Development of Guidelines for Thailand's Pre-Release Programs Under the Soft Prison System

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Abstract
Thailand practices pre-release programs under the soft prison system with the rationale that such programs would give offenders an opportunity to reform. This study aimed to find out the development of guidelines for Thailand's pre-release programs under the soft prison. The research was carried out with 45 key informants through in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The sample included experts, academicians, executive officers and officials at headquarter of the Department of Corrections, prison wardens and officers in charge of pre-release programs under soft prison system. This study used questionaries, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect data. The study found that the development of guidelines for Thailand's pre-release programs under the soft prison consisted of four essential factors which are development of pre-release programs in the soft prison, development of the prison environment, development of coordination with relevant agencies and planning of future policy of the soft prison. The findings of this study would provide useful insights to the policy makers and the legal experts to redefine the regulations and guidelines related to the pre-release programs under the soft prison.

Keywords: Soft prison, Pre-release program, social reintegration, juveniles, recidivism

Introduction
In Thailand, the seeds of pre-release programs under the soft prison system were sown in 1952 in the juvenile justice system in the form of a probation. This was later promulgated in the form of Probation Procedure Act and probation offices and departments were established in Bangkok and other major towns. The rationale of offering probation to an offender was that if a court found a juvenile guilty, the offender was put on probation giving an opportunity to reform. In 2003, judges began to impose Community Service Orders in lieu of fines to juveniles, supervised by probation officers, again with the view to reform the juveniles. There was also a provision to pre-release the offenders at different stages of adjudication and community services, subject to the recommendation of probation officers.

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The pre-release program under the soft prisons scheme therefore is linked with the previously operated probation and community service programs in Thailand. Such programs are needed due to the excessive number of inmates, space constraints in prisons, and the difficulty of detention of all types of inmates together, including inmates who are during the trial, convicted inmates, and pre-release inmates (Department of Corrections, 2019). Consequently, normal activities in prison and pre-release activities were planned to take place in areas such as barrack areas, dining rooms, and visiting rooms. The Department of Corrections set the policy to establish a soft prison or pre-release prison in order to discharge inmates (Department of Corrections, 2018). Additionally, inmates who were about to be released were separated and merged with the offenders grouped in pre-release program in order to correct their behaviors and promote their potential individually. The motive was to reintegrate them into society and help them make a living and not commit offence again after they were released (Department of Corrections, 2011). Separating inmates who were about to be released from other inmates was more effective (Department of Corrections, 2011). The differences between re-release programs under the soft prison and pre-release programs under the main prison in Thailand can be summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Differences between re-release programs under the soft prison and pre-release programs under the main prison in Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Main Prison</th>
<th>Soft Prison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High security and stability</td>
<td>Low security and stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in remote areas</td>
<td>Located close to the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High and stable wall, crowded atmosphere, strict control measures, strict monitoring of escape, high security</td>
<td>Low-security wall; having an atmosphere close to nature and community, and low security</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed prison, and difficult for outsiders to get in and out due to strictness of security</td>
<td>Built from containers, particularly used as a training center, mostly located in opened correctional institutions, closer to people in the community and teachers because programs focus on approaching the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives cannot make a close visit. However, relatives can visit inmates more often than the soft prison.</td>
<td>Relatives can make a close visit. There are mutual activities more than in the main prison.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic programs and training based on specific programs that are divided according to the types of cases of inmates.</td>
<td>Intensive pre-release program because it is a pre-release program particularly provided for inmates of all cases.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on short-term vocational training</td>
<td>Physical, mental, moral, vocational, family, and social training. It is 3-month training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers cannot approach all inmates due to security.</td>
<td>Trainers can approach inmates more than in the main prison because the soft prison focuses on approaching the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for promotion</td>
<td>It is a pre-release program to enable inmates to reintegrate into society happily.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inmates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inmates stay together in the main prison which is a closed system.</td>
<td>Inmates who participate in the project are in the center and separated from inmates in the main prison.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inmates of all cases are repeat inmates.</td>
<td>Inmates of all cases but mostly are inmates of drug cases and first-time prisoners. They can be rehabilitated.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study found the pre-release programs under the soft prison both challenging and important to the justice system in Thailand. It was therefore interesting to study the implementation of pre-release under the soft prison which is systemically applied to inmates who are given parole or about to be released. Besides, there was also a need to design guidelines to solve the problem of prison overcrowding and recidivism. This research was based on the premise that such factors that could help in the development of guidelines for Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison system should be identified. This was also required to obtain the maximum benefit in policy management and for effective and sustainable implementation of guidelines.

**Literature Review**

- **Pre-release concept**
  The pre-release concept is an integral part of the punishment process of offenders. Karpman (1949) stated that “...imprisonment and punishment themselves are not an appropriate treatment for offenders. We need to treat those offenders as people who are mentally ill. In fact, those offenders are mentally ill in every aspect. Thus, there is no reason to punish them for their uncontrollable behaviors. This is like punishing someone who needs to breathe through his mouth due to tonsillitis...so, we hope that the advancement of psychology and criminology will help to replace warders and security guards with nurses and replace judges with psychologists who attempt to rehabilitate and remedy offenders with their hearts instead of sole legal punishment...”

  Pre-release includes rehabilitation processes with the justice system. According to Maltz (1984), rehabilitation refers to patterns and processes with respective meanings, including (1) Offenders or inmates have problems which are direct causes of criminal behaviors; (2) Personnel responsible for rehabilitation in a correctional institution can consider such problems accurately, while the correctional institution also has approaches to treat and rehabilitate inmates or offenders; (3) Rehabilitation approaches are applied to inmates or offenders appropriately; (4) Problems of inmates or offenders are solved or alleviated because they are rehabilitated by approaches of the correctional institution; (5) As a result, the criminal behaviors of inmates or offenders begin to decrease because their problems are alleviated or solved.

- **Punishment and social reintegration**
  In the current correctional operation, the concept of social reintegration is applied to control inmates with the purpose to allow released inmates to live without reoffending and to be responsible for society in the future. In other words, this is to allow released inmates to live with other people in society. Furthermore, in prison, it aims to improve their common sense, adjust their habits and behaviors, and promote and develop their skills in various aspects. This will increase economic value for inmates when they are released to reintegrate into society. Inmates who are developed will not reoffend and return to their old ways of life (Worapat, 2010).

  At the same time, punishing offenders is a social response indicating the purpose of punishment. The system of the US Department of Corrections indicates corrections and society, that is, the purpose of prison is equivalent to society's response toward crime. In addition, prison/penological work is difficult in which the nature of
Correctional work originates from human conflicts (US Department of Correction, 2015). However, it is created to help society to solve most of the problems difficult to be solved such as violence, etc. The objective of correctional work is to meet the needs of society regarding criminal behaviors, that is, to end illegal acts, reduce recidivism, and cause offenders to be punished (US Department of Correction, 2015).

The concept of rehabilitation is to allow offenders to reform themselves by preventing them from a crime. Besides, it also prevents offenders from being punished in the manner of destroying their characteristics or abilities of social reintegration by using punitive measures that do not cause stigma and do prevent them from learning from other offenders. Such an approach is to avoid imprisonment, such as suspension of a sentence with probation and a fine penalty, as well as other measures in the community so that offenders will not negatively be affected by prison.

Moreover, measures to avoid imprisonment are used in the case of having been imprisoned for some time in which offenders should be imprisoned as short as possible so as to receive the least effect as well, such as using parole, reducing imprisonment terms, or serving public works in a correctional center. Meanwhile, those who are under imprisonment measure receive vocational training, education, moral and religious training, welfare, and group and individual therapy so as to solve the cause of offenders’ deficiency and illegal acts (Chitsawang, n.d.).

- Labeling theory

The Labeling Theory is a part of criminological theory of social process and demonstrates the role and significance of stigma and labeling affecting the behaviors of former offenders. This theory also demonstrates the background of stigma and how stigma and labeling becoming the cause of crime (Khruakham, 2015). The concept of the Labeling Theory that a crime is caused by society’s labeling. Labeling occurs when the first offense is committed (Khruakham, 2015). An offender is also involved in the justice system and other agencies in society in which he is defined as a criminal by these agencies. As such, an offender is inevitably labeled and begins to determine the direction of his future behavior to correspond to society’s perception. Consequently, crime is caused by the interaction between a person and society (Chutinan, 2018).

Becker (1963) published Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance demonstrating the principle of Labeling Theory that criminal behavior is caused by the way such behavior is labeled as bad. As a result, a person who is labeled actually possesses or continues such behavior.

The cause of criminal behavior caused by being labeled can be explained in that general people may have their first-time or original behavior occasionally but irregularly and it is not violent or serious. However, if a person having such behavior is already engaged in social control mechanism, especially being prosecuted by agencies in the justice system of the state, and humiliated or defamed, such a person creates an irreparable criminal self-image. This also increases more chances causing a person to possess criminal behavior permanently. However, if any society allows former offenders to reintegrate into society so that such a person will not feel excluded, this will reduce permanent deviant behavior which is the cause of crime or becoming an irreparable criminal. The cause of criminal behaviors can be explained according to the Labeling Theory as follows (Maneepakorn, 2012).
Related research
Santhosh and Mathew (2021) conducted research on two Indian states, to examine the social reintegration of released prisoners. This empirical analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between various factors such as visits of family members, probation officers, and relevant suspension of a sentence. However, the factor of being imprisoned for several years had a significant negative correlation to inmate’s recovery element. Moreover, inmates who participated in pre-release programs were likely to reoffend less than those who did not participate in the program. The previous research indicated that the way inmates received education and training in work and life skills during their imprisonment helped them to choose to live a good way. This will help to prevent them from committing a new crime. These inmates who participate in programs had more chances to be successful than those who were released without participating in programs (Chan, 2018; Rodriguez, 2013).

Previous studies have also noted that pre-release program must focus on the intensity of building a stable career in which inmates could support themselves and their families. Discipline should also be emphasized so that prisoners could live with others in society when they are released. This is because most inmates wish to be released and successfully reintegrate into society (Shaivitz, 2015). Rehabilitation programs must also consist of educational programs, vocational training programs and mental therapy programs (Arbour, Lacroix, & Marchand, 2021; MacKenzie, 2006; Reunrom, Patvivatanasiri, & Mahakeeta, 2020; Taylor, 2017). The aforementioned programs would benefit all inmates when inmates return to live in society and reduce recidivism (Arbour et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2013; Jirathitikarn, 2015; Kittiwanit et al., 2022; Lattimore, Witte, & Baker, 1990; Saylor & Gaes, 1996).

Rehabilitation and pre-release programs are under the operation and supervision of the Department of Corrections. It does not require the operation of the Department of Corrections but it also needs cooperation of agencies in various sectors in society, including the public, private and society. Creating a strong network of cooperation with highly integrated system can assist to build values, acceptance and giving opportunities in returning society after being released through rehabilitation and pre-release programs various projects. This is an important factor in repatriating inmates to society and resulting in a decrease in recidivism (Pengudom, 2021).

Figure 1. Cause of criminal behaviors based on Labeling Theory
Methodology

• Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design with data presented through descriptive and narrative methods. A content analysis was done with the data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The inductive approach helped to conduct the analysis of pre-release programs in the soft prison which was confirmed through the literature review, related research, documents, textbooks, and data obtained from in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

• Sampling and participants

The sample groups consisted of 45 key informants and were divided into three groups. Group 1 comprised executives of the Department of Corrections, namely the Director-General of the Department of Corrections, the Deputy Director-General for Development and officials responsible for soft prison system. Group 2 comprised experts including former Director-General of the Department of Corrections, who had initiated the Soft Prison Project and academics who had the knowledge of rehabilitation of inmates. Group 3 comprised a group of prison warden or superintendent prison/correctional institution and officers in charge of pre-release programs under soft prison system. Table 2 presents the details of the key informants of this study.

Table 2. Key informants of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Key Informant</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>N=45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Executives of the Department of Corrections, namely the Director-General of the Department of Corrections, the Deputy Director-General for Development and officials responsible for soft prison system at headquarters of the Department of Corrections.</td>
<td>Making policy and setting practice in soft prison operation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experts of soft prison system such as former Director-General of the Department of Corrections, who initiated the Soft Prison Project and academics with knowledge of rehabilitation of inmates.</td>
<td>1) former Director-General of the Department of Corrections, who initiated the Soft Prison Project 2) Academics who specialize in prison administration and inmate rehabilitation. Also, they have knowledge and experience in criminology and penology.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prison warden or superintendent prison/correctional institution and officers in charge of pre-release implementing of soft prison programs under soft prison system.</td>
<td>Operating and having work experience in setting up and implementing of soft prison</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Research Tool**

A questionnaire was used to gather data from experts, academics, executive officers and officials at headquarter of the Department of Corrections, prison warden as well as officers in charge of pre-release programs under soft prison system. The questionnaire contained four parts: Part 1 contained personal information; Part 2 contained operational mechanism in pre-release program of soft prison; Part 3 contained problems of pre-release program of soft prison; and Part 4 contained operational guidelines for pre-release program of soft prison.

• **Data Collection**

Besides the questionnaire, the qualitative data was collected through in-depth interview and focus group discussion. In-depth Interview was carried out with groups of experts, academics, executive officers and officials at headquarter of the Department of Corrections. Before starting the interview, the researcher clarified the objectives of the study and explained the key points to the key informants. Each in-depth interview took 30-45 minutes. Focus group discussions were also conducted with prison wardens and officers in charge of pre-release programs under soft prison system. For the purpose of focus group discussion, the participants were divided into two groups, with each group consisted of 11 participants. Before starting the researcher shared the objectives of the study. Each Focus group took approximately 2.30 hours – 3.30 hours. Prior permission was taken for the audio recording from each informant before starting the in-depth interview and focus groups. Those who denied the permission, the information was noted in writing.

• **Data Verification and Data Analysis**

Data verification was carried out through two methods. One, a few samples were randomly interviewed separately on the same question several times to verify the reliability and consistency of the information; two, information was verified from other sources which were willing to cooperate with the researcher. These sources included penologist, criminologist, major advisor, co-advisor, and members of the thesis examination committee who were asked to verify the accuracy, completeness, fairness and reliability of data. The data so collected from in-depth interview and focus group discussion with target population were analyzed by using content and thematic analysis methods. The audio tapes were transcribed verbatim and the themes were retrieved from it. The thematic content was synthesized with documentary research data to sort out answers into research results. Finally, the analyzed and processed data was found to be consistent with the research purpose, concepts, and theories from the analysis of pre-release programs of officers and relevant people in order to create further assumptions or theories.

**Results**

The thematic and content analysis of the data revealed four factors of the development of guidelines for Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison system, namely development guidelines for pre-release programs in the soft prison, for prison environment, for coordination with relevant agencies, and for planning of future policy of the soft prison.
• **Development guidelines for pre-release programs in the soft prison**

The purpose of pre-release programs is to prevent inmates from reoffending and adjusting inmates’ criminal attitudes in various cases so that they are rehabilitated as decent people in society. The training program are implemented by specialists for the most effective pre-release programs. According to the study informants, important factors for released inmates’ lives included stable jobs and being able to support themselves and their families. Therefore, the development of pre-release programs under the soft prison system focused on promoting vocational skills that can be applied to making a living after being released. Furthermore, pre-release programs under the soft prison also focused on self-discipline training because some inmates may have undisciplined ways of living. Additionally, the programs were adjusted to be social reintegration and should promote more activities related to family and society. Providing pre-release training programs under the soft prison for every inmate would also help to promote rehabilitation for inmates in all cases.

Moreover, all informants agreed that a developed technology, social media, or other media to promote and facilitate pre-release programs under the soft prison such as providing online vocational training in some topics that can be implemented online for constant training and corresponding to the current Covid-19 situation. If the Covid-19 pandemic ends, it is able to develop training programs and techniques for inmates by using technology to be teaching media for inmates. As a result, inmates can be more aware of technology and adjust to social context even more.

• **Development guidelines for prison environment**

All the informants agreed that, in order to develop the area to be full pre-release prison, it should be equipped with a full consumer system and basic necessities in the soft prison such as buildings for vocational training, visiting rooms, activity facilities, training rooms, and equipment facilitating the most effective training because currently, these are extremely inadequate. In another aspect, for the establishment of soft prison, a need was felt for additional pre-release centers in each domicile so as not to make inmates feel unfamiliar with the area. Moreover, the Department of Corrections should develop areas and landscapes of the soft prison to ensure the security of inmate control and cleanliness of the soft prison, because in each prison, 200-300 inmates stayed together, which caused stress to inmates. When they are in a crowded dormitory, this created even more stress for them. Consequently, this caused inmates to escape, especially in the zone of male inmates.

• **Development guidelines for coordination with relevant agencies**

The study findings revealed a need for the development of coordination with relevant agencies for Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison system. Promoting external agencies, both public and private, were a part of rehabilitation training and enabled systemic implementation and provided clear goals. In addition, coordination among relevant agencies helped to create relationships and unity, resulting in successful pre-release programs.
Development guidelines for planning of future policy of the soft prison

It was also found that any future policy corresponding to pre-release programs under the soft prison system should emphasize returning good people to society, monitoring the system of released inmates, and policy for a specialized prison. The first policy dealt with returning good people to society, which meant that the rehabilitation policy should be intensive and should truly benefit inmates in order to convert them to be decent people in society. Their action and behavior should be so modified that they do not reoffend, and are answerable to society if they have availed the pre-release program under the soft prison. The same policy was applicable to those inmates who were pre-released as a part of the parole program. The second policy concerned inmate post-release monitoring and evaluation, for which a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with agencies that should be responsible for monitoring and supporting the released inmates. Such a planning for post-release monitoring is required to prevent recidivism. Key informants stated that the Department of Probation should be responsible for such post-release monitoring because the pre-release process need to be implemented along with parole. These inmates were then released at the Department of Probation. Therefore, the Department of Probation should have additional missions for collecting inmate information about their living conditions, occupation, or if inmates have any problems. This is to particularly monitor inmates who reoffend or are at risk of reoffending. The duration of monitoring should be clearly specified so as to specify the scope of the duration of post-release monitoring by issuing the post-release monitoring system policy for making the project more tangible. The third and final policy dealt with a policy for a specialized prison. Key informants stated that the soft prison should have special characteristics different from common prison detaining inmates. In other words, it is a specialized prison for vocational training, and self-discipline training before releasing inmates to reintegrate into society. Therefore, a self-management policy should be implemented in the manner of a specialized prison.

In other words, under the pre-release programs of the soft prison system, the development guidelines mainly dealt with the treatment of inmates and on rehabilitation and improvement of inmates' attitudes. It was also found out that there were more alternative ways of punishment. Imprisonment is used particularly in the case which is serious and dangerous to society.

Discussion

The research found that the development of pre-release programs under the soft prison is a factor in the development of guidelines for Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison. It was evident from the study that the pre-release programs should be intensive whether for juveniles or for the inmates receiving parole. This study discovered four elements as prerequisites for the development of guidelines for pre-release programs under the soft prison. These guidelines dealt with the development of pre-release programs in the soft prison; development of the prison environment; 3) development of coordination with relevant agencies; and development of planning for future policy of the soft prison. Moreover, the research found that pre-release programs under the soft prison should intensively focus on
enabling inmates to have stable jobs so that they can support themselves and their families, and focus on self-discipline training so that they can live with other people in society when they are released (Seetasit, 2015). This is due to the fact that most inmates wish to be released and successfully reintegrate into society (Shaivitz, 2015).

The aforementioned findings are consistent with the previous research findings which also discovered that detention in a rehabilitation-friendly prison should benefit inmates (Arbour et al., 2021; Landersø, 2015); pre-release programs should include educational programs, vocational programs, and behavioral and mental treatment programs (Arbour et al., 2021; MacKenzie, 2006; Reunrom et al., 2020; Taylor, 2017); rehabilitation programs should be beneficial to inmates when they reintegrate into society and to reduce recidivism (Arbour et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2013; Lattimore et al., 1990). Likewise, previous studies also felt that providing educational and vocational programs can enable inmates to apply the knowledge to make a living and increase job opportunities after they are released (Jirathitikarn, 2015; Kittiwani et al., 2022; Saylor & Gaes, 1996). When released inmates are employed, they have limited time to reoffend. This is because most of their time is spent on their work to support their families. Additionally, inmates who have undergone rehabilitation programs are likely not to reoffend (Jirathitikarn, 2015) because they have developed their physical health, mind, knowledge, skills, morality, and behaviors in order to make a change in their attitude and personality. As a result, their behaviors will be changed in a good way (Auidurongtham, 2021). Furthermore, this is consistent with the idea of rehabilitation which is to allow inmates to improve themselves and not fall deeper into crime. In addition, there is an attempt to prevent inmates from punishment in the manner of destroying their characteristics or abilities to reintegrate into society by using punitive measures that avoid stigmatizing inmates. Moreover, the prison provides vocational, educational, moral, and religious training, welfare, and individual and group rehabilitation in order to solve the cause of offenders' deficiency and illegal acts (Chitsawang, n.d.).

The research also discovered that the development of the prison environment was another factor in the development of guidelines for pre-release programs under the soft prison. In order to develop the area to be full pre-release prison, it should be equipped with a full consumer system and basic necessities in the soft prison such as buildings for vocational training, visiting rooms, activity facilities, training rooms, and equipment facilitating the most effective training (Komchadluek Online, 2016). In another aspect, for the establishment of soft prison, there should be additional pre-release centers in each domicile so as not to make inmates feel unfamiliar with the area. This is consistent with the research indicating that designing a low-security prison with the model of landscape in the pre-release zone of the prison in Thailand with cooperation from the general public sector and prison rehabilitation aim to be another approach to support the adjustment of pre-release inmates during being in pre-release zone (also known as "temporary prison"). The landscape is adapted to have characteristics that are similar to a park so as to encourage social participation, educate inmates to have morality, increase educational opportunities, and develop vocational skills during participating in pre-release programs. This helps to reduce recidivism and alleviate the density of a high-security prison (Khamkorngeat, 2016; Landersø, 2015; Phosriwungchai, 2019; Wongphadungtham, 2015).
This research also highlighted the development of guidelines for pre-release programs under the soft prison, which required cooperation of the relevant agencies in both public and private sectors to be a part of rehabilitation training for inmates. The private sector’s participation can change the attitudes of outsiders to reduce prejudice towards inmates and give inmates opportunities and prevent them from being disadvantaged and forgotten people. This is consistent with the research studies (Ang-ard & Sukhum, n.d.; Chunsawat, 2008) which suggest that crime prevention and suppression for peace of members in society and prevention of recidivism require cooperation from agencies directly responsible for crime prevention and solution. This included cooperation from agencies in the justice system that comprised the beginning and destination of the justice system, including the Ministry of Justice, the police, prosecutor, court, correctional institution, and prison. These agencies are necessary to cooperate constantly and systemically because every agency has related missions. Therefore, this social security required cooperation from all sectors to prevent society from crime problems (Sintoppant, n.d.).

However, participation in Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison should not be limited only to the public and private sectors, but family and community should participate in programs as well. This is because the community is the place where inmates need to reintegrate after they have been rehabilitated. If the community does not welcome former inmates and does not allow them to participate in activities of the community, it would be difficult for them to reform themselves to be decent people of the community. Therefore, the community’s participation in pre-release programs can help the community to accept former inmates to be employed and participate in other activities. Consequently, former inmates conduct themselves to be good citizens quickly and permanently. Furthermore, the community’s participation in Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison is consistent with the Interactive Theory. In other words, the way a person commits a crime or possesses deviant behavior may be caused by relationships with other people. The way each inmate has different ways of living can possibly cause difficulty in rehabilitation. The way people in society help and interact with former inmates can make members of society better accept each other and bring about respect between people providing rehabilitation and people receiving rehabilitation. As a result, former inmates reintegrate into society normally.

Furthermore, the community’s participation in pre-release programs under the soft prison will help to reduce the labeling of former inmates since crime is caused by being labeled by society. The principle of the Labeling Theory states that criminal behavior is caused by being labeled as bad behavior by society. Then, a person who is labeled as having such behavior actually possesses and continues such behavior (Becker, 1963; Chutinan, 2018). However, if society emphasizes returning former inmates to reintegrate into society to prevent them from a sense of being outsiders by avoiding stigmatization, this will reduce recidivism behavior which is the cause of crime. Moreover, the reduction of labeling former inmates can improve former inmates’ behaviors when they reintegrate into society (Maneepakorn, 2012). In addition, the family should participate in pre-release programs since former inmates are important human resources for the family. Therefore, family participation can reconcile family members to empathize and forgive each other. As a result, the
relationship between family members is stronger. If the family does not accept or exclude former inmates from the family, former inmates would reoffend and society would be affected as well.

Lastly, the development of pre-release programs under the soft prison requires planning of future policies regarding adjustment of inmates’ behaviors and return of good people into society, released inmate monitoring system, and policy for a specialized prison. This is consistent with the researcher indicating that rehabilitating inmates to become good citizens and setting the policy of management and control of inmates is the main mission that must be successfully implemented by the correctional agency in order to adjust the attitudes and behaviors of inmates to become decent people who are valuable to society (Department of Corrections, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendations

To summarize, the development of guidelines for Thailand’s pre-release programs under the soft prison system contains four factors. It included the development of pre-release programs in the soft prison, development of the prison environment, development of coordination with relevant agencies, and planning of future policy of the soft prison. The Department of Corrections should determine the policy to develop the potential of inmates who participate in the soft prison project in terms of improving the economic status of inmates by issuing a vocational certificate granted by the Department of Corrections. This is equivalent to the standard of Singapore’s pre-release that grants the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualification Certificate to inmates so as to apply for a job after being released from prison. Most of the inmates who are qualified for the program are from drug cases because these inmates need to improve their economic status. They are socially disadvantaged and from marginal groups trafficking drugs. Thus, how can inmates who participate in the program be economically stable, make a living with legal occupation and not reoffend, this may be from finding the cause of each offense and classifying inmates to participate in each program intensively and effectively by monitoring post-release behaviors and well-being of the inmates.

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