

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS, SOCIAL COEXISTENCE AND REHABILITATION OF EX- PRISONERS UNDER INTERNAL SECURITY ACT IN THE SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES OF THAILAND

Jiraporn Ruangying¹, Ajcharapun Kunsuya², and Danuwat Suwanwong³

¹ Institute for Peace Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

² Faculty of Education Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya, Rajabhat University, Thailand

³ Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

***Corresponding author:**

Ajcharapun Kunsuya
ningyongg@gmail.com

Received: 18 January 2024

Revised: 20 June 2024

Accepted: 25 June 2024

Published: 16 December 2024

Citation:

Ruangying, J., Kunsuya, A., &
Suwanwong, D. (2024).
*Psychological conditions, social
coexistence and rehabilitation of
ex-prisoners under Internal
Security Act in the southern
border provinces of Thailand.*
*Humanities, Arts and Social
Sciences Studies*, 24(3),
753–767.

Ex-prisoners are defined as those under the Internal Security Act who have previously committed offenses connected to the incidences of disturbance/conflicts in Thailand's southern border provinces. Additionally, certain people have a strong propensity for repeat transgressions, which could be detrimental to society. This study used qualitative research techniques and in-depth interviews to examine psychological circumstances, social coexistence, means of subsistence, occupations, and current support practices. Following a period of reintegration into society, some observations were made namely: i) 23 ex-prisoners in the southern border provinces were on insurgent charges, ii) 10 government employees with five years of experience were in care, assistance, healing, and rehabilitation process, and iii) four members of civil society with five years of experience in aid, recovery, and rehabilitation were among the informers for the sources of information. The results also revealed that most ex-prisoners experienced psychological stress and anxiety after re-entering society. This phenomenon occurs due to issues related to debt, low income, localized violence, and frequent visits by the army troops' to their houses, it was discovered that some groups were stigmatized by local residents. Nevertheless, they were found to have adjusted to living and got along well with their families. In terms of occupation and sources of income, it was found that most were merchants, general laborers, and rubber tappers. Additionally, the community networks supporting the restoration of coexistence in the community are either the responsibility from government agencies or authority both direct or indirect involvement of the civil society organizations/Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs). The findings of this study will be helpful in establishing a framework for assisting and rehabilitating the quality of life of ex-prisoners under the Internal Security Act that is congruent with the local requirements and context.

Keywords: Psychological conditions; social coexistence; ex-prisoners; southern border provinces of Thailand

1. INTRODUCTION

The southern border provinces of Thailand have been experiencing instability for the past 19 years. Although the violence appears to be decreasing, the number of casualties continues to increase. The Deep South Watch report's data revealed that between January 2004 and June 2023, cumulatively, there were a total of 22,069 incidents of unrest, 7,495 deaths, and 13,925 injuries (Deep South Watch, n.d.). In addition to the numerical impacts of the losses, there are also unquantifiable psychological impacts that take time to heal, as well as negative impacts on the local economy and tourism sector.

The term "former detainees" or "former detainees under special laws" refers to individuals who have committed crimes related to the unrest in Thailand's southern border provinces. These people have a tendency of repeating their offenses. Hence, this scenario has conveyed the idea that these people have lost their standing as members of the society and as ordinary people, let alone possessing poor self-esteem to the point where there is occasionally a sense of self-denial (Becker, 1963). It also symbolizes the rejection from the society and the stigma of being a prisoner or offender. This emotion plays a significant role in forming the ideas of future misbehavior, according to Punnahitanon (2016).

The social learning of people who are inclined toward criminal activities in the past and the present is another crucial factor, communication or experience with criminals can lead to the development of criminal behavior, including deviant behavior, in terms of values, attitudes, meanings of occurrences, and behavioral patterns (Kanyajit, 2016; Akers, 1985). Numerous studies have discovered that being friends with criminals has an impact on how a person changes their behavior towards criminality through a variety of processes or mechanisms, including the development of criminal techniques, friendship values, loyalty to friends, love for friends, changing attitudes, opening up opportunities for wrongdoing. Having close contact with criminals allows people to pick up criminal tactics and mentalities, which results in behavioral learning (Maneepakorn, 2012).

Recently, resilience is one of the factors that have been studied extensively since it is considered as a factor that protects people facing stress in life or having or experiencing mental wounds to stand up again or to recover and be able to perform their duties regularly as before. As for the factors that make correction and rehabilitation in terms of the quality of life of former detainees effectively, psychologists and related academics in numerous studies showed that those with high levels of resilience are less likely to repeat committing crimes or resort to violent means (Grotberg, 1995; Hengudomsub, 2007; Masten et al., 1990).

In researching and comprehending ideas, feelings, and actions of ex-prisoners, behavioral science principles that integrate several perspectives, such as psychology, sociology, criminology, when applied, can integrate different perspectives in order to ensure the research has a more effective method of restoring the quality of life for former prisoners upon their return to society. Understanding, predicting, preventing, and managing things intelligently is made possible by researching, comprehending, and evaluating the behavior of numerous occurrences that occur from various angles. It aids in defining the phenomena between variables. This is performed because each occurring phenomenon is related to the behavior of individuals, groups, and societies. Various factors are different in terms of the intensity and depth of complexity inter-twined and connected between these factors. Therefore, it is necessary to rely on an empirical research and studies to clearly understand both the determinants and factors related to them. It requires clear definitions of behavior and rational proposals in order to truly understand the final outcomes or results. In addition, it also sets a path for the right way to prevent and correct the distorted situation (Suvannathat, 2016).

This research aims to investigate the mental state, way of life, occupation, and current support guidelines, as well as the need for support and rehabilitation after reintegration. Finally, this will allow the researchers to construct a framework for norms and support in improving former detainees' quality of life after reintegration in accordance with the needs and spatial contexts. This will in turn stop the possibility of violent resurgence and safeguard societal security.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature was reviewed to provide a framework for the investigation into the psychological conditions, social coexistence, and rehabilitation of ex-prisoners under the Internal Security Act in Thailand's southern border districts.

2.1 Mental health

According to the 2016 version of the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, Bureau of Public Health (2016), mental health refers to a positive mental state that can manage emotions, avoid mental conflict or dissatisfaction, and enable a person to live a happy life.

Mental health issues are defined as mental conditions that show themselves as shifts in behaviour, emotion, and thinking that leave a person unable to fit in with society and their surroundings, making them unable to lead regular lives (Mental Health Act B.E. 2551, 2008). Many individuals in the southern border provinces have been afflicted with psychological issues that display behavioural changes, mood swings, and thoughts after the release of former inmates under special legislation. They are unable to adjust to society and their environment as a result. Because of this, they are unable to live a regular life. In certain circumstances, this causes stress, leading to violence or the resurgence of violence in the community. With the aid of networks, personnel, and agencies, an organization that has a role in promoting, supporting, and developing mental health both inside and outside the Ministry of Public Health, it is essential to rehabilitate, and heal this group of people so they can be strong, have mental immunity, and be able to live with dignity in society. To promote and advance social measures, all sectors, including the government, the corporate sector, and civil society, collaborate. These individuals' rights are protected, mental health issues are avoided, and they receive appropriate care through screening, delivery, care, treatment, rehabilitation, discharge, and ongoing follow-up.

2.2 The concepts of resilience quotient

A mental component is the resilience quotient (RQ). The ability of people who are in themselves and used when having to overcome problems, obstacles, or difficulties that arise is described in many ways by scholars and professional agencies in Thailand, including willpower, mental strength, mental health power, mental immunity, or the Department of Mental Health uses the word Endure-Enthusiast-fight (I am, I have, I can). It constitutes what enables individuals to go through crises or negative situations and assist people improve difficulties into opportunities by allowing them to enhance their lives and thoughts once the incident has passed. In addition, individuals heal emotionally and mentally quickly, are flexible, and are able to resume their daily lives. It serves as a strategy to guard against instability or helplessness in a setting where social norms are shifting (Grothberg, 1995). Individuals may increase their resilience quotient, which will help them deal with societal effects and change. Additionally, people are able to handle a variety of issues; in other words, having a high resilience quotient enables people to have fulfilling lives and return to normality.

2.3 Social learning theory

All forms of criminal behaviour, including deviant behaviour, can develop due to the experience of the person who touches or adapts to the environment, depending on the communication or experience with criminals in terms of values, attitudes, meanings to phenomena, and patterns of behaviour (Kanyajit, 2016). Akers (1985) claims that deviant behaviour develops as a result of a process of intimate learning or copying of another person's behaviour. The following are the theory's primary tenets: 1) Differential association is the method through which a person uses values to decide whether to accept or reject unlawful or lawful activity. 2) Definition refers to a person's attitude about a specific conduct or the significance of the circumstance, as well as their attitude toward any behaviour or action, regardless of whether it is suitable or not, right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesired, reasonable or irrational. 3) Differential reinforcement describes how expectations, benefits, and consequences of behaviour are balanced. 4) The term "imitation" refers to changing one's conduct after witnessing others conducting themselves in a similar way. 5) The Social Learning Process is a learning process for both past and present individuals who are open to illegal actions. 6) Initial Delinquency. The examination, analysis, and synthesis of behavioural science's thinking and action behaviour were done in this research using Akers' learning theory (1985). Under legislation for remediation, prevention, and development, it outlines the wrongdoings of former inmates. It is also searching for methods for coordinating the efforts of the relevant agencies and correcting their mistakes. The target group stands to benefit most from it, and society's citizens will be safe.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and participants

This study used qualitative research methods to study the psychological conditions, social coexistence, occupations, rehabilitation of ex-prisoners under Internal Security Act after reintegration into society in the southern border province. Through in-depth interviews, the scope of key informants were selected by using the purposive sampling method. The chosen pool of respondents were from those directly involved in supporting the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under special laws after repatriation to the society in the southern border provinces. Three groups were taken into account in light of the fact that these groups could convey information according to the objectives of the study. These respondents possess the following characteristics: 1) those who had been imprisoned for committing an offense against the law for insurgency in the southern border provinces after being released back into the community for the period of at least 1–2 years. A total of 23 people were chosen 13 people were living in Narathiwat Province while 10 people

lived in Yala Province, within the age range of between 23 and 60 years old. 2) those possessing at least five years of working experience. 10 executives or representatives of government agencies were responsible for this mission and have experience in caring, helping, remediating, and rehabilitating the quality of life of former detainees under special laws in the southern border provinces. 3) those with at least five years of experience working as civil society representatives who have been working on aid, remedy, and restoring the quality of life of 4 former detainees under special laws after reintegrating into society in the southern border provinces.

This research complied with international norms for research ethics in human subjects. All three groups of participants accepted the terms and conditions stipulated in the research and have given their consent to be a participant, after being made aware of the study's goals, methodology, and potential advantages for the participants. The study team also interviewed and communicated with former detainees under a special legislation together with a Muslim psychologist, fluent in Malay language (Standard Malaysian language), while taking into account the identity background of the region.

3.2 Data collection

In acquiring data, in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews were employed. Former detainees under special law were interviewed using open-ended questions with regards to their own feelings and others involved in their living in the community/society, relationships with family members and in the community. Questions pertaining to whether they had received or needed help to improve their quality of life were also being posed directly to the respondents. In order to assist and improve the quality of life of former detainees under special laws in the southern border provinces, interviews with executives or representatives of government agencies and civil society organizations were conducted locally. Topics covered included community/society life, community relations of former detainees under special laws, and custody operations. The validity of the content for the interview questionnaires were being evaluated by the experts with sound knowledge and experience in rehabilitating psychologically affected people or those detained for social work and legal issues. The researchers planned the interview's date, time, and location and spoke with each group of informants separately. A Muslim interviewer who speaks Malay was present when former inmates under the special law were being interviewed. The total results were then synthesized using the data from the three primary informants' interviews, and the names of the informants were covered up using codes.

The stress test questionnaire (ST5), a risk screening form for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychological impact scale for crisis events (PISCES-10), which is a standard assessment form of the Department of Mental Health, Thailand, were also used to evaluate the mental health of former detainees under the special law.

3.3 Data analysis

The research team used individual in-depth interviews. Mental health assessments using the standardized assessment form of the Department of Mental Health, Thailand, was also carried out to gather pertinent data on the current state of respondent's mental health. Other data gathered were community coexistence, livelihoods/income, the current state of assistance and support needs to restore the quality of life of former detainees with reference to specific law after reintegration into society in the southern border provinces.

The content analysis approach was employed in analyzing the data obtained from the interview. The information obtained from the interviews were classified according to the primary research questionnaire. Principles, concepts, theories, and previously published research (locally and globally specifically for the Thai context) were used as a framework to allow for open coding, axial coding, and relevant connecting categories. Finally, the data source were triangulated to confirm the correctness of the data, which involved comparing the accuracy of information obtained through interviews with the informants of various statuses to see if the information remain intact/ the same when the informants changed. The findings of the mental health evaluation interpreted the data using the Department of Mental Health, Thailand's standard criteria.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Following ethical approval from the Center for Human Research Ethics Social and Behavioral Sciences, Prince of Songkla University Research Code: PSU IRB 2022-LL-Peacestudies-021 (Internal).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the findings of the research on psychological conditions, community coexistence, occupations, and recommendations for improving the standard of living for former prisoners under the special law upon returning to the southern border regions.

4.1 The psychological conditions, community coexistence, and occupations of former prisoners under the special law upon returning to the southern border regions.

4.1.1 The psychological conditions of former prisoners after being reintegrated into the communities.

The research found out that majority of them were determined to be worried, apprehensive, paranoid, and occasionally terrified by the on-field inspections, in-depth interviews, and psychiatric evaluations of former prisoners under special legislation following their repatriation to communities. Three key factors contributing to this mental state are listed as follows, namely: insufficient income and debt problems, the prevalence of violence nearby, and regular military officers stopping by their houses and investigating them.

4.1.1.1 Insufficient income and problem debt

According to the study, one of the factors contributing to the tension and anxiety experienced by former special law prisoners is their inability to meet family expenses since some of them served as the head of the family and regarded as the bread winner in charge of providing income to the majority of the household's expenses. However, there is a technique to build a career when resettling in the neighborhood to earn less money so that they are considered as less fortunate. Additionally, some families are burdened with debt, most of which stemmed from legal expenses like attorney legal fees to defend them while in captive, which adds stress and worry on how the family would survive when income is less. This is an example of the feedback obtained from the interview.

Stress exists. There is little concern about insufficient income. Since I am the head of the family, I must be responsible for my wife, but this did not interfere with my regular activities, which led to sleeplessness. Irritability, anxiety or a lack of social desire are stress that can be managed and does not affect life. (N3¹)

Anxiety about inadequate family debts and expenses results in occasional frustration but not a mental health condition. (N4)

4.1.1.2 The prevalence of violence nearby

The study found that one of the reasons facing the former detainees under the special law was stress, anxiety, paranoia, and feeling unhappy when violence occurred in the area because the aforementioned incidents stimulate memories of past events. It causes mistrust of the environment, feeling insecure, and worrying that they will not be helped in case a violent incident erupted. In order to avoid thinking about the situation, many choose to spend time with their families rather than engage in community activities. This is one example of the feedback found in the interview.

There was less emotional anguish, delight, dread of another violent episode, and anxiety. Sometimes memories of incidents, mistrust of the environment, diminished confidence, and occasionally still feeling fatigued and exhausted. (Y2)

Stress, insomnia, fear, and a suspicion of mistrust toward the surroundings were present. Most of them stay at home, avoid leaving, and experience insecurity. It's easier to stay at home, eat, go to work, come home, and live like this because I'm frightened that if anything occurs, nobody will be able to help me. It might lessen anxiety. (N11)

4.1.1.3 Military officers stopping by their houses

Military visits at home caused stress, anxiety, and paranoia for former detainees when there was unrest in the village or nearby villages. In such happenings, there will be soldiers around their vicinity to search although the operation was considered as routine work of the authorities causing former detainees under the special law to experience stress and feel insecure living in the community. Here is another example of the feedback of the interview:

There was a rumor that a soldier in black had been at the residence. They arrived to check on their whereabouts and to see if they were at home. They would arrive immediately in the event of an emergency close to the village. I experience moments of anxiety, paranoia, and mental instability. Since the area around the home is a rubber plantation and the troops feel unsafe, they frequently visit to see who is calling on the phone. (Y9)

¹ (N) represents to the Narathiwat Province Key Informant Group, (Y) represents to the Yala Province Key Informant Group, and (P) represents to the Pattani Province Key Informant Group.

I have two grandchildren with me, so every time the military patrol, I worry. I'm worried about my grandchildren being scared. (N13)

However, it was discovered that relevant government agencies in the area have tried to communicate to create understanding and reduce concerns or distrust from the government sector, and seeking cooperation from all relevant sectors to jointly assist former detainees and prevent repeat offenders. Here is an example of an interview:

Communication to understand and lessen problems with anxiety or mistrust of the government and seeking cooperation from all sectors to jointly help those released from prison not to repeat the offense. (P1, P2)

Additionally, the outcomes of mental health evaluations of former detainees under special law using the standardized assessment form of the Department of Mental Health, Thailand, specifically the stress test questionnaire (ST5), a risk screening form for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the psychological impact scale for crisis events (PISCES-10). Table 1 provides a summary of the findings.

Table 1: Results of stress assessment, risk screening results for post-traumatic stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress assessment among former detainees under special laws

Mental health assessment	Criteria / Score range	Number of people (Percentage)	Interpret results
Stress	0-4	16 (69.56)	Low stress
	5-8	5 (21.74)	Moderate stress
	9-13	2 (8.70)	Most stressful
Risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	Answer yes to both 1P and 2P	8 (3.48)	There is a risk
	Answer No to both 1P and 2P or any of them	15 (65.22)	No risk/not found heartbreaking event
Psychological impact after a traumatic event	Less than 9 points	18 (56.52)	Normal
	9-13 points	3 (8.70)	Mild psychological distress
	14-18 points	0 (0.00)	Very emotionally distressed
	19 points	2 (8.70)	severe mental suffering

From Table 1, the mental health assessment of 23 former special law detainees in the southern border provinces found that most of them had mild stress ($n = 16$). Most ($n = 15$) had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and most ($n = 18$) did not experience any psychological problems. It was discovered that a group of former prisoners' subject to special laws in the southern border provinces had mental health evaluation results that called for urgent and immediate care. Highest levels of stress ($n = 2$), PTSD risk ($n = 8$), and severe psychological distress ($n = 2$) were all present.

4.1.2 After their release to the villages, former prisoners were living together in a community

Following their return to the communities in the southern border provinces, former detainees under special laws were subjected to stigmatization by community members. According to in-depth interviews regarding the living conditions in those regions, they mentioned that they have tried to adapt to fit in with the community, and most of them commented that they get along well with their families.

4.1.2.1 Being stigmatized by people in the community

It was found that former detainees under the special law had less acquaintances upon their return to the community whereby they were stigmatized by society and were not accepted by the community, hence, they infrequently interacted with locals. They believed that they were being assessed negatively by society because such negative impressions towards them were formed due to their history of security cases and prior offenses. Some individuals, whether friends, family, or others, display a negative demeanor and keep their distance from them. The exception is only intimate friends which they have mutual trust. Here is another example of the feedback from the interview:

Fewer friends, only close friends who are trusted, feel that others will view themselves in a bad way after being convicted of a lawsuit. Even if the court acquitted not guilty but was known as a security case, it made me feel that I was being judged in a bad way towards society, be it friends, relatives or anyone else. (Y1)

Feeling sorry because the neighbors distanced themselves. There are fewer friends now and almost no friends because friends think they are guilty or committing crimes. Currently living with family do not associate with friends, will go anywhere with relatives. (Y10)

4.1.2.2 Trying to adapt to living together in the community

In the early stages of reintegration, former special-law detainees were found to be introverted and reluctant to leave due to safety concerns, paranoia, social insecurity, and insecurities regarding people's feelings in the community toward themselves. While visiting each other in the neighborhood, their feelings had changed. Now, they have made an effort to fit in by taking part in community events like the merit event, Friday prayers, and sports sponsored by the neighborhood. They try to participate more in community activities to foster positive relationships with the locals. Their immediate neighbors' attitudes have improved, and now they are more encouraging and helpful to enable them to live in society. Here is an example of a feedback from an interview:

At first, I didn't want to go anywhere because I was concerned for my safety and uneasy about how the residents in the town felt. Additionally, we make an effort to fit in by participating in communal events like Friday prayers, merit-making activities, and organized sports. (Y3)

At first, there was a perception that people in the community must detest them for committing crimes and having been in jail, but without them, I was glad. Fewer friends and neighbors in the community also have strong relationships and are not treated to make one feel shunned. (N4)

4.1.2.3 Having positive familial relationships

Family members of the former Special Law detainees get along well and have good understanding with one another. The majority of men work to support their families. The women stay home and raise the kids. Families encourage and support one another, which enables them to face challenges and lead their daily lives smoothly. Here is an example of an answer from the interview:

We are a content family with no issues. The wife has three children, is intelligent, values her family, and is unemployed. She is a stay-at-home mother of children who attend school. All three of them are self-sufficient. (Y9)

My wife and I have been married for four years and have no children, but family life is wonderful and everyone gets along well. The wife lived with her parents and does not work outside the home. I don't currently have the funds to construct a house. (N1)

4.1.3 Occupation and income generation of former detainees after reintegration into communities

According to the in-depth interviews with former detainees under the special law after their return to the community on occupational issues, it was found that most of the former detainees under the special law were working as rubber tappers, general workers, and merchant or entrepreneurs. Most of them received training to develop knowledge and occupational skills and needed occupational assistance for a better quality of life.

4.1.3.1 Earn money through engaging in general occupations, merchant careers, and rubber tapping

Most of those who were once detained under the special law now work as general laborers and cultivate rubber as rubber planters to make a living and support their families. Almost all of them make 200–300 baht a day from rubber tapping, depending on the current market price of rubber. Some individuals support themselves by general occupation, such as cutting, collecting stumps, clearing forests, raising cows, cultivating rice fields, and doing construction work, among other things.

There is income from the rubber tapping service by sharing half of the income of selling rubber pellets each time, which earns about 180 baht/day. The overall income per month is about 2,000–3,000 baht. In addition, there are additional jobs from being hired to clear the forest, but it's not consistent. And like to grow bananas in the beginning, the yield was quite good, but later on, there was a problem with bananas growing as a disease. As a result, the banana grows slowly. Some bananas died and the yield was poor. (Y3)

Tap the rubber into our garden, earning 200 baht/day. Sometimes, when we don't cut the rubber, we'll go for general work, such as construction work. The income is uncertain, but the expenses are daily. (Y7)

In addition, it was found that some families live on the principle of self-sufficiency, earning income from rubber tapping, growing rice for their own consumption and sharing some of the sales. Interview examples include:

The income comes from rubber tapping, about 100 baht/day. In my spare time, I help my parents mow the grass in the rubber plantation and help my parents do rice farming. Part of the harvested rice is sold and used for eating. After doing rice farming, he sleeps and rests. He likes to stay at home. (N10)

However, most of the former detentions under special laws reflect that they want to have a stable career in order to have a stable income to support their family.

The main income of the family comes from them from general employment and rubber tapping. Income is about 250–300 baht per day. They want to have a stable career, stable income or have a supplementary occupation to support their family and family members more. (Y2)

4.1.3.2 Development of knowledge and occupational skills

The study found that most of the former detainees under the special law have developed knowledge and skills in a variety of occupations such as welding, cooking/culinary, rubber tapping, mechanic training and making new furniture, etc. The agencies that provide assistance to develop knowledge and occupational skills include agencies from the government such as the Provincial Skill Development Institute, the Royal Vocational Training Center in Southern Border Provinces, the Peacekeeping Division, Center for Peaceful Means, Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 Front (ISOC Region 4), the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), and civil society in the area.

Trained by the vocational training center for ten days in steel welding. (Y1)

Training, and wife learning how to cook, and also supports cooking equipment. (Y9)

A 60-hour training program on motor mechanics was offered. The difficulty is that there is no shop at all, making it impossible to build a repair shop, even though the provider offered equipment to create a job. (N8)

Additionally, it was found that several former inmates subject to the special law had utilized their training in New Theory Agriculture before to release. By practicing self-sufficiency at home, we can practice in the community once we get there. Interview examples include:

I attended a training course on New Theory Agriculture before leaving prison, which was a 15-day training course with a certificate based on the integrated farming model, 4 forests and 5 benefits, which is virtual in a prison. When I came out, I tried to do what I had been trained to do at home without having to worry too much about anyone. (N3)

4.1.3.3 Occupational support needs for a better quality of life

Most of the former detainees under the special law want to be trained, educated and develop occupational skills that are in line with the community life, based on the principle of sufficiency, such as producing local home-made curry condiments/spices, making Integrated agriculture, animal husbandry, and wood furniture making, etc. They also wished to get funding support for self-sufficient agriculture such as growing vegetables, raising animals, and building their own small trading business. Interview examples include:

I want to help the family's economy as much as possible. It may be a group of housewives and some people come to give knowledge about occupation, such as making a group of village curry paste so that other people in the community can have extra income as well. (N1)

If there is a need for catfish and chicken farming as a job. If not, I'm not sure what to do. I don't want to meddle with anyone's affairs; I want to live alone. (Y4)

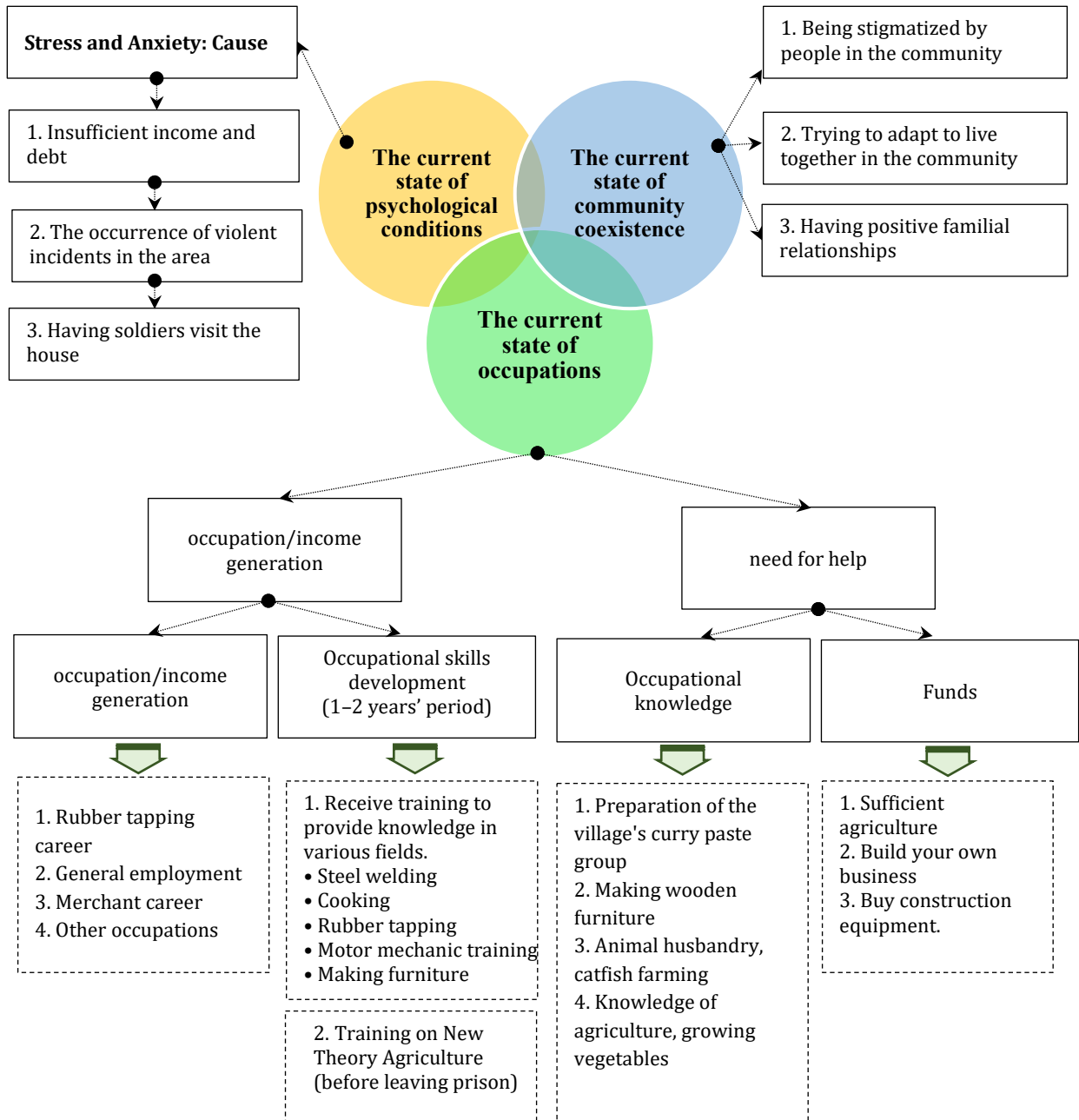


Figure 1: Psychological conditions, community coexistence, and occupations of former detainees under special law after reintegration into communities in southern border provinces

4.2 Guidelines to help and support the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under the special law after their return to society in the southern border provinces at present

This study discovered that nongovernment organizations (NGOs) or civil society organizations and government agencies that were established to develop solutions to problems or have direct and relevant authority/responsibility were both directly driving the community networks involved in supporting the restoration of peaceful coexistence in the community, as summarized in Figure 2.

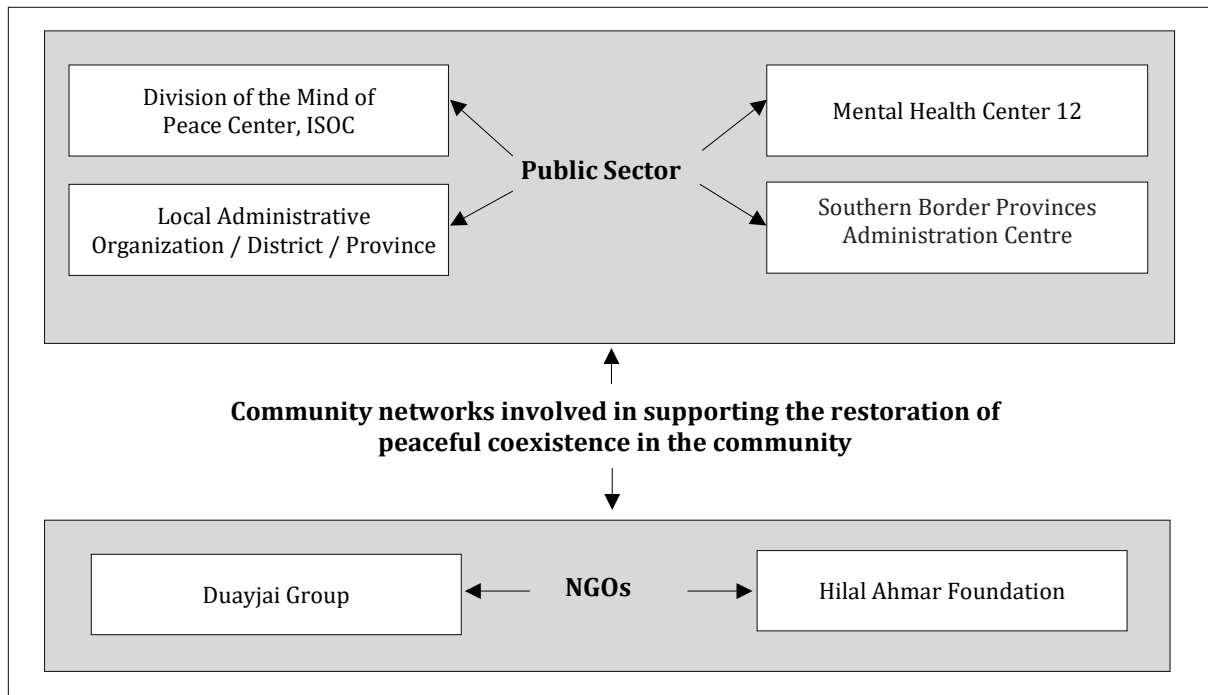


Figure 2: Community networks involved in supporting the restoration of peaceful coexistence in the community

Figure 2 shows the community networks involved in supporting the restoration of normal coexistence in the community that are directly driven by government agencies that have been established to develop and solve this problem or have duties/responsibilities both directly and involved, and civil society agencies/NGOs that have similar and different statuses and roles, but have common goals in operations, which can be presented as follows:

At present, the approach to help and support the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under special laws after reintegration into society in the southern border provinces on the part of government agencies is the nature of operations according to the authority and mission is involved in. The image of a network of communities' support rehabilitation in a way that different people do different things but have a common goal. The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center, or SBPAC, sees the policy as seeking to aid and support the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under specific laws in collaboration with relevant agencies in the area. The emphasis on occupational aid is in line with the Division of Weaving Hearts', Center for Peace's, and Internal Security Operations Command's (ISOC) stated missions. Mental Health Center 12's main focus is mental health assessment, occupational therapy and counseling as local government organizations and agencies at the district and provincial levels focus on improving the quality of life. Social welfare is a general mission that may not focus on helping to restore the quality of life of former detainees under special laws. Whereas civil society organizations or NGOs are agencies that play a vital role in the area, they can reach or build trust with the community. Examples include the Hilal Ahmar Foundation and the Duayjai Group, which focus on vocational support to create opportunities for affected people to earn income and support themselves and their families and psychological care. The assistance is provided in the form of individual counseling, which is a one-on-one relationship. The operations of some cases are a connection to work with the Mental Health Center 12 under the Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health as a coordinating agency for care from agencies and NGOs in the area so that cases can be accessed to public hospital services.

Current support guidelines

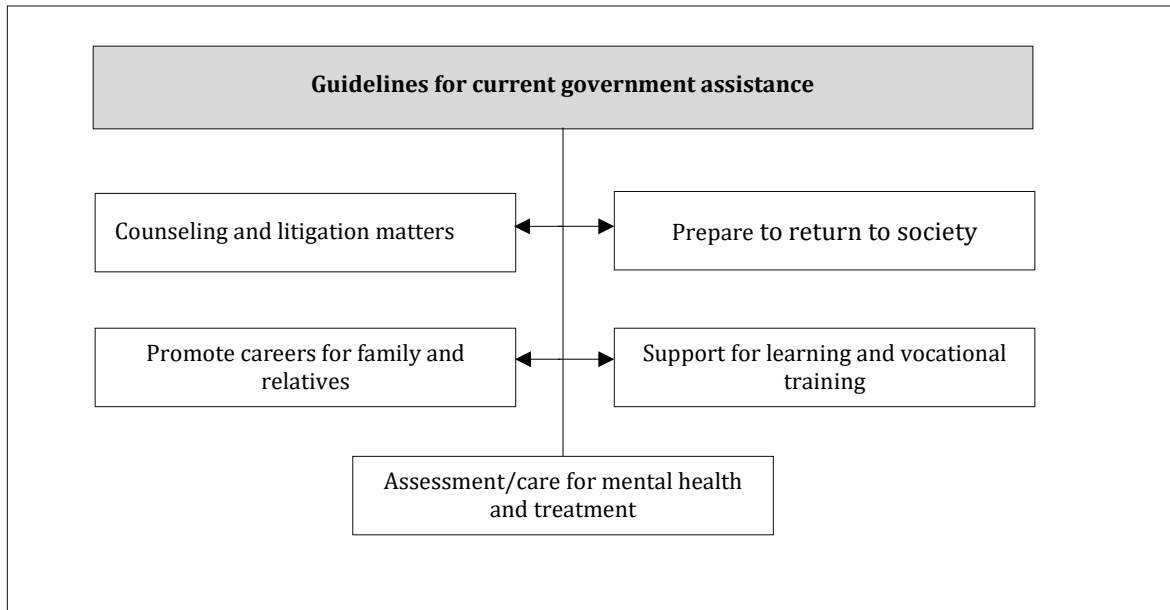


Figure 3: Current support guidelines

Figure 3 shows the current government assistance approach that focuses on the case itself and the surrounding environment, such as family and community. Some cases, who are former inmates in security cases who are most often stigmatized/society, do not accept jobs in private companies or agencies and may be rejected because entrepreneurs or employers need to consider the safety of employees as a whole and the impact that may occur if they accept an ex convict. However, there are currently initiatives to support these groupings of pertinent government entities that can be categorized into five categories, namely: 1) From the start of court proceedings to the conclusion, there is aid through counseling and assistance in litigation. The government assists in identifying solutions that are most advantageous to the case and guarantee the defendants are treated fairly. 2) Families are supported while prisoners serve out their terms in prison by encouraging jobs that will bring in money for the family. 3) Support is given to prisoners before they are released from jail and rejoin society. Surveys were taken about readiness for involvement, safety, social interaction, and self-care. 4) Assistance/support is provided to encourage learning and vocational training based on needs/interests, and supporting tools/equipment are provided so that the prisoner can work when they return to their community of residence. And 5) There are several ways to access psychological care and treatment, including mental health evaluations, trips to public hospitals, visits to chat and communicate at home, individual and group therapy, mindfulness training using CBT techniques, and ongoing monitoring.

4.3 Discussion of main results

The current mental health, community coexistence, occupation, and methods for assisting and supporting the rehabilitation of former detainees' quality of life after returning to the communities in southern border provinces under the special law is discussed as follows:

4.3.1 Psychological conditions, community coexistence, and occupations of former detainees under special law after reintegration into communities in southern border provinces

The quality of life and well-being of former special law detainees after reintegration into the community is connected to three components: (1) mental state, (2) life in the community, and (3) occupations and having a stable income. It was found that after returning to the community most of these people experience stress, anxiety, paranoia and fear. This state of mind is caused by three main reasons including having insufficient income and having debt. This connotes that, there are ways to build a career while reentering the society that will produce less money, Furthermore, some families also faced debt problems, which adds to the stress and worry on family income. Additionally, violent episodes that happen occasionally in the nearby village and military visits to their houses are among the contributing factors that caused them to be stressful, anxious, paranoid, and unhappy since it triggered their past memories and experiences. So, they try to avoid situations that cause them to think about that event by being with their family rather than participating in community activities. Although at present, relevant agencies in the area have tried to communicate to create

understanding, reduce mistrust towards the government and try to seek cooperation from all relevant sectors to jointly help the former detainees. The findings related to these groups being skeptical towards government agencies and most likely seeking help from local civil society/NGOs are consistent with the results of the study by Trimek and Wuthijumnong (2021). The research found that the representative samples are moderately confident with the safety provided by the government agencies. alongside with the results of the study by Tóth (2005), whereby it was found that many women inmates did not trust other people after being released. Women's social skills are particularly impacted by government facilities and prisons during the initial weeks of disorientation, especially for those incarcerated/ jailed for lengthy periods. The follow-up mental health assessment revealed that majority of these individuals had mental health issues and unfavorable automatic thinking. They will recover to normal state of mind and be able to live in the society with other people when they receive treatment and take medication consistently. However, in some cases, the symptoms recurred and if they experience the same event again after they have recovered for a period of time, and stopped taking the prescription.

However, depending on the communication or experience with criminals in terms of values, attitudes, giving meaning to phenomena, and patterns of behavior, all types of criminal behavior, including deviant behavior, can develop as a result of a person's exposure to or adaptation to the environment (Kanyajit, 2016) which is in line with Akers's (1985), who claimed that deviant behavior results via a process of intimacy-or formally-induced imitation of another person's behavior-based learning. The main principles of the theory are 1) Different associations. Differential association refers to the process by which an individual experiences values to accept or reject illegal or lawful behavior. 2) Definition means the attitude that a person clings to or towards a particular behavior or the meaning of the situation and the attitude towards that behavior or action whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, desired or unwanted, reasonable or unreasonable, including suitability. 3) Differential Reinforcement refers to the balance of expectations, rewards, and harms that result from a person's behavior. 4) Imitation means to interfere with behavior after observing similar behavior of other people. 5) The Social Learning Process is the learning process of past and present individuals who are open to illegal actions. And 6) Initial Delinquency. According to Merton (1968), criminal conduct is caused by a conflict between society values and the means to achieve them. This conflict originates from social structure, such as society rules or interconnected behavioral patterns. There is pressure to achieve the goals that society has set. The strain that promotes deviant behavior is the individual's sense that he or she has suffered considerable injustice. It occurs when people lack self-control, such as being denied the right to express their values and identities. Being exploited or a victim of a crime can bring about the conclusion that social norms in Thailand's southern border regions is the fundamental cause of criminal activity in response to local unrest is consistent with the results of the study by Phuengsanthia and Thongkum (2018). They discovered that former inmates were more internally vulnerable to mistakes that have been committed and that they had higher rates of despair and insomnia as well as a strong desire to resume their daily routines in jail. Changing an inmate's conduct requires first changing their mindset, and the reason why ex-offenders revert to their old behaviors is that society does not provide possibilities for this group of people.

Values criticize rather than present opportunities for change. These individuals lose all self-worth and believe in which they have no place in the society when society ignores them and does not provide them with possibilities. As a result, they turn to repeat the same crime. The research results of Samana and Na Ranong (2017) found that the inmates' crux towards the mission of returning good people to the society has three factors: (1) Inmates have instinctive thoughts and behaviors. This indicated that there are behaviors to act according to one's own will, not doing what their main duties are, including anger, frustration, and thinking that is wrong from reality. (2) Prisoners have thoughts and behaviors according to their characteristics. This indicates that there is a behavior of refusal and acceptance of educational and training activities and vocational training related to behavioral development by tending to do self-indulgent activities. (3) Inmates possess thoughts and behaviors based on learning from the society. This implies a behavior that shows a lack of interest in their responsibilities. It is the result of a learning environment in everyday life with people and friends in prison.

When it came to contemplating living together in the community, it was found that some groups were stigmatized by the residents. By taking part in communal events like prayer and sports hosted by the community, they sought to adapt to living side by side in the neighborhood. They also tried to get to know more neighbors by taking part in community events. This situation demonstrated how the group of ex-convicts made an effort to change their ways of thinking and strengthen their mental health by taking part in social activities, which took them to the point of getting used to certain situation. It is consistent with the resilience quotient (RQ) theory, which holds that mental resilience or mental immunity is a person's innate capacity to be utilized when needing to overcome challenges. A person may be able to turn crises into opportunities by elevating their thoughts, minds, and lives in a better way after the event has passed, with quick emotional and mental recovery,

flexibility well-adapted, and the ability to return to normal life once more, when obstacles or difficulties arise that allow people to experience crises or negative events. It is a tool to prevent oneself from being at risk of instability or being unable to help oneself in a society that has severely changed (Grotberg, 1995). The study of Chaikan (2021) also found the main issues which enable former female inmates to adapt and avoid recidivism. The issues are having goals in life by setting life goals and making plans for life after release while in prison. Upon being released from prison, ex-inmates have to learn how to live outside the prison, where there may be some obstacles at the beginning of their life. Since after being released, their daily life is no more the same whereby no one has come to supervise, to act in a disciplined manner like in a prison, hence they have to adjust their relationships with family members by themselves. Close people must know how to restrain and control themselves and know how to refuse to certain pressure and groups in order not to return to the original whirlpool.

Referring to the former prisoners who were subject to the special law, the majority of them are currently employed as general laborers and rubber workers. For instance, among other things they were recruited to chop during every school season, pick stubble, clear the forest, raise cows, farm, cultivate rice, and do construction labor. They need a steady income because they do not make enough money to feed their family every day. The majority of them will receive training from state sector organizations like the Provincial Skill Development, Institute Royal Vocational Training Center, Southern Border Provinces Division for Peace Nonviolence, Center Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 Front (ISOC Region 4), and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center to harness their knowledge and skills in a variety of occupations like welding, cooking, rubber tapping, mechanic training, and furniture making. However, it was found that some vocations, such as those requiring skills and experience like welding and auto repair, received training and a set of tools for life after completing the training course. However, in reality, unfortunately these training skills obtained were found to be not applicable for genuine employment. According to the study's findings, this happened after the prisoners were let go. In terms of welfare-related issues including education, employment, financial status, housing, interpersonal relationships, and health, they lacked resources in a variety of areas. They all influence the likelihood of recidivism. As a result, this group of people should receive social support since it is vital for them to live and have a higher quality of life.

4.3.2 Guidelines to help and support the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under the special law after their return to society in the southern border provinces at present

Considering the approach to help and support the restoration of the quality of life of former detainees under special laws after reintegration into society in the southern border provinces, at present, this study found that *it is the nature of operations according to their duties and tasks*. They show an image of a community network that join in supporting the rehabilitation in a way that different people do different things, but they have a common goal. There are two main types of organizations, which are government agencies, namely the Division of Weaving Hearts to the Center for Peace, Internal Security Operations Command: ISOC, Mental Health Center 12, Local Administrative Organizations / District / Provinces in the area including the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) and the main civil society organizations in the area, including the Hilal Ahmar Foundation and the Duayjai Group. When considering the nature of the network operation at present, it is found that there are some operations in the form of a collaborative network. It will be mostly like cooperation between 2 agencies but the whole system of cooperation networks of various agencies has all related missions or duties that have not yet occurred. The cooperation networks are currently occurring and will help or cooperate. For example, there is a case that is taken care of by civil society but needs to enter the service system of the state hospital. There is a connection through the mental health center 12 to facilitate referral. Public health agencies in nearby areas will assist in allowing cases to enter the service system of government hospitals. This indicates that it is still a collaboration between the two agencies only.

Looking closer at the specific cases, there is still no indication of agency coordination. In order to assist and support the restoration of the quality of life for former detainees under special laws after their return to society in the southern border province, there should be close cooperation between government agencies or between government agencies and the civil society. Today, however, the cooperation only functions in a coordinated manner when these parties are required to do so by the same authority or because it falls under their purview. There has not been any serious cooperation under the rapid change, combined with the current social and environmental conditions. A clear collaborative system in five dimensions may also have an impact on space in the future when the relevant agencies in the area do not have to cooperate in operations, help, support, rehabilitation, and continuity. These include (1) counseling and legal proceedings, (2) career promotion for family and relatives, (3) preparation for reintegration into society, (4) support for vocational training and learning, and (5) assessment/care of mental health and treatment.

All five areas need collaboration across different agencies. The government and other pertinent local civil society groups should elevate it to the level of partnership it deserves, not only between two agencies.

The management of public works has benefited greatly from teamwork, as Agranoff and McGuire (2003) pointed out. It is a result of the realization that diverse public works are managed. Due to the fast-changing environment and ongoing limitations of a single organization to stand alone and fight, solving the issues and challenges that society is currently experiencing cannot be limited to the purview of a single institution.

Research from the past has shown that collaboration between departments and organizations is facilitated by cooperation. Rukspollmuang et al. (2015) investigated the kinds of cooperation in education management of local administrative organizations, which consisted many different types. It was discovered that there are many different kinds of collaboration. As an illustration, the following collaborations should be considered, namely: (1) a type of cooperation based on a juristic person that can be both an independent public organization and a general organization. Sahakarn (Cooperation), Special District Communities, and Interorganizational Cooperation Organizations are the most well-liked types of independent organizations that manage tasks with a joint board. There exist various forms of collaboration that do not fall under the legal umbrella. These include non-organizational formal and informal collaboration, task delegation to represent the public interest in compliance with the law, the establishment of ad hoc joint committees, and the drafting of memorandums of understanding between organizations. (2) This type is a kind of cooperation based on the service area that is a mutual agreement for the parties in the Area-based Agreement and is not restricted to the region in their own area. (3) Network-based or business partners that use various or similar structures for cooperation. This cooperation need not be close in term of geographical proximity; rather, there should be shared goals and opportunities for collaboration with groups that are prepared and have the potential to act as "hosts" of cooperation. (4) A form of collaboration based on the division of labor, wherein tasks are assigned in accordance with the organizations that join as cooperation partners. (5) Two types of cooperation can be categorized as Equal Parties and cooperation based on the organization's level of readiness.

4.4 Recommendation

1. The majority of ex-prisoners experienced psychological stress and anxiety upon re-entering the society again. It is suggested that they should receive mental reinforcement. They should be able to deal with the social pressure environment and provide information on adjusting and living in society. It is also suggested that they should be able to pursue a career that can generate enough cash to support their family on their own. It is also suggested that individual cognitive and behavioral treatment may incorporate elements from cognitive and behavioral therapy as well as religious elements. This action should continue from the time when they attend correctional facilities until they return to the community. Information regarding the individuals is proposed to be passed from the psychologists and social workers working in correctional facilities to the psychologists and social workers working in communities.

2. It is suggested that guidelines/systems should be developed that will help former detainees in restoring their quality of life following their release from custody under specific legislation. There should be a link between working in prison and returning to the community. This suggestion is mentioned by taking into consideration various crucial factors, including:

1) Understanding the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of oneself. Perspective on the people around and the society should also be understood and taken into account. This entails understanding each individual's background and circumstances as well as familial support.

2) Increasing and reskills practitioners' ability to improve the quality of life of former special law detainees. They should have the right knowledge, attitudes, and abilities to assist a successful transfer. Practical skills need to be imparted to them so that it can be practically implemented by them.

3) The rehabilitation programs used for enhancing the quality of life of former inmates under special legislation should have particular qualities that are tailored to the psychological, social, and economic needs of each individual.

5. CONCLUSION

This research findings can be distributed to related agencies or institutions in the region to increase knowledge about psychological conditions, community coexistence, occupations, and ways to assist and support the restoration of former detainees' quality of life after their return to the communities in the southern border provinces at the present. The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), the Division of Weaving Hearts to the Center for Peace, Internal Security Operations Command Region 4, Mental Health Center No. 12, the Provincial Skill Development Institute, and the local administrative organizations/districts /provinces are a few examples of pertinent institutions. Hilal Ahmar Foundation and Duay Jai Group are two civil society organizations that are significant in the region. To alleviate the danger of recidivism, data should

be utilized in the system as a means to assist and improve as a means to assist improve the quality of life of former prisoners under special legislation after complete reintegration into society upon returning home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by National Science, Research and Innovation Fund (NSRF) and Prince of Songkla University (Grant No. IPS6505137S).

REFERENCES

- Agranoff, R., & McGuire M. (2003). *Collaborative public management: New strategies for local governments*. Georgetown University Press.
- Akers, R. L. (1985). *Deviant behavior: A social learning approach* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. Free Press Glencoe.
- Chaikan, R. (2021). *Adaptation process of female former inmate charged with taking drugs to avoid committing the offence repeatedly* [Master's thesis, Srinakharinwirot University]. DSpace. <http://ir-ithesis.swu.ac.th/dspace/handle/123456789/1980>
- Deep South Watch. (n.d.). *Conflict incident database* [Power BI area chart]. Deep South Watch Database. <https://deepsouthwatch.org/th>
- Grotberg, E. H. (1995). *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit*. Bernard Van Leer Foundation.
- Hengudomsub, P. (2007). Resilience in later life. *Thai Pharmaceutical and Health Science Journal*, 2(1), 115–123.
- Kanyajit, S. (2016). Behavioral science from diverse perspectives. In Y. Chaijukul (Ed.), *Behavioral science from a criminological perspective* (pp. 187–221). Rojana Printing Limited Partnership (Head office). [in Thai]
- Maneepakorn, P. (2012). *Criminology theory*. M.T. Press Limited Partnership. [in Thai]
- Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology*, 2(4), 245–444. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579400005812>
- Mental Health Act B.E. 2551 (2008, February 20). *Royal Thai Government Gazette*. No. 125 Section 36 K. pp. 37–60. [in Thai]
- Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. Free Press.
- Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, Bureau of Public Health. (2016). *Thai public health dictionary. Royal institute edition 2016*. Bureau of Public Health. Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health. [in Thai]
- Phuengsanthia, T., & Tongkum, S. (2018). Prison: The area of punishment and the return of good inmates to society. *Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University (Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts)*, 11(3), 737–748. <https://he02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/Veridian-E-Journal/article/view/154727> [in Thai]
- Punnahitanon, S. (2016). Behavioral science from diverse perspectives. In Y. Chaijukul (Ed.), *Behavioral science from a sociological perspective* (pp. 93–121). Rojana Printing Limited Partnership (Head office). [in Thai]
- Rukspollmuang, C., Sukontasap, S., & Hongwityakorn, U. (2015). Models for the collaboration of local administrative organizations in the provision of education. *Srinakharinwirot Research and Development (Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 7(13), 47–62.
- Samana, S., & Na Ranong, L. (2017). The crux of prisoners toward the project of return good people to the society. *Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University*, 10(2), 1105–1114. <https://he02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/Veridian-E-Journal/article/view/98038/76392> [in Thai]
- Suvannathat, J. (2016). Behavioral science from diverse perspectives. In Y. Chaijukul (Ed.), *Key concepts in behavioral science and their application in creating a behavioral science research curriculum* (pp. 47–57). Rojana Printing Limited Partnership (Head office). [in Thai]
- Tóth, H. (2005). *Women, integration and prison: An analysis of the processes of socio-labor integration of women after prison in Europe (MIP)*. Central European University.
- Trimek, J., & Wuthijumnong, K. (2021). Perception of crime and priority of justice in the southernmost provinces of Thailand. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 21(2), 203–208. <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/hasss/article/view/223751>