Relationships between Islamic ethical behavior and Islamic factors among Muslim youths in the three southern border provinces of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the relationships between Islamic ethical behavior and Islamic factors (Islamic way of upbringing, knowledge of the religion, participation in Islamic activities, and practicing Islamic principles) among Muslim youths in the three southern border provinces, Thailand. A cross-sectional study was conducted in which 2,160 Muslim youths were surveyed and relevant data collected. They were recruited using multi-stage sampling methods. The data were analyzed with the R program to calculate Pearson's product—moment correlation coefficients and multiple linear correlation coefficients. The study found that there were statistically significant correlations between Islamic ethical behavior and the Islamic way of upbringing, knowledge of the religion, participation in Islamic activities, and practicing Islamic principles ($R^2 = .474$, $p < .001$). Practicing Islamic principles clearly had the strongest correlation in explaining Islamic ethical behavior ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$). The Islamic way of upbringing, knowledge of the religion, and participation in Islamic activities also made some contribution in explaining the variance in the Islamic ethical behavior ($\beta = .34$, .17, and .09, respectively, all with $p < .001$).

Introduction

A lack of Islamic ethics is a common behavioral problem occurring within Muslim societies, and is well known among all parties concerned such as among Muslim youths themselves, parents, religious leaders, and local leaders. It is a problem that affects Muslim youth's way and quality of life, that makes them deviate from the right way of life, weakens their faith, makes them misbehave and commit sins as a habit without shame, and even commit sins openly. Such problems have accumulated in a circle with no exit (Anmunajid, 2010; Annadwee, 2004). Islamic ethics is one of the cornerstones of Islam and is one of the fundamental sources of a community's strength. Islam has established universal fundamental Islamic ethics that have provided not only legal safeguards, but also a very effective ethical system. Thus, whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or the society and does not oppose any maxims of the religion is ethically good in Islam, and whatever is harmful is ethically bad. Given its importance in a healthy society, Islam supports an ethical way of life and matters that lead to it, and is the path followed by the best Muslims along with all matters that lead to it. The guiding principle for the behavior of a Muslim is "Virtuous Deeds". This term covers all deeds, not only acts of worship. The Guardian and Judge of all deeds is God Himself. The most fundamental characteristics of a Muslim are piety and humility. A Muslim must be humble with God and with other people (Hesamifar, 2012; Latif, 2008). Islamic ethics is the ethical system formed by the teachings of the Quran and explained

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by the Prophet Muhammad through action and words. Islamic ethics deals with those standards that prescribe what Muslims ought to do. It also addresses the virtues, duties, and attitudes of the individual and the society (Hashi, 2011; Zaroug, 1999).

There are many causes that influence at a high level Islamic ethical behavior among Muslim youths. However, the causes of Islamic factors are highly correlated with Islamic ethical behavior among Muslim youth, such as the Islamic way of upbringing, knowledge of the religion, participation in Islamic activities, and practicing Islamic principles. This is consistent with the studies of Khagphong (2004), Laeheem (2014a, 2015a), and Mahama (2009) who all reported that Islamic factors that contribute the most are Islamic ethical behavior among Muslim youths, Islamic upbringing, the study of Islam, religious practice and participation in religious activities. Muslim youths who practice religious activities well, who routinely and strictly practice the religion, who are in families that bring up their children in the Islamic way, and who have studied Islam well, tend to have highly ethical Islamic behavior. Chaiprasit, Chansawang, and Pergmark (2005), Khagphong (2004), Laeheem and Baka (2010), and Laeheem (2013) found that Islamic up-bringing results in understanding and acceptance of the values and social norms of the society in which they live, and the upbringing influences their Islamic ethical behavior. Islamic upbringing reflects the truth of living and can lead Muslim youths to true happiness based on Islamic morals and ethics, and upbringing is important and has a positive influence on behavior among Thai youths.

Studies have reported that one way to promote and support Muslim youths to have Islamic ethical behavior at a high level is to encourage them to gain knowledge and understanding of Islamic principles and to encourage them to strictly practice the religion (Chaiprasit et al., 2005; Mahamad, Thongkum, & Damcha-om, 2008). There are four factors that significantly result in the Islamic way of life: the level of knowledge of the religion, the level of Islamic upbringing, participation in Islamic activities, and training in Islam (Laeheem, 2014a). Promoting Muslim youths to have knowledge and understanding of Islamic teaching, practice, and strict adherence to religious activities can result in Islamic ethical behavior among youths. Therefore, religious factors can make individuals behave in accordance with Islamic ethics and help individuals to recognize right from wrong because the individuals socialize and develop personality, habit, morality, ethics, and manners corresponding to religious principles (Khagphong, 2004; Laeheem, 2014a; Mahama, 2009; Thepsitha, 1998).

Thus, the researcher was interested in exploring the relationships between Islamic ethical behavior and Islamic factors (Islamic way of upbringing, knowledge of the religion, participation in Islamic activities, and practicing Islamic principles) among Muslim youths in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The Islamic factors in this study were adopted from Khagphong (2004), Laeheem (2014a, 2015a), and Mahama (2009). The results of the study would be useful for related individuals and organizations in forming policy for preventing and solving the problem of unethical behavior or poor Islamic ethical behavior among Muslim youths before it becomes more severe and develops into social problems that are difficult to solve in the future, and in seeking ways to solve the problem in a timely manner.

Literature Review

Superb Islamic ethical behavior is the main goal of the Islamic principles which is an important base used as the Islamic way of life and Islamic behavior among Muslim.

Meanings of Ethics

The word "ethics" originates from the Greek word "ethos", which means "character, spirit and attitude of a group of people or culture" (Aidaros, Mohd. Shamsudin & Mohd. Idris, 2013; Loeb, 1971). Ethics represent a set of moral principles, rules of conduct or values and the issue of ethics arises when a person has to make a decision from various alternatives relating to moral principles, and is concerned with the good worth sought in life and with the rules that ought to govern human behavior and human interaction (Al-Aidaros et al., 2013; Burks, 2006; Delaney, 2005; Rachels & Rachels, 1993). Ethics is reflected in the principles that a person uses in governing his/her actions and the personal standard by which a person distinguishes right from wrong, as it is the mission for, and the understanding of, the good life, living well—a life worth living. Thus, ethics is largely a matter of perspective by putting every action and goal in its place, knowing what is important to do and what is not (Al-idaros et al., 2013; Elegido, 2000; Ogbonna & Ebimobowei, 2011).

Categories of Ethics

Ethics is generally divided into three main categories and each of these categories deals with a different facet of ethics. (1) Meta ethics is the closest attempt to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological presuppositions and pledges of moral thought, talk, and practice. It is the association between beliefs, causes for action, and human motivation, it might provide us with reasons to do or abstain from doing as it demands (Abbas, Gondal, Junaid, Rana, & Aslam, 2012; Ayer, 1946). (2) Normative ethics involves interpreting the word normative as a derivation of the word 'norm'. In its pure philosophical context, a norm generally exemplifies a standard, rule, or principle, in opposition to what is "normal" for people to do, in contrast with what they really do. Normative ethics is related to moral norms in the sense of being a regulator with which moral agents should comply (Abbas et al., 2012; Rawls, 1975). (3) Applied ethics deals with ethics specifically as a concrete code which affects human conduct and behavior, while 'conduct' is a collective recognition for voluntary actions. It can be viewed as any action of a being that transforms and re-defines its relationship to its environment; on the other hand, behavior provides outputs from the organism to the environment (Dusenbery, 2009). A voluntary action is that course of an action that a person could have done differently if there had been the option to do so. Our principal concern is human conduct that shows an extreme in the will, wish, and direction which it has