

Effective Implementation of Pre-Release Juvenile Offender Toward Drug Offense on Thailand

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the pre-release of juveniles toward drug offenses for enabling effectiveness and preventing juveniles from reoffending. This qualitative research used the in-depth interview and focus groups to collect data. There were 40 samples in this research, including the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection administrator, criminologist, lawyer, social worker, personnel of vocational education institutions, and representative of establishments in Bangkok and regional areas. The results revealed that effective pre-release for reintegrating juveniles toward drug offenses comprised 2 elements: a rehabilitation program and social sector participation. This is because a few establishments allowed juveniles to participate in vocational training. Therefore, the government sector should publicize the project to expand the network of establishments ready to cooperate in vocational training projects for juveniles.

Keyword: Pre-release; rehabilitation; juvenile; drugs; criminological theory

Introduction

Currently, the number of offenses committed by juveniles tend to increase, and their manners are more violent and complicated. Most juveniles are from problematic families in which their parents are poor and divorced. Consequently, families are broken, and juveniles are not cared for and educated by the family. The force of the addiction cycle is a strong motivator for young juveniles as it frequently results in criminal behavior and, subsequently, prisons, entities, and even death (DeVore, 2021). Youths use alcohol and drugs at greater proportions than previously witnessed and begin using them at earlier ages than ever. Juvenile delinquency courts nationwide have handled this by putting programs that pay particular attention to substance addiction problems among young offenders (Child Crime Prevention & Safety Center, 2023a). Juvenile drug courts are not exempted from controversy; many criticize the absence of parents participating during therapy and the courts' efficacy. However, it happens frequently that the juvenile offender's family is also addicted. In order to prevent the child from being persuaded into abuse or relapse, it may be essential to exclude the minor from the family or their parents. Besides, due to maturity, having bad role models in the family, environmental factors such as associating with delinquent friends or possessing bad behaviors, and the environment and influence of the community where juveniles grow up in bad neighborhoods, these factors extremely affect juveniles to commit offenses easily. As a result, some juveniles are accused of drug offenses at a young age, and some commit criminal offenses under 15. Offenses include drug offenses, sex offenses, general criminal offenses, and serious criminal offenses. A juvenile offender may be charged with any number of various drug offences. Simple possession represents one of the most common drug offences, where a kid is found to possess a comparatively small quantity of a narcotic (Child Crime Prevention & Safety Center, 2023b). Newspapers and news channels occasionally depict more serious circumstances involving the drug issue and Thai society, such as drug usage or delivery. The greatest challenge is the severe problem of Thai children and young people abusing narcotics (Khundiloknattawasa et al., 2022). Treatment is required since juvenile drug use is so prevalent. Although assessment for addiction to drugs among juvenile offenders is typically done, there is

still a need to strengthen screening procedures and ensure that screening happens promptly enough to allow adolescents to be redirected from the criminal system into programs in the community when necessary.

According to research, using drugs makes it more likely for a youngster to have a protracted engagement with the juvenile court system, as well as produce disruptive behavior and contribute to or outcome of co-occurring mental problems. The likelihood that a youngster will engage in significant and persistent criminal behavior increases as soon as they start consuming drugs or alcohol ([The Recovery Village, 2022](#)). The prevalence of narcotics is rising in Thai society. Particularly the youth, who are the heart and soul of the country. Youth who cannot blend in with society tend to isolate themselves and spend all their time online, making it simpler for drug dealers and other criminal organizations to encourage crime ([Panya & Thajang, 2020](#)). The number of juvenile offences is rising at present. Their actions are more brutal, serious and difficult. The majority of juvenile criminals come from unstable and underprivileged backgrounds. Most of their parents have split up, leaving them abandoned and not receiving the required care. The Juvenile Observation and Protection Center report indicates the number of prosecuted juveniles throughout the country, classified by offenses, during 2018-2022. It is found that juveniles are most prosecuted in drug offenses as shown in [Table 1](#);

Table 1. The number of juveniles prosecuted by the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center during 2018-2022

Offense	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Offenses against property	1,555	2948	2028	1857	1828
Offenses against life and body	1,005	2175	1705	1477	1695
Sex offenses	439	922	790	721	612
Drug offenses	5,194	10634	9600	6943	4885
Firearms and explosive offenses	529	951	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other offenses	1,323	2695	4140	3338	2765

Source: Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection

A severe set of drug regulations are severely enforced in the Kingdom of Thailand. When implementing these rules, the police are given considerable flexibility. For minor offenders, the courts may inflict relatively severe punishments. Serious offenders may receive an execution penalty. Foreign drug offenders do have some defense options, however they are uncommon in Thai judicial system (HG.org, 2023). Juveniles prosecuted by the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center need to be excluded from outsiders and change their ways of living, comply with regulations in living, restricted in rights and freedom to behave according to their needs. These may cause juveniles to have negative attitudes toward their surroundings, be shameful, and be afraid of being stigmatized and unaccepted by society. These conditions make most juveniles difficult to adjust to family and outside society. It may come as unexpected that the Kingdom of Thailand changed its drug regulations to lower the number of individuals imprisoned during a time when the availability of narcotics in Southeast Asia, particularly synthetic drugs made in Myanmar and supplied through adjacent nations, has surpassed unprecedented levels (Lai, 2021). If someone who committed a "serious drug crime" is discovered to be a "person in command" or to have a managerial position within a criminal organisation, or if their activities negatively impacted the community's safety or national security, they will face more severe punishments, up to and even exceeding the death sentence.

Moreover, the initial period of post-release is essential. Since released juveniles are likely to face such problems, pre-release of the juvenile before reintegrating into outside society is important. Pre-release will help to enhance the confidence of juveniles and be guidelines for them to choose their ways of living after being released.

More people have been imprisoned in Thailand compared to any other nation in Southeast Asia. Given this strict stance against illegal substances, it is not surprise that Thailand's imprisonment capacity has sharply increased since the beginning of the 1990s and that drug criminals dominate the population in its correctional institutions (Jeffries, Chuenurah, & Wallis, 2019). Accordingly, juveniles can adjust to family, community, and society appropriately. However, the social environment is constantly changing, and juveniles are unaccepted by society. Consequently, these juveniles feel confused, lonely, and abandoned. This may be the reason that juveniles

reoffend. Thailand has carried out a brutal campaign against drugs that uses imprisonment as a punishment.

In contrast to goals pertaining to public health, judicial actions have received priority in drug control initiatives, and preventative and treatment techniques have been directly supportive of these efforts. Law enforcement was urged to concentrate on street-level security and received incentives for targeting drug users via wage hikes related to arrest quotas (WPB, 2021). Simultaneously the Thai law enforcement agency struggles to differentiate among leisurely consumers, drug dependents, petty retailers, and organized crime. Thailand is renowned for adopting strict regulations that prevent drug abuse and narcotics-related crimes. The use of severe consequences, including an execution or life imprisonment, to combat illicit drug trade.

Nonetheless, the law has been altered due to the nation's constant growth. The world was shocked when Thailand decided to legalize marijuana usage, and the new law places more emphasis on rehabilitating criminals (Siam Legal, 2023). One of the reasons that children and youth recommit crimes after leaving detention and they re-entry to detention because of juvenile care system of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection. Therefore, academics and relevant agencies have proposed the development of programs that can reduce the recidivism factors of juvenile toward drug offense (Panya & Thajang, 2020). However, there is little research on the pre-release of children and young people who have committed drug offences. Then, it cannot provide direction to relevant agencies. Therefore, this research data shortage attracts the researchers to study the pre-release of juvenile toward drug offense. This study aims to examine and assess the efficacy of Thailand's pre-release initiatives for juvenile offenders who have committed drug-related offences. The research attempts to offer useful insights and suggestions for enhancing the implementation of pre-release programs and lowering the reoffending rate among this particular category of offenders by analyzing the present framework and investigating numerous aspects that lead to effective reintegration. Following are the objectives of this present study:

1. To assess the existing pre-release programs for juvenile offenders involved in drug offenses in Thailand

2. To examine the factors influencing juvenile offenders' effective reintegration into community upon completing pre-release programs
3. To identify the gaps in existing pre-release initiatives in Thailand in order to increase their efficiency in rehabilitating juvenile drug offenders

The study can help establish and improve policies and practices targeted at rehabilitating and reintegrating this particular set of offenders by thoroughly examining the efficacy of pre-release initiatives for juvenile offenders involved in drug offences. This study contributes to the body of information on juvenile justice by concentrating on pre-release initiatives and how well they work for juvenile offenders who use drugs in Thailand. It offers insightful observations, factual data, and suggestions that might provide a basis for more in-depth investigation and academic discussion in this area.

Process flow for research

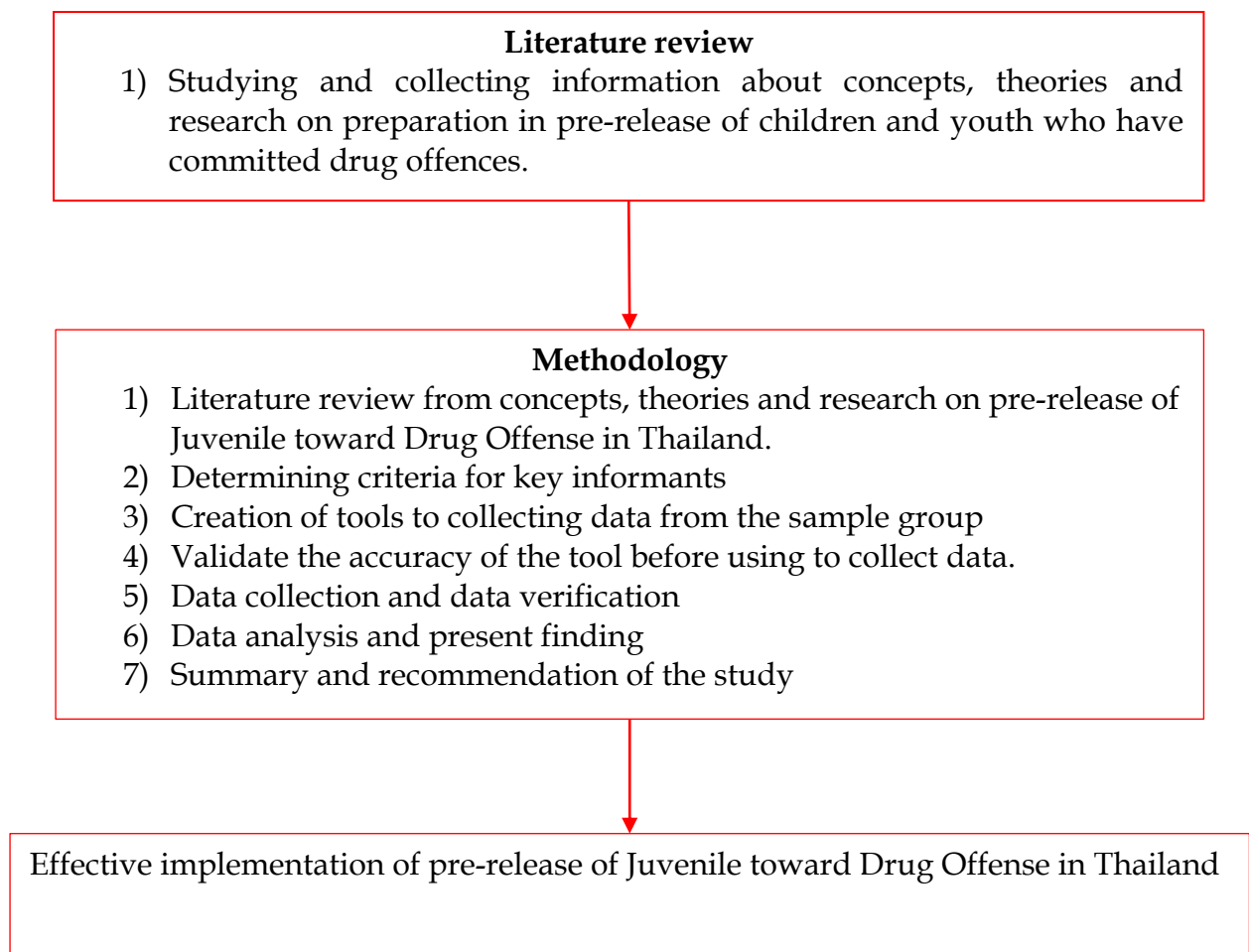


Figure 1. Process flow for research

Literature Review

Self-control Theory

[Gottfredson and Hirschi \(1990\)](#) introduce a new criminal theory called the Self-Control Theory. This theory is developed from Hirschi's Social Bond Theory and introduced to explain the difference in individuals' characteristics that can restrain or control themselves from deviant behaviors or crimes. In other words, all types of crime, conditions, and environments are included. The Self-control Theory deems that a person who has high self-control is relatively less likely to engage in crime or deviant and criminal behavior all the time ([Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990](#)). They suggest using "self-control" as an organizing concept to organize all of the information they currently know about criminality. They specifically contend that their theory of self-control is the only rationale for the data pertaining to the consistency of variances in criminal tendency and the diversity of crime performed by the same people ([Akers, 1991](#)). At the same time, a person with low self-control is highly likely to engage in crime or deviant and criminal. In addition to explaining the cause of criminal behavior, self-control is also applied to explain other behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drug use, gallivanting, and having unethical sexual intercourse. The theory of self-control heavily intersects with a variety of closely connected ideas. Deficits in self-control are linked to impulsiveness, which frequently refers to a failure to consider the effects of behaviors ([Strayhorn Jr, 2002](#)). Those with strong self-control will be far less inclined to commit crimes at every phase of life. External factors may overcome low self-control; thus, crime is not necessary. Inefficient or inadequate socialization, particularly ineffective children's upbringing, is the root of poor self-control. Children will learn self-control from adults physically near them, watch over them carefully, recognize when they lack it, and discipline misbehavior.

Social Bond

The social bonding theory's fundamental principle is that criminal conduct happens when a person's connection to community is weak or damaged ([Özbay & Özcan, 2008](#)). In Hirschi's Social Bonding Theory ([Hirschi, 1969](#)), the criminologist argues that explaining the motivation or stimulation of criminal behavior is unnecessary because

humans inherently have criminal behaviors. Hirschi introduces the theory with the basis that a person who has an attachment to social organizations or groups, including family, school, and peers is not likely to commit a crime. The social bonding theory is an approach to control designed to clarify why some individuals choose not to commit crime over doing it. It is based on the premise that individuals are naturally self-interested. According to the concept, interpersonal connections to organizations and those who uphold the law are compromised or disrupted, which leads to criminal behavior (Hodwitz, 2014). The principle of this theory is that social bond is divided into 4 types: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. This theory assumes that “a person with a low social bond is likely to possess criminal behavior”.

In contrast, the social control theory assumes that criminal behavior results from a person’s bond with a social organization which is weakened or destroyed (Hirschi, 2017). The social bonding theory attracted the interest of both philosophers and academics, leading to a wide range of empirical assessments, heated discussions, and theoretical development. In criminological literature, this represents one of the more well-known control concepts. There are 4 elements of social bond:

- 1) Attachment: how a person has an attachment or affection to others or pays attention to others’ feelings. This attachment is a fundamental element causing a person to accept social values and norms. As a result, a person creates common sense to control oneself to be a decent person in society. Thus, an attachment is an emotional or affectionate element of a person’s social bond.
- 2) Commitment: the way a person is committed to living based on social decency, namely having education to engage in lawful occupation and be successful in life. This affects the loss of success in life. Therefore, commitment is a rational element of a person's bond with society.
- 3) Involvement: the way a person involves in various social activities. A person is limited in time to commit a crime because most of the time is spent on social activities. Thus, involvement is an activity element of a person’s bond with society.
- 4) Belief: the level of belief towards social values and norms. If a person has a high belief in social values and norms, a person is not likely to break social rules. Thus, a belief is an ethical element of a person’s bond with society.

Rehabilitative Theory

To allow offenders to improve themselves is the concept to prevent them from committing more violent crimes. This is to avoid punishing offenders in a manner to destroy their characteristics or abilities to reintegrate into society by using measures to avoid imprisonment such as suspension of a sentence with probation, a fine penalty, and other measures in the community. This is to prevent offenders from being negatively affected by prison. Furthermore, measures to avoid imprisonment are used in the case of imprisonment for some time in which offenders should be imprisoned as short as possible to receive the least effect such as using parole, reducing imprisonment terms, or serving public works in a correctional center. At the same time, imprisoned people receive vocational training, education, moral and religious training, welfare, and group and individual therapy to solve the causes of offenders' deficiency and illegal acts. However, despite various limitations on rehabilitation, it is accepted and implemented in the law of various countries. Generally, it must be implemented along with the principle of inmate classification in order to separate those who are appropriate to be seriously rehabilitated, and integrated with other punitive theories ([Warakulsalam & Chokprajakchat, 2022](#)). In some ways, it is not unexpected that there is still disagreement over rehabilitative theories because the idea of rehabilitation is constantly highly debated and extraordinarily flexible ([McNeill, 2012](#)).

Labeling Theory

In the early 1960s, when there were obvious substantial gaps in the community and many people were challenging the customs and institutions that propagated the division, criminologists began to pay more attention to labelling. The relevance of social responses in influencing criminal careers is a major topic of contention in the labelling debate ([Triplett & Upton, 2015](#)). The Labeling Theory influences inmate treatment in today's criminology field, especially the treatment of ex-inmates. This theory is derived from Howard S. Becker's concept ([Bureau of Rehabilitation, 2011](#)). The basis of the Labeling Theory can be summarized that any act called "deviant behavior" is not directly based on such behavior. Still, it is the likelihood that such an

act is labeled to be different from norms expected or desired by society. Therefore, deviant behavior in the perspective of this theory focuses on the reaction of society towards offenders rather than the meaning of such acts. When labelling theory first gained popularity in the 1960s, it was troubled by debates. These disagreements resulted in several changes in the theory that improved its capacity for explanation. As a result, various perspectives on labelling began to emerge ([Barmaki, 2019](#)).

Socialization Theory

Socialization is the process that allows a person to learn cultures, traditions, social norms, personalities, and values of the social system and comply with social rules in everyday life until it becomes a habit ([Mercer & Merton, 1958](#)). Interactions between persons or persons' behaviors must follow the group's expectations or have appropriate behaviors according to adults' expectations ([Second & Backman, 1967](#)). Socialization is a direct process, namely direct teaching or telling, and indirect learning based on observing and imitating humans in society to develop their personalities to be accepted by society. Conflicting theoretical stances marked the evolution of theory in criminology in the last century. For criminological philosophy, the labelling theory reflects the important social school of symbolic interactivity ([Wellford & Triplett, 2023](#)). Several studies have looked at the judicial socialization process, which describes how juveniles learn to accept and follow the law through interactions with formal and informal socializing agents, and studies on juvenile delinquency in general. Since law enforcement agencies represent the public image of the judiciary and help society internalize standards and principles, police legitimacy is a crucial component of legal socialization ([Baz Cores & Fernández-Molina, 2022](#)).

Related Research

Previous studies were conducted to gather data for this research and the previous research was qualitative and quantitative studies regarding juvenile reentry. Post-release recidivism of juveniles results from environments in family, community, and a training center. Recidivism of juveniles is most associated with environmental factors in a training center ([Chadngern & Chotchakornpant, 2016](#)). Additionally, ex-inmates do not receive justice, are unaccepted, and stigmatized by society

The previous research reveals that ex-inmates' unemployment is another cause of a vast increase in recidivism, especially in the United States with a threefold increase (Bhuller et al., 2016). Providing vocational education, promotion of vocational skills, lawful jobs, social welfare, and a variety of activities for juveniles is to improve the quality of life of juveniles and encourage them to improve their behaviors to be ready to reintegrate into family and community and enable reduction of recidivism and the number of prosecution (Hassan & Rosly, 2021; Lanshima & Egwu, 2021; Nantiwatkun, Permpoonwiwat, & Sukharom, 2022).

Furthermore, cooperation from society and educational institutions to develop the quality of education by creating a cooperation network of educational institutions is a significant strategy to develop the quality of education and rehabilitation of juveniles. The development requires cooperation from various sectors as organizational networks to improve the quality of education in their responsibilities leading to mutual solutions in the future (Kampang et al., 2020). Drug addicts who overuse drugs tend to lose their social abilities. A critical public health issue that has major societal implications is juvenile crime. Over 850,000 delinquency allegations are resolved yearly in juvenile courts, despite the general levels of youthful criminal justice participation dropping over the previous ten years (Hockenberry & Puzanchera, 2015). Strategies to juvenile justice have always strongly emphasized individualized therapeutic efforts and disciplinary measures (Evans et al., 2016).

Methodology

This qualitative research was conducted and the methodology can define as follow.

Sample group

The samples were totally 60 people that separate into 2 groups. All participants were indicated as follow.

In-depth interview

The 20 key informants were carried out through in-depth interview. The key informants comprised the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection officers, scholars, criminologists, lawyers and social workers.

Focus group discussion

The samples in focus group discussion consisted of 3 groups: teachers from vocational education institutions, juvenile and entrepreneurs or business owners. The number of samples in focus group discussion was 40 people. Entrepreneurs or businesses that allow juvenile offender doing internship located in Bangkok and regional areas of Thailand.

Table 2. Information of sample group

Sample group	Qualification	Amount
Officers of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection	Having work experience for rehabilitation and caring juvenile offender over 5 years	5
Criminologist	Having work experience of juvenile offender over 5 years	4
Scholars	Having work experience in research of juvenile offender over 5 years	4
Lawyer	Having work experience for prosecution of juvenile offender in drug cases over 10 cases	3
Social workers	Having work experience for consultation and helping juvenile offender in drug cases over 5 years	4
Teachers from vocational education institutions	Having experience for teaching juvenile offender over 5 years	8
Entrepreneurs or business owners	Entrepreneurs or business owners who allow juvenile offender to do vocational training or internships.	12
Ex-convicts from detention of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection	Juveniles who used to commit drug crime and detention of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection Not recommit crime during 5 year after releasing from detention	20
Total		60

Tool for data collecting

Questionnaires were a tool to gather data. The questionnaires of in-depth interview consisted of 5 parts as follow.

Table 3. Questionnaires of in-depth interview

Part	Information of question
1	Personal information
2	Causes for committing of drug crime
3	Factor for reducing number of juvenile offenders in drug crime
4	Factor for preventing reoffence of juvenile offenders in drug crime
5	Rehabilitation of juvenile offenders in drug crime

Regard with focus group discussion, the questionnaires comprise of 4 parts as follow

Table 4. Questionnaires of focus croup discussion

Part	Information of question
1	Personal information
2	Creating suitable and effective vocational training courses
3	Development of a vocational training courses in pre- pre-release of juvenile offenders who committed drug offences
4	Guidelines for success in implementing vocational training programs

Data collecting

In-depth interview

In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data from the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection officers, scholars, criminologist, lawyer, and social worker, a total of 20 key informants. Before the interview, the researcher would inform key informants about the research aim and ask permission using audio recording. The researcher would comply with the request if any key informant did not consent to the audio recording. The data was collected using notetaking and audio-recording methods during the interview to include subject matters within 1-2 hours.

Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion was divided into 2 groups. The first group has 20 people who were 8 Teachers from vocational education institutions 12 business owners. The interview was conducted around 3 hours. The second group was 20 ex-convicts who used to commit drug offense and they did not re-offense during 5 years after releasing detention. The second group took about 3 hours for interview.

Focus group discussion was conducted the same as in-depth interview. The researcher informed the research objectives before the interview and also asked permission using audio recording during the interview. The researcher would comply with the request if any sample did not allow the audio recording. The data was collected by using notetaking and audio-recording.

Data verification and Data analysis

The researcher examined the data verification as follows 1) there were interviews with some samples with the same question from several times to verify the reliability and 2) there was reviewing information from other informants who are willing to cooperate with researchers. The data obtained from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion were analyzed by content analysis techniques to present the findings.

Result

According to collecting data, it can summaries research finding that effective implementation pre-release for the reintegration of juveniles toward drug offense comprises 2 factors. The two elements are a rehabilitation program and participation of the social sector, which can indicate as following.

Rehabilitation Program

The research found that a rehabilitation program for juvenile toward drug offense is an important factor in effective pre-release for reintegration. An important rehabilitation program for juvenile toward drug offense is vocational training programs that help develop juveniles' skills in training centers to be prepared to reintegrate into society. They

are prepared with the necessary knowledge and skills for employment in establishments based on their needs and the demand of the labor market and establishment. The pattern of a vocational training program to prepare juveniles to reintegrate into society is that there are 9 elective subjects to engage in the establishment, including vocational principles and processes, business principles and guidelines, marketing communication, sparking ideas of business, business innovation and technology, team management, basic accounting, basic law, organization and management, and customer service, and so on.

“The training program is based on the Competency-Based Curriculum providing vocational training and work-based learning. When released from the Observation and Protection Center, juveniles will have knowledge and skills for making a living.” (Officers of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection)

“I remember that he was aggressive at the beginning of prosecution. When he was released from detention, I visited him at home. He and his parents were packing banana chips to send online customers. He told me that teachers from vocational institution taught him during his detention. When I saw his parents; I saw they were proud of their son.” (Lawyer)

“If child and youth have an activity that attracts their attention and society gives them as well as good environment, it is less likely that he recommit another crime.” (Scholars)

Cooperation from the social sector

The research also found that cooperation from the social sector is an important factor in the pre-release for the reintegration of juveniles toward drug offense. Entrepreneurs and establishments agree to provide vocational knowledge and training in establishments as well as financial support for juveniles. Cooperation from the social sector provides opportunities for juveniles to reintegrate into society and learn how to live and adjust to society after being released. Entrepreneurs from various fields provide vocational knowledge and training such as agricultural product processing businesses, Ice cream shop and restaurant businesses, scaffolding and building maintenance businesses, security businesses, car inspection businesses, etc.

“The most effective vocational training is to experience real situations requiring external entrepreneurs to allow these juveniles to experience real job situations and learn how to live with others in society. So, receiving cooperation from the social sector is important.” (Criminologist)

Table 5. The pre-release training of juvenile toward drug offense in Thailand

Establishments	Learning and Training Skills from Establishments
Agricultural product processing business	<p>Juveniles will learn and train agricultural product processing skills to increase the product's value and maintain agricultural products for household consumption for a long time without spoiling; such as processing fruits into fruit jam and fresh fruit into crispy fried fruit.</p>
Ice cream shop and restaurant business	<p>Juveniles will learn and train skills in customer service and communication, food service or serving, food taste and quality, table decoration, welcome of customers, food order reception, and cleaning.</p>
Scaffolding and building maintenance business	<p>Juveniles will learn and train to install scaffolding to prepare for work at height. Learning is theatrical and practical and focuses on sequences of scaffolding installation for maximum workers' safety and training in building tool maintenance.</p>
Security business	<p>Juveniles will learn and train in inspection techniques, a consciousness of surroundings and situations, inspect persons and baggage, and reorganize personal identity.</p>
Car inspection business	<p>Juveniles will learn and train to check the accuracy of the car's basic information such as registration plate, car's appearance, color, form, number, type, and engine and fuel number whether or not they are accurate as identified in the car registration book. Moreover, they will learn and train to inspect conditions inside and outside the car, such as seat belts, electrical systems, lighting systems, signal lights, tires, and other safety features.</p>

“Private sector such as business owner is an important factor because this allows juveniles in drug cases to acquire knowledge and skills for making their living. They will learn to be patient, live and adjust to others. When these juveniles are released, they can adjust to other people in society.” (Social workers)

“Boss, I mean a business owner teach me about how to make ice cream and how to prepare ingredient for cooking” (Ex-convict)

“I can learn how to observe danger objects and signs and prepare safety for clients” (Ex-convict)

“The owner teaches me about looking at engine and fuel number of car. If the engine look like this, it is fine. If the engine shows red color on screen, it means warning signs of engine failure” (Ex-convict)

“I learnt how to make fresh fruit into crispy fried fruit when I was convict in detention. After release from detention, I made crispy fried such as banana, jack fruit, sweet potato and taro. I have been selling for 5 years. Now, I have both shop and online store” (Ex-convict)

Discussion

The research reveals that the effective pre-release for the reintegration of juveniles toward drug offense comprises 2 elements, including a rehabilitation program and social sector participation.

The rehabilitation program for juvenile in drug cases provides vocational training to prepare juveniles to reintegrate into society to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for employment in establishments based on their needs and aptitudes. Besides, the concept of learning promoting creative thinking based on vocational education/training encourages juveniles toward drug offense to improve themselves to prepare for reintegrating into society, allows juveniles to present their potentials and aptitudes in different skills, develops vocations to correspond to juveniles' aptitudes and demand of labor market. Consequently, juvenile in drug cases have employment and earn income for living, reducing recidivism of drug cases and other crimes. This is consistent with the research indicating that developing vocational skills during rehabilitation in prison is important to help juveniles live in society happily after they are released ([Chatngoen & Chotchakornpant, 2016](#); [Mitpracha, 2014](#)). Furthermore, vocational training and

opportunities are provided for juveniles in drug cases to engage in employment and have incomes to support themselves and their families after they are released. These juveniles can also care for themselves and are not burdensome to society. This can help to reduce recidivism and the number of prosecutions (Bhuller et al., 2016; Brown & Thakur, 2006; Hassan & Rosly, 2021; Larson & Turner, 2002; Mitpracha, 2014; Nantiwatkun et al., 2022; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2010; Platt, Casey, & Faessel, 2006; Silarat & Limprasert, 2013). A substantial and ignored population, juvenile offenders with drug addictions are extremely likely to have negative long-term effects on themselves, their households, neighborhoods, and society. Training and learning are crucial elements of rehabilitation (Hassan & Rosly, 2021). Agencies can increase the likelihood of juveniles with drug offences finding relevant and long-term employment after release by improving their chances of finding work through vocational training. Due to the financial security and sense of responsibility that productive job provides, it lowers the likelihood of relapsing into criminal behavior.

The rehabilitation program for juvenile toward drug offenses provides vocational training for juveniles to be educated and trained to engage in lawful employment and be successful in life. Furthermore, how juveniles participate in various social activities causes them to be limited in time to commit a crime. This is because most of the time is spent on social activities. Therefore, attachment is a person's bond with society. This is consistent with the Social Bond Theory that a person attached to social organizations or groups such as family, school, and peers is not likely to commit a crime (Hirschi, 1969). Providing vocational training for juveniles can adjust their attitudes and behaviors. In other words, this is to focus on rehabilitation and support rather than punishment. Thus, this is consistent with the Rehabilitative Theory with the concept that punishment should be implemented to rehabilitate offenders so that they will reform themselves into decent people, will not reoffend, and will reintegrate into society normally. Therefore, learning, education, and vocational training should be provided sufficiently for juveniles' post-release life (Chutinan, 2018; Thongyai, 2019).

The social sector participating by allowing juveniles to train in establishments is to adjust juveniles' attitudes to be aware of their worth and create understanding to juveniles to reintegrate into society effectively and not reoffend (Nilarun et al., 2014;

[Sawangwong, 2014](#)). Vocational training in establishments enables these juveniles to be educated to be specialized or skilled in participating in social activities with other people. This also enables the process of developing beliefs, attitudes, values, motivations, and personalities to adjust to society's standards, traditions, and practices. This is consistent with Socialization Theory that socialization is the process enabling humans to learn and perceive rules, regulations, practices, and values of people in society to improve themselves to acquire characteristics accepted by society ([Mercer & Merton, 1958](#); [Second & Backman, 1967](#); [Supap, 1995](#)).

Furthermore, training in skills in establishments enables juveniles to learn how to be patient with their frustration and to find other satisfactions to compensate for such frustration. As a result, these juveniles can restrain and control themselves, will not commit a crime or illegal act when stimulated, and live in society peacefully. This is consistent with the Self-Control Theory that a person with high self-control is less likely to engage in crime or deviant and criminal behavior all the time. At the same time, a person with low self-control is highly likely to engage in deviant or criminal behavior ([Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990](#)). When juveniles are trained and developed in self-control ability through a learning process, moral sense and self-esteem as direct reinforcement ([Suwanatat, Phuapirom, & Sudprasert, 1990](#)), juveniles can restrain and control themselves and will not reoffend.

Society often devalues these juveniles because some of their behaviors are deviant. Since they are isolated and discriminated against from being a part of society, they may be labeled deviant. The situation as mentioned earlier is common in society and causes unaware discrimination to society ([Kunthongchan, 2016](#)). This is consistent with the Labeling Theory that a person and a group of persons are labeled and discriminated against by considering socially undesirable or deviant characteristics. As a result, this person and group are deemed as different or “deviant” and then labeled, isolated, and discriminated against by society ([Becker, 1963](#); [Bureau of Rehabilitation, 2011](#)). However, participation of establishments by providing vocational training for juveniles can build confidence and change people’s attitudes to accept these juveniles. This can enable the reduction of labeling these juveniles so that they can adjust to society and community normally, and will not reoffend.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Pre-release of juvenile toward drug offense in Thailand is to enable sustainability in returning good juveniles to society so they will no longer reoffend. The important process is the way the rehabilitation program is applied with juveniles by using vocational training in order to strengthen the mental health of juveniles released to reintegrate into the community along with changing the paradigm of people in society to provide these juveniles opportunities to be included in society, have legal employment or quality way of living according to the path of normal society. Vocational training corresponding to the demand of the labor market and the social sector's participation will enable sources of providing employment and income for juveniles so that they can live in society normally and happily and will no longer reoffend.

There were some limitations in this study. Small sample sizes are frequently used in interviews; therefore, the results may not represent all juvenile offenders in Thailand's pre-release initiatives. The findings from the interviews probably don't apply to the larger group of young people who commit drug crimes. Particularly when addressing sensitive topics like criminal behavior and rehabilitation, interviewees could be susceptible to giving socially acceptable responses. This may cause biases and mistakes in the data that are gathered. Conducting focus groups and interviews took a lot of time and resources. As a result, the number of interviews and the quality of the data acquired was limited. There are some practical and theoretical implications of this study's findings. This study's results may provide insight into the benefits and drawbacks of the pre-release initiatives currently available in Thailand for young offenders who have committed drug offences. Practitioners and decision-makers can use this data to determine areas for improvement, refine program elements, and put evidence-based tactics into practice to increase the efficacy of these initiatives. The study may improve understanding of the social reintegration theory by analyzing the crucial role that pre-release initiatives play in the smooth reintegration of juvenile drug offenders from prison environments back into society. The study could help create and improve rehabilitation and reintegration models tailored to juvenile offenders who have committed drug offences. It can guide the creation of comprehensive, research-based initiatives targeting criminal behavior and the underlying causes of drug use.

However, this research indicates that few establishments in Thailand provide juvenile vocational training. Therefore, the number of establishments should be increased to provide vocational opportunities for juveniles. The government sector such as the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection may make a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the network of establishments ready to provide opportunities for vocational experiences from real workplaces, environments, and situations. This also includes increased opportunities for appropriate employment and income for juveniles released to integrate into society. Furthermore, the government sector should publicize the project to expand the network of establishments ready to cooperate in vocational training projects for juveniles.

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