

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS TO TACKLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A CASE ANALYSIS OF HUAY SAM PAD SUB-DISTRICT, THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

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Domestic violence is a serious problem in Thailand, and social networks can play an important role in addressing it. This study aimed to explore the process of constructing a social network to address domestic violence in a Thai community and to inquire about the operational challenges of this social network in terms of its capacity to tackle issues surrounding household violence. Huay Sam Pad Sub-district, a rural community in Udon Thani Province, Thailand, was purposely selected as the area of inquiry due to the good practices of its area-based social network. The study draws on concepts surrounding social networks and adopts a socio-ecological perspective to analyze qualitative data acquired from community members belonging to the social network. Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions with key informants, and encoded data were analyzed using thematic and interpretation analyses. Preliminary findings showed that the construction of the operating social network in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district has not been a linear process. Rather, according to the subjective perceptions of social network members, network construction has resulted from supportive factors associated with an academic institution, provincial policies, and the area-based center for violence resolution. Meanwhile, the area-based network has been facing many challenges that threaten to hinder sustainable network management. These challenges relate to informal (weak ties) network operations, the questionable effectiveness of therapy for violent perpetrators, and personnel and budget constraints, as well as inconsistency in project implementation. Addressing these factors will be crucial for effective domestic violence interventions amid uncertain and disruptive situations that persist in Thai society.

**Keywords:** Social network; domestic violence; local Thai community

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family violence is an urgent problem that affects people of all ages and genders. It can have a devastating impact on victims, their families, and their communities. Domestic violence is any form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or negligence that occurs between perpetrators and victims, according to the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act 2550 B.E. of Thailand (Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act, B.E. 2550, 2007).

From a global perspective, economic and social tensions in people's lives have been compounded by increasing poverty and inequality, influenced by globalization, neoliberal economic policies, industrialization, and urbanization. These are significant components informing the construction of violence in society and in households (Muggah & Savage, 2012; World Bank Group, 2011), inflicting damage to life, body, and property and further violating the human rights of individuals and communities. Currently, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have recognized the importance of this issue, especially under Goal 5, which promotes gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and children, and Goal 16, which promotes peace, security, and collaboration between stakeholders in resolving and developing mechanisms to mitigate harm.

In the context of Thai society and governance, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, through the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Institutions, has been implementing policies to address the issue of family violence. The passage of the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act, B.E. 2550 (2007) and the establishment of local mechanisms, such as Community Family Development Centers (CDCs) and Sub-district Centers to Prevent and Solve Domestic Violence Problems (SOCs), have been aimed at creating and driving local networks. This is supported by the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Foundation for Women (FFW) and the Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation (WMPF). Moreover, initiatives in the academic sector, such as the Women's Health and Gender Justice Plan at Mahidol University, have provided academic and project support to promote the creation and use of social networks as vital agents for addressing challenges in combating domestic violence. Such projects can provide victims with support, information, and resources. They can also help raise awareness of domestic violence, challenging the social norms that contribute to it.

A social network is a group of people who are connected by social ties. Such networks can be based on kinship, friendship, neighborhood, workplace, or other social affiliations. Netto et al. (2017) proposed that the creation of networks amongst victims of violence can be divided into three levels based on the socio-ecological aspects adjacent to victims and their households: primary network (relatives), secondary network (professional organizations), and tertiary network (informal network). Analyses of social networks have shown that they tend to face common challenges in terms of flexibility, scalability, and sustainability (Castells, 2004). However, during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 to present), the use of social network mechanisms and peer-to-peer support systems has proven important for preventing domestic violence. Reporting of incidents can save the victim from repeatedly experiencing the same violence, and networks may be able to provide the psychological support to survivors that is required to help them escape the cycle of violence if they are suffering from stress or depression. Having such a support system can allow victims to overcome their fear and gain the courage to disclose incidents (Ogbe et al., 2021). According to the socio-ecological perspective, which takes into account multiple aspects, such as cultural issues and economic, legal, and political factors, sharing their experience helps victims create a layer of social protection for themselves against abuses or crimes related to domestic violence (Golu, 2017; Suriyanyong et al., 2014; Renzetti & Larkin, 2009; Federici, 2018; True, 2010; Henke & Hsu, 2022; Cosimo, 2012).

Social networks, however, can also impose challenges that inhibit combating family violence. For example, victims may be reluctant to reach out to their social networks for help due to fear of reprisal or shame. Social networks may also lack resources and the expertise to provide adequate support to victims. In Thailand, despite the passing of laws, the initiation of projects and activities, and the construction of local mechanisms, many obstacles remain at the local level in terms of implementation and development. Both provincial and regional government agencies are limited in their immediate access to incidents and locations at the local level, making it difficult for mechanisms such as CDCs and SOCs to operate sustainably and independently. Such mechanisms are also inefficient and lack participation from the local community. Awareness among social networks and the public remains limited. These constraints make any anti-domestic violence activities or projects difficult to sustain. Policies and mechanisms can only be partially implemented in certain areas with varying conditions, as well as varying networks of actors, including those within the government and private sectors, academic institutions, and local bodies (Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation et al., 2020; Roopkhamdee, 2011). Meanwhile, NGOs have been operating intimately with local communities at pilot sites, but their work is also limited in terms of expanding areas of social protection and implementing domestic violence prevention programs in areas that extend beyond these sites.

Huay Sam Pad is a sub-district located 30 kilometers from the city of Udon Thani in the Prachaksillapakhom District of Udon Thani Province in Northeast Thailand. The community consists of 13 villages and 2 local hospitals. This area was selected by the Women's Health and Gender Justice Plan to be one of three areas to run pilot projects aimed at domestic violence prevention (the other two are in Tak and Nakornsawan Provinces). In order to develop more effective coping mechanisms, it is important to trace back network formulation. Once network formulation and its significance have been investigated, challenges may be identified in order to improve network operations in the community. Therefore, the current exploratory

inquiry will trace back network formulation, filling in the gaps in the literature by providing insights into the construction and operation of a social network aimed at addressing domestic violence in the Thai context. Most importantly, the findings will have important implications for policymakers, practitioners, and community members working within social networks on how to strengthen prevention mechanisms and develop their capacity to respond to challenges.

This research has two main objectives:

- 1) To explore construction processes utilized by social networks addressing domestic violence, specifically focusing on the Huay Sam Pad Community.
- 2) To examine operating methods used by social networks, as well as specific challenges faced when targeting or addressing domestic violence issues via social network operations within the Huay Sam Pad Community.

## 2. METHODS

A qualitative research methodology was employed using interviews and focus group discussions. The primary objective was to apprehend the lived experiences of those directly involved with the Huay Sam Pad network. This approach was aimed at providing the researchers with deeper insights into the network's operations, particularly when dealing with domestic violence issues. Phenomenological perspectives gathered via the qualitative methods applied in this study were deemed most appropriate for achieving this goal.

### 2.1 Sampling method and unit of analysis

A purposive rational sampling technique was used to select participants who would be able to provide insights relevant to the objectives of the study. Fourteen people were deliberately chosen from the social network active within Huay Sam Pad Sub-district, with the intent of selecting informants from a variety of sectors, including community leaders, village health volunteers, local nurses, teachers, community development officers, and community police. Participants were initially selected using information available nationwide, provided via the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which had already identified Huay Sam Pad Sub-district as one of three pilot areas to run similar networking projects focused upon resolving domestic violence issues under the Women's Gender Justice Health Plan (the other pilots being in Tak and Nakhon Sawan Provinces). Personnel who were subsequently recruited as informants for the study using the snowball technique, starting in October 2022, had been exposed to and operated directly in connection with violent incidents that had occurred in the community in the five years prior. They were, therefore, able to depict and narrate details about abuse in greater detail.

Being a collective case study, as described by Babbie (2013), the analysis of this study pertains solely to the collective characteristics exhibited throughout the Huay Sam Pad area, reflecting the community's awareness of problems related to domestic abuse. This study was conducted exclusively through a sub-district operation center focused strictly on preventative measures and addressing problems related solely to domestic violence occurring within Prachaksillapakhom District/Udon Thani Province.

### 2.2 Data collection methods

Two data collection methods were employed:

**1. Interviews** were conducted with 14 key informants hailing exclusively from Huay Sam Pad Sub-district. Informants were selected using the snowball technique. For example, the community development officer recommended that the village head get more details about certain cases. The community nurse suggested a village health volunteer, who could provide more perspective on drug-related cases. The final sample included community leaders, village health volunteers, local nurses, a community development officer, teachers, and community police. Roughly an hour per meeting per participant was spent conducting interviews and focus group discussions.

**2. A focus group discussion** lasting two hours was arranged and conducted with participants who were randomly selected during a sub-district administration visit to the Huay Sam Pad social network. The objective of the focus group discussion was to learn about operations aimed at addressing domestic violence issues and promoting family welfare. Semi-structured interview guidelines were used for both interviews and focus group discussions, allowing flexible probing questions to be employed by the researchers in pursuit of deeper data collection.

### 2.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis and an interpretative approach were used for analyzing the raw data, which identified patterns relevant to the research objectives, including sub-themes related to the construction of the Huay Sam Pad social network and its operations aimed at addressing domestic violence issues.

## 2.4 Ethical approval

The study received ethical clearance from Khon Kaen University's Research Ethics Committee on July 17, 2022 (No. HE653132). Prior to each step of the qualitative data collection process, informed-consent forms were completed, officially authorizing the researchers to collect data from the selected participants.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 The process of building social networks for addressing domestic violence in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district, Prachaksillapakhom District, Udon Thani Province

This section explains how social networks for addressing domestic violence in Huay Sam Pad have been formed over time through supportive conditions, factors, and policies, along with adaptations made in response to past experiences up until the current study was conducted. Data are presented in chronological order according to official records maintained in the local area, and eco-social systems that have governed the creation of the significant networks are highlighted.

Within the five-year period under investigation, 31 social network activities with the aim of addressing domestic violence had been carried out. The activities were managed by various mechanisms that had been created in order to build networks. Community development officers explained that prior to 2021, prevention projects had not been recorded and the networks had functioned differently. Mobilization of networks had largely been determined by the nature of events surrounding affected individuals and had required assessments from different perspectives. Relevant services offered locally had included police interventions and psychiatric treatment facilities.

The external area network surrounding Huay Sam Pad was found to be an important factor for internal coordination and external communication channels. The Women's & Gender Justice Health Plan supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has led to provincial interdisciplinary meetings facilitating information exchange and practical training opportunities that address domestic abuse cases. Sub-district administrative organization officials, schools, health promotion hospitals, and village headmen/elders/volunteers have been part of this network. Basic training processes have created awareness among network members, who may monitor their communities to ensure incidents do not go unnoticed. Collaborative efforts using shared resources have also led to improved outcomes, benefiting everyone concerned. In this way, external area support has contributed significantly toward the implementation of activities and projects, both inside and outside Huay Sam Pad Community, in person and virtually. Certain key network actors, especially local nurses, teachers, community development officers, village heads, and village health volunteers, had participated in trainings and case meetings throughout the period under study, regardless even of disruptions due to COVID-19.

The Udon Thani Provincial Office of Social Development and Human Security (PSDHS) and the Udon Thani Provincial Shelter for Children and Family (PSCF) are also regional or provincial agencies that have facilitated the operation of social networks in the area as part of the Committee for the Prevention and Resolution of Domestic Violence at the Sub-district Level (CPRD). Incidents can currently be reported directly to the OSCC 1300 hotline, or the relevant agency can be contacted through a smartphone application. A LINE group has also been set up to exchange information and facilitate reporting of incidents at the provincial level. Additionally, informal relationships within Huay Sam Pad Sub-district's social network have made operations more horizontal and egalitarian, leading to improved efficiency and faster coordination.

Legal frameworks have been another important factor in addressing family violence, as shown by the roles of the PSDHS, the Department of Women and Family Affairs, and the Provincial Shelter. The Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act, B.E. 2550, has guided national domestic violence policy. The law requires community leaders and sub-district administrative organizations to participate in addressing this issue through various mechanisms, such as OSCC hotlines and CPRDs. Local social networks have, therefore, emerged in areas like Huay Sam Pad Sub-district to address the problem. The goal is for domestic violence to progressively become a shared challenge for which all community members take ownership. Provincial mechanisms have acted as bridges connecting communities to outside resources. For example, when local agencies have applied for funding to implement relevant projects, such as those related to family or social development, home visits have been carried out to assess the situation, funding prospects, or budget provision. Certain projects undertaken by Huay Sam Pad Sub-district Administrative Organization, in collaboration with Women's Health Plan, and supported by provincial mechanisms have been indirectly linked to domestic violence prevention and intervention efforts. The true purpose behind legal and policy frameworks is mainly to strengthen monitoring mechanisms within areas while providing channels and processes that can assist action when community members are facing problems, thereby creating a protective space against violence. Even if elimination of violence has proven difficult, realistic operational processes nonetheless now exist to respond to violence that does occur.

Early social networks, on the other hand, lacked clear procedures for addressing domestic violence, leading to an initial period of trial and error. Volunteers often faced difficult situations involving mental health and drug abuse and struggled to navigate regional-level systems. Ultimately, the Udon Thani Provincial Public Health Office and District Quality Life Committee heard from a nurse about problems in the area, highlighting the need for better communication within social networks.

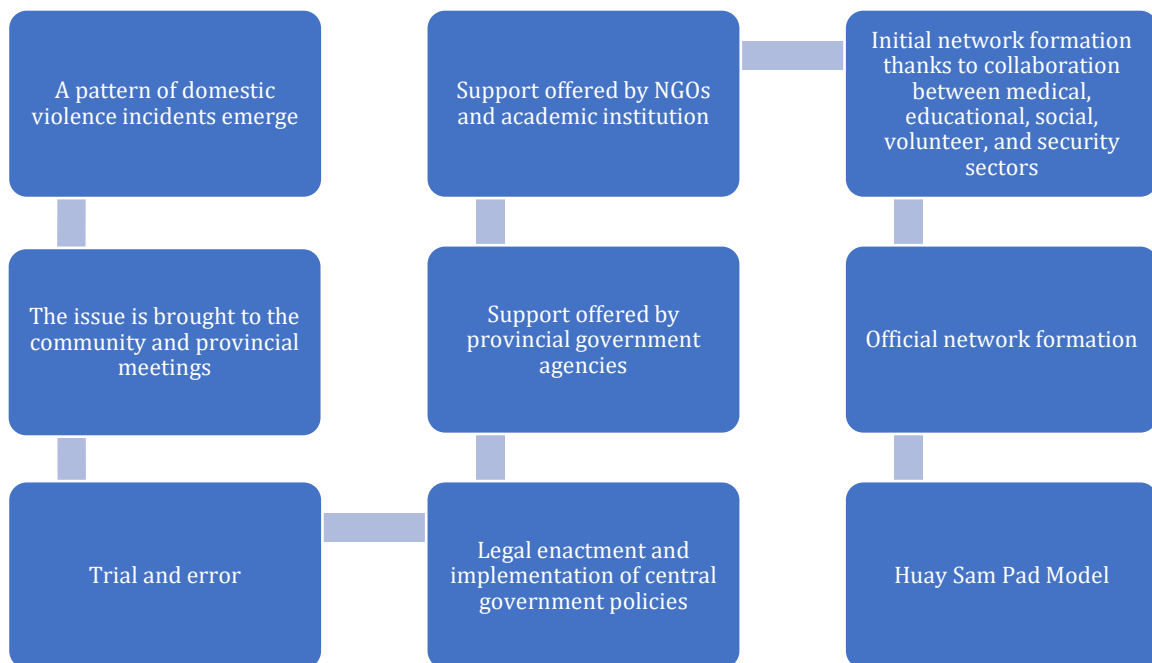
Before 2018, when the family development center was upgraded and turned into the Center for Prevention and Resolution of Domestic Violence at the Sub-district Level, each incident and case study constituted a turning point that required mobilization among a diversity of stakeholders, including police, community leaders, volunteers, psychiatric hospitals, shelters, local government organizations, and health promotion hospitals. They mobilized on their own to maximize their effectiveness in rehabilitating victims.

Over half a decade later, multiple case studies have served as real-world tests, leading to a learning and exchange process between different stakeholders and networks, and culminating in the creation of (an) anti-domestic-violence-centered social networking system(s) that can address the specific needs of victims.

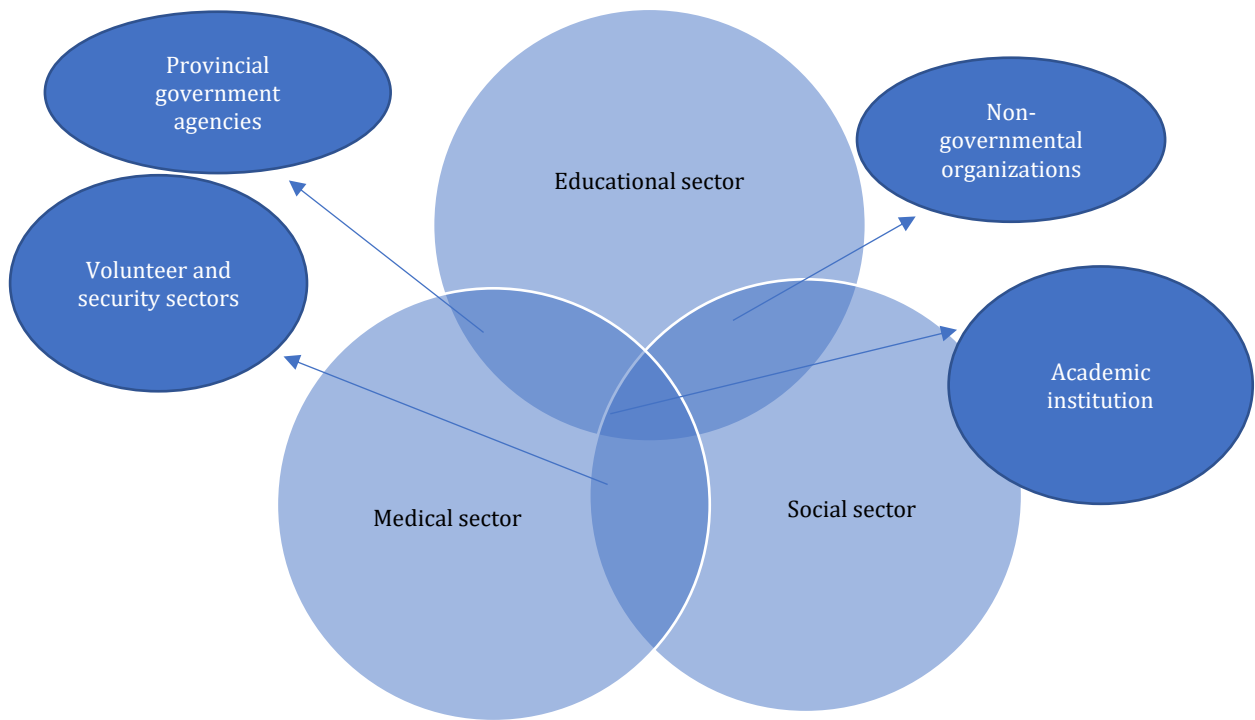
Schools in Huay Sam Pad have also recognized the direct and indirect responsibility they hold in safeguarding children and families. Teachers can play a crucial role in reducing violence against youth and their families. NGOs, educational service area offices, and international children's organizations have collaborated to create mechanisms supporting the reduction of violence at both intra- and extra-school levels. In the case of Huay Sam Pad, assistance has extended beyond local support, allowing educators to participate in learning processes with external networks at provincial and national levels. Teachers, therefore, are aware of their obligation to monitor students' lives outside of school while providing care within academic settings. At the same time, youth-related issues and violent behavior affecting them cannot be solved by one agency alone. Stakeholders must participate in providing employment opportunities, health services, and other essential amenities expected of society and local governance. Joining a social network can be challenging but brings happiness and improvements in self-esteem while fostering community ties.

Eventually, the "Huay Sam Pad Model" social network was established, providing space for youth to learn about issues affecting them. The social network for addressing domestic violence became increasingly instrumental in addressing the issue of high teenage pregnancy rates at both local and district levels. The network had the advantage of legal frameworks already being in place, such as the Prevention and Resolution of Teenage Pregnancy Act, B.E. 2559, and the Child Protection Act, B.E. 2546, aimed at preventing children from dropping out of schools while ensuring protection measures would be available for them within communities and schools.

To conclude, the social networking process/model can be visually summarized by Figures 1 and 2 depicted below:



**Figure 1:** The process of social network construction for addressing domestic violence in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district

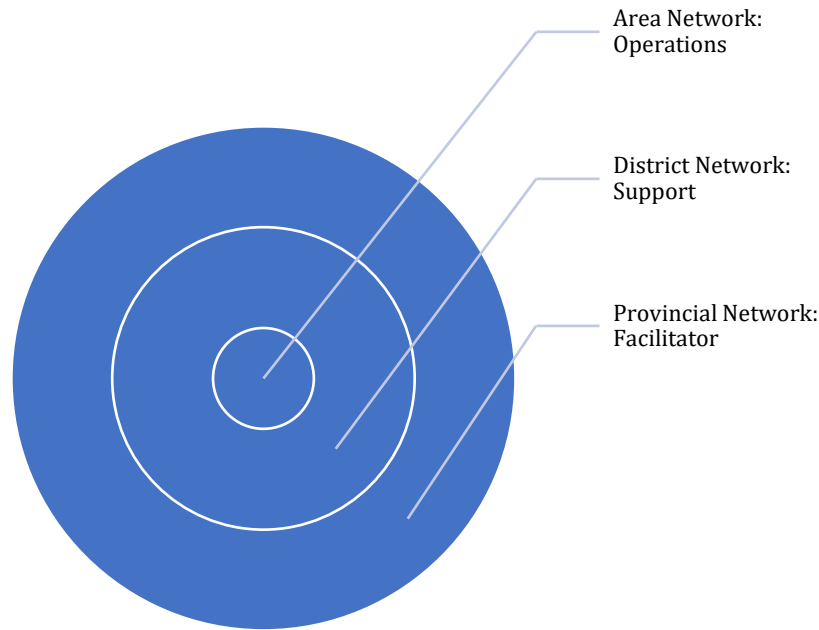


**Figure 2:** The Social network cooperation model for addressing domestic violence in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district

The social network cooperation model for addressing domestic violence in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district is a complex solution that requires careful consideration. Social network building and addressing domestic violence are seen as almost identical issues in terms of network operations due to the network's dynamics of adaptation, modification, and assimilation. The complexity has resulted in a dynamic process of learning and exchanging information among stakeholders.

As a result of this process, network members had gained valuable knowledge from their past experiences up until the time of the current study, resulting in their improved understanding of relevant laws, the establishment of family development centers within communities, the formation of teenage unplanned pregnancy networks, and the creation of operation centers aimed at addressing violence. These mechanisms have enabled smoother operations among the existing social networks that align with regional solutions for addressing problems where violence is prevalent. Policies or mechanisms that have emerged from national, regional, and local levels have been applied to address domestic violence in a layered manner similar to the onion diagram below (Figure 3):





**Figure 3:** The socio-ecological aspect of social networks addressing domestic violence in the Huay Sam Pad Sub-district

The Domestic Violence Prevention and Response Center provides a brief understanding of the eco-social system of the network, with details of the network's operations manifesting at different levels as follows:

- *Area network:* This network comprises close relatives, village health volunteers (VHWs), village leaders, and professional networks, such as community developers, teachers, and nurses from government organizations within the area, including the local administrative organization, schools, and community health centers. It is responsible for taking action when an incident or situation of violence occurs in any household within its purview. An assessment process may lead to further intervention.

- *District network:* Located farther away from the community are organizations, such as district hospitals and police stations, that provide support to victims or survivors by filing police reports or providing physical treatment once notified about an incident. The network at this level will supplement the work carried out by the area network when the latter cannot cope. Certain specific policies will come into effect, for example, in cases related to drug abuse.

- *Provincial network:* At this level, certain agencies are responsible for funding additional projects and activities within communities while also supporting area networks through organizing meetings and training sessions aimed at exchanging information and knowledge on domestic violence prevention measures. Examples include academic institutions like the Women's Health and Gender Equality Department, alongside other entities such as the Provincial Office of Social Development and Human Security (PSDHS) and the Provincial Shelter for Children and Family (PSCF). These types of groups support knowledge- and skill-building for area networks according to the mechanisms available to combat family violence in the specific community.

In short, Huay Sam Pad Sub-district has a three-tiered social network, with each tier fulfilling their own role and working together with the other tiers to prevent domestic violence as effectively as possible.

However, some challenges related to each social network's role in preventing domestic violence have been raised based on informants' perceptions:

- *Risk of violating victim and family rights:* Networks often face difficulties controlling media influence, as the Thai state bureaucracy continues to focus on capturing images instead of solving issues.

- *Limited capacity to implement comprehensive prevention and response at the community level:* This is compounded by accessibility constraints faced by regional governments when they reach out to people who are confronting problems.

- *Law enforcement effectiveness:* The current study took place in the context of a widespread drug outbreak with psychiatric effects and limited rehabilitation and treatment capacities. This issue put families and communities perpetually at risk.

- *Perception that violence is a private rather than public issue:* This perception creates complex vulnerabilities, and internal negotiations are often required before stories will be shared, even during meetings, trainings, and seminars related to violent incidents.

Due to the nature of these challenges, social networks aimed at addressing domestic abuse cases must always be aware of stakeholders' concerns; these challenges require ongoing solutions and efforts to continuously improve existing systems.

### **3.2 The strength and resilience of the social network addressing violence in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district**

Based on the collected data, the strength and resilience of the network's operations lie in the following two categories:

#### **3.2.1 Information flow, feedback, and knowledge exchange among network partners**

Transferring policies and mechanisms from central to local agencies has allowed for enhanced knowledge of household challenges. Constructive attitudes are crucial for effective prevention, and integration between agencies remains a challenge. Empowerment through informal networks, meanwhile, has been a strength in the Huay Sam Pad Sub-district.

Two crucial components ensure effective operation:

- Working under an informal relationship structure makes operations flexible while reaching families efficiently;
- Working with both formal and informal networks provide varied resources, supporting roles, and assistance in operational processes, helping to develop strengths and overcome weaknesses.

The active participation and interaction between sectors in Huay Sam Pad Sub-district and with their network partners, particularly via medical interviews that are followed up seamlessly by connecting with members of the social sector, is one strength and resilience factor that has brought about effective operative results. Research conducted in Hong Kong has highlighted the importance of domestic violence awareness among primary care medical personnel and has indicated the critical violence management factors of communication training and continuous care, alongside screening policies and training plans that emphasize cooperation between medical and social sectors, thus optimizing efficient management and screening mechanisms (Lam et al., 2020).

The significance of these factors can be explained via Human's (1961, as cited in Emerson, 1987) concept of social networks, where social exchange mechanisms may occur if exchanges happen regularly and successfully. High-frequency exchange contributes toward group formation, leading to a strong operational network, which needs positive reinforcement; positive interaction between network partners via empowerment and encouragement creates important emotional responses that support sustainable development, materialization, and enhanced network efficiency.

#### **3.2.2 A prompt sensitivity to situations intricately tied to the identity of members, particularly volunteers and community leaders residing in close proximity to survivors, is essential**

Individuals affected by violence must be ready and able to work alongside health agencies, sub-district officials, and hospitals so that comprehensive care may be provided. Therefore, staff or committee members must be involved in strengthening leadership skills and intensifying coordination efforts. It is essential to find opportunities to connect with those who have had first-hand experience with violence, as such experience develops a person's knowledge, skills, and the practices necessary for quick problem perception. When survivors are able to coordinate with relevant stakeholders, more effective interventions can be designed.

In some cases, households and neighbors may resolve conflicts independently, not requiring that information be shared among local government agencies. When violence occurs against children, however, resulting in physical injuries, or when tackling root causes, such as substance abuse or mental health problems, sharing information among stakeholders within social networks is necessary.

Teachers and community developers have expressed positive feedback toward funding and mobilization of alternative resources aimed at domestic violence activities, as external regional and provincial agency funding sources have complemented and replaced limited resources from local government agencies. This, in turn, has fostered trust among the various stakeholders, including those from the medical, social, educational, administrative, and volunteer sectors. Over time, this trust has been built through experience, case studies, training, workshops, and consecutive project and activity implementation, resulting in a more effective use of existing resources to address violence.

Informal weak ties within the network are suitable for circumstances requiring flexibility and creativity, such as media involvement and visibility. Household, community, and social issues require learning and adapting to meet challenges when aiming to prevent and monitor violence, for example, how to handle repeat perpetrators. Therefore, designing safe spaces for households and communities remains a challenging yet crucial task ahead.



In terms of disseminating information and generating opportunities within the community, weak tie networks or relationships have also proven effective. Such networks do not require members to maintain close relationships to the same extent as in formal networks, but they can help connect groups in the network to operate actively in the social system. This reflects the need for network partners to have a flexible strategy to cope with change while eliminating egocentrism, which might be generated among individuals or groups when creating formal or overly strict social networks (Granovetter, 1973).

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have detailed some of the history of Huay Sam Pad Community's network operations and the challenges the community has faced. Through a gradual learning process, the people in the network have progressively been able to run the operation more effectively. Three main factors have made it possible for the Huay Sam Pad network, located in a pilot area for addressing domestic violence issues, to enhance their effectiveness: support from the Women's and Gender Justice Health Plan, promotion by Udon Thani's provincial bodies in accordance with laws and policies, and facilitation by social and health sectors operating in the local area.

In terms of the model of network, it can be described from a socio-ecological perspective based on its ties, where a network is organized from the environment nearest to the local context to the furthest sphere. The network model operating in the Huay Sam Pad area can be divided into area, district and provincial network tiers. This framework echoes the work of Netto et al. (2017), which found that networks of women who had been victims of violence were divided into three levels: 1) Primary network: this refers to the network that the victim is most familiar with, such as their relatives; 2) Secondary network: this refers to a system of organizations, professions, or agencies that assist victims with social assistance, healthcare, education, and safety; and 3) Tertiary network: this refers to informal places of worship, or religious institutions. In Huay Sam Pad Sub-district, these three network levels correspond to the area network, the district network (including the district's governmental bodies and professionals), and lastly, the informal or religious network. Findings from the current study also showed that other informal exchanges between actors in the Huay Sam Pad network were beneficial to domestic violence prevention operations and activities in the area. These included informal relationships between provincial government agencies and local community bodies and the sharing of knowledge and mutual reinforcement between area-based professionals, as well as food handouts from temples and neighbors to former perpetrators. This kind of support has been significant in many communities. According to Ogbe et al. (2021), during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of social network mechanisms, social support for families, and the use of peer-to-peer support systems were significant in preventing domestic violence. These support systems also serve as incident report mechanisms for victims, which may save them from experiencing further violence. In addition, psychological support for survivors who suffer from stress or depression may help them escape the cycle of violence.

The above analysis points to the strength and resilience of the Huay Sam Pad network, especially in terms of its weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), or the informal bondage between organizations, professionals, and volunteers. This is precisely what has led to intense participation in the network and all actors' ability to lead. Support from provincial bodies has been vital for distributing information and driving learning opportunities for people in the community. Provincial bodies have also been able to connect groups in the network, enhancing active participation in the social system. This reflects the network partners' flexible strategy that has been favourable toward coping with change, as well as reducing any egocentrism within groups or individuals, preventing social networks from becoming too formal or strict. Moreover, during network formation, network actors were learning via their own experiences and training from both inside and outside the local area (hosted by provincial state agencies and non-governmental organizations, as well as an academic institution). This has helped them become more aware of and sensitive to any violent situations occurring in their community. Advocacy from non-state actors can provide knowledge, practices, projects/activities, and increased budget for propelling the network forward, diversifying its sources of support beyond provincial government bodies (Chalayonnawin, 2016). Furthermore, the Huay Sam Pad network has been able to mobilize informal resources within the area by recruiting internal actors, including many professionals, village chiefs, and volunteers, to handle challenges that have emerged.

The current analysis of the Huay Sam Pad area social network shows that power exchange in the network's operations was made possible due to various features: 1) a highly flexible and informal organizational structure, or weak network connections, 2) a mobile and diversified membership, 3) a functioning network with personal contact prioritized, 4) ongoing cooperation, and 5) non-profit operations (Cook et al., 1983; Emerson, 1987).

From a socio-ecological perspective, Golu (2017) summarized four systematic factors that could affect domestic violence, namely, legal aspects, political issues, economic factors contributing to in-house abuse, and particularly, cultural norms (Suriyanyong et al., 2014). The findings from the current study showed that the network operating in Huay Sam Pad faces challenges in monitoring private spaces in the community and addressing violence that happens within households. In addition, economic factors consistent with those discussed by many scholars have come into play, including discrimination, victims' limited access to resources, economic dependence, and the market systems that govern healthcare and education. Renzetti and Larkin (2009) and Federici (2018) studied the relationship between economic stress and domestic abuse and found that economic recession and unemployment were associated significantly with an increased risk of violence. Women, especially, face the consequences of this secondary crisis in poor economic conditions (True, 2010). Their study was conducted after the 2008 financial crisis when the unemployment rate was high, and their findings expanded society's understanding of domestic violence by linking it to the macroeconomic policy context and relating it to economic factors. Meanwhile, research by Henke and Hsu (2022) questioned whether the issue of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic was an economic issue or one of social isolation. Their study linked domestic violence to the household bargaining theory, which predicts that the dynamics of family violence will change when one party, such as the non-working partner, gains economic bargaining power. When a potential victim is employed, it is reasonable for her/him to speak up or threaten to leave the cycle of a violent relationship. Similarly, Özbay and Özcan (2008) examined the relationship between social bonding and family violence using Hirschi's social bonding theory. Their results found that most violent perpetrators lack social bonding and attachment with their relatives and neighbors. They isolate themselves from others due to drug and alcohol abuse, which could in turn lead to chronic psychiatric disorders. Most of the current cases of family violence in the Huay Sam Pad area, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, resemble this phenomenon. The negative impact of the pandemic has pulled people in the community into economic hardship, making it difficult for them to improve their economic status and household relationships during a stressful and uncertain time.

Aside from the concept of social networking from the socio-ecological perspective described above, another relevant concept in designing a socio-ecological system adds a criminological angle: community crime prevention. Violence is a criminal behavior that affects the lives, bodies, and property of victims, and the essence of community crime prevention lies in social organization, effective community organization, and empowerment of communities to prevent crime (Welsh et al., 2018). Social control mechanisms that bolster collective behavior or community cohesion in responding to various incidents may include surveillance (e.g., patrolling, neighborhood watch) and preventive behaviors, such as whistles, emergency reporting channels, community policing, formal and informal community interventions, halfway houses for victims, youth support activities in the area, counselling, general services for victims, and family bonding activities (Lewis & Salem, 2000).

It can be seen that community crime prevention involves taking intentional action to alter social conditions that are believed to perpetuate crime. Such action may incorporate community organization, resource mobilization, community prevention through modification, internal organizational management and social environment adjustment, and risk and vulnerability management (Hope, 1995), as well as transformation of dynamics between government bodies and civil society into cooperative relationships or partnerships (Crawford, 1994). All of these are actions or processes for designing a socio-ecological system that can ameliorate risk, including risk of household abuse. These aspects of local-level crime prevention are consistent with the current study's findings on Huay Sam Pad Community's most recent network operations. When social networks are mobilized for the purposes of coping with violence, they become a space for both direct and indirect victims of violence to create models or design solutions addressing the problem. For instance, Hydén (2015) studied life experiences through narrative, focusing on operations of social networks surrounding victims after incidents of domestic violence in Sweden. They found that family abuse is a hidden crime. Despite occurring worldwide, it is rarely addressed in public social services and social policies, yet the stories of the three women in their study showed the effectiveness of their social networks. Social networks provided a safe space for the women to gain more self-confidence, making them more willing to unveil their stories despite feeling embarrassed. Their networks prevented them from feeling isolated. Some women did not define themselves as victims of violence despite having faced violent incidents. They simply wanted a space to build their self-esteem. Occasionally, women may have an aversion to telling their stories to external social networks in the community. Victims of abuse in Huay Sam Pad Community faced similar challenges.

The Huay Sam Pad network continues to be confronted with challenges related to family violence assessment. According to the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act, B.E. 2550 (2007), four types of domestic abuse constitute violence on a person: physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. In addition, if a child is involved, the Child Protection Act, 2546 B.E., must be applied, wherein the case is preliminarily assessed

before connecting with the appropriate professional or organization. Adherence to these legal frameworks can lead to extremely complex issues for network actors, as the difficulty does not lie solely in assessment, but also in information exchange between actors, professionals, and volunteers when choosing the appropriate model for coping with violence. Natarajan and Rodriguez-Spahia (2019) presented the following models to cope with violence: 1) extreme prosecution, 2) support for prosecution, 3) negotiation, and 4) prevention and surveillance. The choice of the model depends on the pattern of violence and the complexity of the case, as well as the discretion of social network actors. The complexity is compounded with law enforcement constraints, limited capacity to cope with issues at the local level, and lastly, challenges in integrating with different agencies and professionals to implement policies and mechanisms (such as projects or activities), including those aimed at combating the cultural perception that violence is a private rather than public matter. These challenges can put the rights of victims, families, and their neighboring communities at risk.

Another challenge for network actors in Huay Sam Pad Community is to run the network more sustainably. According to Homans (1961, as cited in Emerson, 1987), social exchange, a mechanism of social networks, manifests in two ways. First, if exchange occurs regularly and successfully, with high frequency, it will lead to the formation of a group and ultimately a strong operational network. Second, successful exchange requires positive reinforcement. If exchange ends due to negative reinforcement, the network ties will collapse. In analyzing social networks, Castells (2004) points out that there are three components to their survival, namely, flexibility, scalability, and sustainability. Members of the network with social ties must frequently and adaptably reflect on all three of these assets in terms of their operations. Several studies provide examples of how to successfully operate social ties in area-based spaces. The Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation et al. (2020) found that a crucial factor is the community leader's awareness, as well as the continuity of activities aimed at raising awareness among people in the community. A pilot community may subsequently expand social ties to people outside of their community, in both urban and rural areas, building a community of social protection. This is consistent with Phollawan and Limsakul (2022), who demonstrate the importance of both formal and informal networks to the activities of community chiefs. That is, successful leaders regularly visit families in their community, both officially, such as by going to meet, talk, and observe at the homes of families, and informally, such as by talking, greeting, asking, and observing during encounters in other contexts, for example, during community activities. According to the current study, two important components have made for an effective operation: 1) Working under an informal relationship structure has contributed to the operation's flexibility and ability to effectively reach households, and 2) Working with both formal and informal networks has facilitated access to various kinds of resources that can support the operation, complementing its strengths and helping to address its weaknesses. In terms of domestic violence and healthcare, a research study conducted in Hong Kong on the awareness of domestic violence among medical personnel in the primary care setting demonstrated that training in communication and continuous care is an important factor in violence management. Additionally, it is important to have a policy of screening and a training plan for the area that emphasizes coordinated participation between the medical and social sectors in order to implement efficient management and screening mechanisms (Lam et al., 2020). This shows the importance of both formal and informal roles in the medical and social sectors and is consistent with the findings in Huay Sam Pad Community showing the significance of these factors to the success of their operations.

The operational process followed by Huay Sam Pad's network is not rigid or linear. The factors involved are necessarily variable according to how different situations or events affect each victim or household. During disruptive and turbulent times like the COVID-19 pandemic and post-COVID-19 recovery period, it is inevitable that community members with social ties affected by patterns of violence will have to employ certain applications or social networking channels to be able to inform and stay in contact with social network members, professionals, and public and private organizations to facilitate violence prevention. Examples of such social network channels include the LINE application, which has been used for both personal/informal group communications and for an official LINE channel, as well as other mobile applications. Over time, the Huay Sam Pad network learned to utilize these applications or channels, some being created by provincial bodies, others initiated at the local or sub-district level. Similarly, Goodman et al. (2018) demonstrated the use of a set of online tools to give families and community members access to guidelines for preventing and addressing domestic violence based on community participation. For example, the online tools showed steps for building relationships with victims of violence and strategies for building trust and relationships between community members. Therefore, online tools and social networks have also become crucial.

In summary, the social network constructed by the Huay Sam Pad Community faces a number of challenges, but its operations can be a powerful force for violence prevention and response. Its operations, aimed at community-based security management in a particular location, must be flexible and adaptable to specific situations or events affecting each victim or household. However, certain mechanisms need further

development in order to offer optimal social support for families, as well as peer-to-peer support, and for effective prevention and family abuse resolution outcomes. Certain resolution and prevention tools may be gradually initiated and implemented as a result of training, meetings, and processing of operations based on community participation. Such forums will allow people in the community to contribute to accessible and usable guidance for preventing and tackling household abuse.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, there are policy suggestions as follows:

1. Increasing budget support from local government agencies toward projects related to domestic violence and family welfare promotion at the sub-district level in order to more effectively raise awareness among members of social networks who are entrusted with managing domestic violence. Activities or projects are needed that offer legal knowledge and operational skills development, particularly to law enforcement, among other local officials.

2. Developing communication channels and information technology systems to facilitate the generation of databases supportive of violence prevention activities. In addition, improving collaborative nodes between ministries and other bodies apart from NGOs and locally-based civil organizations, especially among provincial and local agencies functioning under social, healthcare, education and governance nodes. Such agencies should be connected to the family-violence central database in order to more efficiently employ existing mechanisms.

3. Fostering a sense of community safety and social belonging, such as neighborhood patrols and neighborhood watches led by locals. For instance, village health volunteers (VHVs), social development and human security volunteers (SDHSVs), and community development staff should organize rapid response teams to oversee and support cases of family abuse in local areas.

Conducting an in-depth study (in any community) using participatory action research to analyze the root causes of violence and to design ways to cope at the community level is suggested for further research.

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