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The effects of happy Muslim family activities on reduction of domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses in Satun province



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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of happy Muslim family activities on a decrease in domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses in Satun province, Thailand. This experimental study was conducted with 40 married Thai Muslim couples in Satun province, with 20 couples in the experimental group, and the other 20 in the control group. They were recruited using simple random sampling and randomized matching methods. The experimental group participated in happy Muslim family activities while the control group participated in normal community activities. The study employed a true control group pretest and posttest design and the data-collecting instrument was a screening questionnaire for domestic violence risk behaviors among Thai Muslim married couples. The data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and t-test.

The study found that before participation in the activities, significantly more subjects in the experimental group who participated in happy Muslim family activities had violent behaviors against their spouses than those in the control group who participated in normal community activities. However, after participating in the happy Muslim family activities, those in the experimental group used significantly less domestic violence against their spouses when compared with those in the control group.

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Introduction

The use of violence against spouses has long been an important problem that has not been solved or given as much attention as it should have in Thai society even though it has become increasingly more severe. As a result, it has affected many people involved because Thai society usually considers such violence as a personal matter between husbands and wives, in which outsiders should not interfere. It has become a hidden problem that the victim dare not reveal, and thus makes it more complex and more difficult to prevent and solve (Laeheem, 2014a; Promrak, 2007).

Many phenomena reflect that most incidents of domestic violence are committed by husbands against their wives, they happen in families from all economic levels, occupations, races, and religions, and the problem has become increasingly more severe (Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985). Examples of physical, mental, and sexual abuse by husbands are found in most cases of domestic violence (Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008) and they are usually related to conflict which makes it more difficult to prevent the problem. Some people believe that conflict between husbands and wives is normal and common for all families, and management of such a problem is usually required when it becomes serious (Sanprasit, Boonprakob, Kongsakon, & Intarakamhang, 2011).

Domestic violence against the spouse is an act by the husband intentionally using his physical force or power to

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threaten or act against his wife. It is an act that violates the wife's personal rights physically, verbally, mentally, and sexually by forcing, threatening, hitting, kicking, limiting, and preventing her freedom in public or private life that causes physical and mental suffering (Intarajit & Karinchai, 1999; Triemchaisri, 2001). It is the husband's behavior to show his power and to control his wife; it is when the wife is physically, mentally, and sexually injured or threatened by her husband time after time in order to control or threaten her to do or not to do what he wants without considering her personal rights (Hampton, Gullotta, & Ramos, 2006).

Violence against the spouse affects the person and usually causes external injuries needing treatment, and leaves internal or mental injuries remaining, which may not be visibly apparent throughout the victim's life. It also affects family members, especially young children or teenagers who are severely affected mentally, making them emotionally repressed, aggressive, roguish, and they become inattentive students. Domestic violence causes divorces, children run away from home and become homeless and eventually social problems. These events in turn greatly affect the country not only socially but also economically, especially in terms of medical treatment, social welfare, counseling services for victims of domestic violence, and the implementation of preventive measures, and such violence also causes children to learn and absorb it (Promrak, 2007; Puawongpaet, 1994).

In particular, it affects children who are in a severe environment, and when they grow up, they will commit violence against their own families. Violence can be transferred from parents to their children and grandchildren, and thus, if we allow it to happen no matter how severe it is, it will remain in our society. Therefore, we must prevent the violence and never allow it to continue (Klongpayabarn, 1999; Kongsakon & Pojam, 2008).

The above problems have prompted related organizations to realize and give importance to solving them, especially the government which has issued the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act, B.E. 2550—a law with the purpose to protect victims of domestic violence because the family is the social unit that is the foundation and is natural, and thus, has the right to be protected by society and the state as specified in Article 52, Sentence 2 that “Children, youths, women and family members shall have the right to be protected by the state against violence and unfair treatment and the right to receive remedy in such a case” (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2007).

A study by Parimutto (2011) proposed a solution to conflict leading to domestic violence according to the Dhamma principles of Theravada Buddhism which states that the solution to the problem according to Buddhist principles is to start from all members of the family conducting themselves according to their role and duties using the sense-object control principles referring to as physical, verbal, and mental control and the layman principles referring to honesty towards each other, and restraining oneself from indulging in and refraining from the six causes of ruin or vices that would lead the family to devastation. Sanprasit et al. (2011) specified that in

preventing domestic violence at the community level, concepts should be incorporated to reduce opportunities for the problem to happen, and to stop the problem from expanding even though it takes time to prevent the problem with activities that are suitable for the context of the community. It requires people in the community to participate in preventing the problem and in evaluating the preventive activities in order to reflect the performance and the intervention to prevent the problem, taking into consideration the length of time and methods used at each level of the community.

The happy Muslim family activities used in this study were developed through a brainstorming meeting and a criticism meeting with cooperation from all related parties. It is the first program used to prevent and reduce violence against the spouse based on activities that focus on applying Islamic methods to make the target group change their behaviors to others, in congruence with Islamic principles and social norms. In preventing and solving the problem of domestic violence, there are six main activities: 1) self-socialization or At-Tazkiyah which is a method used to develop and change the behavior of the couples by trying to build and develop their own personalities in a positive and better way; 2) studying Islam or At-Tarbiyah Islamiyah is a process of developing knowledge, ability, attitude, good behavior, and morality so as to be accepted or recognized by Muslim society through doing activities suitable for the community context; 3) activities in studying and learning the Quran, starting with learning the Quran to use this in solving problems and developing the quality of life of the human race, to take as the norm for practicing religious and daily life activities to achieve the ultimate success in this world and the next world; 4) Islamic lectures in which, religious leaders or religious academicians are invited to give lectures to provide knowledge and understanding, to instill behavior, reinforce morality and ethics, make the couples with the problem realize, and cite case studies to socialize the couples, and to make them good followers of Allah who can practice the religion correctly, be good people in society and good members of mankind; 5) group study or Halaqah, which involves studying in a group to exchange knowledge, experience, and to reflect the problems, seeking knowledge of happy families in Islam from the Quran and the role model of the Prophet Muhammad; and 6) praying after midnight or Kiyamullai—this is an activity that the Prophet Muhammad did as an example to socialize the mind which is essential for Muslims, especially for people who wish to change their behavior to seek Allah's mercy and hope that Allah will respond and make them able to change and improve their behavior (Laeheem, 2015).

Therefore, the researcher was interested in exploring the effects of happy Muslim family activities on the reduction of violence against spouses among married Thai Muslim couples in Satun province, particularly whether married Thai Muslim couples having participated in happy Muslim family activities would have less domestic violence, and how this had occurred. The results of the study should benefit all parties involved in preventing and reducing violence against spouses before the problem becomes increasingly more severe and

becomes a social problem. The results would also contribute to a timely solution to the problem.

Objective

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of happy Muslim family activities on a decrease in domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses in Satun province.

Research Methodology

Target Group

The target group used in this study was 40 Thai Muslim married couples in Satun province who experienced domestic violence. They were the target group in the first year of the research project, being married couples who had high scores when measured with a risk behavior of using domestic violence screening test. The couples were divided into two groups each of 20 couples—one the experimental group and the other the control group—recruited by drawing simple random samples and randomized matching methods. The experimental group participated in happy Muslim family activities, and the control group participated in normal community activities. Husbands (actors/offenders) were representatives to participate in the activities because in most cases husbands committed offenses against their wives, and the wives (victims) answered the screening questionnaire for domestic violence risk behaviors among Thai Muslim married couples because questions in the questionnaire were about being offended.

Research Instrument and Instrument Development

1. The screening questionnaire for domestic violence risk behaviors among Thai Muslim married couples in Satun province was developed in the first year of the research project and consisted of 48 question items with a scale of 1–5, the index of item-objective congruence was between 0.80 and 1.00, the t-values between 3.668 and 18.6555, coefficients between .308 and .823, the reliability was .936, percentiles were between 23.62 and 99.87 and the normal scores were between T23.62 and T80.11 (Laeheem, 2014b).
2. Happy Muslim family activities used to change and reduce violence against the spouse were developed through a brainstorming meeting and a criticism meeting. In the meetings, the discussions were about the types and contents of the activities that would be effective and they needed to be incorporated with Islamic principles and concepts. Each of the activities was designed to be tried for 60 min each time and twice a week for 12 weeks totaling 24 times (Laeheem, 2015).
3. Normal community activities were designed by the community as a way to change and reduce domestic violence consisting of important activities which were admonition and advice after praying, a weekly sermon, monthly Kiyamullai (staying overnight at the mosque and getting up at 0200 h to do activities such as thinking

over their wrong doings and asking Allah for forgiveness, and praying Kiyamullai). These activities were conducted for 12 weeks.

Experimental Design

The true experimental research used a pretest–posttest design with a true experimental and a true control group (Campbell & Russo, 1999). In the experiment, the experimental group participated in happy Muslim family activities while the control group participated in normal community activities.

Data Collection

1. Before participating in the activities, the subjects in the experimental and control groups were tested for their behavior of using violence against their wives (victims of the violence) with the screening questionnaire for domestic violence risk behaviors among Thai Muslim married couples, and a score was given to each of them.
2. The happy Muslim family activities were conducted as planned for the experimental group with the religious leader as a research assistant who was the activity conductor, and the researcher was an observer and sometimes a participant. The experiment lasted 12 weeks; each time the activity lasted 60 min and was conducted twice a week totaling 24 times. The activities were run on Mondays and Thursdays from 1900 to 2000 h. The control group participated in normal community activities according to the plan of the community. The husbands in the control group were representatives participating in the activities because husbands were found to commit offenses against wives in most cases.
3. After the experiment, the subjects in the experimental and control groups were tested again for their behavior of using violence against their wives (victims of the violence) with the screening questionnaire for domestic violence risk behaviors among Thai Muslim married couples, and a score was given to each of them.

Rights of Research Participants

The researcher protected the rights of the research participants taking into consideration their consent and rights, and informed them about their rights as research participants. The researcher introduced himself, informed the participants about the purposes of the research, described the characteristics, types, contents of the activities, the dates and time the activities were to be conducted. The participants understood this information before they decided to voluntarily participate in the activities, and they were invited to participate in the activities every week throughout the experimental period of 12 weeks. The operations of the activities and their outcomes were kept confidential; data were presented as a whole without revealing the names and surnames of the participants. The participants could withdraw from participation in the research at any time they wished without having to give a reason for their withdrawal.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the R program; the descriptive data were analyzed using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation; domestic violence acts committed by the experimental and the control groups were compared using an independent samples t-test, and behaviors of the experimental group in committing violence against the spouse before and after participating in the activities were compared using a paired samples t-test.

Results

Before the experiment, the experimental group that was to participate in the happy Muslim family activities and the control group that was to participate in the normal community activities were significantly different in terms of committing violence against their spouses at the .01 level; that is, more subjects in the experimental group than the control group used violence against their spouses, as shown in Table 1.

After participating in the normal community activities, significantly fewer subjects (at the .001 level) in the control group used violence against their spouses; the difference between the means was 0.71, as shown in Table 2.

After participating in the happy Muslim family activities, significantly fewer subjects (at the .001 level) in the experimental group used violence against their spouses; the difference between the means was 2.01, as shown in Table 3.

After the experiment, the experimental group that participated in the happy Muslim family activities and the control group that participated in the normal community activities were significantly different in terms of committing violence against their spouses at the .001 level. Significantly fewer subjects in the experimental group than in the control group committed violence against their spouses, as shown in Table 4.

Discussion and Conclusion

Important findings from this study were that before participating in the experiment, significantly more subjects in the experimental group than in the control group used violence against their spouses. However, after participating in the experiment, significantly fewer subjects in the experimental group used violence against their spouses. It can be seen that using happy Muslim family activities could reduce and solve the problem of domestic violence more successfully than using normal community activities because the happy Muslim family activities

Table 1
Domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses before participating in the project

Group	\bar{x}	SD	n	Mean of the differences (95% C.I.)	t	p
Control group	3.36	0.20	20	-0.20 (-0.34, -0.08)	3.208	.003
Experimental group	3.56	0.21	20			

Table 2
Domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses of control group before and after participating in the project

Control group	\bar{x}	SD	n	Mean of the differences (95% C.I.)	t	p
Before participating	3.36	0.20	20	0.71 (0.61, 0.82)	14.249	.000
After participating	2.65	0.19	20			

Table 3
Domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses of experimental group before and after participating in the project

Experimental group	\bar{x}	SD	n	Mean of the differences (95% C.I.)	t	p
Before participating	3.56	0.21	20	2.08 (1.98, 2.17)	46.425	.000
After participating	1.49	0.19	20			

Table 4
Domestic violence against Thai-Muslim spouses after participating in the project

Group	\bar{x}	SD	n	Mean of the differences (95% C.I.)	t	p
Control group	2.65	0.19	20	1.16 (1.04, 1.28)	19.659	.000
Experimental group	1.49	0.19	20			

emphasized the use of the process of Islamic socialization that instills moral awareness in the target group, and focuses on being ashamed of doing sins, doing wrong, or acting against Islamic principles or social norms. This corresponds with the concept which states that using mental socialization and inculcating moral awareness can develop individuals to behave according to social norms or as desired by society (Sereetrakul, 2009; Thitiwattana, 2004). This process applied Islamic principles in providing knowledge and understanding as well as realization for the participants of the happy Muslim family activities due to the fact that every Muslim must always be aware of and realize that studying Islam is the duty of all Muslims so that they can use Islamic principles as the system of life. The knowledge and understanding of Islam can give them prosperity in knowledge, skills, and process to enable them to have good attitudes continuously and practice them correctly in their daily life, to develop themselves to being perfect humans according to Islamic principles, beliefs, and methods that emphasize characteristics, values, attitudes, behavior, and practice religious activities in their daily life (Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). Knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles can prevent problems because knowledge can prevent individuals from going astray or being misled by social environments, and can make them humble and lead their lives according to Islamic principles (Laeheem & Baka, 2010). Individuals who behave correctly according to social norms are those who have been influenced by their knowledge, understanding, and

acceptance of religious values and principles (Sereetrakul, 2009; Thitiwattana, 2004). Muslims who behave according to social norms are usually those who have knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings, strictly practice the religion, have been instilled with Islamic morality and ethics, and have been through an Islamic personality and moral development process (Khagphong, 2004; Mahama, 2009). The level of Islamic knowledge, participation in Islamic activities and Islamic training are significantly associated with Islamic behavior. Muslims who have a high level of Islamic behavior are those who have a high level of Islamic knowledge, Islamic upbringing, regular participation in Islamic activities, and regular participation in Islamic training (Laeheem, 2013a).

Moreover, promoting Muslims to participate in activities that develop their potential with emphasis on Islamic morality and ethics can prevent and solve the problem of aggressive behavior (Laeheem & Baka, 2012).

It is evident that the happy Muslim family activities used to reduce and solve the problem of domestic violence are activities that focus on applying Islamic methods of mental socialization, training, teaching, and changing behavior in order to transfer knowledge, thoughts, attitudes, ideologies, and personalities to make the target group change their behaviors to those in congruence with Islamic principles and social norms. This is in agreement with the concepts and theories which state that social socialization using the religious institution can change behaviors of individuals and enable them to behave according to social norms and live with others happily (Adivitanasit, 2002; Thitiwattana, 2004). It is a process that gives knowledge and principles to which individuals adhere in order to behave and practice themselves in a good way and to know right from wrong (Thepsitha, 1998). Islamic socialization is giving knowledge, understanding, experience, training, and instilling in individuals morality, ethics, and discipline, and develops their behavior in the Islamic way to enable them to live happily in society (Mahama, 2009; Narongraksakhet, 1997). Organizing religious activities enables the target group to know, understand, and realize feeling of others, and makes them change their attitudes and behaviors as targeted. The activities promote their emotional, social, and attitude development, and more importantly change their habits, personalities, and behaviors to get along with their family members well (Chatsupakul, 2003; Rogers, 1970). Organizing religious activities with emphasis on a process that reinforces discipline, morality, ethics, and socially accepted values and practice according to rules and social norms can promote, support, and enable the target group to acquire social skills, self-control, be responsible for duties, have respect for others, and adopt self-adaptation to family members and others (Department of Mental Health, 2000; Nelson-Jones, 1992). Applying Islamic principles in changing behavior can promote the target group to behave in the Islamic way (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem & Baka, 2009; Mahama, 2009).

Behavioral socialization with religious principles can encourage the target group to change their behavior to being good persons with morality, ethics, and to be well-disciplined and recognized by society, as they behave

according to social values and norms (Laeheem, 2013b; Thitiwattana, 2004).

Therefore, organizing happy Muslim family activities is one way that can prevent and reduce violence against the spouse when these activities are conducted systematically with cooperation from all related parties. A variety of activities incorporated with Islamic principles and ethics that are run systematically in which the target group participates is a socialization process that focuses on the mind, emotion, intelligence, and Islamic spirit and soul, and as shown in the research results, it is one way to solve, prevent, and reduce the problem of domestic violence. Thus, related individuals and organizations should actively use the activities because this corresponds with a theory that specifies that the more the target group is attached and adheres to religious principles, the more it is possible to stop its wrong doing.

The results of this study could help Islamic and governmental organizations in forming good policy and concrete strategies for promoting and supporting married couples with violent behavior to return to being individuals with behavior according to social norms and the Islamic way. The happy Muslim family activities should be considered as the first and principal ways in the development and promotion of the prevention and solving of domestic violence in a more concrete way through the use of socialization in the activities found by this study. Therefore, religious leaders and family members of the married couple with domestic violence must realize and give importance to the ways of preventing and solving the problem as one way of problem management before the problem of domestic violence becomes more violent and a widespread social problem and to jointly find ways to solve the problem in time.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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