

Investigating preferences for patriarchal values among Muslim university students in southern Thailand

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Abstract Recent research on Muslim populations has offered interesting but limited insights about values preferences. This mixed-methods study examines the prevalence of support for patriarchy among a sample of religious Muslim university students in Southern Thailand using items from the World Values Survey. It also investigates the durability of these preferences by examining correlations between support or opposition to patriarchal values with preferences towards courtship practices, and elements that influence respondents' views on gender roles, particularly related to the contemporary socio-economic and political situation facing the Muslim minority of Southern Thailand.

Keywords Muslims · Patriarchy · Southern Thailand · Values · World Values Survey

Background

Multiple commentators have discussed political and cultural values within the Islamic world writ large, mostly within the context of post-colonial Islamic resurgence

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(Esposito and Voll 1996; Hunter 1998; Kabuli 1994; Lewis 2002; Midlarsky 1998). Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington famously posited a stark distinction between Islamic and Western “civilizations,” arguing that Islamic societies are predisposed against democratic governance and values (Huntington 1993, 1996). Subsequently, scholars such as Edward Said challenged the Huntington thesis as a reductionist assertion that justified western confrontation towards the Islamic world (Chowdhry 2007; Said 2001; Tuastad 2003). Since that debate has evolved, empirical evidence has not substantiated simplistic assertions. Utilizing data from the World Values Survey – a comparative social values study administered across over 70 nations - Inglehart and Norris demonstrated that support for democratic governance in Islamic and western nations were similar (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2002), a conclusion also supported by Rowley and Smith’s analysis of World Values Survey data (Rowley and Smith 2009). Other studies have confirmed the thesis that Muslims support democratic governance and political values, despite the relative absence of democratic governments in Islamic nations (Braizat 2010; Jamal and Tessler 2008; Mogahed and Abdo 2006; Shafiq 2010).

Concurrent with these findings, however, other empirical studies have found that although Muslims strongly support democratic political values and institutions, they maintain patriarchal social values (Alexander and Welzel 2011; Norris and Inglehart 2002; Rizzo et al. 2007). Norris and Inglehart used World Values Survey items to compare support for political and social values in Islamic majority countries against western/non-Muslim majority nations. They found an overall trend showing stronger levels of support for patriarchal values within Islamic-majority nations compared to western ones (2002). Rizzo and colleagues also used World Values Survey items to compare Muslim-majority Arab countries (defined as nations who were members of the League of Arab States) versus select non-Arab, Muslim-majority nations (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey). They found that support for traditional patriarchal values was higher in the Arab nations than the non-Arab ones (2007). That finding comports with theories suggesting that political context may play a significant role in explaining differing levels of patriarchy across Islamic nations (Bellin 2004; Fish 2002; Karatnycky 2002). Stepan and Robertson found that non-Arab, Muslim nations were more likely to have democratic components in their electoral and political cultures than traditionally authoritarian Arab nations (2003), supporting modernism theories assuming that democracy is a pre-requisite for the development of culturally liberal ideas.

Other commentators have pointed to macro-level factors in developing nations that drive low levels of female literacy and educational achievement - characteristics present in Muslim and non-Muslim societies throughout the global south (Marcoux 1998; Rigg 2006). On the other hand, Alexander and Welzel found that in both predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim societies, self-identifying Muslims show higher prevalence of support for patriarchal values than non-Muslims (2011). This comports with studies showing persistent support for traditional values among Muslim immigrants in non-Muslim nations (Buijs and Rath 2002; Fetzer and Soper 2005). Thus, much of the academic work suggests that Muslims support democratic political values but seek to maintain traditional social structures (Esposito and Mogahed 2007, 2008), though there are variations on theories explaining why these preferences exist. Within popular cultures, however, the extreme otherness of Muslims has led to the proliferation of

negative representations conflating Islam with harmful practices towards women, such as female genital mutilation, “honor killings”, and other cultural practices prevalent in some Muslim-majority nations, or extremist segments which have dominated media depictions of Muslims since 9/11 (Abbas 2004; Husain and O'Brien 2000; Strabac and Listhaug 2008).

There is a need for more studies investigating the factors associated with support for patriarchy among Muslim populations. Lack of access to populations, disciplinary limitations, or Islamophobic assumptions behind scholarship may continue to drive simplistic understandings of gender values among Muslim populations. Critics have long lamented these shortcomings, particularly in terms of how they have strengthened stereotypes about Muslim societies. Edward Said attacked the trope of the submissive Muslim woman, not to defend actual oppression of women, but to point out its centrality to the narrative of *The Orient* (1979). Chandra Mohanty and others have argued that western second wave feminists have unconsciously reproduced a simplistic conceptualization of “third world women” ignoring local contexts, social practices, class, religion, and other factors (1988). Because of mainstream western feminism’s historical grounding in secular and western societies, religion – and particularly Islam – has been cast as an inherently patriarchal system, therefore contributing to the orientalist notion that Islam excludes the possibility of a “western” understanding of gender equality within Muslim societies (Salem 2013). This critique follows from the work of Saba Mahmood (2011), Lila Abu-Lughod (2002), and others who have questioned reductionist discourses about Muslim women.

Critical race scholars also provide an insightful perspective on this discussion. Originating from African-American critique of the United States’ legal system, these scholars reacted to the limiting binaries of gender and race to the experiences of Black-American women, and highlighted the importance of recognizing the existence of multiple identities within a dynamic society of overlapping power relations (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). Kimberle Crenshaw, for example, argued that African-American women may sometimes experience sexism similar to that of a white woman, or racism similar to that of a black man. However, their lived experiences fail to bifurcate into either category separately, or the sum of both, but to an array of multidimensional experiences unique to black women (1989).

Similarly, we should expect that lived experiences in local contexts among Muslims should impact their attitudes regarding gender values. A major distinction might be made between Muslims in majority-Islamic nations versus Muslims living in societies as religious or ethnic minorities. In recent years, there has been a surge in scholarship on Muslim minorities in western countries, particularly European nations (Abbas 2004, 2007; Khan 2000; Husain and O'Brien 2000; Peach and Glebe 1995) and also the United States (Haniff 2003; Kurien 2001; Maira 2005; Schmidt 2004). Although the breadth and variety of such studies defy easy categorization, those that have examined Muslim immigrant integration in western environments and effects on religious values have confirmed trends aligning with classical assimilationist theories (Maliepaard et al. 2010; Van Tubergen 2007), as well as more segmented assimilation patterns dependent on individual level characteristics or post-immigration environmental contexts (Fleischmann and Phalet 2012; Güveli and Platt 2011; Smits et al. 2010). Other examinations have identified reactive identification trends among Muslim immigrants to the west as a result of stigma, or real or perceived hostility (Kunst et al. 2012; Voas

and Fleischmann 2012; Shirazi and Mishra 2010). The French law banning practices of veiling and the subsequent resistance by French Muslim women was a visible reflection of the latter phenomenon (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 2005; Werbner 2007; Wing and Smith 2005). Yet despite the scholarly attention devoted to Muslim minorities in western nations, as noted by Hamid (2015) – the majority of the world’s Muslim minorities live outside the west, and a considerable amount in Asian nations. Additionally, these minorities are not post-colonial immigrants, but indigenous to their home nations, and many have historically experienced historical discrimination in these environments for some time.

The Malay-Muslim minority of Southern Thailand presents a salient opportunity to explore these issues. Muslims are the largest religious minority in Thailand, but compose the majority of the population in the southern part of the country (Thai National Statistics Office 2000). The three southernmost provinces of Thailand were previously an independent Islamic sultanate with strong cultural orientations to the Malay world (Jory 2007; Puaksom 2008). The region was brought under Siamese control through the expansion of the Thai state in the early twentieth century (Aphornsuvan 2008). This included the use of harsh state policies during the administration of Field Marshall Phibun Songkram during World War II to assimilate the local population into the majority Thai Buddhist nation (Boonprakarn et al. 2015; Koch 1977; Ockey 2011; Scupin 1987; Winichakul 2000). This included prohibitions on the use of the native Malay dialect, banning of headscarves, imposition of Buddhist worship in schools, and other restrictions on Muslim religious expression to suppress or eradicate ethnic Malay and Islamic practices (Khareng et al. 2015). More recently, violence in the area has flared between pro-separatist insurgents and Thai government forces, leading to a state of persistent unrest in the south (Askew 2008; Liow 2004; McCargo 2006). Violence surged in 2004, after over 70 Muslim protesters died from suffocation after being arrested and forced into Thai military trucks (Jitpiromrsi and McCargo 2008). Since then, Human Rights Watch has estimated that over 6000 people have died in related violence (Human Rights Watch 2015). The southern Muslim-majority provinces remain the only parts of the country that have remained under martial law in Thailand for the past decade, with wide ranging allegations of arbitrary arrests, searches, torture, and extrajudicial killings of civilians (ACARM 2012; Amnesty International 2009; Human Rights Watch 2007, 2010a).

Concurrent with this political backdrop has been a growth in Islamic identity formation within Thailand, and particularly in the three southern provinces where Malay Muslims form the majority population. This trend can be credited to a mix of factors, including the increased educational and cultural links between Thailand’s Muslim community and the wider Islamic world (Liow 2010; Horstmann 2007; Madmarn 2009; Yusuf 2007); changing Thai government policies accommodating Malay-Muslim practices and expressions (Islam 2006; Yusuf 2006); and Islamic group identity formation as resistance to Thai cultural hegemony (Lyndon et al. 2015; Marddent 2007; Peow 2009). This has manifested in significant shifts towards more fundamentalist expressions of Islam and growth in Islamic religious schooling and culture in the south (Liow 2010; Mutalib 1990). However, there have been few recent studies examining social values among Muslim youth in the southern provinces of Thailand. Sateemae and colleagues examined perceptions of social problems among southern Muslim adolescents by their parents (2015). Laeheem and colleagues (2013;

2014) and Mahamad et al. (2008) have reviewed socialization of Islamic values among youth in the three southern provinces, as well as use of Islamic educational approaches towards drug use and criminal behavior among youth (Laeheem and Madreh 2014; Laeheem et al. 2014). Lateh and Mudor examined attitudes towards wearing the hijab among southern university students (2014). Chaiprasit et al. (2005), and Wibulswasdi-Anderson and Anderson (1986) have looked at sexual practices among southern Muslim adolescents.

Of course, an obvious difficulty with ascribing any categorical inferences about social values preferences on the Malay Muslim population is the diversity of the community, particularly in terms of religious cultures. Although it is true that the three southern provinces are historically and ethnically different from Muslim communities in other parts of Thailand, even within the three provinces there are clear distinctions to be found (Joll 2011). Historically, local Muslim culture was syncretic in nature and contained influences from animist or Hindu cosmologies (see, e.g., Fraser 1966). The ascendance of the Tablighi Jama'at and Salafiyyah movements has challenged this milieu. The transnational Tablighi Jama'at has established a significant presence and wide following in the three provinces. As a revivalist, missionary movement with a firm setting in formalistic Sunni tradition, the Tablighi Jama'at have inspired locals to adhere to core teachings and practices which emphasize the movement's focus on personal spiritual faith, piety, and proselytization (Horstmann 2007). The Tablighi Jama'at are known to focus their missionary efforts on rural and lower-income families. They have also successfully opened Tahfiz schools (Quranic memorization) throughout the region. The Tablighi Jama'at proselytizers and communities have adopted fundamentalist expressions that encourage rejection of materialism. However, the leaders of the movement have maintained good relations with local authorities by stressing peace, focusing on missionary work, and rejecting involvement in political controversies because such activity is not deemed central to Muslim faith or practice.

Unlike the South Asian-based Tablighi Jama'at, the Salafiyyah movement in Southern Thailand has developed directly from the historical ties between the Malay-Muslim scholarly community and religious universities in Mecca. The basic assertion of the Salafiyyah is that the practice of Islam has not been correctly adhered to since the time of the early Muslims, necessitating a return to the true monotheistic Islam of the early period (Gauvain 2012). The Salafiyyah in Thailand have successfully leveraged scholarly expertise and credibility with financial support from Arab gulf nations to expand Sunni Islamic reformism in the three southern provinces, primarily through the reach of educational institutions (Liow 2010). The Salafiyyah leadership have also earned trust or established key partnerships with the Thai government and elite members of the political establishment, and embraced principles of multi-religious friendship and a commitment to working within the Thai legal and political system (Yahprung 2014). They have extended their influence in local communities through the sanctioning and proliferation of integrated Islamic and secular curriculums into Islamic private schools throughout the area. This has served the purpose of increasing quality education in orthodox Islamic principles among area youth, while satisfying government requirements to teach the standard Thai national curriculum under the Thai Education Act. Like the Tablighi Jama'at, they actively encourage peaceful relations, compliance with the law, and avoiding conflict with Thai authorities in order to continue their religious missions. The Salafiyyah have similarly inspired an increased and highly visible surge

in conservative religious practices, ideology, and personal and communal expressions of piety (Marddent 2013).

It is worth recognizing that both movements have clearly distinct historical origins, scholastic traditions, and ascribed purposes (sometimes at odds with each other), though a complete discussion is not warranted here. Suffice to say, for most residents of the area, the everyday relevance of these movements on the Malay Muslim minority lies not in differences among scholarly theological discourse, but their significant role in Islamic identity formation. Although both the formal Tablighi Jama'at and Salafiyah movements in the three provinces are avowedly apolitical or politics-neutral, their organic emergence among an ethnic and religious minority that has been historically oppressed serves as a strong facilitator of collective identity formation (Marddent 2007, 2013).

Some commentators have argued that these religious identity movements have encouraged gendered roles among activists. Marddent (2013) has asserted that some Malay Muslim women encounter difficulties in asserting rights because of the negative associations of such activities with western feminist and secular movements. Pollachom has also discussed how some Malay Muslim women have chosen to promote traditional family life as expressions of religious solidarity, while simultaneously furthering women-focused Islamic social and education activities (2014). In contrast, Neelaphajit has offered sharp criticism, and argued that Malay Muslim women in the three provinces have been marginalized by male-dominated institutions, and have endured layered victimization as a result of the political violence. As illustrative examples, she points to the cases in which Thai security forces have sexually assaulted or raped Malay Muslim women – situations in which the victims are unlikely to receive redress either by the government or local communities due to the highly stigmatizing nature of sexual violation in Muslim culture (Neelapajit 2009).

Although the small number of empirical studies on Malay Muslims in Thailand is growing, we have found no studies that have implemented World Values Survey items to Muslim populations in Thailand, or examined attitudes towards gender equality or patriarchy specifically. This study has several purposes. First, we wanted to implement the World Values Survey items among a sample of Malay Muslims in Thailand as an indication of preferences for or against patriarchy. A convenience sample was employed of students at a private Islamic university in the south. We utilized items measuring support for patriarchy from the most recent (sixth wave) version of the World Values Survey to explore this question. We also wanted to examine our respondents' attitudes on these items relative to comparison populations – a viable inquiry given the availability of such data from previous administrations of the World Values Survey.

Secondly, and more importantly, we wanted to examine the durability of support for or against patriarchal values among our sample population as reflected in the World Values Survey responses, and explore perspectives explaining our survey findings. We did this in two ways. In our survey, we included items on preferences towards heterosexual courtship practices. Courtship is generally defined as activities in which two people develop a relationship towards romantic partnership and marriage. We define agency in courtship as individual control over choices towards finding a mate. We examined the relationship between preferences among our sample regarding patriarchal values, and preferences regarding agency in courtship. We selected this

focus because, even though courtship behavior is regulated by Islamic law and local customs, preferences towards courtship may indicate variability reflecting individualized negotiations of social conventions (see, e.g., Platt 2010). It should be noted that the traditional discourse about the relationship between gender attitudes and agency reflects assumptions about agency as a response to social subjugation (Abrams 1995; Davies 1991; McNay 2010), and has led to an extensive debate on the topic among scholars of feminism (Burke 2012; Chen 2013; Hatton and Trautner 2013). However, our concern with agency in courtship is restricted to its function measuring behavioral preferences as a function of values, as per traditional social values-beliefs theory (Rokeach 1973).

Additionally, we convened a focus group to assess respondents' perspectives on the reasoning behind their World Values Survey item answers on patriarchy. The qualitative approach was specifically aimed at identifying the "why" behind our quantitative results. We were particularly interested in exploring the relevance of how ethnic minority status, local conditions related to the current conflict, and non-religious factors impacted respondents' attitudes towards patriarchy as measured in the World Values Survey items. Following from the works of critical scholars on Islam noted previously, this exploration was important to investigate local context and lived experiences within a conflict zone that might explain the values preferences revealed in the survey responses, and challenge any unsubstantiated conclusions, stereotypes or assumptions.

Methods

The quantitative data used in this research was gathered from a survey implemented in the summer of 2015. The survey included select questions from Wave 6 of the World Values Survey in the Thai language. Those questions were: "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women", "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do", and "A university education is more important for a boy than a girl". These three questions have previously been used and validated as a scale to measure support for patriarchy among Muslim populations by Alexander and Welzel (2011). Both Rizzo et al. (2007) and Asadullah and Chaudhury (2010) have also employed variations on these questions to measure support for patriarchy among Muslim populations. The three WVS questions on gender equality had different response scales, and were thus recoded into a uniform scale for consistency (0–1.0), using the same method employed by Alexander and Welzel (2011). Questions on courtship practices were based on items from Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (2005). Those questions asked respondents to rate the acceptability of meeting partners: "through school or college", "online through the internet", "through dating", "through friends", "on parent's request", and "through arranged marriage", and utilized a consistent response scale. We also included questions on gender and age. All additional questions besides the WVS items were translated into standard Thai language, piloted with native Thai speakers, and re-translated into English for verification by the authors.

The survey was compiled into a written questionnaire and administered with students from a private Islamic university in Pattani province, Thailand. Permission for the data collection was granted by university administrators. A total of 329 students were provided the survey, and 186 completed and returned it for a response rate of 56%. All students had major fields from the Faculty of Social Sciences, and were from

second and third year classes. Table 1 displays gender and age of respondents. Respondents were overwhelmingly female.¹ Analysis of survey data was completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 23.0.

Following completion of the survey, the authors conducted a semi-structured focus group with seven respondents (6 female and 1 male). We gauged respondents' approaches to the three survey items measuring support for patriarchy with a central question of, "Why did you answer the survey items the way you did?" followed by probing as appropriate. The responses were recorded and coded by the authors using ATLAS.ti 7.0 software. An organic, grounded theory approach was used to independently code focus group content, and identify themes that were relevant to explaining respondents' survey answers (Charmaz 2011; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Results

Survey data

Support for patriarchy and peer comparisons

Our survey sample responses showed relatively high levels of support for patriarchy. Our sample's responses and comparison responses are displayed in Table 2. Four populations from Wave 6 were used as comparisons. Respondents aged 19–25 only were used from the comparison populations. The first comparison group was the Thailand sample ($n = 71$), the home nation, of which the majority of people are Thai Buddhist. The second comparison group was the Malaysia sample ($n = 211$), the Muslim-majority nation that borders Southern Thailand, and shares many cultural characteristics with ethnic Malay Muslims in Thailand. Thirdly, we compared our sample against respondents from an aggregate of ASEAN nations – the ten nation regional association of South East Asia. We wished to do this to establish where the sample stood against a more regional milieu on patriarchal values. However, Wave 6 currently only includes responses from four ASEAN members: Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore ($n = 792$). Thus, responses were aggregated from those four nations only. Finally, we wished to compare our sample against Muslim-majority Arab nations. We employed the same approach that Rizzo and colleagues used towards identifying this group, which was selecting Wave 6 participants that were members of the League of Arab Nations (Rizzo et al. 2007). This included an aggregate of respondents from the country samples for Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen ($n = 3292$).

MANOVA tests for the three patriarchy items were completed for our sample against each of the four comparison groups. There was a significant difference found between our sample and their Thai peers ($F(3, 189) = 82.647, p < .001$), Malaysian peers ($F(3, 329) = 31.218, p < .001$), the aggregate of four ASEAN nations ($F(3, 910) = 65.334, p < .001$), and the aggregate of Arab nations ($F(3, 3288) = 34.481, p < .001$). For Thailand, Malaysia, and the Arab nations aggregate, all three patriarchy questions

¹ As of the semester of April 2016, the university had a gender makeup of 66% female. The female majority of our sample was thus higher than their overall representativeness in the university.

Table 1 Survey sample characteristics

Gender		Age						
Male	Female	19	20	21	22	23	24	25+
23/12.4%	163/87.6%	16.8.6%	40/21.5%	52/28.0%	27/14.5%	35/18.8%	10/5.4%	6/3.2%

contributed to the significant difference in means for the MANOVA tests. For the ASEAN aggregate, two of the questions contributed to the significant difference, and one did not (“When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.”)

Our sample’s responses to the patriarchy items indicated that they were quite conservative relative to the other comparison groups. The differences in means and respective standard deviations for the 3 questions across the comparison groups are displayed in Figs. 1, 2 and 3. For each of the question response scales, a lower response indicated greater levels of agreement with question statements assuming patriarchal

Table 2 Support for patriarchy

	Mean	SD	N	F	p
Item: When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. (1 = Agree, 3 = Disagree)					
Sample	1.98	0.738	122		
Thailand	2.42	0.690	71	16.633	.001*
Malaysia	1.73	0.845	211	7.914	.005*
ASEAN [‡]	2.01	0.861	792	.076	.783
Arab ^{**}	1.61	0.832	3170	24.262	.001*
Item: On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do. (1 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree)					
Sample	1.36	0.546	122		
Thailand	2.87	0.877	71	217.940	.001*
Malaysia	2.01	0.822	211	60.476	.001*
ASEAN [‡]	2.40	0.841	792	174.027	.001*
Arab ^{**}	1.82	0.935	3170	29.091	.001*
Item: A university education is more important for a boy than a girl. (1 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree)					
Sample	2.35	1.028	122		
Thailand	3.17	0.697	71	35.322	.001*
Malaysia	2.61	0.931	211	5.534	.019*
ASEAN [‡]	2.84	0.896	792	29.830	.001*
Arab ^{**}	2.76	1.056	3170	17.742	.001*

*Significance at <0.05

[‡] ASEAN nations include Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore

^{**} Arab nations include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen

values. Thus, higher group means indicate greater support for gender equality, and lower means indicate greater support for more socially conservative, patriarchal values. On two of the questions, our sample scored significantly lower than all other groups (“On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” and “A university education is more important for a boy than a girl”). On the jobs questions, our sample scored in the middle, higher than the Malaysian and Arab respondents, lower than Thai respondents, and equal to ASEAN respondents.²

Agency in Courtship

The six questions related to agency in courtship were factor analyzed using principal component analysis. Using a varimax extraction, Eigenvalues yielded two factors greater than 1.0 that accounted for 33% and 27% of the variance. An oblimin rotation was also conducted, which yielded a similar factor structure. The first factor was labeled Personal Choice as it reflected personal agency in courtship, and the second Family Choice as it reflected more deference to the family’s voice in courtship (Table 3).

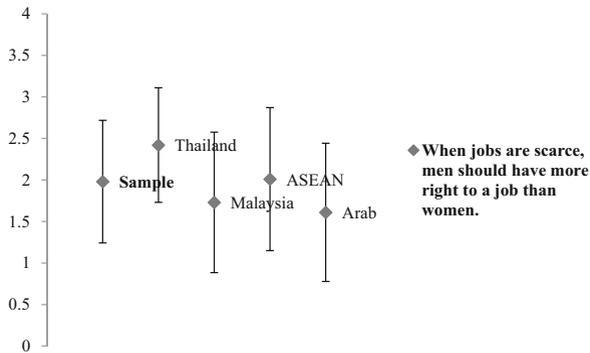
Factor loadings were sufficiently strong at a level greater than .7 for five of the six methods, with the Personal Choice factor including meeting partners through school or college (.702), online (.707), or through dating (.811). Variables that loaded highly on Family Choice included meeting partners through arranged marriage (.795), and on parent’s request (.749). The final method – meeting partners through friends, split relatively evenly between both factors, though slightly higher on the Personal Choice factor (.550). Factor scores were created for both factors 1 and 2 for correlation analysis.

Correlations between support for patriarchy and Agency in Courtship

A total Gender Equality Score was calculated for all members of our sample by averaging the 0–1.0 recoded score for the three patriarchy questions. A higher score represented a general preference for gender equality and rejection of patriarchal norms. Interestingly, a one-way ANOVA indicated no significant relationship between gender of respondents and the Gender Equality Score ($F(1,120) = 2.264, p = .135$) among our respondents. Finding no relationship between gender and the Gender Equality Score, we then conducted Pearson correlations to identify relationships between the Gender Equality Score, the six individual items for agency in courtship, and both the Personal Choice and Family Choice factors (See Table 4).

We found a moderate positive correlation between the Gender Equality Score and Factor 1 (Personal Choice) ($r = .240, p < 0.01$), as well as with two of the agency in courtship items affiliated with Personal Choice approaches: meeting partners through the internet ($r = .298, p < 0.01$), and dating ($r = .195, p < 0.05$). There was no correlation between Gender Equality and Factor 2 (Family Choice).

² It should also be noted that although we only included respondents aged 19–25 among the peer comparison populations from World Values Study respondents, the gender representation was not similar. Among the WVS populations, gender representation was tended to be approximately 50% female and 50% male.



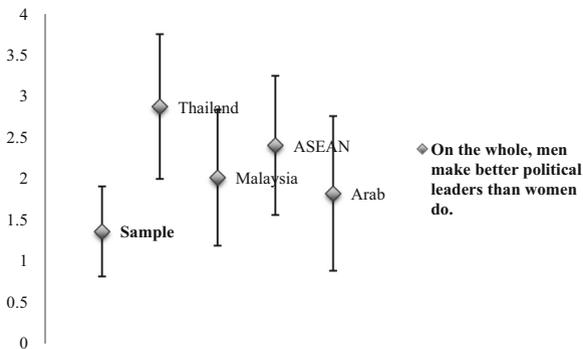
Note: Lower means indicate more agreement with the statement.

Fig. 1 Comparison on job scarcity

Focus group data

What influenced responses on patriarchy items?

Focus group respondents offered numerous perspectives on how they answered the survey items on patriarchy. Many of the themes reflected the relevance of the socio-economic and political situation in the south. Focus group participants discussed at length how their negotiations of the survey questions were based on considerations of their families’ financial well-being, and how the low-wages generated by rubber-tapping (a principal source of income for many families) influenced division of labor choices among families and children. One persistent theme was the limited opportunities young men have to advance financially or occupationally. This appeared to influence respondents to answer survey items in a way to prioritize opportunities or favor higher social status for men, particularly since younger men may be considered at risk for drug use or other anti-social or criminal behavior. Some participants also believed that safety concerns were important factors behind considerations about the appropriateness of men or women working outside the home. The participants also



Note: Lower means indicate more agreement with the statement.

Fig. 2 Comparison on political leaders

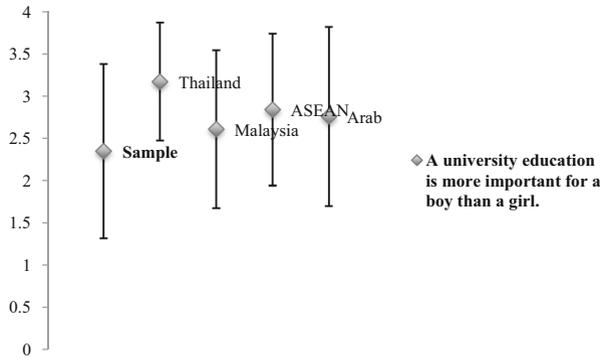


Fig. 3 Comparison on university education

noted that men are traditionally expected to take a leadership role in work or business, particularly since the majority of work in the area is agricultural or labor intensive. There were also preferences expressed supporting the notion that women were better fit to stay home and raise families, rather than work. Finally, a number of students expressed adherence to traditional Islamic legal principles that men should be responsible for the economic well-being of women and children:

“Nowadays, money is difficult. My parents earn only 70 Baht per day from rubber tapping, while we need money for food and school and colleges. My only

Table 3 Agency in courtship eigenvalues and factor loadings

Factor Analysis, Varimax Rotation			
Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.963	32.716	32.716
2	1.645	27.415	60.131
3	0.775	12.919	73.050
4	0.679	11.324	84.374
5	0.550	9.172	93.547
6	0.387	6.453	100.000
		Factor 1	Factor 2
How acceptable is it for young Muslims to meet their partners through each of the following ways?		Personal Choice	Family Choice
Through school of college		.702	.065
Online through internet chatrooms, discussion forums, online dating or social media		.707	-.478
Through dating		.811	-.064
Through friends		.550	.463
Through arranged marriage		.015	.795
On parent’s request		.103	.749

Table 4 Correlations

	Gender Equality Score	Factor 1 Personal Choice	Factor 2 Family Choice
Factor 1 Personal Choice	.240**	1	1
Factor 2 Family Choice	-.048	1	1
Through school or college	.059	.721**	-.125
Online through the internet	.298**	.805**	-.411**
Through dating	.195*	.828**	-.152
Through friends	.094	.556**	.401**
On parent's request	.092	.087	.694**
Through arranged marriage	-.032	-.074	.738**

*Significance at $p < 0.05$

**Significance at $p < 0.01$

brother has to help my parents in their work. Only me and my sister are supported to go to college." (Female)

"If jobs are scarce, I think we should see which jobs are right for each sex. Some jobs are good for women, some jobs are more suitable for men. Some women work until night. Riding from work at night is dangerous, especially for women." (Male)

"Many women work until the night time. They then cannot be good mothers." (Female)

"Islamic law provides the complete protection for female's welfare, as females are seen as the most vulnerable. Arabs are rich enough to provide welfare for their families. But in my hometown, Muslim women still must have an economic role because of poverty. We regard this as an exempted condition, as Islamic rules can be flexible." (Female)

The fact that young Muslim men are stereotypically viewed with suspicion by authorities, also plays a role in socio-economic opportunities. As the three provinces are under martial law by Thai authorities, both younger men and adult males are often targeted in dragnet sweeps to find insurgents – operations that have been widely reported to result in indiscriminate detentions, abuses, and even disappearances (Human Rights Watch 2007, 2010b, 2014). Focus group participants noted how these problems with authorities worked to curtail opportunities for young men both in school and professionally. This also supported the theme that men's advancement should be prioritized, particularly in work, as either or both a means to improve everyday safety for male family members and as a form of collective solidarity against authorities:

"Many boys who dropped from school or have no jobs were arrested because of some security reasons." (Female)

“Male adolescents and adults are often eyed by the military. Many Muslim men are arrested by the authorities to retrieve information from them regarding security problems.” (Female)

Similar concerns about safety were made regarding the question about men making better political leaders. One focus group participant stated that men are more appropriate political leaders because they are more likely to be the targets of violence. This attitude is not uncommon in the region. It has been widely reported that the Malay Muslim provinces of Thailand have the highest rates of political assassinations in the country, with victims being almost exclusively male and nearly 3/4ths being sub-district administrators (Vititanon 2011). Members of the focus group also believed that female involvement in political activities either made them vulnerable to sexual assaults, or to inappropriate relationships with Thai government representatives or soldiers – an extremely sensitive issue which has also been reported in the press (see, e.g., Bangkok Post 2012):

“Men are more appropriate political leaders because it is not a safe job for women.” (Male)

“Islam never forbids females to be involved in political matters. But students think males are better suited to be political leaders. The conditions of society support this attitude. In fact some Muslim females who have participated in political activities have been abused. I think this is related to sexual safety. The status of women in many ways is related to assuring their sexual safety.” (Female)

A central theme focused around the importance of how educational opportunities, particularly Islamic education, would serve to improve the character and behavior of young men. The general conclusion of the focus group was that prioritizing opportunities for men in education would yield results that would benefit the Muslim communities in the area generally. Part of this was because of the perception that Islamic education would deter young men from engaging in harmful conduct, particularly drug use, which is a major concern among local community members (see, e.g., Binwang and Laeheem 2013; Sateemae et al. 2015):

“Many boys in the villages are uneducated or unemployed, and refuse to acquire Islam ... They are addicted to drugs, or more interested in music or movies.” (Female)

“Some boys dropped out of school or no longer study religious curriculum. But we can see that the number of boys studying to become Hafiz (memorizers of the Quran) are increasing, and these schools are spreading in the area. The parents want to send their sons to these schools to get them away from drugs.” (Female)

Another consistent and related theme was that greater education, again with an emphasis on Islamic values, would improve outcomes on personal levels as well. Focus group participants stressed that Islamic education would lead to better familial life through character development:

“My brother in law became better to my sister after he became involved in the Da’wah Tablighi (Islamic missionary) group.” (Male)

“I want to marry with a man of high Islamic knowledge. Because I notice that most of them are good to their wives because of their good education in Islam.” (Female)

“Divorce is common among families with less education and Islamic consciousness. They do not have enough knowledge to respect each other.” (Male)

Additionally, focus group participants believed that education would lead to better political outcomes. There was support for the notion that Muslims must support each other, and that individual improvements would lead to overall better status for the Muslim community in Thailand generally:

“Education and Islamic education is the solution for building peace in the area in every level. Good politics derives from good education.”

“Few educated men are appointed as political leaders. Some of them in politics have no skills in political administration.”

“We are proud to be Muslim. We need to help each other as much as we can. Muslims in Thailand are all brothers and sisters. We hope the next generation will be better, and that Muslims act in a more Islamic manner. That society as a whole will be more peaceful.”

Discussion

Our survey results indicate that there was relatively strong support for patriarchal values among our sample. Levels of support for patriarchy were in line with peer comparison groups from other Muslim populations, and also align with findings from other researchers indicating a preference for conservative social values among Muslim populations in general. On one hand this was not surprising given the fact that our sample was composed of students from an Islamic university, where it can be assumed that there is strong adherence to collective identity norms. At the same time, our sample was composed of a majority of females, whom one might expect to have less support for patriarchy.

Our results leave a number of unanswered questions, but present a greater need to conduct further research in this area. The major caveat of the study is that it is based on a convenience sample of students who we can assume are more religious than the general population of Malay-Muslims in the area. Additionally, the sample was mainly female, though the university overall was also majority female. We used no objective measures to determine religiosity among our sample, or compare it to representatives from the general population. As second limitation is that although the focus group was explanatory, it was not a comprehensive instrument to assess cognitive processes about patriarchy among the sample as a whole.

Despite these caveats, there are two notable findings of interest. First, there was a significant positive correlation between respondents' Gender Equality Score – which reflected opposition to patriarchal values – and agency in courtship. A higher Gender Equality Score was also positively correlated with two individual courtship approaches that reflected independent agency in courtship. On the contrary, there were no significant negative correlations between Gender Equality and agency in courtship. Thus, although the sample overall showed strong preferences for patriarchal values as measured by the World Values Survey items, there was a divergence of views on social practices which were associated with opposition to patriarchal values. This comports with the notion that although there may be some generalities to be made about Muslim preferences regarding social values, there are contradictions and nuances that deserve further examination. Of course, there are limitations to be noted in our observations. We used agency in courtship as a measure to approximate a relationship to support or opposition to patriarchal values – as reflected in the three World Values Survey items. There are no doubt other categories of social behavior that might serve as equally relevant or more appropriate reflections of support or opposition to patriarchal values. Indeed, within discourse about the relationship between agency and values, there is significant discussion within feminist and critical circles about this connection in general. We suggest that further research be done in the area of courtship preferences, and associations with other social values among this population.

Secondly, the focus group discussion provided a number of insights explaining the high support for patriarchy as indicated in our sample's responses. Here, many of the themes discussed highlighted the importance of dynamics specific to the local context influencing respondent views. One theme was based on the notion that the community as a whole should prioritize supporting young men in certain areas – foremost in education – to advance their status in both the personal and social realms. This idea reflected an active awareness that men in the community faced certain disadvantages that needed to be overcome. This population has not only been a historically marginalized minority group, but have also lived – and adapted to – an environment of continual violence and martial law. Many of the themes covered in the focus group thus reflected concerns regarding everyday violence and safety. In fact, security and safety considerations seemed to be the major theme that influenced respondents' answers on the patriarchy preference questions. Other themes reflected nuanced considerations related to social status, pragmatic concerns, or desires to overcome adverse conditions and improve overall outcomes for the Muslim community in Thailand generally. What was noticeably absent were any explicit themes reflecting bare chauvinism. Generally, the focus group spoke to the need to further investigate how local political and socio-economic contexts and lived experiences specific to communities of interest influence values, particularly for Muslim minority groups.

A clear methodological and scholastic implication of our study is how it reveals the limitations of quantitative analysis when viewed in isolation. Our quantitative results seemed to align with survey findings on Muslim values' preferences towards patriarchy in studies conducted by other researchers. Such a conclusion might support an assumption that the principal driver of such value preferences must therefore be religion. Although we do not disagree that religion is obviously a central influence on social values, our focus group results strongly suggest that local realities and context were key determinants. This highlights the importance with which researchers must employ

multiple means to engage this population before drawing conclusions about values preferences. When viewed together, the quantitative and qualitative results constructed a much more comprehensive story than either set of data viewed alone. Given the extent to which scholarship and discourse about Muslim communities has increased in recent years, including by commentators who lack in-depth knowledge of Muslims or their local realities, scholars in this field should redouble efforts to examine context and engage local voices using multiple methods.

Thus, we hope that this study will inspire greater interest in exploring complexities related to values preferences among this sample of Muslims in Thailand, or other Muslim minority populations generally. We also hope this discussion can expand to include methodological and interdisciplinary considerations for research on Muslim values. Given the fact that empirical studies on Muslim populations in general are still lacking, at least in the western academic canon, more thorough and complex investigations are necessary to expand on existing empirical studies in this area, and challenge partial conclusions or unsubstantiated stereotypes.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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