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Preventing drug problems through community empowerment in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Ranong Province

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) examine drug prevention processes, 2) analyze challenges in preventing drug problems, and 3) propose ways to strengthen community empowerment in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Ranong Province. This study aimed to Using qualitative methods, data were collected through in-depth interviews with local officials, community leaders, and representatives of key organizations, and analyzed descriptively.

Findings revealed that drug prevention relied on education, media campaigns, recreational programs, and family and community participation to build awareness and resilience. Key obstacles included limited resources, weak intersectoral collaboration, risky behaviors, relapse among users, fragile family structures, and inconsistent law enforcement. Effective community empowerment should emphasize collaboration between authorities and citizens, education and training, creative community activities, public participation, and continuous monitoring. These strategies can enhance community strength and ensure sustainable drug problem prevention.

Keywords: community empowerment, strong community, drug prevention, drug abuse

1. Introduction

Drug abuse is a critical global issue affecting society, the economy, and security. According to the UNODC World Drug Report 2021, 275 million people, or 5.5% of the worldwide population, use drugs. In Thailand, border areas facilitate the trafficking of methamphetamine, heroin, and crystal meth, with youth being particularly vulnerable (ONCB, 2021).

In Ranong Province, several agencies, particularly Local Administrative Organizations, collaborate to prevent drug problems through awareness campaigns, youth education, family and community involvement, rehabilitation, harm reduction, and strict law enforcement. (Poochinda, K., & Srison, W., 2025) Programs include educational workshops, recreational activities, volunteer monitoring, and coordination with police. Despite these efforts, limited public participation—especially at the family level—reduces the effectiveness of prevention, highlighting the importance of community engagement in safeguarding youth and maintaining drug-free environments.

In Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, drug issues persist due to local dealers and multiple access routes. Effective prevention requires informed and proactive communities that can monitor, report, and participate in intervention strategies. This study, “Preventing Drug Problems through Community Empowerment in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Ranong Province,”

investigates prevention processes, identifies challenges, and proposes strategies to strengthen community empowerment for sustainable drug prevention.

1.1 Research Objective

1) To examine the process of drug problem prevention in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Mueang Ranong District, Ranong Province.

2) To analyze problems and obstacles in drug prevention in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Mueang Ranong District, Ranong Province.

3) To propose strategies for strengthening community empowerment to effectively prevent drug problems in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Mueang Ranong District, Ranong Province.

2. Literature review

2.1 Prevention and Resolution of Drug Problems

Effective drug prevention requires multi-level strategies involving various stakeholders. According to Charoen Chaekpimai (2012) and the ONCB, key approaches include:

1) Individual prevention: Develop self-discipline, set good examples, use time productively, choose positive peers, avoid risky behaviors, and refrain from drug experimentation without medical supervision.

2) Family prevention: Build strong family bonds through support, love, guidance, and timely intervention for members who use drugs.

3) Community prevention: Educate neighbors on drug harms, encourage treatment for users, and report drug-related behaviors to authorities.

4) Societal prevention: Collaborate with government agencies to monitor drug issues, report hotspots, and support law enforcement.

The ONCB emphasizes enhancing individual potential and quality of life, preparing parents and close contacts to build resilience, targeting specific areas and groups, integrating strategies based on local conditions, involving government, private, and civil society organizations, and leveraging local wisdom for culturally appropriate, sustainable solutions.

2.2 Concept of Community Empowerment

Empowerment enhances individuals' and communities' capacity to manage problems and develop themselves. Gibson (1991) describes it as a social process promoting self-confidence, problem-solving, and control over one's life. Chandler (1992) highlights empowerment's role in fostering security, confidence, and effective decision-making. Beck (1992) identifies three key dimensions: (1) personal growth and self-esteem, (2) skill development and goal-setting, and (3) awareness of social and political contexts. Bowen and Lawler (1992) emphasize organizational empowerment through information sharing, performance-based rewards, knowledge development, and decision-making authority, enabling individuals to perform effectively and achieve outcomes at personal and organizational levels.

2.3 Concepts of a Strong Community

A strong community comprises members collaborating to carry out activities and address local problems, fostering resilience and preparedness (Somphorn Nilkamphir, 2022). Sustainable development enables members to solve problems individually or collectively with unity (Banjong Hititan, 2017). Key factors include a community-centered approach integrating traditional knowledge, ethical and adaptable leadership, shared goals, continuous learning, collaborative networks, social capital, and effective management (Somphorn Nilkamphir, 2022; Banjong Hititan, 2017; Vachiraporn Surathanasakul et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

This study, “Preventing Drug Problems through Community Empowerment in Ngao Subdistrict Municipality, Ranong Province,” uses a qualitative design to explore strategies for enhancing community empowerment. Seventeen key informants were purposively selected, including local officials, community leaders, and residents actively involved in drug prevention or holding leadership roles influencing local strategies.

3.1 Data Collection

1) **Documentary Research:** Reviewed relevant literature, research articles, theses, and reports, both domestic and international.

2) **Field Research:** Conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to capture diverse perspectives.

3.2 Data Analysis

1) **Documentary Analysis:** Identified patterns, similarities, differences, and relationships to construct the study’s theoretical framework.

2) **Data Triangulation:** Verified information across time, location, and participants to ensure reliability.

3) **Inductive Analysis:** Applied content analysis to categorize data, identify key themes, and interpret findings using relevant theories to address the research objectives.

4. Results

4.1 Drug Prevention Strategies in Ngao Subdistrict, Ranong

Drug prevention in Ngao employs a proactive, multi-faceted approach, including public awareness campaigns targeting youth and families through seminars, workshops, and community events. Collaboration with local authorities and organizations enhances efforts via volunteer monitoring groups, police checkpoints, and media campaigns. Key informants highlighted the importance of education on drug harms, youth participation in sports and arts, and using technology to disseminate information. Government agencies focus on patrols, monitoring high-risk areas, and supporting volunteer groups to report drug activities.

4.2 Challenges in Drug Prevention

Major obstacles include limited resources and funding, a lack of accurate local drug data, difficulty securing cooperation from some community members, misunderstandings of

prevention methods, and insufficient support from certain organizations. These factors hinder effective planning and implementation.

4.3 Community Empowerment for Drug Prevention

Empowerment begins with strong family involvement—providing love, attention, and open communication to prevent youth drug use. The government should decentralize power genuinely, engage communities in activities, and maintain ongoing school programs with continuous evaluation. Strengthening cooperation across all sectors is essential for sustainable and effective community-based drug prevention.

5. Conclusion

The study found that effective drug prevention in Ngao Subdistrict requires a multi-dimensional approach focused on community awareness and education. Key strategies include training and seminars on drug risks, youth participation in beneficial recreational activities such as sports and arts, and the use of media and technology to disseminate information. Government agencies play a critical role in monitoring, law enforcement, and supporting volunteer groups to report drug-related activities.

Strengthening community empowerment begins with the family, providing love, guidance, and open communication to prevent youth drug use. The government should decentralize power, actively involve communities in prevention activities, implement continuous school-based programs, and monitor outcomes. Collaboration across families, communities, and all sectors is essential for building resilient communities and sustainably preventing drug problems

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