

สตรีมุสลิมและวิถีชีวิตด้านสุขภาพในสามจังหวัดชายแดนใต้

Muslim Women and Health Lifestyle in

Deep South of Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อแสดงความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับสตรีมุสลิมและชีวิตประจำวันและวิถีชีวิตด้านสุขภาพท่ามกลางความขัดแย้งในสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ ของประเทศไทย ใช้วิธีการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกสตรีมุสลิมจำนวน 20 คน ที่สูญเสียสมาชิกในครอบครัวจากความรุนแรงในสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ของประเทศไทย และใช้การสนทนากลุ่มในการอภิปรายวิถีชีวิตด้านสุขภาพของ

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สตรีมุสลิม ในการศึกษาใช้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยการวิเคราะห์บริบทเชิงเนื้อหา และการเปรียบเทียบแนวคิดเชิงทฤษฎีกับการศึกษาอื่น ๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้หญิงมุสลิมส่วนใหญ่ที่อาศัยท่ามกลางความขัดแย้งในสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ของประเทศไทย รู้สึกถึงความไม่มั่นคงในชีวิตและทรัพย์สิน ได้รับผลกระทบจากการสูญเสียผู้นำครอบครัว ทำให้ชีวิตส่วนตัวและการประกอบอาชีพมีความยากลำบาก การขนส่งสาธารณะก็ไม่ปลอดภัย สตรีจำนวนมากต้องเป็นหม้ายและต้องรับภาระหนักในฐานะหัวหน้าครอบครัว จึงต้องปรับวิถีชีวิตภายใต้สถานการณ์ความไม่สงบเป็นอย่างมากมีความยากลำบากในการเดินทาง รวมไปถึงการปรับตัวด้านสุขภาพและการใช้ชีวิต และมีเวลาดูแลครอบครัวน้อยลง อีกทั้งต้องเสี่ยงชีวิตในการเดินทางไปทำงานหรือร่วมละหมาดที่มัสยิด นอกจากนี้ ผู้หญิงมุสลิมที่มีสุขภาพแข็งแรงจะต้องเป็นผู้นำเพื่อจูงใจคนให้มีวิถีสุขภาพที่ดี ทั้งสุขภาพกาย จิตใจ สังคม จิตวิญญาณ และสร้างสิ่งแวดล้อมทางสุขภาพ

คำสำคัญ : วิถีชีวิต สตรีมุสลิม วิถีชีวิตด้านสุขภาพ ความขัดแย้ง ชายแดนใต้

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to express opinions on Muslim women and their daily life and health lifestyle amid the conflicts in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. Data were collected via in-depth interviews among 20 women who had lost their family members through violence in three southern border provinces of Thailand. In addition, the study utilized a focus group to discuss health lifestyle. Logical context description is employed to analyze content by comparing theoretical concepts with other related studies. The results show that most of the Muslim Women amid the conflicts in the three southern border provinces of Thailand feel insecure in their lives, property, and the deaths of the family

leaders impacted by their personal life and work, difficulty in traveling due to unsafe public transportation, health adjustment and less time for family. At the risk of injury or death, they do not dare to work outside the area or engage in religious prayer at the mosque. In addition, a healthy Muslim woman must be a leader to motivate people to a healthy lifestyle. both physical, mental, social, spiritual and environmental health.

Keywords : way of life, Muslim women, health lifestyle, conflict, southern border of Thailand

Introduction

This article aims to express opinions on Muslim women and their daily life amidst the conflicts in the three southern border provinces of Thailand; how, when, how much the situation affects people in the area, and how people in the area differ from people elsewhere. These are questions many people want to know the answers to. This article has answers from women who are part of the people who face the situation and are affected by the conflicts in the three southern border provinces. The unrest situation has caused many lives to be separated, in hardship, to migrate, and to adapt themselves in many ways in order to survive. The state's failure to implement peacebuilding policies in the southern border provinces of Thailand has caused insecurity in people's lives and property—that is, until they decide to move out of the area (Seedam, 2012). The situation of unrest in the three border provinces has greatly impacted their personal life and work, such as difficulty finding food, difficulty traveling due to unsafe public

transportation, reduced time for family, and increased risk of injury or death (Kraonual, Hatthaki, & Boonyasopu, 2009). Unrest in the three border provinces has resulted in daily lifestyle disturbance, and the situation has been notorious due to fear of danger and working difficulties (Malainak, Phachusilpa, & Oumtanee, 2015).

In the deep south of Thailand, people affected by the violence include a group of children and women because of the deaths of the families leaders, and the family leadership is transferred to women who are responsible for taking care of their family (Vaivanjit et al., 2020). Many women in the deep south of Thailand have a hard time living under violence and conflicts. In addition, the problem of family violence and violence against women is very easy to find in the three southern border provinces of Thailand (Theactive, 2021). The quality of life of Muslim women had underlying diseases such as overweight, hyperlipidemia, diabetes mellitus, and hypertension (Kongvattananon & Othaganont, 2019). In addition, potential barriers of healthy lifestyle include modesty and privacy among Muslim women, gender preference for providers, family involvement in care, fatalism and predestination, maintaining religious practices during illness, low health literacy and language proficiency, preference for traditional remedies, fear of stereotype and discrimination, and limited healthcare access (Tackett et al., 2018).

This article presents the truth about Muslim women in their daily living and health lifestyle amidst the conflicts; how they live and how they adapt themselves to the situation they are in, and the author's opinions as a woman who perceives many aspects of life of Muslim women who have

been affected by the unrest situation. The authors see that each and every life is important and has perceived the losses and changes that are equally important for each of them, and therefore, would like to present them through writing this article which should be useful for readers.

Objective

To express opinions on Muslim women and their daily life and health lifestyle amidst the conflicts in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

Literature Reviews

Muslims comprise Thailand's largest religious minority and are concentrated mainly in the southernmost provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Satun and are ninety-nine percent Sunni and one percent Shi'ite of Thai Muslims. In the three southern border provinces of Thailand (Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat), most of the people are descended from the indigenous people on the Malay Peninsula. The local language is the Yawee language (Malay language). The social characteristics of the area are those of Malay Muslims, who form the majority of the people in the society and live in harmony with ethnic Thai and Chinese minorities. In addition, The Thai Muslims living in the three southern border provinces are approximately 1.4 million people. In addition, the problems in the three southern provinces are in general similar to those existing in remote provinces of other regions in Thailand. They include poverty, being underdeveloped, unemployment,

low education, as well as discrimination from corrupt and misbehaving officers. In addition, the movements are often subject to their own internal conflicts and according to the interrogation of the arrested insurgents, most of the militants were youths in the area of the southern border provinces. They were misled and incited to violence (Royal Thai Embassy, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n. d.).

In the deep south of Thailand, elderly Muslims had three important problems concerning Islamic learning such as lack of realization and did not give importance to Islamic learning because of tiredness after work and extra income earning job, and long traveling to work that became a way of life; as a result, they ignored Islamic learning and sometimes they even ignored daily religious practices. Secondly, a problem of religious leaders did not adequately promote Islamic learning as they also had to focus on earning income for their families during the time of poor economic conditions of the changing world that affected their religious dedication, and Muslims also face problem of lacking learning promotion operators. The lack was caused by a limited number of religious learners and some learning promotion operators had overwhelming work related to religious ritual (Laeheem et al., 2020).

The factors expected to be related to Muslim women's quality of life is most personal factors of physical health, nutrition, and mental health, respectively, in respect to Islamic culture, (Khanthachai & Vajirakachorn, 2014). Muslims woman with no income or mainly work from home most of the time, feel insecure about being of economic status, especially widow Muslim woman, and the widow who was not a wife of anyone was forced to marry with the other man to regain her status. Remarriage of these widows

Led to many problems because most of them became the second wife of the man and who were treated unfairly and sometimes were threaten by her husband. In the case of Muslim women who experienced the cultural violence because of lack of a family leader making them face problems with structural violence through systematic mechanisms that men have a power that creates more limitations and reduces their Muslim women's potential in dealing with the problem of poverty and their life (Laeheem et al., 2021).

Muslims believe that taking care of one's health is a religious duty (Attum et al., 2022). However, women among the Muslim population may be at an increased risk of several diseases, due to perceived restrictions in medical care. These restrictions may include gender preference of healthcare providers, modesty, and misconception about what causes certain illnesses (Updegraff, 2019). Health lifestyles of Muslim women is in ordinances of Islam in both a rule for practicing physical control and promoting mental health at the same time. For prayer, Muslims have adapted without losing the significance of their religious prescriptions. Those prescriptions are derived from Islamic Sharia Law, which in turn are sourced from the Quran - the revelations of Allah to Prophet Muhammad. Muslims regard the Quran as the literal word of God spoken through the actions of his messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (Dimmer, 2021)

Conceptual Framework

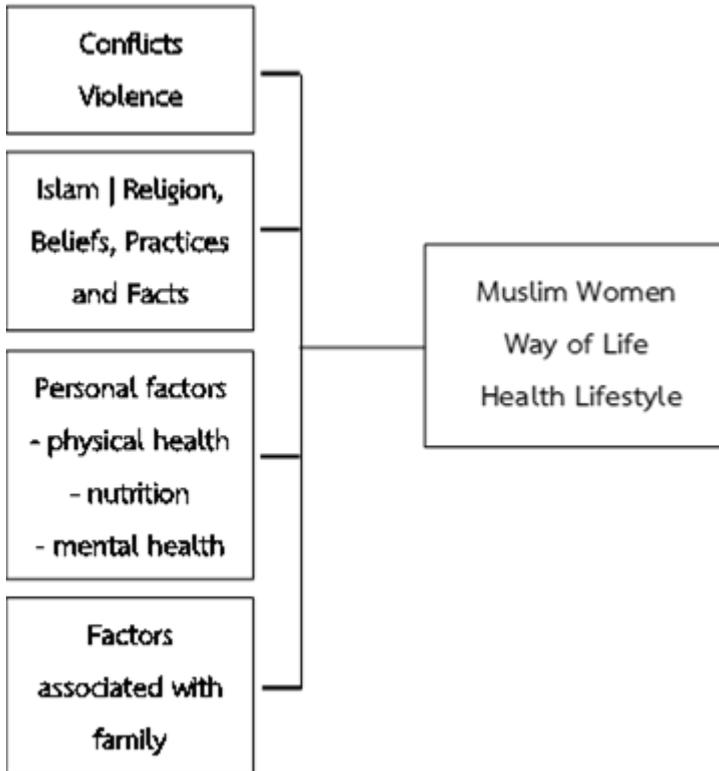


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methods

This paper explores the most common methods of data collection used in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. Data were collected from January to August 2019.

Methods

In this paper, we use a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews among 20 women who had lost their family members through violence in the three southern border provinces of Thailand such as widowed women and head of community enterprise. In addition, the study utilized a focus group with 8 participants to discuss health lifestyle and selecting target participants chosen from respondents who are convenient to the researcher and a group that included single women, a married woman, and a widow woman.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, they were initially classified according to the objectives. Logical context description and comparisons of theoretical concepts with relevant research were used to analyze the content.

Results and Discussion

The area of the three southern border provinces includes the southernmost provinces of Thailand bordering northern Malaysia. Most of the population, or approximately 80 percent, are Muslim and speak a local Malay dialect. They have their own art and performance arts that are unique to this area, such as Koleh boats, Liky Hulu (a traditional dramatic

performance), and Rong Ngeng dance. As some scholars have explained, the Patani Malay is a dialect and mother tongue of the Melayu people in three provinces of the deep south of Thailand (Isaya, 2010). The Life Malay fishing boat has been depicted through art as a visual-concept painting with acrylic on wood trim (Machenae, 2009). Likay Hulu's performance is highly popular and has been wildly performed all over the region, which shares its identity in the characteristics of performers, music, colors, and styles. The local culture, in particular, has perfectly been integrated and is to be updated in order to provide audiences with creativity and ideas through enjoyable entertainment (Saksung, Saksung, & Salaebing, 2007; Cheni, Osman, & Binisres, 2014). Rong Ngeng is a local show with a long history and development, as well as a mixture of Eastern and Western cultures; this can be seen from the musical instruments, songs, and dances. Rong Ngeng has become more popular and has spread out into 3 Southern borderline provinces. The show's form has also improved in that it is consistent with the Rong Ngeng way of life and culture of living (Bunratnang, 2010; Pholboon, 2017).

The occupations of most people are in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. They have low income and some of them have lost opportunities to carry on their work due to the unrest situation in the three southern border provinces, namely, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. It has been told that Pattani in the past was a prosperous major province until the time when the government of the country was changed from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, and then injustice took place to Muslims. As a result, there was a man called Haji Sulong who led a fight against state power

that oppressed people. He was arrested and sentenced. After he did his time in prison, he was lost, and his children believed that he was killed by a state official. This could be a claim for separatism in the past, and the probable causes of the separatism could be as follows:

1. The language that is used for communication in the area as well as in the neighbouring country where the majority of people are also Muslim.
2. The art and culture that are identities of the area.
3. Local leaders' needs for use of Islamic law in the area.
4. Some people in the area have not learned the Thai language, which is the official language, making it inconvenient for them to communicate with government officials, and as a result, they feel neglected by the government.

With many of such existing factors, local leaders who have influence on people in the area may probably see a way out of the problems and thus, try to separate the administrative rule or even the territory using the unrest situation or losses on the part of the government as a negotiation tool. In addition, there may be people who take advantage of the situation by deviating from religious principles, leading astray youth into drugs, and corruption by government officials (Pitsuwan, 1985; Whittingham-Jones, 1947).

Muslim Women and Their Daily Life

“When flowers are in bloom” is like a mirror reflecting the image of Muslim women entering their family life, social life and the way of bringing up their children according to Islamic principles. Amidst the chaos of the present society, how can Muslim women lead their life properly being

females according to Islamic principles in terms of family life, marriage, parents' rights, and working conditions. On comparing women's status and women's exploitation in different regions, it is believed that Muslim women (Muslimah) are a creation of Allah who bestows upon them the most perfect characteristics to suit men that were also created by Allah to be with women and carry on their duties according to Allah's commands. The Koran states that humans should be humble to Allah who protects them, created a man from one being and created his mate from the same being.

In addition, Muslim men and women were created from the same soul and were created for each other, and women were created to have their own natural characteristics that were different from men in terms of sex and emotion. For this reason, men and women have different rights and duties but this does not mean that their value and importance as human beings are different. Allah has created males and females with the same purposes. However, they have different roles to play in fulfilling each other's lives. In fact, Muslim women's main role is to inculcate children. This shows that women must be knowledgeable in order to build a good family and to ensure the children will grow up as humble, patient, and gentle people with good etiquette. This kind of knowledge will definitely define women's dignity since knowledge is dignity for both men and women (Kowattanakul, Boonrith, Waiwannajit, Ra-ob, Teesa, 2016). Factors facilitating Muslim women's leading roles in community and family development include the following: increases in participation in development activities, their abilities to fulfil household duties at the same time as their development involvement, and the buildup of social acceptance from community

members. As such, the promotion of Muslim women's development participation should be based on Islamic principles and practices, which emphasizes women's roles as wives and mothers (Kittitornkool, Wongpanit, & Nonthaphut, 2005).

People's way of life is formed according to their social conditions, the way they eat, live, dress, work, rest, express their emotions, and according to their traffic and transportation, living together in groups, the way they express their happiness, and their principles of living. Their living principles that illustrate their way of life can begin from an individual or a group of individuals who act as a model for people to follow and pass on from generation to generation. Therefore, the way of life can change according to conditions and time. When a new invention or discovery takes place and becomes a better solution and meets the social needs better, and thus, becomes popular among members of the society, the way of life can eventually change and the old way is abolished. Therefore, the way of life has to be adapted, changed or improved so that it is suitable and efficient for the time. Regarding the Muslim way of life, especially the Muslim way of life in Thailand, it is entirely different from that of Muslims elsewhere. For Muslims, there are Islamic guidelines for life from the day they are born to the day they die and from the time they wake up to the time they go to sleep. These guidelines are believed by Muslims to be Allah (swt) 's commands which is the Al-Quran and Al-Hadith (the practice of the prophet Muhammad (saas)). It is the culture of Muslims' lives the world over, and Muslim women in the southern border provinces of Thailand are no exception. Nevertheless, when they have to face the unrest situation, how

do they live amidst the situation called “the southern fire” by the government? Muslim women in this area who have to be the head of the household working to raise the family at the same time as taking care of children and doing housework which have all inevitably become their responsibility because some of their husbands have joined the insurgency while others have joined forces to protect their villages. As a result, some of the women have lost their husbands, the head of the household. The situation has been around for a long time and the malicious intentions resulting in loss of lives have become commonplace and the effects have become part of life because there are conflicts everywhere. The only difference is what type it is, political or cultural because the degree of violence is the same (Kowattanakul, Boonrith, Waiwannajit, Ra-ob, Teesa, 2016).

From these accounts of Muslim women in the area who have to raise their family alone, it can be seen that they have faced the situation that is unforgettable. For example, their husbands were attacked in their presence and they could do nothing about it. Some have seen the elderly in their family killed while working at home. These are some of the losses that should not have happened and that hurt the feelings of their family members. I, myself have also lost my uncle because of the unrest situation in the three southern border provinces. I learned about it through the news as I was working at the university; I saw the newspaper headline and the television news about what happened to my uncle, who was over 70 years old, in Pattani. It was such an awful happening that hurt the feelings of all my family members. It is true that to be born, become old, sick, and finally

die are natural for people in this world; however, death that does not come as it naturally should is cruel to family, relatives and friends. What I can do is only pray that the same situation will not happen to any other families because a loss causes unbalance to the family as responsibilities have to be taken by the other person, in this case, the Muslim women who have lost their husbands. They have to be the only bread winner of the family and have to do the job of being a mother and a father at the same time. This is particularly cruel for them as they did not have to work hard or some of them did not have to work at all when their husbands were still alive and took all the responsibilities. Their lives have to change totally; it is a feeling that words can hardly express. These women have to accept the situation and try to adapt themselves according to the situation in the area. As a result, it was found that people fear the violent events that take place daily, do not dare to work outside the area, and do not dare engage in religious prayer at the mosque for fear of doing harm to themselves or their family. This includes the state sectors, which have not helped the innocents accused of terror. Moreover, religious teachings were distorted so that the doctrines became erroneous. Also, there were conflicts of interest on the subject of drugs (Nadaman, & Jancum, 2013). The problem found with families is the diminishment of familial relationships; the problems within society and culture are those having to do with everyday life; the problem with regard to economics is that the pay is not enough, there is a lack of occupations, and debt has increased; and the problems concerning physical health and mental health have to do with disability and sadness (Boonsiri, 2016).

Muslim Woman and Health Lifestyle

Violent situations in the deep south of Thailand have had many impacts on Muslim women, especially with regard to their mental and psychological health. However, when Muslim women experience various problems, they do not seek counselling from public health officials, and they like to exercise and take care of their own mental and psychological health; however, Muslim women are limited to performing only a few activities, so most physical exercise is done by walking, running, and biking (i.e., walking in and around the house or walking in a public area with other Muslim women), as well as housework such as washing clothes and house cleaning.

The significant issue for Muslim women's physical activities in health empowerment are proposed as places for physical activities for Muslim women and the specific place to exercise in public area for only Muslim woman are important and not only the venues for their health empowerment but they are also the platforms for them, specifically widowed women to exchange experiences and ideas between women. However, Religious organizations should have direct policy towards women's groups in improving the quality of health life especially in the matter physical and mental health and promoting good health activities such as suitable areas for only women of all age groups on their activities in public area such as aerobics, running, dancing. Activities in a safe public area can improve mental health more because people can participate with each other. In addition, Muslim women obtain their knowledge on healthy living from a variety of sources in Thai, English and Malay. These include public

talks by healthcare professionals and religious scholars, social media such as Facebook and YouTube, and mainstream media that include radio and television.

Conclusion

Muslim women and their daily life amidst the conflicts in the three southern border provinces are involved with fighting and negotiation. The diversity of the situation depends on the context and area. They have to choose to negotiate and adapt to the change in their lives under the changing situation. What is important is that everyone has to help people in the family, the community, and the country. This article presents this area as part of the context of the whole world where the world has been developing, and changes have to take place, people have to adapt themselves and learn to face problems. This is not any different from the three southern border provinces of Thailand where people have to adapt or change their way of life and some of their identities so as to be in accordance with the present social situation, and to be able to stand and live on amidst the changing situation with minimal difficulty

The way of life of Muslim women in the deep south of Thailand at present is in the midst of a complex society and modern technologies. (Baka & Laeheem, 2010). However, Muslim women who participated in the group activities to promote Islamic learning could acquire truly Islamic behavior, teach and train their children and grandchildren, and be a good role model for their children and grandchildren (Laeheem et al., 2021). In addition,

health workers should be established to promote health in the area continuously and create a network staff for health promotions, also to support and correct Muslim Women's Health attitudes for women to have awareness and increase their competence to understand the importance of health promotion.

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