

Perceptions of the crisis in three southern provinces border of Thailand and the image of Thai Muslim students from the view point of private enterprise executives in Bangkok Metropolis

Abstract

The particular objectives of the study of Perceptions of the crisis in three southern provinces border of Thailand and the image of Thai Muslim students from the view point of private enterprise executives in Bangkok Metropolis are: 1) to study the level of exposure to the crisis in three southern border provinces of Thailand; 2) to compare executive perceptions of the severity of the crisis in the south; 3) to study the image of Thai Muslim students from these southern provinces, held by executives; and 4) to study opinions and considerations relating to accepting Thai Muslim students into private enterprises. A total of 50 private enterprise executives, who are not Muslim and who had enterprises located in the Bangkok Metropolis, were selected and agreed to participate. Questionnaires and Interviews were the tools used for data collection. Statistical analyses were based on frequency, percentage and mean.

The results of the study were as follows:

1) The sample's exposure to the crisis in the southern provinces is mainly from the mass media and personal communication. For the mass media communication, the frequency of exposure showed a 4.47 average mean with very high level, and the time taken by mass media showed a 3.19 average mean with high level. For the personal communication, the sample's exposure showed a lower 2.88 average mean with middle level. When asked about their perceptions of the crisis events in three southern provinces during the period 2004 - 2008, the participants identified three incidents as indicating the severity of the situation. These were : (1) the Takbi case when 85 people died in the event, (2) Krue Sae riots when three government officials and 32 people died, and (3) The 70 arson attempts and insurgent attacks in the southern provinces on April 22nd, 2004.

2) The sample's perception of the severity of the crisis in the south of Thailand showed a 3.56 average mean with high level. There were 3 issues on which the participants mostly agreed, these were: (1) that the three southern border provinces of Thailand were full of danger and there were no safe areas; this showed a 4.80 average mean, (2) that the crisis in these southern provinces had destroyed government credibility about being able to protect the general public from

the violence; this showed a 4.78 average mean, and (3) that the crisis in the southern provinces has been reported regularly by mass media; this showed a 4.76 average mean.

3) A large majority (over 75 %) of the sample had favourable attitudes to Thai Muslim students from the southern border provinces of Thailand. In interviews the participants indicated the following: they knew something about the Islamic religion and understood the Muslim daily life style and practice; they thought Islam was a peaceful religion; they did not think that Thai Muslim students, domiciled in the southern border provinces of Thailand, were aggressive or would join with insurgents there. The sample thought that Thai Muslim students domiciled in the south were friendly, personable, honest, disciplined, patient and hardworking.

4) A majority of over 75 % of the sample had positive opinions about admitting Thai Muslim students, domiciled in the southern border provinces of Thailand, into their private enterprise. The interview responses indicated the following. The participants thought that the identity of Thai Muslim students was a promotional factor in considerations for a job. The executives also thought Thai Muslim students would have good knowledge and a fair understanding of careers in their field of study that was similar to other students of different religions. These executives were pleased to give opportunities for Thai Muslim students to apply for their jobs without conditions of race or religion. They did not think the Muslim daily practice was a problem in working together with other employees of different religions. The sample executives were pleased to admit Thai Muslim students into their enterprise, if the applicants had the knowledge, qualifications and abilities required.

From these findings it can be concluded that the sample's exposure to the crisis in three southern border provinces of Thailand is positively correlated with the perception of severity of the crisis. However, the sample's exposure and perception of severity of the situation are not negatively correlated with the image of Thai Muslim students or with consideration to employ students, domiciled in the southern border provinces, in the sample's enterprises.