



Family background in upbringing, experience of violence, and authority relationship among married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to investigate family background in upbringing, experience of violence, and authority relationship among married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence. The informants of this study consisted of 20 spouses experiencing domestic violence, 20 parents and 20 relatives of the spouses. The data were collected through discussions and in-depth interviews, and then analyzed using comparative logic of concepts, theories, research reports, and context. The study found that married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence had had a strict upbringing, experienced violence in witnessing their parents quarreling and beating each other, had experienced severe punishment in childhood, believed that women have an inferior status to men, and that men are dominant.

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Introduction

The problem of domestic violence has become a social phenomenon with social, cultural, and family conditions as factors that designate and contribute to spousal relationships in Thai society, and various phenomena reflect an increase in violence and complications between married couples that make the problem more difficult to prevent and to solve. Such problems affect victims as well as witnesses physically and mentally, and undermine happiness in the family. Domestic violence has become prevalent in society, in families from any economic status, profession, race and religion, and as a result, more organizations in the government and private sectors give importance to prevention and solving the problems (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Laeheem, 2014). This is different from the past

when Thai society did not place much importance on nor recognized domestic violence because it used to be considered a personal matter between the husband and wife, and that husbands were the owner of their wife and had the right to do anything with their wife while their wife could not resist, and others should not interfere. Most people used to think that it was normal for spouses to quarrel because they were so close to each other and they were compared to the tongue and teeth that often hit each other. Moreover, domestic violence is not considered a serious crime that has impact on society as a whole, and when a case was reported, police officers usually reconciled those involved and did not file the report. As a result, spouses who committed violence were not punished suitably, and thus, they did not have to enter the process of behavioral change (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Pradabmuk, 2003; Puawongpaet, 1994).

Most violence between spouses is committed by husbands against their wives with the intention of using force to threaten and to harm them physically and mentally, to

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coerce them to do or not to do something, sexually harass them, and limit their freedom, all of which developed from conflicts and quarrels (Intarajit & Karinchai, 1999; Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Triemchaisri, 2001). Victims are usually injured physically and mentally, and frightened into thinking all the time that they are going to be attacked. Furthermore, children who witness such an incident regularly will learn and absorb violence leading to their negative attitudes towards family relationships and they may think that violence is an answer to all problems. As a result, these children will have violent behavior not only during their childhood but also later in life, and will commit violence against their peers, spouses, and children (Klongpayabarn, 1999; Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Promrak, 2007).

There are many causes of domestic violence but one of the most important is the family background, particularly the background in upbringing, experiencing violence, and the authority relationship. A study found that strict upbringing and violence in the family could result from family members showing negative behavior toward each other to a more severe extent than usual because of being furious or other accumulated negative emotions (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2007). Family is an important factor contributing to increasing violence, especially in a family with a strict upbringing and violence, with such a background acting as a stimulus to display violence or to accept violence as normal in daily living and as an alternative to problem-solving (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Laeheem, 2013; Remschmidt, 1993). Experiencing violence in childhood by witnessing parents quarreling and beating each other, of being severely punished during childhood, and of expressing violent behavior during childhood were the most common risk behaviors that resulted in domestic violence (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Parimutto, 2011). Most married couples involved in domestic violence had experienced severe violence in their childhood in witnessing their parents quarreling and beating each other, in being severely punished, and in using violence against their peers and those around them (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Parimutto, 2011; Pongwech & Wijitranon, 2000). Important causes of domestic violence include wrong attitudes and values concerning the authority relationship, gender inequality, and husbands who have power over their wives and want their wives to consent in all matters (Puawongpaet, 1994; Straus, 2001). In addition, the authority relationship in terms of women's inferior status, and a belief in male dominance, or patriarchy in which the male gender is the one of power, strength, leadership, the household leader, and a belief that using violence is normal for males because it makes males true men—all these lead to violence against women that affects them physically and mentally. In addition, they lead to sexual harassment of women, and to women always being taken advantage of (Archawanitkul & Im-am, 2003; Moser & Winton, 2002; Punamsap, 2005).

Therefore, it is essential to conduct a study on family background in upbringing, experiences of violence, and the authority relationship among married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence. The study aimed to determine the upbringing styles of married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province, whether

they witnessed their parents quarreling and beating each other, whether they were severely punished in their childhood, whether they thought that women had an inferior status, and whether they believed in male dominance. The results of this study will be useful to individuals and organizations concerned with policy forming for preventing and solving problems related to domestic violence before the problems become more severe and develop into social problems that will be difficult to solve in the future, and to aid cooperation to identify ways to solve the problems in a timely manner.

Literature Review

Meanings of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence between spouses is behavior showing an intention to use force or physical power to threaten or to harm others or to violate personal rights physically, verbally, mentally, or sexually by forcing, threatening, hitting, kicking, punching, limiting, and obstructing rights, and freedoms in public or personal life. This can result in physical and mental suffering for the victim (Arpapirom, 2000; Wichitranon & Phongwet, 2000). It is the use of power apart from the use of physical strength to harm others. It is an action arising from a power relationship, threatening or intimidating using power, leaving or ignoring which results in physical, mental and sexual suffering, committing suicide, and self-injury in various ways, which happens immediately or years after the first act of violence (Pongwech & Wijitranon, 2000; Yoddumnern-Attig, 2003). Domestic violence also refers to using force to harm family members physically, mentally, sexually or to harm life, and to violate rights and freedoms in various ways, which are unfair actions in order to get power to control them or to make them yield (Corsini, 1999; Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014).

Types of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence between spouses can be classified into three types. Type 1 is physical violence, which refers to the use of force or a tool as a weapon to hurt the victim such as pushing, slapping, hitting, punching, beating, jerking, squeezing the neck, throwing things, and injuring severely with a weapon or a sharp object, among others. Type 2 is mental violence, which refers to any action or ignoring to act which causes the victim sorrow or losing rights or freedom by acting verbally or through gestures and action such as verbally despising, satirizing, scolding, bawling, yelling, embarrassing, being indifferent, threatening, and showing anger. Type 3 is sexual violence, which refers to an incident where a husband abuses his wife, a father abuses his children, an elder relative such as a brother, an uncle, a grandfather abuses his younger relative, among others. Such actions are usually sexual molestations or sex-related offenses. For example, the husband uses physical force to have sex with his wife in a way that she does not like or want or has sex with her without caring about her pleasure, the husband forces his wife to sell or have sex with other men, the husband rapes his wife (Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Promrak, 2007).

Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence between spouses can first occur at any stage when they live together. The starting point is when they face problems and then so much stress is built up that negative interaction occurs. When husbands lose control of their emotion, even trivial arguments can result in violence and the first physical assault occurs. After that, the vicious circle of violence begins. That is, stress leads to argument or quarrel and physical assault. The circle usually finishes with the husband's repentance and the wife's forgiveness. However, the couple does not actually deal with the problem and again falls into this vicious circle which usually becomes more intense. The three main reasons for violence against spouses are listed below. 1) Background in upbringing is an important factor contributing to increasing violence, especially in a family with a strict upbringing and violence in the family could result from family members showing negative behavior toward each other to a more severe extent than usual because of being furious or other accumulated negative emotions. The violence could also result from experience and the thinking process or reasoning of individuals in response to the environments in a violent way, which usually develops from conflict (Laeheem, 2013; Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Moser & Winton, 2002; Straus, 2001). 2) Background in experiencing violence, especially experiencing violence in childhood from witnessing parents quarreling and beating each other, of being severely punished during childhood, and of expressing violent behavior during childhood are the highest risk factors that result in domestic violence. Moreover, husbands who have experienced violence or have been affected by violence before marriage are exposed to another risk factor resulting in domestic violence (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008; Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Parimutto, 2011). 3) Background in an authority relationship, especially an authority relationship in terms of women's inferior status, and a belief in male dominance, or patriarchy in which the male gender is associated with power, strength, leadership, the household leader, and a belief that using violence is normal for males because it makes males true men—all these lead to violence against women that affects them physically and mentally. In addition, they lead to sexual harassment of women, and they are always taken advantage of (Archawanitkul & Imam, 2003; Moser & Winton, 2002; Punamsap, 2005; Songsumpan, 2002).

Effects of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence between spouses affects three groups of people concerned. The first group is the individuals who are physically injured and whose external wounds have to be treated and whose internal wounds can be hidden inside all their life. Most mental injuries are not treated or cured but can be treated by realization of their personal values. The second group is other family members, especially young children or teenagers who are directly and severely affected mentally. These children have a negative image of family relationships that affects their life values making them aggressive, roguish, and not able to

concentrate on their studies. The third group is people in society or the community. In low-income families, whether or not the parents are divorced or not divorced, children may run away from home and become vagrants that are either a short-term or a long-term social problem (Laeheem & Boonprakarn, 2014; Promrak, 2007; Puawongpaet, 1994; Triemchaisri, 2001).

Research Methodology

Key Informants

This study involved qualitative research. The key informants in this study consisted of 20 married spouses experiencing domestic violence, 20 parents and 20 relatives of the married spouses. Data were collected through discussions and in-depth interviews between October and December, 2013. The married spouses were interviewed separately each interview lasting approximately 60–90 min. The informants were selected with cooperation from the Pattani Provincial Islamic Committee Office who provided statistics and selected married spouses who were ready and willing to participate in the study.

Protection of Informants' Rights

Before interviewing, the researcher informed the target groups about their rights and that they could decide whether or not to participate in the study, and that refusal to give any information would not affect any future requests for help or support from the Pattani Provincial Islamic Committee Office. Moreover, they could change their mind even during the interview and withdraw from participation at any time, and they would not suffer any adverse effects. They were informed that their personal information would not be revealed, and data about their family background in upbringing, experiencing violence, and authority relationships, and behavior leading to domestic violence would be presented as overall findings.

Data Analysis

The emphasis of the data analysis was on the family background in upbringing, experiencing violence, and authority relationships among married, Thai, Muslim couples. The data collected from discussions and in-depth interviews were analyzed based on theories to decode the data according to the objectives and research questions. Then, they were presented based on descriptive analysis in which the data were classified into categories, analyzed, and conclusions drawn. Connections and linkages between the research questions and concepts in theories were considered intensively according to the guidelines that had been set in order to obtain only concrete data and find new descriptions for them. Thus, it can be seen that in the data analysis of this study, the data were primarily analyzed by classifying into categories or issues according to the research questions, then content analysis was conducted using comparative logic of concepts, theories, research reports, and context.

Result and Discussion

From the in-depth interviews with 20 married, Thai, Muslim spouses experiencing domestic violence, 20 mothers or fathers and 20 relatives of these spouses where the emphasis was on upbringing, experience of violence, and authority relationships, the results were as follows.

Family Background in Upbringing among Married, Thai, Muslim Spouses Experiencing Domestic Violence

The spouses of married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence were reared under very strict upbringing styles. They said that their parents were over strict and overprotective, and thus, they felt that they did not have enough freedom, and could not have or do what they wanted to because their parents were there to oversee them all the time. They had to be very disciplined with their parents keeping an eye on them consistently, and their parents had rules for almost everything they did that they had to obey strictly because violation of the rules was considered a serious wrongdoing. Furthermore, the target group said that their parents often exerted authority over them by setting strict rules, being dictatorial, and setting high expectations for them. They accepted that what their parents said was always correct and suitable. However, their parents used authority to control and force them, and punished them when they could not meet their parents' expectations. Consequently, they were pressured, pessimistic, did not trust others, and enjoyed blaming and criticizing others, and as a result, they could not adapt to society. Their parents frequently ordered them to do things and checked closely whether they did it or not, and if not, they were punished.

The results indicated that married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province who experience domestic violence were raised under strict upbringing styles because their parents were dictatorial, and did not listen to their children's opinions or suggestions but held fast to their own reasons or views as mainstream. As a result, the participants felt that they had no freedom, could not be their own self, could not do what they wanted to do, had to strictly obey rules and regulations, and if not, they would be severely punished. Consequently, children have to seek ways to reduce such feelings, which result in displaying violence that continues until they are in their adulthood (Baumrind, 1976; Roger, 1972). Furthermore, such strict upbringing results in pressured children who do not trust other people, are pessimistic, cannot adapt themselves to society, and become children with improper behavior, such as being aggressive, suffering from a neurosis, being stubborn, contradictory, uncooperative, pessimistic, envious, uncaring, misbehaving, and not getting along with others. As a result, they show undesirable and violent behavior towards others (Shapiro, 1997). If parents do not have good guidelines for practice in teaching their children, they usually set family rules and do not follow the rules themselves, which confuses their children who try to find ways to avoid the rules with many excuses so that they do not have to follow the rules just like their parents. Consequently, the children are problematic with aggressive behavior toward other

people (Brentro & Long, 1995). Individuals who have experienced an improper upbringing can misbehave and have undesirable behavior, and display certain behavior to respond to what they perceive. That is to say, if they perceive that their parents treat them cruelly, unfairly, do not really love and help them, they may react severely; if they perceive that their violent behavior is acceptable, they will behave that way again (Remschmidt, 1993).

Therefore, it can be said that upbringing or parenting is very important for the development of an individuals' personality, character, behavior, and development. If parents want their children to have certain attributes, they must practice in such a way in order to be a role model. Individuals who have been brought up properly and suitably for the situation or circumstance would be able to adapt themselves to problems suitably and effectively. If individuals are not properly brought up or brought up unsuitably for the situation or circumstance, they may have improper or undesirable personalities that do not agree with social norms, which make them unable to adapt themselves and address problems easily.

Family Background in Experience of Violence among Married, Thai, Muslim Spouses Experiencing Domestic Violence

The married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence are those who had experienced violence when seeing their parents quarrel and beat each other. Moreover, they were severely punished in their childhood, and they used violent behavior regularly. They said that their parents used violent behavior regularly in using force to harm each other (beating, hitting, kicking, and punching), and threatening, which was more violent than releasing anger. Violence in their families was usually committed by their fathers against their mothers, which involved hurting their mothers physically and mentally, and it was done repeatedly. Their fathers forced and threatened their mothers to do or not to do some things as their fathers wanted, and they felt sad, depressed, stressed, felt sorry for their mothers, and they wanted to release the stress they had. Furthermore, the target group revealed that their parents often quarreled and always hurt each other. Sometimes they slapped, hit, punched, beat using their elbows and knees similar to Thai boxing, and other times they used objects such as a stick, a chair, a pot, a pan, or a broom to injure each other, and they both ended up with injuries. Each fight lasted a long time and ended only when one of them escaped or surrendered. Neighbors knew about it but nobody dared to interfere. The informants, as children, had to be patient and tried to cope with the situation since they were very young until they grew up and felt indifferent and sometimes grew tired of it and very depressed at the same time.

The target group also said that they were always severely punished by their parents in their childhood, sometimes for their wrongdoing but other times they were punished without any reason. When they were small, they were hit with a bamboo stick and a broom, and when they grew bigger; they were slapped, kicked, and had objects thrown at them. Sometimes, they were tied up to a pole and beaten with a rod. This remained in their memory and

they always felt indignant about the incident. Some informants said that they were always punished by their mothers and older brothers because they often bullied others and stole things from neighbors to sell and use the money to buy drugs. Their mothers hit them with a rod while their brothers kicked, punched, slapped, and beat them. The target group further said that they always had violent behavior and most of time it was to take revenge or because they were despised, their girlfriends were taken by other boys, they disliked people, the opposite party showed power, and they quarreled. The violent behavior involved using heavy wooden rods as weapons, knives, machetes, iron rods, pens, and knuckledusters. These weapons could severely harm the other party that might suffer head injuries or bruising on their body parts, and sometimes they had to be hospitalized or in some cases, they even became handicapped.

Therefore, experiencing violence is an important cause of an individuals' violent behavior, which is a negative influence on individuals resulting in their learning and absorbing from the model. They eventually exhibit violent behavior without knowing it, but think that using violence is normal and common. Consequently, they use violence with people around them in their daily life, and think that violence can solve problems. Studies found that one risk factor that results in the use of violence is that individuals have witnessed violence or illegal actions (Bandura, 1976; Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2007). Experience of violence affects individuals emotionally and mentally and they can develop emotional problems and eventually this makes the individuals use violent behavior in their daily life (Baldry, 2003; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Furthermore, experiencing violence can cause a learning and imitating process, especially in situations involving feeling and emotion in childhood, during the age when children are ready to learn from other people as models by absorbing it into their personality and that will remain with them until they become adults because children learn and experience violence from people in their family who decide to use violence in the situation, from which children learn a norm where the use of violence is acceptable. When they have conflict with their spouses, they imitate the behavior of using violence to solve problems, which leads to a norm where the use of violence is acceptable especially against their spouses. This goes on and on and becomes cyclical (Bandura, 1976; Gelles & Straus, 1979). Individuals who experienced violence regularly in their childhood displayed more violent behavior than those who did not, and such violence tended to be increasingly more severe (O'Leary & Williams, 2006; Stets, 1990). Children who witness domestic violence when their parents quarreled and beat each other, and were punished severely by their parents will absorb and imitate the use of violence until they grow up and then use violence against their own spouses and children (Laeheem, 2013). Another important cause of violence that results from absorbing and having negative attitudes that violence can solve problems can be seen in individuals with violent behavior who come from families with domestic violence where the parents quarrel and beat each other, and the individuals are used to being severely punished as well as to hurting others physically (Laeheem & Baka, 2012).

Therefore, it can be seen that experiencing violence affects victims and witnesses physically and mentally. For example, in the case where the father hits the mother, the child may be hit, too, and the child who is harmed or always witnesses' violence will remember the violence permanently, and misunderstands that problems can be solved with violence instead of reasoning, explanation, and understanding. Furthermore, being in an environment where violence is used against friends, when children grow up they will use violence toward their own families and pets. Thus, it can be seen that violence can be transferred from parents to children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. If we allow violence to happen—no matter what degree it is—it will remain in society forever. That is why we need to prevent violence from happening and being transferred into a cycle that never ends.

Family Background in Authority Relationship among Married, Thai, Muslim Spouses Experiencing Domestic Violence

The married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence thought that women were inferior, and the men usually thought that they were dominant. The target group said that women and men have different roles, responsibilities, rights, and levels of freedom, and there is no equality between males and females, especially in a family relationship, where men display their leadership role, and that they have power over their wives. They want their wives to agree in all matters, and they make their wives dependent on them by putting the idea in their spouse's head that a divorce will result in bad outcomes for their children. In addition, men usually think that they are stronger and have more energy and power and they must be family leaders because women are weak, gentle, and not reasonable; therefore, men can use violence against them, which is normal, and shows that they are true men. However, wives should not use violence towards their husbands because they are ladies and must be good wives who are modest and do not argue with their husbands but must be patient, respect, and obey their husbands and serve them in all matters. Furthermore, husbands believe that they are owners of their wives and have the right to do anything to them, even to punish them by beating, and that their wives have no right to resist. Consequently, women have a status and human rights that are not equal to those of the men who usually show their dominance in the household, especially their ownership of the assets and their power to manage all family matters.

The results of the study indicated that the authority relationship, especially women's inferior status was maintained and that male dominance existed among married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence. Therefore, the authority relationship is another important cause of domestic violence because in this type of relationship, male domination is the main feature. Men are family leaders who have power to own the family assets and manage all family matters in addition to controlling the behavior of their wife and children, and to force their wife to do house work and to go out to work to earn money. This is in accordance with patriarchy. Studies revealed that Thai society believes that the male is the

stronger sex with more power, more strength, and energy, and with a status superior to females who are weak, gentle, and without reasons, resulting in their status as followers or subordinates (Archawanitkul & Im-am, 2003; Holtz & Safran, 1989; Khopolklang, Polnigongit, & Chamnongsri, 2014; Siriwattana, 1995). Moreover, men using violence are considered normal and that they are true men while women must be ladies, good wives, modest, obedient, and serve their husbands (Archawanitkul & Im-am, 2003; Siriwattana, 1995). In addition, Thai society believes that wives are owned by their husbands who can severely hurt their wives physically, mentally, and sexually (Archawanitkul & Im-am, 2003; Moser & Winton, 2002; Siriwattana, 1995). Thai society also considers that husbands are superior to their wives without taking into consideration human rights, and husbands dominate the household, owning family assets, managing family matters, controlling the behavior of family members and punishing them (Archawanitkul & Im-am, 2003; Punamsap, 2005; Songsumpan, 2002).

Thus, the authority relationship—be it the inferior status of women or the thought concerning male dominance—is acceptable in Thai society as a result of the influence of different social levels including an individuals' character. The social structure as a whole that gives importance to patriarchy or male domination, a female's inferior status, male dominance in ownership of family assets, power in family financial management and all other matters all contribute to domestic violence.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study found that married, Thai, Muslim couples in Pattani province experiencing domestic violence came from a family background where they were raised in a strict style; they experienced violence, witnessing their parents quarreling and beating each other; they were severely punished; and they expressed violent behavior in their childhood. Moreover, they thought that a female's status was inferior to that of the male, and males usually considered they were dominant in the family. This indicates that family background in upbringing, experience violence, and the authority relationship are important factors influencing individuals' violent behavior.

The results of the study are useful as one way of preventing and reducing domestic violence, especially where parents can apply them to improve their parenting styles positively because when children are raised and trained correctly and creatively, they will behave properly. Socialization according to religious principles by giving children knowledge of the religious principles in the beliefs, practice, and morals and ethics, and training in religious practice in suitable environments and in line with the religious principles can reduce individuals' violent behavior. In addition, parents must be patient, tolerant, forgiving, understanding, trusting each other, and avoid quarreling and fighting in order to prevent children learning, absorbing, and imitating such violent behavior, and then later using with their future spouses. Furthermore, husbands, as the most important person must realize and give importance to their wife's emotions and feelings, especially by not

holding on to a value or belief in Thai society that "husbands are family leaders who have power and rights over their wives who belong to them". Husbands should also reduce their wife's frustration, anger, and retaliation, which could be a factor that reduces domestic violence and could prevent problems arising. Furthermore, married couples must be patient, tolerant, forgiving, understanding, and trust each other in addition to avoiding quarrels and fighting. Relevant government and private organizations must cooperate in the promotion of a happy family, jointly resisting and campaigning against domestic violence. People should help by being on the lookout for domestic violence and clues and report any occurrences to the relevant agencies according to the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act B.E. 2550 (2007). It is important for parents to give advice, watch their children closely, and always remind them about the harm or danger that results from displaying violent behavior. Moreover, parents should cooperate with religious leaders and local leaders in socializing children's mind according to the Islamic way so that children will have desirable behavior in accordance with the social norms or expectations of Muslim society and the guidelines set by the Islamic principles because individuals who adopt the Islamic way of life can control themselves and avoid violent behavior because they have religious principles to hold fast to, which enable them to be aware of the clear goals in their lives. These people are strict in doing good deeds and abstain from any practice that is wrong ethically and morally, and avoid practices that violate social norms and the principles of their religion.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

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