



Spring 5-15-2007

New Study Examines Impact of Islamic Religion on Muslim Youth

Ann Aubry
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Aubry, Ann, "New Study Examines Impact of Islamic Religion on Muslim Youth" (2007).
News and Events. 3596.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3596>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

New Study Examines Impact of Islamic Religion on Muslim Youth

May 15, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – In the days since al-Qaeda became a household word, Westerners have grappled with the distinction between radical Islam and Islam as practiced in mainstream Muslim culture. To gain insights into the impact of religion on Muslim youth, the first phase of a long-term study has found that social success is strongly linked to religious involvement within the Islamic majority nation of Indonesia, according to the study's co-author Doran French, professor and chair of psychology at Illinois Wesleyan University.

This study of Muslim 13-year-olds found a correlation between religious involvement across many indices of social competence or success. French and his collaborators found that adolescents with higher degrees of spirituality and religious practice were more popular with peers, had greater academic achievement, displayed more prosocial behavior (being helpful to others), had greater self-esteem, and were more able to regulate their behavior. Those with higher religious involvement were less likely to exhibit deviant behavior or experience negative "internalizing behavior" such as depression or anxiety.

French suggested that a key to interpreting these findings is understanding the context of a homogeneously religious culture, where religion permeates society and is a public, community identity rather than a compartmentalized, private experience as in the U.S. For example, he said, the team's research assistants would stop meetings to observe the call to prayers, for which television shows also are interrupted.

"I think within a homogeneous religious society, being a competent person, being a successful person also means being a religious person," French said.

The team's work didn't compare believers vs. nonbelievers or Muslims vs. Christians, but variations within an all-Muslim group. Unlike many studies of religion and social adjustment, which are often based on a single factor such as church attendance, French noted that their study factored in both the practice of outward religious rituals and internal spiritual activities such as meditation.

Their research involved 183 Muslim adolescents in Indonesia. Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, but has a democratic government and a judicial system based on Western law rather than Islamic law.

French presented his research, "Islam and Peer Relationships and Competence in Indonesian Adolescents," at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development in Boston last month. Co-authors on the work include Nancy Eisenberg and Julie Vaughan of Arizona State University and Urip Purwono and Telie Ari of Padjadjaran University in Bandung. Their research is supported by The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love - Altruism, Compassion, Service at the School of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University, and by the Fetzer Institute.



Doran French

Contact: Ann Aubry, (309) 556-3181