



## Guidelines for operation development of government agencies focused on the problems of young Thai Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand

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### Abstract

The aims of this research were to study the problems of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, to study the management methods of government agencies employed to solve the problems faced by young Muslims, and to study the results of government activities, as well as to suggest guidelines for solving the problems faced by young Muslims. Qualitative methods were utilized in this study, including in-depth interviews with 41 participants and a focus group of 30 participants who met three times to discuss management and policy guidelines for the Thai government. The data were then analyzed using content analysis and descriptive analysis. The study found that the most significant problems facing young Muslims are drug addiction, lack of education, inappropriately timed pregnancies, and violence. In addition, most government projects are unsuccessful because they operate only in the short term and tackle symptoms instead of the root causes of problems. Moreover, most young Muslims who complete training programs go back to their homes, where they face the risk of returning to their former bad behavior, since drugs and insurgent groups are ever present in their communities. In addition, this study will be beneficial to the Royal Thai Government as a guideline for solving the problems of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

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### Introduction

In Thailand, there are approximately four million Muslims within a total population of about 70 million, and of those four million Muslims, 80 percent live in the Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun provinces (Smith, 2004). The three southern border provinces of Thailand (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) have faced problems with violence for more than 10 years. Murders, car bombings, shootings, and assassinations still happen often, and many bombings occur in business areas and sometimes in larger businesses such as hotels or large convenience stores (Sakolnakorn & Naipinit, 2013). Many young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of

Thailand have participated in the violence and are involved with the insurgent groups, not living in the Islamic way because most young Muslims misunderstand the doctrine and morality of Islam (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). Young Muslims have been involved in many violent activities, and the Muslim religious schools have been a key source of recruits for the insurgency (Hays, 2008). In 2014, a United Nations report found that in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, armed groups were recruiting young Muslims and using both Muslim girls and boys, mainly as informants and lookouts, to track the movement of the Thai security forces (United Nations, 2014).

Many young Muslims in the Pattani province in southern Thailand become involved in gambling from the age of 10 years, and predominantly male youths gamble most frequently between the ages of 14 and 18 years, with the principal object of gambling being English soccer because it is easy and convenient. Furthermore, it was found that gambling is related to social problems such as burglary (Dumida, Thongkum &

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Damcha-om, 2007). Muslim youth do not pay attention to activities to promote the Islamic way because Muslim leaders lack the skills, knowledge, and understanding of techniques and methods to make the activities interesting to young Muslims. Muslim leaders cannot encourage young Muslims to live their life according to the Islamic principles (Laeheem, Baka, Tahe & Walee, 2014). In addition, Laeheem and Baka (2009), in their study of the risk factors affecting the violent behavior of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces, found that those who come from poor families had a higher risk of violent behavior than Muslim youths who came from middle-class families. They also found that their parents' marital status was an important factor because young Muslims who lived in families where the father and mother had separated were at a high risk of violent behavior.

In addition, most students in the three southern border provinces of Thailand who come to study in a technical college lack the knowledge and skills taught in general education; for instance, many students cannot speak, write, or read the Thai language very well, and they also lack skills in English and mathematics. In addition, they often need to improve their morality, honesty, and ability to work hard because of the lack of basic education in primary and secondary school (Intarak, Nilwilai & Vongmonta, 2009). Behavioral problems such as bullying, gambling, stealing, drug addiction and trafficking, involvement in insurgent groups, sexual harassment, threatening behavior, and truancy are becoming more critical in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. Young Muslims face many problems, including the violent situation, and the Thai government has initiated many activities and projects to improve their quality of life and to solve their problems. However after 10 years of violence, young Muslims still face the same problems, and some problems have actually become more serious. This paper will present the problems facing young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand and will detail the measures adopted by government agencies to manage and solve these problems. It will also present the results of a study of government projects initiated to solve the problems faced by young Muslims, and policy guidelines for solving the problems of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

## Conceptual Framework

“Young people” refers to people aged between 15 and 24 years old (United Nations, 2000). In this paper, “young Muslims” refers to people who are aged between 15 and 24 years old and who respect Islam. The conceptual framework in this study is based on the previous study of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, the violent situation, and government policy, as follows.

## Young Muslim Problems

A key problem with young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand is that they do not follow the Islamic way of life. Most of the new generation of young Muslims do not place importance on religious activities (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). The main problem faced by young

female Muslims is becoming pregnant before marriage and dropping out of school with the result that they are forced by their families to marry in order to maintain the reputation of their family (Laeheem & Suwansuntorn, 2015). Many young Muslims have been in violent situations (Laeheem & Baka, 2012).

## Young Muslim Behavior

The most important factors related to young Muslims are aggressive behavior associated with frustration in their minds, a strict upbringing in their family, the influence of peer violence at school, the influence of an aggressive media, and the behavior of their father and mother (Laeheem, 2014). The behavior of young Muslims is influenced by many factors, such as their family and close relatives, the media, the community, their friends at school, and their teachers (Athar, 2009). The style and practice of family life affects the behavior of Muslim teenagers, as does their Islamic personality and the spiritual intelligence of Muslim students (Abdul, Abdullah, & Abd, 2014).

## Conflict and Violent Situation

In the three southern border provinces of Thailand, more than 10,000 events of violence have occurred, with approximately 9,965 people injured and 5,352 killed. Approximately 500 soldiers have died, as have approximately 312 police officers and 187 teachers (Sakolnakorn, 2015).

## Government Policy

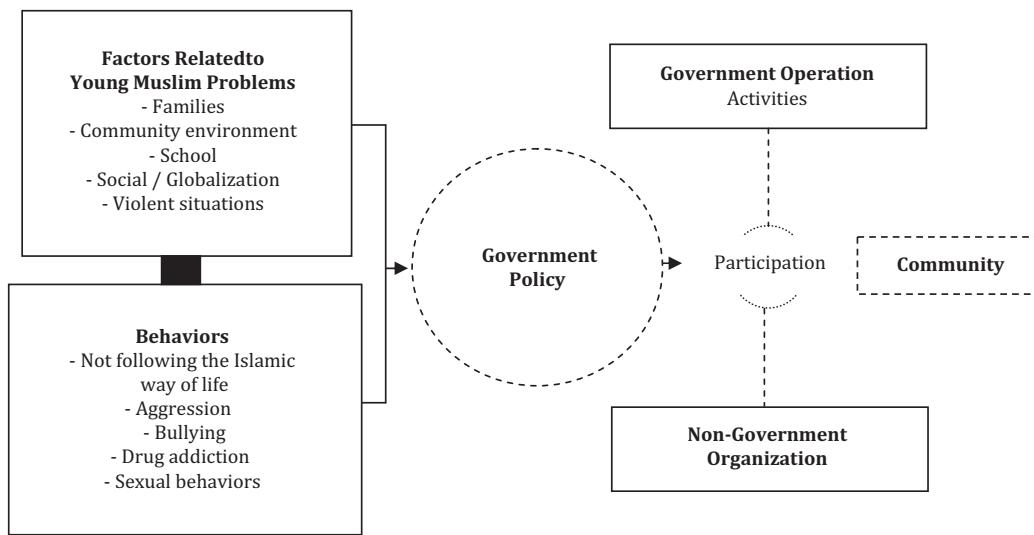
The study of Tangsapwattana (2006) suggested that to solve the problems in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, both the Thai government and the local governments should tackle the poverty problem, promote a pluralistic society, improve educational curricula, improve the legal structure, and promote the people's participation. In addition, Laeheem (2015) suggested that governmental organizations should support Islamic individuals and Islamic private organizations such as mosques and Islamic conservation clubs in order to set up the activities and a strategy to bring young Muslims to participate and live their lives the Islamic way, taking the Prophet Muhammad as their role model.

## Conceptual Framework

This is illustrated in Figure 1.

## Methodology

This study used ethical approaches by focusing on the actual data from participants and paying attention to the themes or patterns that appeared. This study used qualitative methods based on in-depth interviews, a field survey, phone interviews, and a focus group study. Data collection was based on purposive sampling, accidental sampling, and snowball sampling. In addition, the area of this study was the three southern border provinces of Thailand (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat).



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework

## Methods

In this study, in order to investigate the behavior of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews and three phone interviews—based on purposive sampling and snowball sampling—with four school teachers, five police officers, a commander of soldiers, a sheriff, one assistant district officer, a prosecutor, four government agencies involved in Muslim youth issues, one government agency staff member involved in drug and narcotics control, two Islamic religious leaders (imams), one Islamic teacher, three Muslim families, twelve young Muslims, three academics (two of whom were Muslim), and two diplomatic staff members (labor counselors) at the Royal Thai Embassy in Malaysia. The researcher used qualitative methods, conducting in-depth interviews of at least 30–60 minutes. The interviews were based on a semi-structured format, covering problems young Muslims face, asking what the government's plan is to solve those problems, and discussing a case study of successful and unsuccessful government projects and the management of government support in the future. In addition, the researcher conducted focus-group interviews (three times, one in Pattani, one in Yala, and one in Narathiwat) by inviting 10 participants per each focus group, including Muslim leaders, government agency staff members, academics, and young Muslim families, to discuss guidelines for solving the problems faced by young Muslims.

## Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected, the researcher used content analysis and descriptive analysis.

## Results

The problems in the three southern provinces of Thailand include poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment, low education, and discrimination from corrupt and misbehaving officers. However, for more than two decades, the Thai government has had many policies and activities for solving problems, and young Muslims are one target who have been encouraged to live sustainably. Therefore, the results of this study are divided into three phrases as follows.

### *The Problems Faced by Young Muslims*

The study found that the biggest problem for young Muslims nowadays is lack of Islamic general education (religious knowledge). They spend their lives under capitalism and do not follow the way of life of Allah, so lack of Islamic education is related to many problems of young Muslims because they do not conduct themselves in the right way. The greatest problem faced by young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) is drug abuse, especially the use of kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*), which is an evergreen tree belonging to the Rubiaceae (coffee) family, native to southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea, where it is used by Islamic people as a medicine and as a psychoactive narcotic. Many Muslim families boil the leaves in water and consume kratom in a similar way to tea. In addition, some Muslim youths have become addicted to methamphetamine, known in Thailand as yah bah. Based on the information gained from this study, the researcher estimates that approximately 60–70 percent of young Muslims in rural villages in the three southern border provinces of Thailand are addicted to or regularly use methamphetamine.

Young Muslims also face problems arising from the education system in the three southern border provinces of Thailand because some Muslim leaders lack knowledge and

understanding of the role assigned to them, and they lack skills and experience in promoting youth to behave in the Islamic way. In addition, Muslim families in this region prefer to send their children to study in Islamic schools rather than schools in the general education system. Many young Muslims study in Tadika, which are Mosque-based Islamic educational centers, or Pornor institutes, which are schools providing teaching in both general education and Islamic studies but emphasizing the study of Islam. The practice of education in southern Thailand causes young Muslims to lack knowledge of subjects taught in general education as well as broader global knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to continue to study at the university level. In addition, there are not many jobs for people who specialize in Islamic studies.

In many poor Muslim families, the parents are uneducated, and it is not unusual for there to be as many as six to eight children, since Islamic people do not practice the use of birth control. Such families tend not to be concerned about the care of their children and may neglect them because they have no money. However, educated Muslim families tend not have more than two to four children because they are aware of the consequences of having a lot of children. The effect of globalization on the region is that young Muslims do not conform to the Islamic way of life. For instance, many young Muslims do not wear Islamic clothes but prefer to wear clothes following modern fashions, and some Muslim girls wear shorts rather than following the Islamic custom of Muslim women wearing dresses, which conceal the body. Many young Muslims in urban areas occupy their free time by watching movies, listening to songs, playing games, socializing with their friends, and riding motorcycles. Similarly, in rural areas, young Muslims play sports and games and socialize with their friends. When young Muslim boys spend time with friends, this will lead to them smoking and indulging in nightlife inappropriate to the Islamic way of life, and many Muslim boys are involved in illegal gambling, for instance, on English and Italian soccer. Moreover, the most serious problem faced by young Muslims is that when they spend time outside of their family with their friends, some will have sex at an inappropriate age before marriage, which does not conform to the Islamic way of life.

In addition, the study also found that a large number of young female Muslims became pregnant before marriage when they were still students. This situation causes Muslim girls to drop out of school, and the family normally solves the problem by arranging marriages for the two involved teenagers to maintain the reputation of their families. After that, the young couple will both drop out of school and work to earn income to meet their family expenses. This situation causes them stress, and there will be conflicts between the couple, leading eventually, in most cases, to divorce. Finally, the researcher also found that many young Muslims become involved in insurgent groups because there are many Muslim teachers and Muslim leaders who are also involved in insurgent groups. They recruit young Muslims who appear to be innocent and smart and inculcate them with a mistaken Muslim ideology and encourage them to participate in violent activities. In addition, when young Muslims who participate in violent activities are arrested or, in some cases, shot, the family of the arrested or dead youth will protest at what the government

agencies have done because their perception of their son is that he is innocent and smart. The strategy of recruiting smart and apparently innocent young people to participate in violent activities is one regularly employed by the insurgent groups as a way of gaining support in the community.

#### *Management Methods Used by Government Agencies to Solve the Problems of Young Muslims*

In this section, the researcher examines the most significant projects conducted by the government to solve the problems of young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The projects have been set up by government agencies and the activities have been initiated to help solve the problems faced by young Muslims. The following are some examples.

The Yalannanbaru project was set up by the Royal Thai Army and the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 office. This project provides seven days of training in all areas of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat by bringing in Muslim youths who have drug-related problems and have negative ideas about the Thai government. They stay at a military camp and take part in activities to train them on how to avoid drugs and how to improve themselves for a better life, including training for occupational skills and how to live based on the principles of a sufficiency economy. More than 300,000 young Muslims have already passed through this program.

The Youth Exchange with Different Cultures program was set up by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and recruited 75 students from Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun to live and train outside the lower South of Thailand with Buddhist host families for six days and five nights.

The Youth Council project is organized by the Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Under this project, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security provides an annual budget of approximately USD 330 per year to each sub-district in the three provinces for them to set up activities bringing young Muslims together in their community to gain knowledge and to participate in activities such as seminars and training. These seminars and training sessions are set up by each sub-district's youth council (groups of young people in the community), who create the projects and use the USD 330 to finance activities, such as inviting a medical officer to teach them about health, or setting up activities in conjunction with the sub-district administration organization in their area.

The Uniting Thai Hearts for the South program brings together many young Muslims, aged between 15 and 18 years, from the five southern provinces (Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, Satun, and Songkhla) to live with Muslim host families in Bangkok and nearby provinces in central Thailand for a period of time. In addition, during their stay, they learn Muslim ways of life that are different from those prevalent in their hometowns in the lower South, and they also learn how to live with others from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education operates a policy relating to the primary, secondary, and high schools in the three southern border provinces, which aims to increase the awareness of the

students and teachers in government schools by providing the opportunity for teachers to visit their students' homes (if it is not too dangerous for them to do so). The schools also collaborate with the police, village headmen, Muslim leaders, and district officers to monitor their living areas in order to protect students from vices such as drug use, gambling, and playing games at game shops during school time.

The findings of this study suggest that many activities and projects aimed at solving the problems of young Muslims are initiated through the good will of the Thai government, which has devoted a considerable budget to creating and managing these projects, through which more than 500,000 young Muslims from the three southern border provinces have passed. However, despite their attendance at training sessions and seminars, of all those involved in these projects conducted by government agencies, only a small number of young Muslims have been able to change to a better way of life, because when young Muslims go back to their homes after passing through one of the programs, they will go back to the same community environment that they left before attending the training session or seminar, where the problems of the abuse of substances such as *Mitragyna speciosa* and methamphetamine are very common, making it hard for young Muslims to live without becoming drug addicts. Therefore, government agencies, particularly the police, must cooperate with the military and district offices to be more concerned about the drug problem and institute serious measures to suppress the supply of the drugs, *Mitragyna speciosa* and methamphetamine. In addition, government agencies have the duty and responsibility of setting up and implementing policies to solve the problems faced by young Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

#### *Policy Suggestions for the Thai Government*

##### *Narcotics control policy*

1. Thai government agencies, especially the police and the Thai military, should improve their management and operation to protect people in general and young people in particular from abusing drugs and should take serious action to suppress the movement and trafficking of drugs, including the arrest of government officers who are involved in the drug business. In addition, the corruption of government officers is one reason why narcotics control has not been successful, so the Thai government should come up with more strategies to control, investigate, and punish the government officers who are involved in corruption.

2. The Thai government should apply short-term, narcotic addiction rehabilitation and bring young Muslims to drug-withdrawal programs for people who are drug addicts. After that, the Thai government should seriously enforce drug laws, because the drug problem includes *Mitragyna speciosa*, which is not good for people, families, and young Muslims in the long term.

3. For young Muslims who are drug addicts or are involved in drug trafficking, the government should emphasize narcotic addiction rehabilitation more than the use of law enforcement.

4. The Thai government should revise the Narcotic Addiction Rehabilitation Act, B.E.2545, and the legal characteristics and

types and quantities of the Drugs Act, B.E.2546, to provide an opportunity to those suspected of using *Mitragyna speciosa* to be admitted to a rehabilitation program.

##### *Public health and reproductive health policy*

The government also needs to tackle the problem of young female Muslims becoming pregnant before marriage, and should set up a government unit in the three southern border provinces of Thailand to deal solely with this issue, by, for instance, giving more information to families about the negative effects of Muslim girls becoming pregnant.

1. The Thai government, through the Ministry of Public Health, needs to pay more attention to and be more aware of the risks and dangers associated with the use of *Mitragyna speciosa* and methamphetamine by Muslim families. The Ministry of Public Health has many health stations in all sub-districts of all three provinces and should send officers from the health stations to speak to Muslim families and give them information when they come to visit health stations and hospitals.

2. The Ministry of Public Health should be more concerned about reproductive health issues relating to young Muslims because the number of Muslim girls becoming pregnant is increasing. In addition, the Ministry of Education should collaborate with the Ministry of Public Health to set up training courses in schools to provide information about the bad effects on the lives of young people if they become pregnant before reaching an appropriate age and before they have an adequate income, and how their economic prospects and their quality of life will be affected if they have many children in their family (most Muslim families in this area have a lot of children, with some families having as many as 6–8 children).

##### *Budget and financial policy*

The Thai government should give more financial support to ongoing programs in the three southern border provinces because many programs in this area face more problems than those in other regions of Thailand. However, at present, programs in the three southern border provinces receive less financial support than similar programs in other regions that have fewer problems. In addition, the government must assist the unemployed young Muslims who have a low level of education to earn their own income.

##### *Education policy*

Educational development is also very important because education is directly related to the ability of young Muslims to gain employment in the future. However, increasing the number of young Muslims in general education is a distant prospect because most Muslim families are still more concerned that their children should study Islam. Therefore, it is important for the Thai government to encourage Islamic private schools and Islamic education centers (Tadika) to teach Islam in a way that provides an understanding of good practice in the Islamic way of life and also emphasizes the teaching of general education as a basis for future life and career prospects.

1. The Ministry of Education should set up boarding schools including separate student dormitories for boys and girls in provincial public schools (at both the primary and

secondary level) and bring in young Muslims who are willing to stay at the school with their family's approval. This strategy can help young Muslims stay in a better environment free of drugs and thereby have a better quality of life. In addition, schools should offer group activities for students to allow them to have more knowledge sharing and social participation with other people. Laeheem (2013a) suggested that the group study activity, or "Hallakah," can improve students' behavior, and it is a part of Muslim life.

2. The Thai government should pay more attention to encouraging Islamic private schools to develop their general education according to a more standard educational curriculum, coupled with Islamic studies. In addition, the government should systematically develop and improve Tadika in terms of salary, welfare, buildings, and curriculum books. The quality and efficiency of its teachers should also be upgraded.

3. The Thai government, through the Ministry of Education, should pay more attention to encouraging Muslim people to study and to gain an education relevant to the labor market. Muslim people in the three southern border provinces of Thailand have an advantage because they can speak, read, and write the Malay language, which is suitable for the labor market in Malaysia, the neighboring country. Currently, however, many people in the southern border provinces of Thailand do not obtain an education to equip them to compete in the labor market in either Malaysia or Thailand. Instead, they prefer to concentrate on Islamic studies, which makes it hard for them to compete in the labor market. For that reason, many Muslims in the three southern border provinces of Thailand are poor and cannot find good jobs. In addition, the Thai government should encourage young Muslims to study in technical colleges and university programs that are related to the labor market, because people who obtain some degrees (for example, in religious studies and Islamic studies) find it difficult to get a job in Thailand, Malaysia and other places in the world.

#### *Community and family development policy*

The Muslim family is a more important factor than the action of the government (Tohkani, 2012). The family is the key unit in solving this problem, and most teenagers will listen to their family members. In addition, the government should require all schools, including public schools and Islamic private schools, to include sex education in their curriculum, thus informing students about the negative effects of early pregnancy and the difficulties it leads to in life. A key issue in tackling the problem of drug addiction is changing local attitudes about drinking *Mitragyna speciosa* as a tea. This issue is not simple, but government agencies should make more effort to explain the negative effects of this practice on Muslim families, and government agencies need to cooperate with Muslim leaders (imams) and/or Muslim village headmen. For example, if imams included information about this subject in their sermons in the masjid after the worship of Allah, most Muslim families in their villages would learn about the risks of young Muslims drinking *Mitragyna speciosa* as a tea. Therefore, the government should collaborate with religious leaders such as imams in order to describe Islamic teachings in

the right way at Masjid when Muslim people come to worship. In addition, village headmen and members of local administrative organizations are representatives of the Thai government, so the Thai government should train them and give them more knowledge about how to solve social problems, as well as about the right way to achieve peace in their communities. This will enable them, in turn, to inform Muslim families in their communities.

#### *Suggestions for operational improvement of the Thai government*

The government should authorize the provincial Islamic Councils in the three southern border provinces to take care of youths, especially overseeing and monitoring their misconduct in terms of their sexual behavior, the clothing they wear, and other deeds opposed to Islamic values. In addition, the government must enforce Islamic law for Islamic people in the three southern border provinces in connection with clothing, different sexual relations, and other behaviors opposed to Islam.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The main issue for young Muslims is drug addiction. Therefore, the environment in the community is very important to them because despite their participation in activities and training provided by the government, after they go back to their families and communities, if the environment in the community still suffers the problems associated with the use of *Mitragyna speciosa* and methamphetamine, there will still be the opportunity for them to become drug users again. In addition, the young Muslim problems occur in the community, so to solve these problems, the government and non-governmental organizations should encourage local communities to solve these problems by themselves, and the participation of residents in the community is more important than another factors. Therefore, the government and non-governmental organizations should encourage the local community to set up activities such as sports, arts and music, education about reproductive health, education related to occupations, education about the sufficiency economy, and agricultural business and sufficiency. Furthermore, Muslim leaders in the community are also important as sources who can provide the right knowledge and understanding of the Islamic way of life to young Muslims. In addition, Muslim religious leaders need to imbue young Muslims and families with Islamic awareness so they can lead their lives in accordance with the Islamic way of life and prophetic traditions. Camping is also needed from time to time to offer Muslim youth exposure to Islamic moral and ethical lessons. The study of Laeheem (2013b) found that young Muslims who received a higher level of behavior supervision based on Islamic principles were more likely to adopt behavior conforming to understanding Islamic principles and Islamic society norms.

The Muslim family is important to guide children towards Islamic knowledge, and to provide a good example to them. Families should spend more time discussing with and taking more care of their children since this will help young Muslims to avoid social problems such as drug addiction, unwanted

pregnancy, and involvement in violence. In addition, the Muslim family is the main means of teaching children the right way to live, as well as giving them knowledge and training. For example, Syed (2001) stated that the training of a young Muslim "must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his/her personality and creates in him/her an emotional attachment to Islam that enables him/her to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he/she may proceed to the realization of his/her status as Khalifatullah to whom God has promised the authority of the universe." In addition, Yaena (2013) stated that the Muslim family is important as a guide for children's Islamic knowledge. The family must both learn and teach its children authentic knowledge of Islam and, most importantly, be a good example to them. Discussing Islamic issues within the family will bring parents and children closer, improve their relationship, and foster mutual love, respect, and understanding. Children learn more from their parents as they spend time together at home, and there will be more opportunity for young Muslims to avoid problems prevalent among youths in the South, such as delinquency in school, drug addiction, smoking, gambling, violence, involvement in insurgency, and other social problems.

Finally, this study found that Thai government projects aimed at solving the problems of young Muslims have had little success because the temptations of, for instance, drugs and gambling are ever present in the community. In order to solve the problems of young Muslims, all government agencies, such as the police, should make a more serious effort to suppress illegal activities in the community, and schools and families should also be more concerned for the care of children by teaching them the right way to behave. However, all of the Thai government's management and operational efforts should continue, but with added experience and feedback to improve and re-think some of the operational strategies. Although the roadmap's timing for success is difficult to predict, time will show the way. Thus, the government should continue its attempts and be patient. In addition, the Thai government should set up new laboratories for narcotics and drug inspections, or pharmaceutical inspections, in the areas in the deep south of Thailand (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces) because now there are only four laboratories in Thailand, and they are not sufficient to handle all the drug cases in Thailand. Under the circumstances of the on-going violent situation, it is difficult to gain data, and the researcher was unable to go everywhere because some places are very dangerous for people from outside the community.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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