

Thesis Title : Religion and Family Planning : A study of the
Bangkok Buddhist and Muslim religious leader's
attitude toward family planning

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study the attitude of the Buddhist and Muslim leaders on family planning, especially on birth control. The study is divided into two parts: paper and field study. The first part, paper study, deals with their belief and actual practices on family planning, especially on birth control. The study is based on various research, religious doctrine and exegesis made by the scholars of both religions. The second part, field study, makes a research on family planning according to the opinion of both religious leaders: Their attitude on method and reason to limit the size of family by prolongation of marriage, limitation of number of children, sterilization, pill, injection, contraceptive devices, abstention from sexual relations, external ejaculation, choice of infertile period, abortion, including the government's policy on family planning. The study is made within the area of Bangkok. Approximately 30 % of Buddhist chief monks (126 out of 418) and Imams (45 out of 151) answered the questionnaires.

From the paper study, it shows that, in Buddhism, there is no clear teaching about family planning, especially birth control. The Buddhist scholars' opinion on this matter is rather receptive than rejective, except methods against Buddhist doctrine directly, e.g. abortion which is life-killing. Buddhists mostly agree with family planning with the reason of family welfare, better education of children, allowance of parent's free time and for the sake of good health. But some Buddhists disagree, for they consider it a sin and it may cause a risk of health. The Qur'ân forbids child-killing for fear of poverty. The Hadith mentions about external ejaculation. On account of the Muslim Texts, the attitude of Muslim scholars on family planning tend to be rather rejective than receptive. Birth control is allowed in only some serious cases. It should not be done or encouraged. Most Muslims also disagree with the practice of family planning. For them, family planning is against the Will of God.

The field research makes it come to conclusion that the attitude of both religious leaders conforms with the paper study, i.e. Buddhist leaders' attitude on family planning is more affirmative than the Muslims do. From the above mentioned, it indicates that the doctrine of each religion influences their attitude towards family planning. Thus family planning would be more accepted by religious adherents, unless the doctrine of each religion is directly and clearly given against family planning.