

THE PARADIGM SHIFT OF THAI JUVENILE RECIDIVISTS TO RECONSTRUCT VALUE OF LIFE BEFORE REINTEGRATION

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to understand how to create a paradigm shift in the thinking of Thai juvenile recidivists by focusing them on valuing life in the past and improving their perspective on the meaning of hope and life in the present. In order to create a paradigm shift in recidivism researchers looked at recognition for the value of life. The main focus of the research was whether Juvenile recidivists become good persons in society after their participation in the behavior and attitude adjustment activity. Researchers studied 258 children and juveniles in Juvenile Vocational Training Centers using quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The qualitative method was conducted by employing in-depth interviewing and a focus group to look at 43 juveniles and officers in different Juvenile Vocational Training Centers.

The results of the research indicate that juvenile recidivists have a negative attitude due to their life failures, but can also have a positive attitude when they succeed in achieving something. Furthermore, the results illustrate that juvenile recidivists are highly aware of life, regarding their capacity, competence, self-importance, life achievement, and self-esteem after they have received training from the Juvenile Vocational Training Centers. In addition, the assessment carried out on mental paradigm, mindset, and social interaction resulted in the highest levels of performance. Future life expectations for the children and juveniles were looked at under three purposes of planning: 1) education 2) employment and 3) self-employment.

To create the paradigm shift we first need to understand that children and juveniles are primarily influenced by social interaction and it is this which can then lead to a change in their mindset. Significant factors that would affect this paradigm shift are age, training period, life value recognition, rehabilitation activities, and practical professional training, respectively. In addition, the activities that are best suited to boosting a positive attitude in children and juveniles are music, sport, and art. These activities encourage morale improvement, motivation, and the potential for development with understanding, empathy, and familiarity with the officers in Juvenile Vocational Training Centers.

Keywords: recidivism / paradigm / shift / juvenile

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1. INTRODUCTION

The problem and impact of juvenile recidivists is not decreasing even though there have been many studies done on issue resolution. The aforementioned problem may be caused by a lack of mental immunity which affects social reintegration and the juveniles' likelihood to reoffend. A paradigm shift is needed to create mental immunity in juvenile recidivists, particularly in empathy and understanding the past value of life and the present perspective on the meaning of life, including hope for the future, as well as life value recognition. If this can be achieved, not only will juvenile recidivists become good persons in society, but they will also have a positive attitude once they have participated in the behavior and attitude adjustment activity. The results from this research show that state of mind can further determine policy agenda, measures, and implementation toward the social protection juveniles in order to decrease the risk of crime commission and youth violence.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand how to create a paradigm shift in Thai juvenile recidivists by focusing on past life value, perspective for the meaning of life, and hope for the future.
2. To study the paradigm shift in recidivism created by life value recognition and to learn from the behavior and attitude adjustment activity that enables juvenile recidivists to become good persons.

3. RELATED CONCEPT / THEORY

3.1 Social Bond Theory

The social bond theory proposed by Travis Hirschi explains that a person who attaches themselves to an organization or community and gives priority to family, school and friends, has no tendency to commit a crime, as referred to by Pornchai Khantee (2006). The social bond can be put into 4 categories, as follows:

1) Attachment: the feeling of kinship or awareness of morals developed from parenting and nurturing. This includes the relationship with others or social interaction. Therefore, a person who has no bond with family, school, neighbors, or community has a risk of deviant behavior, or a tendency to commit crime.

2) Commitment: the consideration of benefits and consequences. For example, a person with high education or a stable career frequently compares advantages and disadvantages. This is because for them committing a crime would result in loss of fame, honor, dignity, and career.

3) Involvement: a person who is taking time on a particular activity complying with regulations and social norms has less opportunity to commit a crime.

4) Belief: the acceptance of values or social norms. It is believed that the law must be strictly observed. No one can violate and act against the law and religious principles. Indecent behavior is determined to be a sin (Pornchai Khantee, 1999).

According to the analysis of social bond theory, Thai researchers who studied the influences and factors connected to the juvenile crime agree that social bonds influence whether children and juveniles

commit crime. In line with the study of Nattapong Cherchart (2011), crime conducted by children and juveniles reveals that weak social bonds are the main factor. In another study focusing on the same area the research of Wanwimol Kongwichai (2013) there is a social bond factor on drug-related crime in children and juveniles. The research finds that children and juveniles who possess weak social bonds have are at higher risk of committing a drug-related crime.

3.2 The Concept of Paradigm

Paradigm is a process, analysis, or direction of life in the future where change can be achieved. However, such change can only be achieved through a deep understanding of old paradigms and the satisfaction of knowing a new paradigm can change a person's view. In general, a paradigm is an abstract pattern in which the non-recognition of a person can cause impediment to him or herself, and their surroundings; therefore, the change of a paradigm should begin with ourselves first, before expanding it to society (Koson Chopaka, 1999).

The basis of a paradigm shift for child and juvenile recidivists begins with the recognition of life value. This basis can create pride, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These factors impact the juvenile's behavior and increase the tendency of creativity, positive attitude, good relationships, positive state of mind, and the ability to solve problems. With this new responsibility, juveniles tend to accept their mistakes and are ready to correct them.

Warisara Peangsuk (1997) studied the factors for methamphetamine use of juveniles in the Ban Ubekka Juvenile Vocational Training Center. It was found that

most juveniles who had committed crime had low self-esteem. This was related to poor environment and a lack of childcare. Furthermore, according to the study by Vaselska, Geckova, Orosova, Gajdosova, Van Dijk & Sijmen (2009), the relationship between self-esteem and mental strength indicates that adolescents with low self-esteem have a high risk of smoking and marijuana use. On the contrary, adolescents who are stable with good mental strength have the lowest risk of smoking and marijuana use.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out using the methods of combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. Samples of 258 children and juveniles in 3 Juvenile Vocational Training Centers were chosen for the purpose of quantitative research. 43 key informants from juveniles and officers in Juvenile Vocational Training Centers were sampled for qualitative research. In-depth interviews were performed using a group of 13 juveniles. Focus groups of 15 officers were carried out four times and of 15 juveniles once.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Information of Children and Juveniles

Of the sample of 258 children and juveniles from 3 Juvenile Vocational Training Centers 72.87 percent ranged in age from 18 to 21 years. The sample populations who live with parents were 61.63 percent and where the parents were married and cohabiting couples it was 36.43 percent. 31.01 percent of them had a mother as the main guardian. The sample populations from

a warm family was 59.92 percent. Parents whose education background were primary school only was 30.08 percent, and parents with a secondary school degree to diploma was 34.37 percent. 35.66 percent of the parents were employees, and 66.02 percent had sufficient income with surplus.

Most residences, 64.06 percent, were privately owned by parents or relatives, while 25.29 percent of children and juveniles lived in slums. 43.80 percent lived in deteriorating buildings, houses of ill repute, drug trafficking dens or gambling institutions. A majority of the people in the community, 56.98 percent, felt unaccepted, paranoid, and often condemned as juveniles, because most entrepreneurs and business people in the area did not accept juveniles with criminal records into employment.

Furthermore, most children and juveniles, 44.96 percent, were satisfied with a simple life, with no luxuries, while 32.56 percent of children and juveniles admitted

that they sometimes preferred to get into high-risk or exciting activities even though they realized that they tended to get into trouble. 32.56 percent of children and juveniles admitted that whenever they were challenged to a fight, they would immediately attack. Likewise, 32.95 percent of them admitted that they were risk-takers or natural gamblers. 30.62 percent of children and juveniles did not like complicated tasks and would avoid difficult and competence-necessary careers.

The information gathered on the crimes of children and juveniles in 3 Juvenile Vocational Training Centers indicated that 80.23 percent of them were first-time offenders and 19.77 percent of them were recidivists in which of the latest offenses, 39.15 percent were with narcotics, 32.95 percent offenses against property, and 16.67 percent offenses against body, respectively. The most significant reasons for committing crime were peers 33.02 percent, money 23.05 percent, and curiosity 14.33 percent.

Table 1 Information of Children and Juveniles from 3 Juvenile Vocational Training Centers

Details of Children and Juveniles (n = 258)	Percentage
Age	
under 18 years old	23.25
18 – 21 years old	72.87
22 – 24 years old	3.88
Living Status	
Alone	2.33
with partner or friend	8.91
with relatives or acquaintances	27.13
with parents	61.63
Parents Status	
Live together	36.43
Separated	45.35
Pass away (only father/mother or both)	17.44

Details of Children and Juveniles (n = 258)	Percentage
Unknown	0.78
The Guardian (Caretaker)	
Father	13.95
Mother	31.01
Father and Mother	29.07
Relatives or acquaintances	25.97
Education Background of the Guardian	
Non educated	3.52
Primary School	30.08
Secondary School – Diploma	34.37
Bachelor degree and higher	2.34
Unknown	29.69
Family Relationship	
Warm and harmonious	59.92
Less time for each other	32.68
Conflict or quarrel	7.40
Occupation of the Guardian	
Agriculture	17.44
Merchandiser / business owner	26.75
Government / Private officer	15.88
Freelance/ general hired staff	35.66
Unemployed / unknown	4.27
Financial Status	
sufficient with surplus	66.02
sufficient	22.27
not sufficient, but sustainable	8.98
not sufficient and not sustainable	2.73
Accommodation & Neighbor Area	
Private house of parent/relatives	64.06
Slum	25.29
Ruined area / drug trading area / gambling area	43.80
With the aspect of unaccepting, frightening and accusing for the juvenile	56.98
Entrepreneur or business owner is not willing to accept the juvenile	65.50
Child and Juvenile Behavior	
Satisfied with economical and simple life	44.96
Tend to get involved with extreme and exciting activity sometimes with the recognition of trouble	32.56

Details of Children and Juveniles (n = 258)	Percentage
Prompt to fight back for the challenge	32.56
Dare and risk taker	32.95
Avoiding and not into a complicated task	30.62
Information of the offense or crime	
First offense	80.23
Recidivism	19.77
- Drug case	39.15
- Property case	32.95
- Death and body case	16.67
Cause of the offense	
Peers or friends	33.02
Money or income	23.05
Curiosity	14.33

5.2 Valuing of Life in the Past

The aspect of valuing life in the past of a child and juvenile recidivist is influenced by the internal and external factors of each individual. These factors have an impact on the positive and negative viewpoint of the child and juvenile. The individual internal factors, such as body satisfaction, appearance, physical ability, intelligence, or personal taste play an important role in the valuing viewpoint. For instance, Mr. Pae (alias) thinks he has a good personality and is attractive to teenagers in rural areas. With these characteristics, he can easily get a girlfriend. He further explains that, in the early stages of his relationship, he was impressed when his girlfriend took care of him in his apartment while he was ill. As a result, he felt that he was not alone or abandoned.

Having physical ability or intelligence that we can show to earn respect from our peers can also be a major factor that impacts children and juveniles since this

respect makes them proud and gives them more self-esteem. Nevertheless, if children and juveniles use the advantage of physical ability or intelligence in the wrong way, it will have a negative effect on them and their family. For example, Mr. Aon (alias) shared his experience of being arrested. These was one time that he and his friends had agreed to steal a motorcycle and he was the only person who knew how to start the engine without using a key. He was caught and arrested.

The value of earning respect from peers, even when doing something wrong, makes children and juveniles feel that they are valuable and wanted. For instance, Mr. Toomtarn (alias) wanted to prove himself to his upperclassmen friends by getting a gang tattoo near his ear and the tattoos made him more attractive to others. As a result, he started to get more tattoos all over his body.

5.3 Prioritize the Meaning of Life in the Present

The meaning of life in the present for child and juvenile recidivists in Juvenile Vocational Training Centers is influenced by self-concept. Good and bad feelings can be caused by physical appearance and emotional status. The self-concept scheme is developed by looking at the experiences and environments that impact on an individual personality. A person who has a positive self-concept will have behavioral expressions that meet social expectations or social norms. On the other hand, a person who has a negative self-concept will act against social values and often gets into trouble by inflicting pain on their surroundings.

Some child and juvenile recidivists become pessimistic due to their negative self-concept. They tend to look down on themselves and believe that they are undesirable to society. They also tend to feel regret for troubling their family and surroundings, condemning themselves for the reckless actions they have committed. For example, Mr. Deaw (alias) said that he was once accused of molesting his girlfriend by her parents, but the case was ended when he agreed to marry. Mr. Deaw further told us that he felt deep regret for causing a problem for his grandmother. His grandmother had to borrow money from others and get a loan from a loan shark (illegal debt) to cover the wedding expenses. As the most beloved grandson, he felt guilty and under pressure for ruining his grandmother's reputation.

Just as there are two sides to a coin, people can have two sides to a story as well; either optimistic or pessimistic. It was noticed that not all children and juveniles who chose the wrong path became life

criminals. Some juveniles were optimistic by nature. For example, Mr. Eak (alias) was released home from a Juvenile Observation and Protection Center for rehabilitation and he heard his neighbors bad-mouthing him. The neighbors thought he was a dangerous person to society. However, with encouragement from his warm family, he became a good person and made his life better.

Religious discipline or beliefs also have an impact on the positive thinking of child and juvenile recidivists. Such is the case of Mr. Nat (alias) whose indecent behavior had caused trouble for his family. In his early detention in the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center, he felt under pressure and was experiencing depression. At that time, the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center held a mass ordination ceremony for novice monks to honor the King. He decided to be ordained as a Buddhist novice with the hope that his ordination would bring good things to him. Surprisingly, after he left the Buddhist monkhood, he felt much better, with a clear head and a new calmness, resulting in a determination to redeem himself while in the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center.

5.4 Providing hope for life in the future

The expectations we have for the future of children and youths who repeatedly commit crimes are dependent on several factors, such as family, ability, and the training they receive, in order to ensure successful lives in society. Inappropriate behavior is only part of the experiences and memories of life, but it can sometimes determine whether

the future will be successful, or not. After completing training and being released back into society, the experience of failure in life may put these children and youths back at a high risk of recommitting crimes.

Mr. Ta (alias), a young man who committed theft and received stolen goods, said that the first thing he will do after training and release will be to see his mother and grandmother. He will return home to hug his grandmother with pride. After that, Mr. Ta plans to study and complete a bachelor's degree so he can follow his dreams and make a better life for himself. He can also prove himself to the neighbors who once gossiped and insulted him.

Likewise, Mr. Do (alias) who was arrested and prosecuted, previously had a part-time job as motorcycle driver and although his motorbike has been confiscated since the day of the incident, he is not discouraged. He thinks that it is not an obstacle to living. Mr. Do hopes that he will find a job quickly after release in order to start a new life with his family.

5.5 Paradigm shift

The important mission of the juvenile training center is to rehabilitate and strengthen the juvenile resistance to committing crime once they have been released back into society. Each training center has different methods of treatment, rehabilitation, and attitude adjustment activities. It depends on the context of responsibility, environment, and characteristics for each of the children and youths. We need to evaluate the activities in each training center to see which have impacted the paradigm of the children and youths. Information for the promotion of

those methods or activities must be gathered and synthesized from participants. Any weaknesses found in the methods must be improved to ensure quality of training.

According to the in-depth interviews with juvenile delinquents about their activities and attitudes, it was found that the rules and regulations of the training center encourage juveniles to have better behavior. For instance, having a daily routine does not allow the children and youths to think about recommitting crime. All the activities, including resting and personal time, must be done in an appropriate manner. It is also a good way to reduce laziness. Most children and youths prefer activities involving art, sports, music, or careers training. The activities that are unattractive to them are praying and discipline practice.

Changing the paradigm of children and youths in the training center begins with the first paradigm shift in social interaction, such as the attachment to peers, or thinking of favors for parents or guardians. It includes cultivating positive thoughts and behavior through training or religious activities. Subsequently, they will undergo a change in their mental paradigm under the realization for the value of life. They will have compassion for others as well as the inspiration to become a good person and beloved of people. The last step is to change the conceptual paradigm and to think about the future. This can only be done by giving them support and encouraging them toward better education, occupation, and stability.

6. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that family, religion, and schools play an important role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

This is consistent with the social bonding theory put forward by Travis Hirschi and can be clearly supported in 2 areas of juvenile crime, as follow.

1. The majority of juvenile delinquents come from families that lack adequate childcare, attention, or good family background. Youths may come from a family where a single parent, father or mother, is the leader. This is consistent with the research of Nattapong Cherchart (2011) which found that the level of social attachment is related to the criminal acts of children and youths.

2. Most children and youths who are unsuccessful in family life tend to have deviant behavior or violate the law, such as addiction to gambling, drug abuse, or alcohol. These individuals lack the mechanism of family attachment to control their behavior. They have no purpose in life and more easily commit crimes. This is also consistent with the research of Wanwimon Kongwichai (2013) which found that children and youths with low social ties have a higher risk of drug-related offenses.

Therefore, paying attention to the family is important because it is the main institution for cultivating and teaching legitimate behavior. In addition, society, communities, and religious institutions can additionally help to teach children and youths. Each institution is important for the development of the individual to live in a way that conforms to the norms of society.

In order to recognize the value of life and the paradigm shift in juvenile delinquents, we need to look at the concept of paradigm shift. Change can occur once the satisfaction with a new paradigm has been created or molded. The value of life will be an important basis for the change of ideas, beliefs, and values arising from learning from the

inappropriate behavior. A study by Warisara Peangasuk (1997) found that most youth offenders have low self-esteem because they grew up in poor family environments and backgrounds. The study by Vaselska & et al. (2009) found that teens are at a high risk of smoking and use of marijuana if they have low self-esteem. However, if there have high mental strength, they are able to avoid such behavior.

7. SUGGESTION

1. The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection should provide continuous training on personnel development for staffs to gain knowledge in implementing activities, treatment, rehabilitation, and creating a paradigm shift. All personnel must be rotated in order to have the opportunity to take part in all training and to understand the principles, guidelines and standard operating methods, to aid them in incorporating these skills in the rehabilitation activities for the children and youths.

2. Activities to create a youth paradigm shift should start with promoting activities in social interaction (Hand) such as discipline training, cleaning of personal belongings, and organizing activities in a recreational and participatory manner.

3. After the implementation of the paradigm shift activity on social interaction for children and youth, they will move on to carrying out activities that promote the modification of the heart paradigm (Heart). This focuses on activities that raise awareness of own life values, abilities, and importance, including creating desirable aims for the future.

4. The final paradigm change for children and youths is the implementation of activities that promote the modification of the conceptual paradigm (Head). This is to focus on activities that promote awareness of own ability, providing opportunities and potential, as well as ability, professional training, purpose of life, and including interpreting ideas and encouragement of staff.

5. The juvenile training center should divide the activities for children and youths into 5 phases based on the rehabilitation plan and implementation for children and youths:

Phase 1 focuses on recreational activities for mental adjustment and social interaction to reduce anxiety and allow the youth to accept the promotion and development of ability. The teacher shall be the most active advisor.

Phase 2 focuses on the activities of creating hope together with the activity to adjust mind, social interaction, and preparation for the development of life, potential and skills. The rehabilitation plan may be re-adjusted to reflect the needs of the youth.

Phase 3 emphasizes activities that build up expectations, promote positive attitude, and raise awareness of the value of life.

Phase 4 emphasizes the potential for the development of the quality of life for children and youths.

Phase 5 at one month before the end of the training, this focuses on preparation activities for returning to society, family relations activities, and activities for further education or careers.

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