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

Kasetchai Laeheem

Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla 90110, Thailand

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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

E-mail address: lkasetchai@yahoo.com.

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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

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