more in a way expected by the Muslim society have been successful and achieved their goals. Most Muslim youths who have participated in Islamic activities adapted and started to behave more in the Islamic way. This could prevent and solve undesired behavior in society (Laeheem, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

2. It is a program that emphasizes parental involvement.

Parental involvement can be created by providing understanding to parents that they are expected to closely

inspect, control, and monitor their children's behavior and give their children advice, warning, and teach them Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith in a loving and caring way. Moreover, parents need to be good role models for their children. Community leaders should take part in the program by providing knowledge to parents and youths. Parents and the community are required to encourage youths to study the religion on Saturdays and Sundays, and jointly form clear guidelines for the promotion of Islamic ethics as well as pay close attention to their children, especially to their participation in the activities. If parents participate and cooperate in running activities of the program, it is more likely that the program will successfully achieve the goals. Parental involvement is an important factor that can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. A study has shown, the promotion of the program with the involvement of related parties with the same goals is a technique that can make the program more likely to achieve the goals that have been set (Mapobsuk, 2000; Spector, 2006; Tansakul, 2004). Working with the involvement of all parties concerned is considered the most likely way to promote the work process to achieve the goal, especially, involvement that is volunteered with enthusiasm, intention, and sincerity (Bureekul, 2005; DeLamater & Myers, 2007; Patanapongsa, 2004). In addition, successful leaders who focus on a process of work involvement by providing opportunities for parents to be jointly responsible for the operation of activities, to seriously promote Islamic ethics, to make plans for activity management, follow-ups, and evaluation will most likely have successful achievement of the program (Patanapongsa, 2004; Srimechai, 2004).

3. It is a program that emphasizes motivation.

This refers to praising and promoting youths who have ethics in adherence to the faith at the excellent level by awarding them with certificates and prizes, and supporting them to be core youth leaders. Praising and honoring them should be done consistently such as by organizing an important day to honor them called “Khon Dee Sri Char-iyatham Islam” (Islamic Ethical Person), and through an Outstanding Youth Contest for the district, province or region. Such activities are ways of encouraging youths to realize and see the importance of being ethical, and behave more in accordance with Islamic ethics. Studies have found that instilling and promoting Islamic ethics by motivating youths to behave in a desirable way such as by organizing motivating projects, awarding prizes to ethical youth, presenting certificates and praising persons with outstanding ethics, can motivate and stimulate them to have good conduct and display better behavior as well as creating Islamic values and ethics among them (Arbu, 2006; Touthern, 2010). To promote Islamic ethics among youths effectively, clear rules and punishments are required such as using a sternly reproving look to show that something is wrong, dissuading youths from doing wrong, admiring a person who behaves well in the presence of one who misbehaves, ignoring one who misbehaves so that the person acknowledges the mistake. In addition, persuading by admiring supporting, praising, and honoring youths

with outstanding Islamic ethics, and rewarding youths who behave well should be carried out along with promoting Islamic ethics (Kaypan, 2012; Touthern, 2010). Motivating youths to behave according to Islamic ethics by awarding those who have outstanding ethics with prizes, and praising and honoring those who have ethics, organizing activities to praise and honor them, inviting academics to give knowledge of inculcating Islamic ethics, creating good values, citing prominent persons in Islamic history who have conducted themselves correctly according to Islamic principles, and posting biographies of important people for youths to use as examples are activities that should be considered for use in promoting Islamic ethics. Such activities can motivate target youths to pay more attention to following Islamic principles, persuade youths to have ethics, and turn them away from doing wrong, and as a result they will be rewarded in the next world for the good deeds they do (Bungatayong, 2009; Kaypan, 2012).

4. It is a program within an Islamic environment that contributes to the promotion of Islamic ethics.

The emphases of the program are on the improvement and arrangement of the environment and atmosphere of the mosque to be a place for Islamic youth to gather and undertake activities which encourage them to spend their free time usefully. For example, the place should be arranged in such a way that there is an office for the core youth leaders group, a library, a self-study room, an advisory clinic to provide advice and suggestions regarding Islamic principles and ethics, knowledge sharing sessions, correct religious practice sessions, Islamic ethical promotion VCD loaning service, and making posters with information concerning Islamic ethics. Furthermore, youths should be taught and instilled with love for their mosque so that they want to develop it and come to pray there regularly. In particular, youths should be encouraged to pray together at the mosque five times a day and participate in activities at the mosque regularly and consistently. Therefore, social association in places and with people like schoolteachers, friends, and the community can influence success in the promotion of Islamic ethics, and behavioral change among youths. Experience gained from such association can provide youths with good thoughts that they can absorb and use in their daily life. Studies have found that instilling Islamic ethics in youths by environmental arrangement the Islamic way in schools so they love their religious place and hometown and have Islamic ethics requires a religious leader to supervise, and arrange the atmosphere that supports learning Islamic ethics. Campaigning for environmental arrangements to be suitable for instilling Islamic ethics can be done from home to school and the community. Therefore there should be posters and the like to provide information about Islamic ethics in these places because they are factors that can help youth to follow Islamic principles (Kaypan, 2012; Touthern, 2010). The mosque is the best youth center, especially for group study such as getting into groups to study, read, and memorize the Quran and other religious subjects. Moreover, the mosque is the place that builds faith for Muslims,

builds good souls, develops pure thoughts among youths, and teaches them to be attached to Allah in all dimensions of life that make them Allah's followers with sincere adherence to the faith (Touthern, 2010). Instilling Islamic ethics in youths by arranging a good environment in the community is very important for the promotion of Islamic ethics among youths. This can be seen from faith created by Islam that influenced the environmental changes for Arabs in the past. Savagery and cruelty were changed into peaceful societies by the environment being changed step by step, continually, until feelings became loving and good relationships developed among the people who had faith (Kaypan, 2012).

5. It is a program with consistent and continuous promotion of Islamic ethics activities.

The goal of promoting Islamic ethics among youths is to make them complete Muslims through the process of activities that are operated consistently and continually. This is a method that Islam gives much importance to because it is carried out step-by-step and it was the method that the Prophet Muhammad used to propagate Islam. People responsible for the activities need to realize what youths need, considering their gender, age, and growth development in giving them understanding and getting them to practice gradually to build their confidence and belief, so that their practice is correct and can help eliminate their negative feelings such as bias, discouragement, and laziness. The method encourages youths to discover their competence and self-confidence which will lead them to success in the future. Youths are taught to accept their faults and try to find ways to improve themselves. The promotion of Islamic ethics with consistency and continuity can make the content and information used in such a program more credible and valuable together with knowledge that can be practiced. Studies have found that in promoting Islamic ethics, activities should be conducted consistently and step-by-step, clearly, and concretely. Any activity that is difficult to understand should be made easier to understand by allowing youths to gradually practice it to give them confidence, good attitudes, and self-esteem which will eventually improve their behavior (Touthern, 2010). Instilling Islamic ethics continually and consistently is a method that Islam gives importance to because it is carried out step-by-step, and is the method by which the Quran was bestowed and the method the Prophet Muhammad used to propagate Islam. Therefore, instilling Islamic ethics in youths must be gradually carried out through activities organized by the community and incorporated with religious principles taking into consideration physical and mental development, and their feelings. Moreover, there must be evaluation of the changes taking place in each step, similar to evaluating followers by testing their faith in Allah in order to upgrade differences in the faith of each follower (Kaypan, 2012). Preaching and teaching the principles of the faith, practice, and ethics of Islam to the first generation were not conducted only once but took a long time and based on a step-by-step, consistent, and continual process (Laeheem, 2013a, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study indicate that the community leaders of Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province should use “The Program for Promoting Islamic Ethics for Faith-based Socialization” to promote Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Thai Muslim youths in Ban Kha Ling. This program is an applied program that is up-to-date and corresponds with youth's interests. Focusing on the practice of religious activities in adherence to the faith as a part of daily living, the program applies Islamic principles to socialize the minds of youths to hold on to Islamic ethics through teaching, knowledge exchange, reminding, building good attitudes and adapting to Islamic behavior. The program also provides opportunities for parents to participate in giving advice, warning, training, teaching, controlling, looking after, monitoring, and being good role models for their children. It motivates youths in many ways to have Islamic ethics; arranging the environment in the mosque and the community to make it suitable for the promotion of Islamic ethics; conducting Islamic ethics, and promoting activities step-by-step and continuously. Academics suggest that in promoting ethical behavior, various methods should be used and they should be carried out systematically with cooperation from all parties in society. Youths who have been trained using the correct methods will have good conduct and can be good role models. Moreover, it is important to apply Islamic principles in the process of socializing the minds, emotions, intelligence, and souls of Muslim youths (Chareonwongsak, 2006; Laeheem, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2015b; Laeheem, Baka, Tahe, & Walee, 2015). Youths should be socialized to follow the way of life of the Prophet Mohammad by giving them knowledge and understanding of Islamic ethical principles so that they can adhere to them as the guidelines for their everyday religious practice and undertake these habits correctly according to Islamic principles. The activities to promote Islamic ethics must be conducted to socialize the minds and to instill in youth social norms with emphasis on incorporating moral and ethical principles in the activities for youths to learn and to perceive values and rules to live with others in society (Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Laeheem & Madreh, 2014; Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997).

The results of this study can help personnel and organizations related to promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths by concretely encouraging youths in the target area as well as elsewhere. Islamic organizations and government organizations, in particular, should utilize the results of this research in forming policy and setting concrete strategies to promote and support Thai Muslim youths to adopt Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. In addition, the results of this study can be used as important data for the development and support of the family institution, educational institutions, and religious institutions to monitor and oversee Muslim youths who have risky behaviors in order to change them to Islamic behaviors and for youths to have Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. A socialization process can be used because it is a process that parents, teachers, and Muslim leaders can use in training, teaching, giving advice, and

instilling awareness that is correct according to social norms and Islamic principles. Furthermore, the research results can also be beneficial as one way to solve, prevent, and reduce the problem of youths lacking Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. Parents and community leaders must realize and give importance to seriously using the program in each community's daily living before the problems become more severe and before they eventually become social problems. Therefore, all parties concerned must help prevent such problems in a timely manner.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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