

# Implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province

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## Abstract

The objectives of this study were to study: 1) the drug situation in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province; 2) the social structural context affecting the implementation of the drug prevention and suppression policy in the area; and 3) the factors affecting the success or failure of the drug prevention and suppression policy. A qualitative research methodology was used for this study. Data from an in-depth interview was analyzed. Questions were asked that were based on the research framework and this was validated by informants. The results showed that the drug situation in the area was likely to get worse. The most widely used drug was methamphetamine. Most of the drug traders were retailers and most of the drug users were laborers.

Additional findings related to social and structural context that affect the implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy. These were found to relate to issues relating to globalization, the cultural context, economic problems and political instability. The drugs that were being used in the area were found to come from neighboring countries. It was felt that these countries did not pay sufficient attention to drug prevention and suppression. The implementation of drug policy in Kamphaeng Saen was found to be more difficult as a result of globalization. It was found that the patronage culture and family relationships present in Kamphaeng Saen resulted in concealment and connivance of drug traffickers and users. It was found that the economic downturn caused by a recent slump in agricultural product prices would cause more people turn to drug trafficking as a source of income. These economic issues were seen to also have an effect on state officers making them more inclined to accept corrupt payments. It was found that drug dealers would take advantage of political instability to increase their drug trafficking activities.

The factors which affected the success of drug prevention and suppression policy in the area of the study were found to be related to policy, organization, participation and motivation. The policy of drug prevention and suppression was found to be fair and clear. However, the operations on the ground were found to not respond to the specific problems in the area. The Chief District Officer, as the Director of Narcotics Suppression Operation Center, was found to be organized and competent; however, the district lacked sufficient resources to fully implement the drug prevention and suppression policy. It was found that public participation was insufficient and that the officers responsible for implementing the policy were lacking in motivation.

**Keywords:** narcotic drug, drug prevention and suppression, structural context, policy

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## 1. Background and Significance of the Study

Drug trafficking is a transnational crime that has a significant impact on Thailand. It is a primary concern of the majority of countries all over the world. Drug abuse is harmful to human society because it devastates human capital. This is considered to be especially the case for children and teenagers. Due to the severe problems relating to drug abuse the majority of governments around the world have drug control policies and strategies with some even declaring 'war on drugs'.

Currently in Thailand, there is an oversupply of illegal drugs into the country. Drug prices are now not as high as they were in the past. In Thailand in 2017, 136,125 offenders were arrested for drug offences. Seizures were made of 200,387,224 pills of amphetamines, 3,999.88 kg of ice(Crystal meth), and 24,165.60 kg of marihuana.[1] The main source of the drugs is thought to be an area to the North of Thailand which is mountainous and heavily forested. Drug dealers exploit this strategic vulnerability of Thailand to import illicit drugs through crossing points. They do this by concealing them in personal cars, farm trucks, or buses. Once they have entered the country the drugs are widely distributed in the central region.

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The majority end up in Bangkok and its vicinity.

Kamphaeng Saen is a district in Nakhon Pathom Province located 80 KM. from Bangkok. The drug problems are quite severe due to its large area. Kamphaeng Saen consists of 15 sub-districts which are sub-divided into 203 villages. Approximately 127,699 people live in the area.[2] The majority of the population make a living by growing crops and rearing livestock. In addition to this there are approximately 180 authorized factories in the area. Due to these factories there are many laborers that immigrate into the area. Kamphaeng Saen adjoins western border provinces, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, and Suphan Buri. It has therefore become a risk area for becoming a drug trafficking hub. Drugs are brought to such hubs before being distributed to drug traders at all level. Kasetsart University Kamphaeng Saen Campus is also located here giving lots of dormitories, apartment, and houses for rent where dealers can stay before travelling on to Bangkok.

The researcher is a government employee responsible for drug prevention and suppression. For this reason he was interested to investigate the implementation of drug policy in Kamphaeng Saen District. The study aimed to collect and analyze data from the area and to propose approaches to further develop drug prevention and suppression policy implementation in the area.

## 2. Research Objectives

2.1 To study the current drug situation in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province.

2.2 To study the social structural context affecting the implementation process of drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province.

2.3 To study the factors affecting success or failure of drug policy implementation in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province.

## 3. Research Process and Data Collection

There were two research tools that were used for this study. These were as follows:

3.1 Documentary research was carried out through the review of relevant literature, documents and other research. This was done in order to gather general information about the government's drug prevention and suppression policy as well as to gain insight into how the implementation of the policy had been carried out in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province. Following this data collection, the policy structure and administration was analyzed to identify informants in the area of study. The theory, research results, and related variable factors that were found were considered to set the research framework.

3.2 An in-depth interview of the key informants who was related to implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen District was conducted. The semi-structured questions were used which covered relevant factors and allowed the interviewees to give information freely. The data that was collected was analyzed together with the documentary information and on-site experience of the researcher in order to propose academic suggestions.

## 4. Research Summary

### 4.1. Overall drug situation

Illicit drugs are widely available in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province and availability is likely to grow. This is despite a significant number of illicit drug shipments being intercepted. The most widely used drug is methamphetamine. This is mostly brought to Thailand through Kanchanaburi district which borders Myanmar. The people involved in illicit drug trafficking are local politicians, government employees or corrupt government personnel. For these reasons the drug situation in Kamphaeng Saen continues to be of concern.

### 4.2. Structural context

4.2.1 Drug use prevention and suppression in Thailand, including Kamphaeng Saen, is considered to be a difficult operation due to Thailand's numerous international borders and increasing globalization. This is thought to be due to neighboring countries still not place sufficient importance on narcotic drug manufacturing in their countries. In addition to this there are ethnic minority groups along Thai-Burmese border that continue to produce illicit drugs as their main products. In the era of globalization, it is easy for traders to connect to consumers through modern communication technology. This is hard to trace and investigate.

4.2.2 The cultural context in Thailand appears to be making matters worse. The investigation revealed that both the "patronage system" and "aristocratic system" result in political corruption. According to interview of drug users and distributors, all of them said that they bribed the responsible officers. The money from drug trading was spent for luxury goods due to consumerism culture.

4.2.3 The results showed that in times of economic recession and slumps in agricultural produce prices more people turn to illicit drug trafficking as a source of income. In addition to this as Kamphaeng Saen is located near border provinces, it is the best transit hub before distributing to Bangkok and its vicinity.

4.2.4 It was found that in times of political instability, the government's drug suppression policies will be less stringent. Furthermore, since Thailand is a bureaucratic state, most of policies for drug prevention and suppression come from the central authority

which does not truly understand the issues in areas such as Kamphaeng Saen. As a result the policies that they put in force are not sufficient to solve the problems.

#### 4.3. *Factors affecting the implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy*

4.3.1 Political factors have been subdivided into three issues as follows:

##### 4.3.1.1 Legitimacy of Policy

The drug suppression policy implemented in Kamphaeng Saen area is highly just. Due to the long policy process, alternatives were developed and the plan was considered and approved by several cabinets. It was considered to be a just policy with the consent of most of the population. It was found that drug problems were a major concern of the majority of the population of Thailand and were in need of urgent suppression measures.

##### 4.3.1.2 Policy Clearness, Feasibility and Practical Measure

The drug suppression policy implemented in Kamphaeng Saen was found to be perfectly clear and practical. This is because the government, through the Narcotic Control Board, has set in place a “Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme for drug prevention” as a master plan to implement drug suppression in the area. The situation was found to be different when we considered feasibility. It was found that the policy has not responded to the issues relating to the development of Thailand. This is because the operation plan and activities were determined by central government. When the policy was applied in the real situation, it did not give the outcome that was predicted in the policy goals.

##### 4.3.1.3 Policy Evaluation and Monitoring

It was found that the drug suppression policy implemented in Kamphaeng Saen remains ineffective in policy evaluation and monitoring. The plans and activities that have been carried out aimed only to achieve certain outputs but did not seek to achieve long term change. The implementers administered the projects to achieve their goals but did not monitor long-term consequences of the policy. The destination goal of the government was therefore not achieved as expected.

4.3.2 The organizational competency factors were subdivided into three categories as follows:

##### 4.3.2.1 Leadership

The leadership qualities of the Chief District Officer of Kamphaeng Saen, as the director of the Kamphaeng Saen Narcotics Suppression Operation Center, are very good. The Chief gets support from supervisors and operators at all levels. This is due to his friendliness, modesty and devotion to work. In drug suppression operations, the Chief has been assigned tasks based on the overall mission and regular moni-

toring the operations. This way of working has created work participation and good working atmosphere.

##### 4.3.2.2 Organizational Structure

The implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen has been administered through Kamphaeng Saen Narcotics Suppression Operation Center. The Center is operated by local leaders. These included the head of the government agency, state enterprises, local politicians, sub-district headmen, and village headmen. It was found that this structure leads to rapid operations due to the wide variety of expertise within the group.

##### 4.3.2.3 Resources (Budget, Time, Personnel, Technology)

It was found that the implementation of drug suppression policy has a lack of resources. Most government agencies have their own burden of regular work so the drug suppression mission has not been fully achieved. Additionally, the area of Kamphaeng Saen District is very large, so it is impossible to cover drug suppression operation in all areas. Moreover, the equipment that is being used is not modern which reduces the efficiency of the policy implementation.

4.3.3 The participation factor has been subdivided into two issues as follows:

##### 4.3.3.1 Participation of Responsible Government Machineries

The study found that participation in drug suppression policy implementation in Kamphaeng Saen was extremely good. This was found to be because the operations have been carried out following the bureaucratic chain of command. In addition to this the commander, Chief District Officer, has a high level of leadership capability.

##### 4.3.3.2 Participation and Perception of Local Public

The participation and perception of local people toward the implementation of the drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen was found to be at an extremely low level. It was thought that this was because the drug policy has been established by the central agencies using a top down approach. The operational plan and projects that have been designed do not respond to the real conditions in the area. Moreover, the operational units were not provided a budget for public relations. The significant problem in participation is that people do not trust the operating officers and they fear harm from drug users and dealers if they work with the officers.

##### 4.3.4 Motivation factors

According to the study, drug suppression operators in the area have two motivations. These are: 1) a special bonus for drug operating officers and 2) head-money and rewards for bringing drug cases to trial. The results showed that the implementers of the drug prevention and suppression policy lacked motivation. The practitioners view that the consideration and the evaluation for meritorious conduct were unfair

and unclear. Moreover, the process to claim rewards and head-money was complicated and considered not worth doing.

## 5. Discussion of Research Results

### 5.1. Drug Situation in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province

The study indicated that the drug situation in Kamphaeng Saen remains a problem and likely to get worse. The administration personnel, soldiers and police arrested more drug offenders; however the number of offences did not decrease. Methamphetamine is becoming increasingly popular among agriculturists and workers. This remains a serious threat due to its easy availability and low price. Moreover, the number of youth involving themselves in drug use appears to be on the rise.

### 5.2. Structural Context Affecting the Implementation Process of the Policy

The structural context affecting the implementation process of the drug policy in Kamphaeng Saen was found to be similar to “a political economic model of policy implementation” that was reported by Chaicon Praditsil. [3] This states that the political and economic structure in Thailand is based on unequal relationships. This leads to extortion through unfair trading between people in society. In addition to this the political structure needs to be considered especially in the aspect of administrative power. This consideration should include giving importance to cultural structure and the ideology for cause of action. To sum up, the structural context affecting the implementation of drug prevention and suppression policy in Kamphaeng Saen can be explained as follows:

#### 5.2.1 Structural Context of Cross-country and Globalization

In the current era of globalization all countries are connected in communication and trading. This results in difficulties when trying to prevent and suppress the flow of illicit drugs into Thailand. Each country sets its own regulations and practices and no country has power over another. International collaboration in drug prevention and suppression is therefore only at the conceptual level with no concreteness.

#### 5.2.2 Structural Context of Culture

Thailand has a long history of establishment. The patronage and family systems has been deeply ingrained into society and normally influences almost all decisions and actions. Hooligans and corruption are ever present in Thai society. The great obstacle in drug prevention and suppression from these cultural contents is the protection and connivance of offenders who are subordinates or relatives of the responsible officers.

#### 5.2.3 Structural Context of Economy

In the capitalist era, economic status is an important factor affecting human behavior. When there is an economic recession or a slump in agricultural product prices, there are more people willing to enter drug trafficking either to make a living or respond to meet their consumerist demands. The income that can be made from drug trafficking is a highly motivating factor for people considering becoming traffickers and dealers. This is especially the case for those with a low cost of life.

#### 5.2.4 Structural Context of Policy

The drug policy is a political output which was designed to answer the demands of the public. In a politically unstable environment drug policy can become weak. This is because compromises are needed so that all partners are satisfied. In short, the implementation of drug prevention and suppression policies is not fully effective if politicians or interest groups intervene in them.

### 5.3. Factors Affecting Implementation of Drug Prevention and Suppression Policy in Kamphaeng Saen District, Nakhon Pathom Province

5.3.1 Political factors have been subdivided into three issues as follows:

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#### 5.3.3 Participation Factors

A necessary factor for the implementation of drug policy is the participation and cooperation of local people. Unfortunately, in real situations, the policy making agencies do not give the opportunity for implementers or local people to voice their needs or allow them to provide solutions to the problem. This is the reason why the projects and activities do not work well in real contexts. This agrees with Sombat Thamrongthanyawong's opinion about the importance of policy support. He stated that the success of a policy depended on support of implementers (responsible operating machineries) and those who was affected from the policy (public). Consequently, there is no plan or project that the operators do not consider the supporters or opponents. A study of factors affecting the implementation of national literacy campaign found that the national and local support, measures for monitoring evaluation and incentives highly influenced the success of the policy. This was because local

people and interest groups had an input in the policy implementation process. Accordingly, in Thanaphat Khotsing's study [15], the result showed that the community participation was a factor affecting the success of community title deed policy implementation.

#### 5.3.4 Policy Evaluation and Monitoring

The implementers lack of motivation in implementing drug prevention and suppression policy is due to the lack of 'marketing signals' in bureaucratic systems. It is, therefore, rather difficult to understand much about the motivation of implementers and the reward or punishment of good or poor implementers. Motivational measures can be a special salary increase or work promotion but these should be structured as part of a reliable and fair appraisal system. Sombat Thamrongthanyawong stated that motivation was important for successful policy implementation. It is therefore necessary for an organization to provide appropriate incentives to enhance the success. Woradej Chandarasorn also agrees in this point and places a high importance on success and failure of policy with overall evaluation to create fair compensation and punishment for those responsible for the success or failure of implementation.

## 6. Research Suggestion

In this study, the researcher suggests the following:

### 6.1. Suggestion for Policy

6.1.1 Thailand should coordinate with neighboring countries and impose clear and effective measures for drug prevention and suppression in order to eliminate the trafficking of drugs from outside Thailand.

6.1.2 Policy makers should revise the project plan to match the environmental context and the situation in the area of implementation in order to give the highest chance of success.

6.1.3 Policy makers and high-level authorities should focus on policy outcome and destination goals rather than project outputs. This is so that the policy implementation responds to policy objectives rather than just finishing the assigned work.

### 6.2. Suggestion for Implementation

6.2.1 Policy establishments or administrative authorities should allocate a sufficient workforce to the operating agencies. The government officers from the Office of Narcotic Control should be assigned to work at the District Office in order to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the policy.

6.2.2 Training courses should be organized for implementers of the drug suppression policy in order to develop knowledge, ability, and awareness of drug dealer's changes of methods.

6.2.3 Sufficient budget and modern resources should be allocated to policy implementation areas.

6.2.4 Clear and fair performance appraisals should be used as the criteria for rewarding or punishing, as well as motivating those who implement the drug policy.

### 6.3. *Suggestion for Further Study*

The study could be expanded using quantitative research. The population of Kamphaeng Saen District could be asked questions about their needs with regards to the implementation of the drug prevention and suppression policy in their area.

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