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The results of promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Muslim youth in Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province

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Abstract

This study explored the results of promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Muslim youth of Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province, Thailand. Data were collected from 50 youths, 25 of whom had low scores in the Islamic ethics test and they were placed in the experimental group, while the other 25 with higher scores in the test were placed in the control group. The experimental group participated in an Islamic ethics promotion program to be socialized in the faith while the control group participated in religious activities organized by the community using a true control group pretest-posttest design. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling and the data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and paired sample and independent t-tests. Additional data were collected from a focus group discussion with 10 representatives from separate groups of religious leaders, local leaders, core youth leaders, and parents or guardians, totaling 40 informants. Content analysis was performed using logical comparisons of concepts, theories, and research reports along with the context. The results of the study revealed that before the experiment, the youths in the control group had significantly higher scores than those in the experimental group. However, after the experiment, the experimental group had significantly higher scores than the control group. Youths in the experimental group improved in their behavior; they placed greater importance on Islamic ethics regarding adherence to the faith and realized such importance at a higher level that could be seen from their refraining from risk behaviors in terms of losing faith towards Allah by comparing others to Him. In addition, they gave more importance to praying five times a day and staying away from gambling, drugs, and going to discotheques. They dressed in a way that covered their bodies more appropriately and in accordance with Islamic principles. Moreover, they fasted during Ramadan and became more public-minded.

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Introduction

Islamic ethics and adherence to the faith are one of the main goals that Islam uses as a criterion in managing the life system of Muslims and to assess being a perfect Muslim because Islamic ethics in strict adherence to the faith are an

essential element of Islamic practice in daily life for Muslims so that their lives are complete according to Islam. The prophet Muhammad emphasized and encouraged Muslims to adhere to Islamic ethics and live their lives in accordance with these ethics to the best of their ability. That is, in their minds, Muslims can see whether what they are doing is good or bad, praiseworthy, or disgusting, and it is a result of training, upbringing, and religious study (Bungatayong, 2009; Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Rimpeng, 2008).

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Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith is one element of Islamic ethics concerning respect for Allah; it is to place oneself under His protection so that one is protected from those that one fears and from sins by refraining from all taboos. Allah laid principles of belief for Muslims and principles of practice for them to follow sincerely and regularly with thanks and love for each other (Binkasun, 2001; Bungatayong, 2009). These principles include: respect for Allah without comparing anything to Him; to do anything for Him without expecting anything in return from humans, and without expecting praise from one's fellow man; studying for Allah, following Allah's orders, and remaining steadfast in the frame Allah specifies in the Quran and following the role model of the Prophet Muhammad (Rimpeng, 2008). Islam requires Muslims to practice with the purpose of their beliefs and faith, and follow the Prophet Muhammad without any doubt or question, hoping only for Allah's mercy (Annadwee, 2004; Kaypan, 2012).

Muslim society nowadays is faced with the problem of youth lacking Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. It is commonplace to see youth who are not embarrassed of sinning by not praying five times a day, not fasting during Ramadan, dressing in a way that shows their body shape clearly, using drugs, gambling and going to entertainment places. Along with rapid development of science and technology, these are problems that have developed rapidly and become more complicated, more severe and have become chronic and difficult to completely eliminate or solve (Anmunajid, 2010; Annadwee, 2004; Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Suramethee, 2007). This problem has changed rapidly along with technological advancement related to information and foreign cultures that are not suitable for youth but have been mixed and applied in most youths' daily lives without them realizing it and they imitate such behavior without knowing that they actually do (Juajan, 2005; Suramethee, 2007). The changes have taken place due to social conditions that have changed rapidly in all aspects which, at the same time, have directly and indirectly affected the way of life among Muslim youth. Parents do not have time to train and teach their children while youth are more interested in new, enjoyable, exciting, and challenging activities than in religious behavior and so they become involved in such activities to such an extent that it can be said they are slaves of Western values and cultures that weaken their Islamic faith and ethics. Some youth sin and break taboos so regularly and openly that this becomes habitual and they do not feel embarrassed and these eventually become accumulated problems and a cycle with no way out (Anmunajid, 2010; Annadwee, 2004).

The abovementioned incidents are in congruence with the results of a primary survey on a target group of youth in Ban Kha Ling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province. The survey found that youth showed behavior indicating their lack of Islamic ethics such as, not praying, not fasting, not studying the religion, being involved in football betting, drug abuse, going to entertainment places, boasting about themselves, and competing with others for a better position inappropriately. These are worrying problems that all related parties must help to solve and urgently correct before they become more severe and more difficult to solve by using

religious principles as the core solutions to the problem (Laeheem, 2015a). Studies have found that applying Islamic principles in promoting Islamic ethical behavior could encourage youth to practice and behave properly according to social norms and enable Muslim youth to enjoy a way of life corresponding to Islamic principles (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2014a; Mahama, 2009). Moreover, Muslim youth who are involved in religious activities continuously tend to exhibit proper behavior because the activities remind them of Allah and His teachings, making them calm because doing such activities is a way of socializing their mind and practicing to be patient and to resist temptations to behave badly (Chaiprasit, Chansawang, & Pergmark, 2005; Mahama, 2009).

This article aimed to investigate the results of the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Muslim youth of Ban Khaling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province, and whether or not it could promote the youths' Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. The results of this study will be useful for all related parties in solving, preventing, and reducing the problem of the lack of Islamic ethics among youth, as well as in promoting youth to be more ethical. The problem needs to be solved and prevented before it becomes more severe and a more difficult social problem and all related parties should help in the timely solving of the problem.

Methods

Target Group

The target group of this experiment of the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith was 50 Muslim youths in Ban Khaling, Phithen sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani province divided into two groups of 25, with one group being the experimental group participating in a program to promote Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith, and the other (control) group participating in religious activities held by the community. The target group participants were selected through purposive sampling placing those with low scores in one group and high scores in the other. The participants recruited were those who were willing to participate in the experiment. The key informants participated in the focus group discussion to analyze the results of the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith based on 40 participants consisting of 10 representatives of religious leaders, 10 representatives of local leaders, 10 representatives of core youths, and 10 representatives of parents and guardians.

Research Instruments

1. Islamic ethics measuring form: this was developed by adapting the form used in the studies by Laeheem (2015a), and Rimpeng (2008). The form contained 32 question items with a 7-point rating scale where 7 = highest; 6 = high; 5 = rather high; 4 = moderately high; 3 = rather low; 2 = low; 1 = lowest.

2. A program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith: this program applies Islamic principles in activities that are up-to-date, meet the interest of youth, emphasize

religious practice, are open for parent and guardian participation, are encouraging, and run step by step regularly and continuously (Laeheem, 2015a).

3. Community religious activities: these are normal activities used by community leaders to promote Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among Muslim youth through two methods: educational management by the Islamic Ethics Training Center of the mosque, and the Islamic Ethics Training Camp.

Experiment Design

The study involved true experimental research in which the experimental group participated in the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith, and the control group participated in community religious activities. The study employed a true control group, pretest-posttest design (Campbell & Russo, 1999).

Data Collection

1. Levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental and the control group were measured using the measuring form.

2. Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith was promoted using the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith with the experimental group, and observation and monitoring were conducted for community religious activities attended by the control group for four months from April to August, 2015.

3. A focus group discussion was held to analyze the results of the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youth. The discussion involved 40 representatives consisting of 10 representatives from each of four groups—religious leaders, core youths, local leaders, and parents and guardians.

4. After the operation of the program, levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental and the control group were remeasured using the measuring form.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the experiment were analyzed using the R Program to compare differences in levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith between the experimental and the control groups by performing an independent samples t-test. Differences in levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith were compared between the experimental and the control groups before and after their participation in the activities by performing a paired samples t-test. Data obtained

from the focus group discussion were primarily analyzed by categorizing them according to the topics related to Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith before content analysis was conducted using logical comparison of concepts, theories, and research reports along with the context.

Rights of Research Participants

The researcher protected the rights of the research participants, especially the target groups, the youths, and their parents and guardians, taking into consideration their consent and rights, and informed them about their rights as research participants. The researcher and Muslim leaders introduced themselves, and the researcher informed the participants about the purposes of the research, described the characteristics, types, contents of the activities, the dates and time the activities that were to be conducted so that the participants understood before deciding to voluntarily participate in the activities. The operations of the activities and their outcomes were kept confidential; data were presented as a whole without revealing either the names or surnames of the participants. The participants could withdraw from participation in the research at any time they wished without having to give reason for their withdrawal.

Criteria and Interpretation of Means

The researcher used the criteria for interpretation of means of the levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith devised by Laeheem (2014b) where 1.00–1.49 = lowest, 1.50–2.49 = low, 2.50–3.49 = rather low, 3.50–4.49 = moderate, 4.50–5.49 = rather high, 5.50–6.49 = high, and 6.50–7.00 = highest.

Results

Results of the Experiment

1. Before the experiment, youths who participated in the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith (the experimental group) and youths who participated in community religious activities were significantly different at the .001 level in Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. The youths in the experimental group had a lower level of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith than those in the control group. The level of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental group was rather low (mean = 3.08) while that among youths in the control group was at a moderate level (mean = 4.06); the difference of the means was 0.99 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith before participating in the program

Group	\bar{X}	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Experimental group	3.08	0.29	25	10.121***	.000
Control group	4.06	0.39	25		

*** $p < .001$

2. The levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths who participated in community religious activities (the control group) before and after their participation in the activities were significantly different at .001. The level of their Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith after their participation in the activities was higher than that before participation. The level before their participation was moderate (mean = 4.06) while after participation, it was rather high (mean = 4.99); thus, the difference was 0.93 as shown in Table 2.

3. The levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths who participated in the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith (the experiment group) before and after their participation in the program were significantly different at .001. The level of their Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith before their participation in the program was higher than that after participation; the level before participation was rather low (mean = 3.08) while after participation, it was high (mean = 5.73); thus, the difference was 2.65 as shown in Table 3.

4. The levels of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths who participated in the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith (the experiment group) and that among youths who participated in community religious activities (the control group) after their participation in the program were significantly difference at .001. The level of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. The level of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental group was at a high level (mean = 5.73), and that of the control group was at a rather high level (mean = 4.99); thus, the difference was 0.74 as shown in Table 4.

Results of Focus Group Discussion

From the focus group discussion involving representatives of religious leaders, local leaders, core youths, and parents and guardians to analyze the results of the operation of the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among the youths in the experimental group, it was found that these youths changed their behavior in adherence to the faith as could be seen from the higher level of their Islamic ethics in

adherence to the faith. They realized and gave more importance to adjusting their behavior to correspond with Islamic principles, while at the same time being more careful and avoiding actions contrary to Islamic ethics and principles as follows.

Refraining from risk behaviors in losing faith towards Allah by comparing other things to Him

Before participating in the program, the youths still had actions and used words that could affect their faith in Allah and Islamic principles. For example, they wore a wrist band, bracelet, necklace or other charms to protect themselves, to prevent bad omens, to enhance luck and auspicious things, and to do things related to superstition like going to a fortune teller. Nevertheless, after participating in the program, they avoided doing them because these actions are considered serious wrong doings that can result in being expelled from the religion, and if they died still undertaking such actions, they would be permanently in hell.

Giving importance to strictly praying five times a day

Before participating in the program, the youths usually neglected their daily religious practice, especially praying five times a day which is one of the main pillars of Islam, and that seriously undermined their faith. Nevertheless, after participating in the program, they began to see the importance of practicing religious activities so much that they absorbed it and had a good attitude toward religious practice. They realized the importance of religious practice that had become a part of their lives as a result of being socialized with Islamic principles.

Keeping away from gambling, drugs, and going to a discotheque

Most youths who participated in the program used to be involved with drugs, gambling, and going to a discotheque; however, after participating in the program they stayed away from drugs and gambling, and stopped going to a discotheque completely because of the emphasis of the program being on thinking of Allah at all times, practicing religious activities regularly, being aware, understanding and realizing the bad

Table 2 Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith of control group before and after participating in the program

Control group	\bar{X}	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Before participation	4.06	0.17	25	9.881***	.000
After participation	4.99	0.39	25		

*** $p < .001$

Table 3 Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith of experimental group before and after participating in the program

Experimental group	\bar{X}	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Before participation	3.08	0.23	25	36.006***	.000
After participation	5.73	0.29	25		

*** $p < .001$

Table 4 Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith after participating in the program

Group	\bar{X}	S.D.	n	t-test	p
Experimental group	5.73	0.23	25	13.064***	.000
Control group	4.99	0.17	25		

*** $p < .001$

effects of drugs, gambling, and going to discotheques and avoiding and staying away from them, and trying not to allow these to impinge on their lives.

Wearing clothes that cover most parts of the body and in a way that corresponds more with Islamic principles

Before participating in the program, youths used to dress in a modern and fashionable way as seen on television and in magazines and other mass media; they imitated movie stars and pop singers by wearing tight clothing that showed their body shape and by wearing a short and thin hijab or headscarf. The clothes they wore did not cover parts of the body according to Islamic principles. However, after participating in the program, youths dressed more correctly according to Islamic principles and acted politely and appropriately to the time, place, and occasion, and did not wear too much makeup.

Fasting during Ramadan

Most of the youths participating in the program had never fasted and for those who had fasted, they did not fast throughout the entire Ramadan month. Nevertheless, during the past Ramadan month (June 2015), all the youths who participated in the program fasted every day. The program encouraged them to fast and see the importance of fasting and the associated activities during Ramadan. As a result, these youths became absorbed with fasting, had a good attitude toward it and realized its importance. This also resulted from being socialized with Islamic principles during the three months of learning religious principles before Ramadan.

Being public-minded

Before participating in the program, the youths had not given importance to and even avoided performing community services because they had spent most of their time in schooling and with friends who considered doing community services was a waste of time, and they would not gain anything from doing them, and that performing community services was for adults. However, after participating in the program, they realized and gave more attention to activities related to community services, and they became more public-minded and more determined to perform and be a leader in community services such as cleaning the mosque, the graveyard, Tadika School (a place for teaching basic of Islamic studies to young Muslim children ranging in age from 6 to 13 years), and the village. The program encouraged, reminded and instilled in them awareness that performing community services involves cooperation and of the importance of benefits to the public.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study showed that after the youths in the experimental group participated in the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith, the level of their Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith was higher than that of the youths in the control group who participated in community religious activities. Before the program commenced, the Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the control group was moderate and higher than that of the experimental group which was rather low. Nevertheless, after

the operation of the program, the level of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths in the experimental group was high and higher than that of the control group which was rather high. This confirms that the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith could actually promote Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youths and could do it better than the regular method served by the community because the program applies Islamic principles in making the activities up-to-date and meeting the needs and interests of youths with emphasis on religious practice. Moreover, the program allows parents and guardians to participate, motivates participants, and arranges the environment to promote Islamic ethics. The activities are operated step by step, regularly and continuously, in agreement with the concept of organizing activities to be up-to-date and to meet youths' interest emphasizing religious practice in everyday life. In addition, Islamic principles are applied in socializing youths through teaching and training, exchanging knowledge and ideas, reminding, building good concepts and attitudes, and changing behavior to be in accordance with the Islamic way. Emphasis is on a process that allows parents to participate in giving advice and admonition, training, teaching, controlling and monitoring behavior, and being good role models for youth (Laeheem, 2013a; Laeheem, 2013b; Laeheem, 2013c).

In addition, this program motivates participants using different types of activities in an Islamic environment, and it is operated step by step with cooperation from all parties in society. It provides an opportunity to youth to be socialized with correct and various methods and to behave as a good role model. The significant feature of the program is that it applies Islamic principles in a process that socializes Muslim youths, in terms of, the mind, emotion, intelligence, and spirit (Chareonwongsak, 2006; Laeheem, Baka, Tahe, & Walee, 2015; Laeheem, 2015b). Promoting Islamic ethics to Muslim youth requires a knowledge building process for understanding and using the ethics in everyday life correctly according to Islamic principles. Emphasis must be placed on socialization of the mind and inculcating social norms in youth incorporating morals and ethics in activities to give them knowledge about values and rules that enable them to live with others in society (Laeheem & Baka, 2010; Laeheem & Madreh, 2014; Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). Using socialization can promote individuals to behave and have characteristics desired by society (Sereetrakul, 2009; Thitiwattana, 2004). Applying Islamic principles to give knowledge and understanding to youth to make them realize the importance of Islamic ethics by emphasizing knowledge and understanding of the principles of faith, practice, and ethics is something for youth to hold on to and to adopt correctly for use in their everyday life (Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). Constructing knowledge and understanding about Islamic principles is crucial for Muslim youth, because it can prevent them from succumbing to problems and indulging in the environment and societal trends (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). Using a process to make youth behave according to Islamic principles by giving them knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings emphasizing strict religious practice, personality development, and Islamic ethics and morals is to instill in youth Islamic ethics and morals (Khagphong, 2004; Mahama, 2009). Promoting religious

knowledge among youth, an Islamic upbringing, and participation in Islamic activities regularly and continuously can reinforce Islamic ethics among Muslim youth (Laeheem, 2013a; Laeheem et al., 2015). Moreover, conducting activities to promote youth's behavior applying religious principles in giving youth knowledge and understanding, instilling in them correct attitudes and ideologies can make youth behave in the way desired by society which is also appropriate and in congruence with the religion and social norms (Adivatanasit, 2002; Laeheem, 2013b). The most appropriate method for developing and promoting behavior in congruence with religious principles and social norms is by applying religious principles in activity programs in training and socializing the mind of youth to make them behave according to social norms and religious principles (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2012; Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997).

It can be concluded that the promotion of Islamic ethics using the program for promoting Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith resulted in a higher level of Islamic ethics among youth whose level of Islamic ethics was previously low because the program emphasized a behavioral development process promoting training on social rules, instilling discipline, awareness of goodness and right and wrong, being ashamed of committing a sin, and promoting doing good deeds according to social norms (Cohen & Orbuch, 1990; Sereetrakul, 2009; Thitirat, 2004). This promotion processes for behavioral change in youth allows them to be accepted by society, because they correspond to social norms and religious principles, in terms of behavior, characteristics, attitudes, and values as a result of socialization (Aaro, Wold, Kannas, & Rimpela, 1986; Wenzel, 1983). In changing behavior to make youth more ethical according to Islamic ethics, it is necessary to study to understand the needs, expectations, and aims of youth in order to design a program that is attuned to youth's feeling and emotions, to enable them to participate in the program willingly. The program needs to link individuals and the social structure because the social structure can shape youth in the way they wish to learn (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). Moreover, in changing youth's behaviors, it is important to inspire and motivate them by setting clear goals for them to reinforce their honor and dignity, enhancement of their philosophy and values (Hendry, Mayer, & Kloepp, 2007).

The results of this study can help individuals and organizations involved in the promotion of Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youth inside and outside the target area. Islamic and governmental organizations, in particular, should utilize the data and information resulting from this study in forming good policy and concrete strategies on promoting and supporting Muslim youth to have Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith. In addition, the results of this study provide important information for the promotion and support of family, educational, and religious institutions in supervising Muslim youth with low levels of Islamic ethics more concretely in order to improve the level of Islamic ethics among this group of youth. Furthermore, the results of this study can be useful as one way of solving, preventing, and reducing the problems of lacking Islamic ethics in adherence to the faith among youth. However, parents and guardians as well

as community leaders must realize and give importance to the program and use it in everyday life concretely before the problems become more severe and result in broader social problems. This will help to prevent larger problem in the future.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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