

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Student Theses

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Fall 12-2021

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Thai Probation Department

Thanaphon Nunphong

CUNY John Jay College, Thanaphon.Nunphong@jjay.cuny.edu

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/jj_etds/207

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Thai Probation Department

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice degree

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

City University of New York

Thanaphon Nunphong

December 2021

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Thai Probation Department

Thanaphon Nunphong

This thesis has been presented to and accepted by the Criminal Justice Master's Program, John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice degree.

Thesis Advisor: Jeff Mellow

Second Reader: Deborah Koetzle

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had a crucial impact on the Thai criminal justice system. While it may be true that the Department of Probation has proposed preventive and responsive measures in response to COVID-19, relatively little is known about the practical applications of these measures as well as the impact of COVID-19 on probation personnel, probationers, and parolees. The goal of this study is to explore the policies and practices of Thai probation agencies as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study surveyed probation officers in Thailand ($N = 534$; 60.6% Female) in March to April 2021, focusing on probation practices and case management issues prior and post-COVID-19. Data evince that, overall, frequency of officer-offender contacts remained steady even though the type of contact changed post-COVID-19. In-person contact was replaced by remote contact strategies, specifically telephone calls, which increased significantly following the onset of the pandemic.

Keywords: Thailand; probation; parole; community corrections; community supervision

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I am extremely grateful for tremendous support, understanding, and guidance from advisor Dr. Jeff Mellow in the completion of this thesis. His patience throughout the duration of this project was greatly appreciated. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Taweeporn, Jemena, and Thanakrit, who work for the Department of Probation of Thailand, in helping me in the process of collecting data in Thailand. I thank profusely all the Thai probation officers for their participation in a survey. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the second reader of this thesis, Dr. Deborah Koetzle, for her valuable advice. Additionally, I would like to recognize the encouragement and continuous support from my mother, Warintorn, and my sister, Mananya, as well as my friends Sandra, Samelia, Frank, Kushi, Yejin, Nisarath, Napuck, and Ian in the writing of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank myself. The completion of my thesis would not have been possible without my patience and determination.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 1 |
| <i>Literature Review</i> | 5 |
| An Overview of the Probation System in Thailand..... | 5 |
| Challenges of Community Supervision..... | 8 |
| Community Supervision Strategies..... | 11 |
| The Criminal Justice System’s Response to COVID-19..... | 13 |
| <i>Methodology</i> | 16 |
| Current Study..... | 16 |
| Instrumentation and Variables..... | 16 |
| Adaptation of Survey for Thai Probation Officers..... | 19 |
| Source of Data..... | 21 |
| Data Collection Procedures and Statistical Analysis..... | 22 |
| <i>Findings</i> | 24 |
| <i>Discussion and Conclusion</i> | 37 |

Introduction

According to recent estimates, the global pandemic of COVID-19 has infected over 240 million and killed over 4.8 million people worldwide as of October 18, 2021 (World Health Organization, 2021b). COVID-19 has not only affected people's lives, but it has also changed how the world operates due to lockdowns and social-distancing policies (Sheth, 2020). Many sectors of society across the world have been disrupted, and the criminal justice system is no exception. All criminal justice agencies (i.e., law enforcement, courts, and corrections) have had to change their policies and practices in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus (Erisman, 2020; Nyingi, 2020). This study is primarily concerned with how COVID-19 has affected the Thai criminal justice system.

COVID-19 had a crucial impact on the Thai criminal justice system, especially on corrections as the infection rate and death toll in Thailand continue to increase. As of October 18, 2021, Thailand has approximately 1.7 million confirmed cases and over 18,000 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021a). Particularly, COVID-19 has impacted prisoners in overcrowded Thai prisons because prisoners could practice neither social distancing nor safe hygiene as prison facilities are 148 percent overcapacity across the system (Marcum, 2020; Thailand Institute of Justice, 2020).

Consequently, the correctional system in Thailand adopted policies such as releasing non-violent prisoners and offenders who are imprisoned due to technical parole violations ("Criminal Justice Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic," 2020; Erisman, 2020; Thailand Institute of Justice, 2020; Williams, 2020). In an effort to reduce the prison population in Thai correctional facilities and to prevent the spread of coronavirus, the Thailand Institute of Justice proposed a responsive measure that would place individuals on probation rather than incarcerate them

(Ministry of Justice, 2020). As a result of this new measure, the Department of Probation (DOP) is responsible for supervising released prisoners, referred to as parolees, as well as many individuals who will now be placed on probation (i.e., probationers) (Carr, 2020; Nadel & Campbell, 2020 as cited in Swan et al., 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 on probationers and parolees, along with the social and economic restrictions due to COVID-19, is causing significant challenges for community supervision officers to manage their caseloads and provide support for their clients. Probationers and parolees need a job to avoid recidivism, but due to the pandemic, many businesses and companies have reduced staffing needs; hence, the ability of probationers or parolees to obtain employment is very limited (Bomey, 2020; Betesh, 2020 as cited in Carr, 2020). Moreover, according to the DOP of Thailand (2020), DOP manages around 140,000 drug rehabilitation cases, and these population groups are vulnerable and more likely to relapse due to stay-at-home regulations (Carr, 2020).

According to Abraham et al. (2020), DOP was underprepared for a sudden outbreak of infectious disease for several reasons such as being understaffed and having officers with high caseloads. However, current research and media coverage have been focusing more on the effects of COVID-19 on prison and jail populations (Swan et al., 2020), and little is known about the effect of COVID-19 on probation practices. While it may be true that the DOP has proposed preventive and responsive measures to COVID-19, the practical applications of these measures, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on probation personnel, probationers, and parolees, have not been thoroughly studied.

To fill this gap in extant research, this thesis explores Thai probation agencies' response to the coronavirus pandemic and lessons learned from those responses. The primary focus of this

study is to understand how Thai probation practices have changed due to COVID-19, what challenges the Thai probation department experiences, what strategies have been used to deal with the pandemic, and what lessons the Thai probation department has learned from the pandemic.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The goal of this study is to explore the policies and practices of Thai probation agencies as they respond to the coronavirus pandemic. This study targets Thai probation officers who work for the Department of Probation of Thailand across the country and has five guiding research questions listed below.

1. How are probation agencies in Thailand responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What challenges do probation officers, probationers, and parolees face during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How has communication between probationers and parolees and Thai probation officers changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What was the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on strategies and techniques that Thai probation officers use to encourage client compliance (included in this question is how has client compliance changed during the COVID-19 pandemic)?
5. What are the lessons learned from and innovative strategies for dealing with the pandemic for Thai's probation agency?

To answer each research question, multiple data sources were used to develop a thorough understanding of Thai probation officials' operation and changes in policies and practices in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sources included surveying Thai probation officers and examining operational guidelines issued by DOP during the pandemic. However, the survey of

the officers will be used as the primary data source to answer all questions. COVID-19 is not the first global pandemic and will not be the last (Gill, 2020). Therefore, this study will establish a knowledge base that will be valuable for and beneficial to policy makers, practitioners, and community supervision stakeholders in Thailand for effective future planning for probation practices and measures to manage future outbreaks.

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the Department of Probation (DOP) of Thailand. Also, it reviews the existing empirical literature on challenges that probation officers face. Various government publications, including guideline documents issued by DOP as a response to COVID-19, are included too. Finally, literature concerning what community supervision strategies help probation officers to successfully reintegrate offenders into a community will be examined.

An Overview of the Probation System in Thailand

The Department of Probation (DOP) of Thailand is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and currently has 117 offices: three special-sized offices, 20 large-sized offices, 39 mid-sized offices, and 55 small-sized offices. The office size is determined by two factors; 80 percent of the determination is represented by the size of the caseloads in the past two years, and the remaining 20 percent accounts for the area of jurisdiction. DOP has approximately 2,200 probation officers throughout the country with approximately 563,000 cases. About 80.5 percent of the population is adult probationers aged 18 or older while 19.1 percent is adult parolees, and 0.3 percent is juveniles (The Department of Probation, 2020; Chokprajakchat & Sukomol, 2004). At the moment, probation officers have a caseload ratio of 1:30 in Thailand. DOP does not have a caseload standard, and there is no universally accepted standard for caseloads. However, according to the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), a caseload ratio of 1:20 is recommended for intensive cases; therefore, the current ratio of 1:30 is more than a Thai officer can ideally manage.

Furthermore, the probation system in Thailand has changed since it was first established in order to adapt to the changing needs of the country's criminal justice system. The Thai

probation system was used with juvenile offenders for the first time in 1952, and then in 1956, penal code 56-58 was enacted, allowing judges to sentence offenders to probation (Act Promulgating the Criminal Code, TH. § 56-58. (1956)). However, during this era, the courts only suspended sentencing without applying probation services due to the lack of officials. Between 1979 and 1982, DOP only provided probation services for adult offenders in Bangkok. Later, in 1983, regional probation offices were established throughout the country. In 2020, the DOP became the main organization responsible for providing drug rehabilitation for drug-crime offenders in accordance with the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act (2002) (Department of Probation, 2007).

As a result of changes in the probation system of Thailand, DOP is currently supervising different types of groups: people on probation and parole and inmates who have received good time allowances and are given early release. The probation period for adult offenders under a suspended sentence with the condition of probation is typically one year; however, the court can order up to five years of suspension. On the other hand, the court shall not apply the condition of probation in excess of one year for a juvenile offender who is aged between 10 and 17 years and is (1) found not guilty but probation is considered necessary, (2) found guilty and sentenced to probation, (3) conditionally released from a training center, and (4) dismissed from a training center but probation is considered necessary (Department of Probation, 2007). The practice of releasing prisoners early from prison to be supervised in the community during a period when the individual might otherwise be incarcerated is referred to as parole. To meet parole criteria, a prisoner must serve no less than one-third of his or her sentence length in prison, and the supervision period must be more than one year but should not exceed his or her remaining prison time. “Good-time allowances” refer to the time taken off of a prisoner’s maximum term of

imprisonment for good behavior. Even with these allowances, prisoners must serve time in prison no less than six months or 10 years (Department of Probation, 2007). The formula for good-time allowances is five sentenced days off per month for prisoners with good conduct and in excellent class (Prisoners are classified based on their behavior, and prisoners with good behavior belong to excellent class and good class), four sentenced days off per month for those who are in very good class, and three sentenced days off per month for those who are in good class while incarcerated (Department of Probation, 2007).

In addition, an individual who is charged with drug offenses will be referred to the Compulsory Treatment System. According to the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act 2002, drug abusers, referred to as patients, who commit the drug-related crimes of (1) drug consumption, (2) drug consumption and possession, (3) drug consumption and possession for disposal, and (4) drug consumption and disposal according to the amount and type indicated in the Ministerial Regulations are required to engage in the Compulsory Treatment System (Department of Probation, 2007; Macdonald & Nacapew, 2013). Whether the offender is prosecuted or diverted from prison in each case is determined by the court and based primarily on the judge's view of the defendant and the mitigating and aggravating circumstances of the case. When a case is diverted, there are two operational phases in the diversion process. The first phase is a drug assessment phase in which probation officers identify whether the accused is a narcotic consumer or drug addict. Then, the sub-committee of Drug Addict Rehabilitation will determine what type of treatment program is suitable for the substance user or abuser. The next step is the drug rehabilitation phase in which a drug abuser will be assigned to either a non-custodial or custodial rehabilitation program; both programs are overseen and facilitated by DOP (Chokprajakchat & Sukomol, 2004; Department of Probation, 2007). Generally, a drug treatment

program in a custodial facility takes four months; however, if the individual's treatment result is not satisfactory, the individual's time in the program will be extended.

The main duties of the DOP are conducting pre- and post-sentence investigations, as well as supervising and rehabilitating offenders under probation. In the pre-sentence investigation stage, probation officers are directed by court order to collect the criminal justice history (including past convictions) and background information of offenders and prepare a pre-sentence investigation report with recommendations for appropriate punishment and treatment programs (Department of Probation, 2007). Similarly, in the post-sentence investigation stage, probation officers are required to perform the same tasks for prisoners who are eligible for parole or sentence remission and report directly to the parole board. In addition, DOP has been assigned to provide treatment programs for drug offenders. From 2019 to 2021, the DOP has had more than 563,000 cases per year. Approximately thirty percent of the cases consist of control and surveillance of probationers, followed by drug assessments (26%), drug rehabilitation (25.6%), and preliminary investigation (15.2%), so each officer has an average caseload of 200 clients each year (The Department of Probation, 2020). Undeniably, DOP not only manages a diverse group of individuals in the community, but its officers also have exceedingly high caseloads, creating extreme correctional challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges of Community Supervision

The needs of offenders are the main concerns that need to be addressed in order to help them successfully reintegrate into the community and live crime-free lives. However, understanding the challenges that probation officers face in helping offenders reintegrate into the community is important, as they primarily monitor, advocate for, and support the rehabilitation of offenders. Past research indicates the following three challenges that probation and parole

officers face in their jobs: (1) Conflicting Roles, (2) High Caseloads, and (3) Stress and Burnout (Gayman & Bradley, 2013). The following section examines each of the challenges faced by probation and parole officers in reintegrating offenders into the community.

Conflicting Roles

Although conflicting roles have been implied in the literature, relatively little empirical research has been conducted in this area, especially in the Asian region. According to Sinthunawa (2011), the majority of Thai probation officers (69.1%) believe that a probation officer's main job is to support the rehabilitation of clients, with 30 percent believing their role should focus primarily on monitoring and supervision (i.e., law enforcers). In South Korea, another Asian country, probation officers mainly emphasize their role as law enforcers (e.g., police skills and strictly monitoring offenders) when supervising their clients (Gough, 2011).

Previous studies suggest that probation officers may handle dual roles differently in each country. Research in the Asian region has found that correctional officers experience a conflict between being rehabilitation agents and surveillance agents. For example, in a qualitative study of parole officers in Malaysia at the institutional, state, and district levels, Hanim and Hassan (2011) found that parole officers' supervision style depend on various factors such as parole conditions, the goal of sanctions, and the attitude of parole officers (pp. 329-331). According to their study, parole officers tend to use law-oriented supervision rather than social-work oriented supervision to help offenders reintegrate into the community (Hanim & Hassan, 2011).

On the other hand, Hsieh et al. (2015) discovered, in their analysis of probation statutes, that no states in the U.S. classified the role of probation officers as wholly rehabilitation agents or having purely dual roles. Instead, they found that agencies supported a mixed approach, which can strengthen officer-offender interactions and, in fact, result in better outcomes in community

supervision (Hsieh et al., 2015, pp. 23-24). In a similar vein, Allard et al. (2003) found that, in Australia, correctional officers' preference for being social workers or law enforcers did not pose a conflict in their roles. No matter what role (social worker or law enforcer) officers preferred, they were able to perform either role well or were able to resolve their stress stemming from having to manage both roles simultaneously.

Caseloads

Research also suggests that correctional officers who experience high caseloads have negative job performance. According to Sinthunawa's study (2011), Thai officers manage an average of 25 cases per month. However, the statistics were drawn from 186 probation officers, so the sample might not be representative as there are about 2,200 probation officers in the country. In addition, in the past 10 years, studies that examined the relationship between caseloads and officers' job performance have not occurred in Asian countries. Nevertheless, existing research conducted in the U.S. illustrates that officers who experience high caseloads score higher on fatigue, burnout, and over-responsibility scales (Lewis et al., 2013). Further, similar research by DeMichele and Payne (2018) found that probation officers spend most of their time completing reports and assessments rather than interacting with probationers. Consequently, lack of time in officers' interactions with offenders contributes to unsuccessful reentry.

The idea that increased time with probationers can improve reentry outcomes is supported by Jalbert and Rhodes (2012), who suggest that reducing caseloads in probation departments can help to decrease recidivism rates by 30 percent and technical violations by four percent. Reducing caseloads can help officers identify their clients' needs more effectively and distribute resources more efficiently, helping to improve reentry outcomes (Jalbert & Rhodes,

2012). Practically, reducing caseloads will still be a critical challenge for the Thai Probation Department; however, the current research might identify how high caseloads may negatively affect probation officers, showing that lower caseloads are worth the effort and expense.

Stress and Burnout

Research suggests that the stress level of probation and parole officers is related to organizational size. Jaiboon (2010), in her study of work stress and employee engagement among Thai probation officers in the Northern Region, applied a quantitative methodology in which a questionnaire was the main instrument for collecting data. The result shows that a large office size causes greater stress for probation officers than do small and medium office sizes.

Characteristics of the probation officers' jobs are also associated with job stress in probation officers (Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020). The lack of organizational support, as evidenced by factors such as relationships with other agencies and work conditions, also created negative feelings and stress with respect to their jobs (White et al., 2005). However, the study shows that probation officers who use stress management, such as finding support from outside or within the work environment to deal with their negative feelings, can maintain their job performance and health (White et al., 2005). Moreover, a study conducted by Pitts (2007) reveals that one-third of 2,364 correctional officers in 15 states in the U.S. felt that they were educationally unprepared for their jobs and that led to low job performance and stress, which can cause violent behavior, anger issues, and alcohol or drug abuse problems (Pitts, 2007).

Community Supervision Strategies

The aim of community supervision is to supervise individuals who committed crimes and to reintegrate those individuals into a community. In an effort to promote successful probation and parole practices, community correction (i.e., probation, parole, or both) facilities have

embraced evidence-based practices (EBP) (Taxman, 2008). There is much debate over whether or not punishment-oriented or rehabilitation-oriented approaches produce better outcomes related to a decrease in recidivism (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2021; Morash et al., 2019). One of the most prevalent models that combines a managerial approach with treatment models for supervision is the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, which recommends key practices for probation agencies (Bonta & Andrew, 2007; Viglione, 2019). The RNR model emphasizes personal needs, especially for those who are at a high risk of reoffending. The risk principle outlines the importance of identifying risk to recidivate because a higher-risk individual needs intensive treatment and supervision (Andrews et al., 2011; Horan et al., 2020). The need principle suggests assessing criminogenic needs or dynamic risk factors such as substance abuse, antisocial behavior, work or school activities, and social and recreational activities in order to determine an appropriate intervention (Andrews et al., 2011; Horan et al., 2020; Lutze, 2014). Lastly, the responsivity principle aims to match individuals with intervention programs that target their criminogenic needs and are tailored to their learning styles, motivations, and abilities (Andrews et al., 2011; Vose et al., 2020). A series of research has shown the effectiveness of utilizing the RNR model in community corrections (Lutze, 2014). However, a research study by Viglione (2019) attempted to examine how probation officers implemented the RNR principles to probation practices using ethnographic data. She found that probation officers practices misaligned with the RNR principles because officers hardly depended on the risk and needs assessment results and rarely engaged in case planning. Evidently, even though the model itself enhances supervision outcomes if implemented accordingly, agency training on RNR principles is essential because trained officers are more inclined to adhere to the principles in practice (Viglione, 2019).

Undeniably, in order to achieve public safety goals and offender behavioral change, probation officers' skills and comprehension of how to utilize principles in practice are imperative. To achieve community supervision goals, client compliance is one of the most challenging tasks for probation officers. Common strategies used to promote client compliance are (1) the behavioral approach (i.e., client-centered) such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and (2) confrontational tactics such as using negative reinforcement and outlining negative consequences of unacceptable behavior (Gleicher & Green, 2020; Schwartz et al., 2017). A study by Schwalbe and Maschi (2011) explored how probation officers utilize the confrontational approach and client-centered approaches when supervising delinquent youth using data from a web-based survey. They found that officers balanced both confrontational and behavioral tactics; however, the confrontational approach is predominant in practice, especially among youth with drug problems. In the same vein, Bolin and Applegate (2018) demonstrated that officers maintained a balance between both client-centered and confrontational approaches. Preliminary work on analyzing an intensive supervision program that helped in reducing recidivism, undertaken by Pappozzi and Gendreau (2005), suggests that utilizing both law enforcement (i.e., confrontational approach) and social work (i.e., behavioral tactics) orientations reduced recidivism 10 to 30 percent. Similarly, Kennealy et al. (2012) reported that officers performing dual roles—law enforcer and social worker—help to reduce reoffending.

The Criminal Justice System's Response to COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 has forced the criminal justice system to change its procedures and policies in accordance with national measures to prevent the spread of the virus and reduce the risk of contamination. Asian governments were requested, by the United Nations

Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture, to immediately reduce the prison population of detained prisoners, and this request included low-level and nonviolent offenders as well as prisoners with medical problems, as they were at high risk for infection ("Asia: Reduce Prison Populations Facing COVID-19," 2020; Carr, 2020; Seal, 2020). In 2020, the Corrections Department in Thailand, based on the principle of "No Exit for Insider, No Entry for Outsider," banned visitors from seeing prisoners since March and only allowed prisoners to leave their cells when they had to report to court. However, Televisits (e.g., video conferencing) are still allowed (Department of Corrections, 2021; Thailand Institute of Justice, 2020).

While Thai corrections departments implemented measures to respond rapidly to the pandemic, community supervision, as well, needed an immediate response to battle COVID-19, especially because of the rapid change in the number of released prisoners in the community supervision population. The Department of Probation (DOP) of Thailand purchased electronic monitoring devices as part of release planning ("The new normal guidelines for law enforcement," 2020). Additionally, DOP issued work protocols in response to COVID-19 on July 23, 2021. Officers are required to follow the proper protocols for performing each task, and DOP employed technologies such as videoconferencing systems due to stay-at-home regulations. For example, in the event officers need to interrogate offenders who are incarcerated, they need to be granted permission to interrogate offenders via a video conferencing system from correction facilities. Similar to witness interviews, probation officers are advised to document how they conduct the interview (e.g., via telephone or video conferencing) and record the specific date and time of the interview. If an interview is conducted via video call, officers are required to capture the screen for evidence as well. Moreover, officers can recommend virtual

reporting instead of in-person reporting if they find that such a method is appropriate for a probationer.

Even though there is limited research in Thailand to indicate how Thai probation agencies have responded to COVID-19 practically, other countries have begun conducting research on this issue. In the United States, Swan et al. (2020) conducted a survey asking 318 American Probation and Parole Association members how their agencies have responded to the crisis. Their study found that 90 percent of all agencies implemented some form of technology (e.g., teleworking, video, and telephone calls) due to social-distancing regulations similar to the measures that Thailand has implemented. Similarly, Schwalbe and Koetzle (2021) found that remote communication replaced in-person contact and that video conferencing that plays an important role for remote supervision strategies. Despite the fact that many U.S. probation agencies suspended arrests for technical violations and court hearings during the early days of the pandemic, implementation of new procedures and operations still created issues for probation officers. For example, the use of virtual supervision methods led to a lack of physical interaction, lack of communication, and home-visit suspensions (Swan et al., 2020). The challenges observed in the U.S.-based research study indicates that Thai officers may face similar challenges as a result of changes in supervision methods during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly led to an operational change in community supervision in Thailand. Protocols and guidelines were issued to probation officers; however, there is little-to-no information on the effectiveness of these guidelines for probation officers in practice. Thus, this research study aims to explore how COVID-19 has impacted probation practices and strategies and what that impact means for probation policies and practices among Thai officers and agencies.

Methodology

Current Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Thai probation officers and how their probation practices have changed due to COVID-19. This study was designed to focus on the following research questions:

- RQ1. How are probation agencies in Thailand responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2. What challenges do probation officers, probationers, and parolees face during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ3. How has communication between probationers and parolees and Thai probation officers changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ4. What are the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on strategies and techniques that Thai probation officers use to encourage client compliance?
- RQ5. What are the lessons learned from and innovative strategies for dealing with the pandemic for Thai probation agencies?

Instrumentation and Variables

The modified survey used in the current study was originally developed by Dr. Deborah Koetzle from the Department of Criminal Justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Dr. Craig S. J. Schwalbe from the Columbia University School of Social Work. Their survey is a 78-item quantitative survey and has two subscales focusing on probation practices and another two focusing on case management issues (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2021). The survey was recently used to survey probation and parole officers in the United States and Chile during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Questions are close-ended and have multiple choices, checkboxes, and rating scales (i.e., a Likert scale). In the modified

survey, probation officers were asked to report on the probation strategies that they used with a specific client from their caseloads. The officers were, as well, asked questions on clients' characteristics, and clients' compliance and cooperation.

Probation officers were first asked about the clients they serve to screen which probation officers have active caseloads and are currently supervising released prisoners. Specifically, they were asked, "What populations do you supervise?" If they responded, "Neither," then the survey was concluded. Likewise, if they responded, "None of these choices" to the question that asked about their clients' legal status, the survey also concluded. Additionally, the first part of the survey collected *demographic variables of probation and parole officers* including gender, age, years of service, and education; this data was used to generalize the survey's results to the general population. Further, *demographic variables of index clients* were collected, including gender, age, risk of recidivism, time served on probation/parole, and technologies available to them. Index clients were selected by participants from their caseload by selecting the tenth person on the list. The survey also asked about index clients' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and whether or not they or their households had fallen ill with COVID-19 to assess the *impact of COVID-19 on index clients*.

To assess the *impact of COVID-19 on probation officers*, officers were asked four questions: (1) what the officers and members of their families have experienced because of COVID-19; these experiences could be identified as job loss, food insecurity, lost housing, lost income for rent or mortgage, as well as having a child at home because of school or daycare closures, someone moving into or out of the home, anxiety or other mental health concerns, increased drug or alcohol use, and medical emergencies (measured using a nominal scale); (2) whether they or another member of their household fell ill to the COVID-19 virus (measured

using nominal scale); (3) their level of concern (measured using ordinal scale); and (4) their level of lifestyle change (measured using ordinal scale).

Probation officers were also asked about *clients' cooperation and compliance* before and after COVID-19 (i.e., the date when COVID-19 measures and protocols in probation were implemented). To assess clients' compliance, probation officers were asked to rate their clients' compliance in the following four areas: (1) reporting or attending probation appointments (measured using a ratio scale); (2) clients' forthcomingness and truthfulness (measured using a ratio scale); (3) clients' obedience to probation conditions, case plans, or both (measured using a ratio scale); and (4) new police contact or arrest (measured using a nominal scale).

The survey also included the *probation practices* used pre- and post-COVID-19 to examine the effects of COVID-19 on strategies and techniques that Thai probation agencies used. In order to assess the effects of COVID-19 on probation practices, the following areas were explored: (1) the officer's contact types with clients pre- and post-COVID-19, defined as frequency of using the following six types of contacts: in-person office meetings, in-person field meetings, telephone calls, video conference calls, text messages, and email reporting to contact clients (measured using a ratio scale); (2) two subscales of probation techniques or strategies used to encourage client compliance pre- and post-COVID-19; a three-item *confrontation strategies* identifying, for example, frequency of officer reminding the client about the legal consequences of criminal/delinquent behavior (measured using a ratio scale), and a five-item *behavioral strategies* which identified, for instance, how often an officer praises or compliments the client (measured using a ratio scale); (3) two subscales of case management approach; a five-item *rehabilitation approach* identifying how often an officer discusses treatment needs with the client, etc. (measured using a ratio scale) and a three-item *law enforcer approach* identifying

how often an officer reminds the client about the consequences of non-compliance, etc. (measured using a ratio scale) (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2021); and (4) *access to interpreter services* identifying how often an officer used interpreter services when speaking with non-Thai-speaking clients and how often interpreter services were available to an officer when requesting it (measured using a ratio scale). Although the fourth area is important, it may not be applicable to every officer.

To assess *how agencies respond to the COVID-19 pandemic*, probation officers were asked (1) how their agency prioritizes training, supervision, standards, or a combination of all three items; supervision strategies and training include graduated sanctions, graduated incentives or contingency management, risk assessment, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral interventions, training in effective community supervision practices, skills training, and written case plans addressing criminogenic needs (measured using a nominal scale); and (2) standards suspended or changed by the agency during COVID-19. The questions asked how often officers see clients and how officers meet clients. The questions also probed how officers handle technical violations, compliance monitoring, drug testing, graduated sanctions, graduated incentives or contingency management, completion of risk or needs assessments, written case plans, service referrals, Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) like motivational interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and skills training among others (measured using a nominal scale).

Adaptation of Survey for Thai Probation Officers

The survey was translated into the Thai language by the author, who is a native Thai speaker, and was reviewed by two native Thai speakers who work at the Department of Probation and are familiar with the corrections field to ensure accuracy of the translation. In

addition, modifications were made from the original survey: (1) Five questions concerning race and ethnicity were removed as they are not applicable in Thai culture; (2) Choices for legal status of clients that probation officer serves were changed to pre-sentence investigation, drug assessment phase under the Addict Rehabilitation Act B.E. 2545 (2002), on probation, post-sentence investigation of people who are eligible for parole, post-sentence investigation of people who are eligible for good-time allowance, currently on parole, and currently on good-time allowance to agree with the Thai DOP categories; (3) A choice of BA/BS Law was added to question eight as it is the most common degree among Thai probation officers; (4) Three questions (Q49-51) about access to interpreter services were added to the survey; (5) Choices for question 52, regarding judicial division probation officer is currently employed in, were modified as the Department of Probation in Thailand has nine judicial divisions; (6) The choices of EPICS, STICS, and STARR in question 55 were changed to Training in Effective Community Supervision Practices in accordance with the training program at the Department of Probation of Thailand; (7) Three questions (Q65-Q67) about probation officers' perception of their clients were added to the survey; (8) The selection method of a client from an officer's caseload was modified as follows: (a) Use the client's first name instead of last name, (b) Provide an example of how to select a client, (c) In case a probation officer does not have an alphabetical list of clients, the officer is required to select the tenth person from his or her caseload, and (d) Pre/post COVID-time period was set to November 6, 2020, three months before policy changes were implemented at the Department of Probation in Thailand; and (9) Three questions about officers' perception of their agencies were removed.

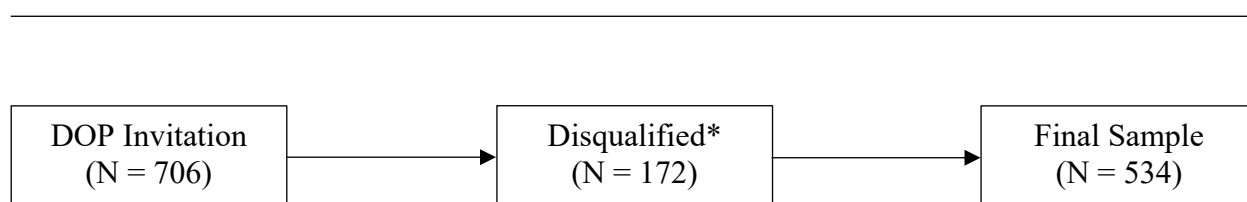
Source of Data

Data for this study was obtained by surveying probation officers in 117 probation offices across all 77 provinces in Thailand. A 67-item, closed-ended survey was used in this study as it “allow[ed] the researcher to use statistical procedures to analyze the data gathered” (Gideon, 2020, p. 238). All individuals who are currently working as probation officers were included in the sampling frame (N = 2,214), ensuring that at least 338 individuals of the sampling frame could be surveyed. The sample size of 338 was determined by using Yamane’s formula, as the population size is finite, to guarantee that the sample is representative (Israel, 1992, p. 4). A 95 percent confidence level and standard deviation of 0.5 were used to calculate the sample size to ensure that the result from the sample will apply to 95 percent of the actual population with a plus or minus five percent sampling error (Gideon, 2020, p. 109).

A consecutive sampling technique was employed as the minimum required sample size has been determined and all subjects are accessible. The consecutive sampling approach was used because such an approach is considered more robust than other nonrandom sampling techniques and makes the sample more representative of the population (Omair, 2014). All individuals were asked to participate in this study until the required sample size—at least 338 subjects—was achieved.

Figure 1

Sample Exclusions



Note. DOP = Department of Probation of Thailand

Disqualified = The respondent selected an answer option that disqualified the respondent due to the Skip Logic in the survey.

Data Collection Procedures and Statistical Analysis

The study was granted permission by the Department of Probation of Thailand to conduct the survey. Then, after receiving permission from the DOP, the researcher applied for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and the research was approved on February 8th, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 situation in Thailand, the process of sending an invitation and collecting data was delayed. However, the DOP was able to send out the survey to probation offices on March 8th, 2021.

The survey was administered via the internet (i.e., electronic survey) using the host SurveyMonkey. Since the research was conducted outside of the United States of America, the web-based survey offers benefits over face-to-face methods and allows for easy recruiting of a large number of participants. In addition, the data gathered by the web-based survey are conveniently imported in an electronic format (Archer, 2003; Wyatt, 2000).

The SurveyMonkey was linked to a QR code to make it more convenient for probation officers to access it. The survey was sent electronically to the Department of Probation of Thailand, and officials at the department electronically distributed it to all 117 offices in its purview to recruit respondents. The survey was opened from March 8 to April 1, 2021. The survey was completely anonymous, and probation officers were not asked to provide identifying information about themselves or their clients. In addition, the DOP did not have access to responses as the information went directly to the researcher.

Some variables were recoded into different variables, creating a new variable in addition to existing variables. For instance, some officers reported index clients' age ranges, then the

clients' overall age range was calculated to a mean; however, an age range larger than 10 years was recoded as missing. In addition, clients' ages were recoded to have two values, which are (1) youth (i.e., younger than 18 years old) and (2) adult (i.e., 18 years old and older).

The study's data was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency counts, percents) were used to simplify large data in a sensible way to characterize the sample and explore the challenges faced by probation officers, probationers, and parolees during the COVID-19 pandemic, probe clients' compliance and cooperation pre- and post-COVID-19, and examine strategies and techniques used (Fitzgerald & Fitzgerald, 2014; Trochim, 2020). Additionally, inferential statistical analysis was used to predict values of five supervision practices: (1) behavioral approaches, (2) confrontational approaches, (3) treatment-oriented case management, (4) accountability-oriented case management, and (5) contact frequency. Each supervision practice was calculated by summing scores on its subscores to obtain pre- and post-COVID scores. For example, confrontational approach had 3 items, which were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 6, with 0 indicating never and 6 indicating every contact. Three items were summed and divided by three to acquire the average score of confrontational approach.

Limitations

This study has its share of limitations. While a consecutive sampling technique makes for a better sample representation, a nonrandom sampling technique tends to be regarded as biased (Gideon, 2020). Another limitation is that probation officers were asked about clients' compliance three months before COVID-19, a period before January 6, 2019; therefore, probation officers may have had difficulty remembering how their clients were doing so long before the survey was issued.

Findings

Probation Officer Demographics

As shown in Table 1, most participating probation officers were females (60.6%), in their 40s (mean = 40.21 years old, SD = \pm 8.0 years), who had more than nine years of service in probation (64.4%). About thirty-eight percent of participants reported having a bachelor's degree in law. Over 60 percent of respondents supervised adults only while 29.5 percent supervised both juveniles and adults, and 1.3 percent reported supervising only juveniles. Overall, caseload sizes ranged from one to 4,000 cases (median = 375.62 cases). The majority of respondents reported being employed in Provincial Probation Office 2 (16.4%) and Provincial Probation Office 3 (14.5%). Over 60 percent of the officers worked in urban locations, and nearly 42 percent of respondents reported working for medium-sized agencies (i.e., those with 20 to 40 officers). Another roughly 40 percent of officers reported working at large-sized agencies (i.e., those with more than 40 officers).

Client Demographics

Index clients randomly selected by respondents were mostly male (59.26%), in their 30s (mean = 31.19 years old, SD = \pm 6.67 years), who had been on probation or parole for an average of nine months (mean = 9.64 months). Additionally, as shown in Table 1, most index clients were on probation (21.66%) and 15.24 percent were in the drug assessment phase under the Addict Rehabilitation Act B.E. 2545 (2002). Majority of the index clients were identified as having a medium risk of recidivism (60%).

Table 1

Characteristics of Probation Officers and Index Clients

| | | Officer | Index Client |
|--|---------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Mean Age (SD) | | 40.21 (8.0) | 31.19 (6.67) |
| | Less than 18 years old (%) | — | 0.6 |
| Gender (%) | Female | 60.6 | 25.15 |
| | Male | 36.7 | 59.26 |
| | Non-binary/Other | 1.3 | 15.59 |
| | Prefer not to say | 1.3 | — |
| Recidivism Risk (%) | Low or very low | — | 16.7 |
| | Medium | — | 60.0 |
| | High or very high | — | 23.3 |
| Mean Time Served in Months (S.D.) | | — | 9.64 (7.42) |
| Legal Status (%) | Pre-sentence investigation | — | 12.40 |
| | Drug assessment | — | 15.24 |
| | Probation | — | 21.66 |
| | PSI ¹ —Parole | — | 10.87 |
| | PSI ² —Good-Time Allowance | — | 10.28 |
| | Parole | — | 14.95 |
| | Good-Time Allowance | — | 14.59 |
| Education (%) | BA/BS Law | 38.8 | — |
| | BA/BS other major | 27.4 | — |
| Years of Service (%) | Less than 1 year | 1.1 | — |

¹ Post-sentence investigation of offender who is eligible for parole

² Post-sentence investigation of offender who is eligible for good-time allowance

| | | Officer | Index Client |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | 1 to 3 years | 14.9 | — |
| | 4 to 6 years | 7.5 | — |
| | 7 to 9 years | 12.0 | — |
| | More than 9 years | 64.4 | — |
| Caseload | Juveniles (%) | 1.5 | — |
| | Adults (%) | 62.4 | — |
| | Adults and Juveniles (%) | 36.1 | — |
| | Mean Size (S.D.) | 375.62 (586.67) | — |
| | General (%) | 19.98 | — |
| | High risk (%) | 14.74 | — |
| | Mental health (%) | 8.36 | — |
| | Drug use (%) | 23.63 | — |
| | Sex offending (%) | 7.90 | — |
| | Low risk (%) | 13.60 | — |
| | Other specializations (%) | 11.78 | — |
| Judicial Division (%) | Provincial Probation Office 2 | 16.4 | — |
| | Provincial Probation Office 3 | 14.5 | — |
| Locations (%) | Urban | 61.94 | — |
| | Suburban | 22.75 | — |
| | Rural | 15.32 | — |
| Agency Size (%) | 6-10 officers | 1.4 | — |
| | 10-20 officers | 16.1 | — |

| | Officer | Index Client |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 20-40 officers | 41.8 | — |
| More than 40 officers | 40.6 | — |

Agency Description

Table 2 (below) shows that prior to COVID-19, most probation officers perceived that their agencies prioritized training in effective practices in community supervision (EPICS) and risk assessment (20.09% and 20%, respectively). However, graduated sanction was perceived to be the lowest priority among agencies (4.69%). Following the onset of the pandemic, agencies needed to suspend or change their standards due to COVID-19 restrictions. Table 3 (below) also indicates that, during the COVID-19 crisis, officers' methods to meet clients (e.g., in-person, in the field, remote/electronic) had significantly changed and so did the contact frequency (18.49%) whereas graduated incentive or contingency management remained unchanged as it was the least prioritized in the agencies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, drug testing had changed or suspended during the onset of the pandemic (11.42%). Due to the social distancing restriction, drug testing might be suspended or reduced as in-person meeting were mostly shifted to remote communication.

Table 2

Mandatory Training, Supervision, or Both Before COVID-19

| | | Officer |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Training and/or Supervision (%) | EPICS | 20.09 |
| | Risk assessment | 20.0 |
| | Skills training | 16.06 |

| | Officer |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Motivational interviewing | 12.11 |
| CBI | 9.30 |
| Criminogenic needs | 8.92 |
| Graduated incentives | 8.83 |
| Graduated sanctions | 4.69 |

Table 3

Changes in Supervision Standards During COVID-19

| | Officer |
|---|----------------|
| Supervision Standards Change (%) How officers meet clients | 25.57 |
| How often officers see clients | 18.49 |
| Drug testing | 11.42 |
| Compliance monitoring | 9.81 |
| Risk/needs assessment | 8.21 |
| Written case plans | 5.19 |
| Technical violations | 4.81 |
| Graduated sanctions | 3.40 |
| Graduated incentives | 2.45 |

COVID-19's Impact on Respondents

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in Table 4 below, most probation officers were moderately concerned about it (42.7%), and their lifestyles moderately changed

because of the pandemic (37.9%). Despite over 90 percent of participants reporting that neither they nor their households were infected with COVID-19, a majority of probation officers reported experiencing anxiety and other mental health concerns in addition to having a child at home because of school or daycare closures (28.23% and 17.38%, respectively). Less than 10 percent experienced other problems such as food insecurity (8.17%), job loss (6.24%), and falling behind on rent payments (6.24%). On the other hand, approximately 30 percent of respondents reported that they had not experienced any problems during the pandemic.

Table 4

COVID-19's Impact and Technology Availability

| | | Officer | Index Client |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Confirmed COVID (%) | Yes | 0.4 | 2.2 |
| | Unsure/maybe | 1.9 | 40.7 |
| | No | 97.7 | 57.1 |
| Level of Concern (%) | Not at all concerned | 4.2 | — |
| | A little concerned | 23.4 | — |
| | Moderately concerned | 42.7 | — |
| | Very concerned | 20.0 | — |
| | Extremely concerned | 9.7 | — |
| Lifestyle Change (%) | None at all | 2.7 | — |
| | A little | 22.3 | — |
| | A moderate amount | 37.9 | — |
| | A lot | 24.4 | — |
| | A great deal | 12.8 | — |

| | | Officer | Index Client |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| COVID-19 Impact (%) | None | 30.61 | 3.48 |
| | Mental health or anxiety | 28.23 | 15.81 |
| | School/daycare closure | 17.38 | 8.45 |
| | Food insecurity | 8.17 | 10.74 |
| | Job loss | 6.24 | 33.60 |
| | Fell behind on rent/mortgage | 6.24 | 9.94 |
| | Medical emergency | 1.93 | 1.19 |
| | Drug/alcohol use | 0.74 | 13.42 |
| | Moved in/moved out of home | 0.30 | 1.79 |
| | Lost housing | 0.15 | 1.59 |
| Tech Availability | Telephone | — | 44.17 |
| | Smartphone | — | 30.22 |
| | Home computer with internet | — | 13.44 |
| | Text messaging | — | 6.91 |
| | Email | — | 2.30 |
| | None of these | — | 1.66 |
| | Video conference | — | 1.28 |

COVID-19's Impact on Index Clients

For index clients, more than half of respondents reported that they were sure that clients and clients' households did not fall ill to COVID-19 while 40.7 percent of participants were uncertain about whether members of clients' households fell ill to COVID-19. However, index

clients were reported as having a higher rate of psychosocial impact than were the probation officers. A majority of index clients experienced job loss (33.60%). They were also more likely to have had anxiety and other mental health concerns (15.81%) as well as increased alcohol and drug use (13.42%). Approximately ten percent of index clients were reported to have food insecurity and fell behind on rent or mortgage payments and eight percent were reported as being affected by school or daycare closures. Fewer than five percent of clients were reported as needing emergency medical care, losing housing, and having someone move into or out of the house.

Supervision Contacts

Technology has become the main communication tool for probation officers and probationers/parolees during the pandemic because of stay-at-home regulations designed to prevent the spread of the virus. Most index clients were reported to have access to numerous forms of communication; only 1.66 percent of index clients had no access to any methods of communication. A majority of index clients had access to telephones and smartphones (44.17% and 30.22%, respectively). In addition, 13.44 percent of the clients owned an internet-connected home computer. Communication through text messaging was more accessible than email and video conferences as shown in Table 3.

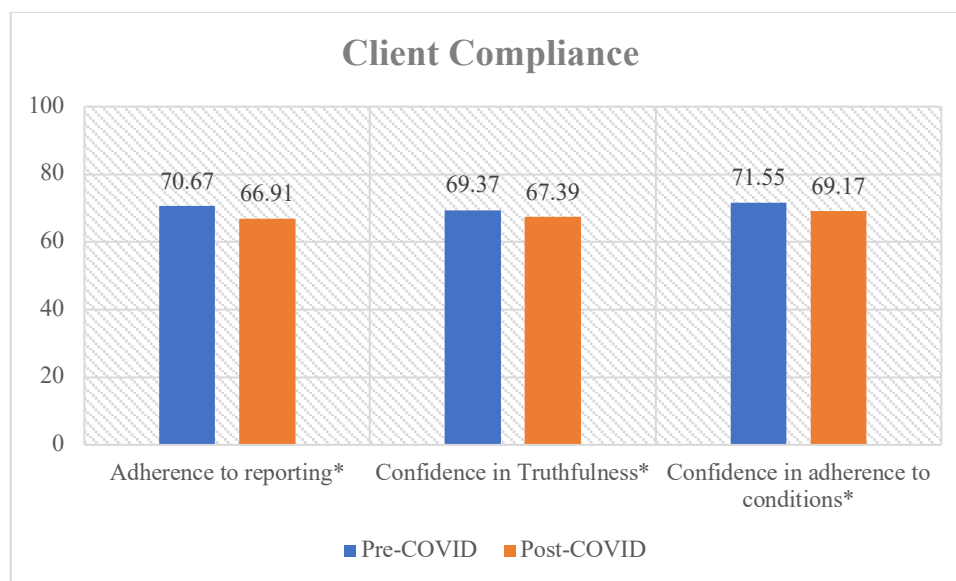
Perceptions of Compliance

The main goals of community supervision are to rehabilitate probationers and parolees, as well as ensure public safety. As shown in Figure 2, probation officers' perceptions of compliance statistically changed following the COVID-19 pandemic; officers reported that fewer clients adhered to reporting requirements. Officers were, on average, 69.37 percent confident that index clients were forthcoming and told the truth prior to COVID-19; this confidence decreased

to 67.39 percent post-COVID-19. Lastly, officers were, on average, 71.55 percent confident that index clients complied with probation conditions and case plans prior to the pandemic, but this confidence dropped to 69.17 percent following the onset of the pandemic. As expected, officers reported having the lowest confidence in high-risk clients' truthfulness, both pre- and post-COVID. Post-COVID, respondents also reported having higher confidence in lower-risk clients (78.21%) abiding by probation conditions than in moderate- and higher-risk clients (69.35% and 62.64% respectively). This pattern remained true for the adherence to reporting, with higher attendance rates for lower-risk clients when compared to moderate- and higher-risk clients.

Figure 2

Perceptions of Compliance Before and Following the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic



* $p < 0.001$

Supervision Practices

The main goal of the study is to examine whether the pandemic changed probation practices. Table 4 (below) shows that index clients had new police contact or arrests that were higher after the onset of COVID-19. However, there is no association between an increase in new police arrests and frequency of in-person officer and field meetings ($t = -0.176, p < 0.05$ and

$t = 1.522, p < 0.05$, respectively). The frequency of contacts remained steady even though the types of contact changed following the onset of the pandemic. Expectedly, in-person contacts, specifically both office and field meetings, showed a statistically-significant decrease during the pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, officers met with index clients in person an average of two to three times a month. Following the onset of COVID-19, the frequency of in-person meetings slightly dropped. Furthermore, remote contact strategies increased following the onset of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, officers reported contacting index clients by telephone calls two to three times a month; this increased to nearly more than once per week after the pandemic. Expectedly, the type of contact changed to remote contact following the onset of COVID-19, so text messaging, video conferencing, and emailing were increased both prior to and following the onset of the pandemic. However, the average contact frequency for those contact types were still low. Possible reasons may be the fact that index clients had limited access to home computers with internet, as well as being unknowledgeable in technology (as shown in Table 3).

Supervision strategies were examined pre- and post-COVID-19. Of particular interest is the change with respect to the behavioral approach, confrontational approach, and accountability-oriented case management, which all showed a statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) increase during the post-COVID period. However, the use of treatment-oriented case management slightly increased (1.27%). The patterns held true even prior to COVID-19 when officers favored the confrontational approach over the behavioral approach and accountability-oriented case management over treatment-oriented case management.

Finally, over half of probation officers reported not needing interpreter services. Expectedly, the frequency of using interpreter services and their availability did not change both prior to COVID-19 and following its onset.

Table 4

Supervision practice pre- and post-COVID

| | Pre-COVID | Post-COVID | T-Statistic |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Supervision Practice³ (M, S.D.) | | | |
| Behavioral approach | 3.37 (1.17) | 3.45 (1.18) | -4.778*** |
| Confrontational approach | 4.62 (1.27) | 4.70 (1.23) | -4.007*** |
| Treatment case management | 3.15 (1.30) | 3.19 (1.31) | -2.614* |
| Accountability case management | 3.48 (1.34) | 3.74 (1.35) | -8.112*** |
| New police arrest⁴ | 55.1 | 56.4 | — |
| Contact frequency⁵ | | | |
| Overall average (M, S.D.) | 9.04 (4.45) | 9.25 (4.54) | -1.551 |
| In-person office | 2.88 (1.53) | 2.46 (1.47) | 6.751*** |
| In-person field | 2.00 (1.42) | 1.79 (1.43) | 3.597*** |
| Telephone | 2.76 (1.58) | 3.25 (1.56) | -7.528*** |
| Video conference | 0.49 (1.03) | 0.57 (1.12) | -3.119** |
| Text messages | 0.70 (1.18) | 0.89 (1.37) | -5.021*** |
| Emails | 0.28 (0.77) | 0.37 (0.97) | -3.630*** |

* $p = 0.009$. ** $p = 0.002$. *** $p < 0.001$.**Probation Officers' Attitudes**

More than half of the officers were inclined to agree that giving them adequate information and training can help them assist their clients to reduce alcohol consumption and

³ Items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 5, with 0 = never and 6 = every contact⁴ Contingency Coefficient = 0.597 ($p < 0.001$)⁵ Frequency ranged from 0 to 5, where 0 = less than once per month and 5 = more than once per week

mental health problems. Interestingly, the majority of officers described themselves to be neither more lenient nor punitive during the pandemic. Their answers were consistent with case management styles as officers reported to focus more on neither accountability nor rehabilitation.

Probation Officers' Perceptions of Agencies

Overall, officers reported having positive perceptions toward their agencies. About 50 percent somewhat agreed that their colleagues believed in the overall direction that the agency was heading in before the pandemic and agreed with the overall direction that the agency has taken since the onset of COVID-19. Nearly 40 percent of officers were inclined to agree that changes to the conventional way of doing tasks at the office were more beneficial than disruptive. However, when officers were asked whether they agree or disagree that conditions are hard to change at the agency, approximately a third of the officers (about 30%) had no comment and tended to agree with the statement.

Probation Officers' Perceptions of Clients' Characteristics

As expected, clients who have high levels of education, medium-to-high household incomes, and professional jobs reported having more success rates for probation.

Further Analysis

As shown in Table 4, the frequency of contact by telephone experienced a statistically-significant increase during the onset of the pandemic. Additionally, Table 5 reveals that, during the COVID-19 crisis, levels of three supervision strategies—behavioral approach, confrontational approach, and especially accountability case management—had statistically-significant differences. Thus, using the telephone was not associated with any indicator of compliance.

Table 5

Mean supervision practices⁶ post-COVID by Telephone

| Supervision Practices | No Telephone | Telephone | T-Statistic |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Behavioral approach | 3.19 | 3.53 | -2.210* |
| Confrontational approach | 4.45 | 4.78 | -2.033* |
| Treatment case management | 2.97 | 3.26 | -1.665 |
| Accountability case management | 3.30 | 3.86 | -3.310** |

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p = 0.001$.

⁶ Items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 5, with 0 = never and 6 = every contact

Discussion

Discussion

This study aimed to explore how COVID-19 impacted the Department of Probation of Thailand. The findings presented valuable insight into the change and stability of supervision practices during the onset of COVID-19. Expectedly, the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened community corrections as a whole, especially among the vulnerable population. The study revealed expected results that most people who are under supervision experienced high rates of economic fallout, specifically job loss and mental health issues. Probation officers were no different as the majority of them experienced mental health problems and school or daycare closure-related issues.

Considering the time when the study was conducted, it may not be surprising that clients were reported to have low rates of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnoses because of the fluctuation of COVID-19 cases in Thailand. However, Thailand was hit by a new COVID-19 surge during early January 2021, and the situation has been worsening since (Ekvittayavechnukul, 2021). The upswing of COVID-19 infections was particularly driven by high infection rates in prison (Strangio, 2021; Thanthong, 2021). Consequently, as of July 2021, the Department of Probation cooperated with the Department of Corrections to facilitate the intake of early released prisoners (i.e., parole) for drug offenses (Naewna News, 2021). It was reasonable to believe that the impact of COVID-19 on community supervision would be gradually exacerbated as cases of the disease rose.

Due to the extended pandemic measures and nationwide lockdown in Thailand, the frequency of in-person office and field meetings declined as expected. The data, however, showed that new police arrests, contact, or both significantly increased after the onset of the

pandemic; nevertheless, the findings found no relationship between the decrease of in-person meetings and new police arrests. There may be other factors that influenced the spike in police arrests. One of the plausible reasons is that Thailand imposed a nationwide curfew, from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m., in April 2020 and anyone caught violating the curfew was arrested (Reuters Staff, 2020). Therefore, people who were under supervision might have been in contact with the police during the curfew time as there were more than 600 cases of curfew violation after 11 days of the curfew's imposition (Bangkok Business News, 2020). Additionally, according to Matichon Online News (2021), one of the new police arrest cases was related to a drug offense.

Evidently, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed probation strategies. During the surge of COVID-19, probation officers shifted to remote communication measures as a method to maintain their communication with clients. Videoconferencing was expected to be prevalent in departmental operations as it was shown to be an effective supervisory tool in the U.S.-based study by Schwalbe and Koetzle (2021). However, the findings of the present study indicate that telephones were the main tools of communication. One plausible explanation was the fact that the Minister of Justice officially announced that the probation department had started a pilot scheme for using videoconferencing in ten provinces around the month of May 2021 and, later on, the probation department issued operational procedures recommending using videoconferencing in July 2021, which was after the survey had been administered.

Additionally, probation officers reported that their frequency of using interpersonal strategies and case management approaches increased following the onset of the pandemic. The findings revealed that officers utilized both the confrontational approach and the behavioral approach, but the confrontational approach was more favored by officers. These results are similar to that from prior research in adult probation settings (Viglione et al., 2017) in which

probation officers used client-centered communication, but authoritarian techniques were more dominant. The findings are also consistent with research by Schwalbe and Maschi (2011) on juvenile probation officers, as they found that the confrontational approach was more favorable in practice. Moreover, the use of accountability-oriented case management was predominant and significantly rose post-COVID whereas the use of treatment-oriented case management was more consistent prior to and following the onset of the pandemic.

Interestingly, the data showed no association between the use of telephone calls and the outcome of client compliance; however, the use of accountability-oriented case management was associated with an increase for officer-client interaction using telephone calls. The implementation of innovative strategies for dealing with the pandemic in the probation department was clearly behind. In Thailand, the pandemic began in January 2020, but the department officially announced the use of videoconferencing one year later. Also, one of the challenges was individuals under supervision have limited access to technological communication tools or likely lack the knowledge to use such technology. Nevertheless, this gap opens an opportunity to further explore the use of technology, especially videoconferencing, as one of the supervision techniques for probationers and parolees, and how to integrate such technology into the case management system to improve and maintain appropriate levels of supervision for positive probation and parole outcomes.

Even though the majority of probation officers considered themselves balancing dual roles of both law enforcer and social worker, and focusing on both accountability and rehabilitation approaches, the findings show that, in practice, officers moved toward a punitive approach. This finding is consistent with prior research that parole officers favored law-oriented supervision in order to help offenders successfully complete probation (Hanim & Hassan, 2011).

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted probation practices in Thailand. Based on the analysis, the results indicate that probation agencies were able to maintain the supervision levels under the severe coronavirus-related restrictions, as well as in maintain the sociopsychological impact on officers. As predicted, the contact methods were changed to remote communication tools. Considering the COVID-19 situation is getting worse in Thailand, future research is unequivocally needed in order to support probation agencies to deal with the pandemic. Such research needs to explore more on the use of videoconferencing as part of the supervision practices, and to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative strategy implementation in probation practices and how such practices improve probation and parole outcomes.

References

- Abraham, L. A., Brown, T. C., & Thomas, S. A. (2020). How COVID-19's Disruption of the US Correctional System Provides an Opportunity for Decarceration. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 45*(4), 780-792.
- Allard, T. J., Wortley, R. K., & Stewart, A. L. (2003). Role conflict in community corrections. *Psychology, Crime and Law, 9*(3), 279-289.
- Allard, T. J., Wortley, R. K., & Stewart, A. L. (2003). Role conflict in community corrections. *Psychology, Crime and Law, 9*(3), 279-289.
- Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Wormith, J. S. (2011). The risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model: Does adding the good lives model contribute to effective crime prevention?. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 38*(7), 735-755.
- Archer, T. M. (2003). Web-based surveys. *Journal of Extension, 41*(4), 1-5. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://www.joe.org/joe/2003august/tt6.php>
- Asia: Reduce Prison Populations Facing COVID-19*. Human Rights Watch. (2020). Retrieved 28 October 2020, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/06/asia-reduce-prison-populations-facing-covid-19>.
- Bangkok Business News. (2020, April 16). *ฝ่าฟันเคอร์ฟิว ถูกจับคุมประพฤติแล้ว 619 คดี ศาลสั่งบริการสังคมแทนค่าปรับ*. Bangkokbiznews. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/876400>
- Bolin, R. M., & Applegate, B. K. (2018). Supervising juveniles and adults: Organizational context, professional orientations, and probation and parole officer behaviors. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 41*(4), 410-426.

- Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. *Rehabilitation*, 6(1), 1-22.
- Carr, N. (2020). Community supervision and COVID. *Probation Journal*, 67(2), 95–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0264550520922321>
- Chokprajakchat, S., & Sukomol, S. (2004). *Department of Probation's National Standards*. Bangkok.
- DeMichele, M., & Payne, B. (2018). Taking officer time seriously: A study of the daily activities of probation officers. *Probation Journal*, 65(1), 39-60.
- DeMichele, M., & Payne, B. (2018). Taking officer time seriously: A study of the daily activities of probation officers. *Probation Journal*, 65(1), 39-60.
- Department of Corrections (2021). *Department of correction, Ministry of Justice*. Bangkok.
- Department of Probation. (2007). *Department of Probation, Ministry of Justice*. Bangkok.
- Ekvittayavechnukul, C. (2021, July 2). *Thai virus surge prompts concern over ICUs, vaccine supply*. AP NEWS. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from
<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-business-health-25554b11fa75924f03a5867e92ea50e1>
- Electronic Monitoring: 3,000 Prisoners Set for Release in September*. Thailand Visa Forum by Thai Visa | The Nation. (2020). Retrieved 28 October 2020, from
<https://forum.thaivisa.com/topic/1173464-electronic-monitoring-3000-prisoners-set-for-release-in-september/>.
- The new normal guidelines for law enforcement officers during Covid-19 pandemic, quarantined police officers may threaten public safety*. Thailand Institute of Justice. (2020).
<https://www.tijthailand.org/highlight/detail/living-with-covid-19-02>

- Erisman, K. (2020, May 6). *How Coronavirus Has Stifled the Criminal Justice System*. In Public Safety. Retrieved 17 September 2020, from <https://inpublicsafety.com/2020/05/how-coronavirus-has-stifled-the-court-system/>.
- Gayman, M. D., & Bradley, M. S. (2013). Organizational climate, work stress, and depressive symptoms among probation and parole officers. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 26(3), 326-346.
- Gideon, L. (2020). *Theories of research methodology: Readings in methods* (3rd ed.) Kendall Hunt Pub Co.
- Gill, V. (2020). *Coronavirus: This is not the last pandemic*. BBC News. Retrieved 17 September 2020, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52775386>.
- Gleicher, L., & Green, E. (2020, August 25). *Effective Strategies in Community Supervision: Core Correctional Practices and Motivational Interviewing*. ICJIA | Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Retrieved October 25, 2021, from <https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/effective-strategies-in-community-supervision-core-correctional-practices-and-motivational-interviewing>
- Gough, D. (2011). Probation in the Republic of Korea: A compressed journey to public protection. *Probation Journal*, 58(4), 372-385.
- Hanim, Z., & Hassan, R. (2012). The Roles and Challenges of Parole Officers in Reintegrating Prisoners into the Community under the Parole System. *Procedia. Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 36(C), 324-332.
- Horan, R., Wong, K., & Szifris, K. (2020). Enabling change: An assessment tool for adult offenders that operationalises risk needs responsivity and desistance principles. *European Journal of Probation*, 12(1), 1-16.

- Hsieh, M. L., Hafoka, M., Woo, Y., van Wormer, J., Stohr, M. K., & Hemmens, C. (2015). Probation officer roles: A statutory analysis. *Fed. Probation, 79*, 20.
- Israel, G. D. (1992). Determining sample size (Fact sheet PEOD-6). *Gainesville, FL: University of Florida*.
- Jaiboon, P. (2010). *Work stress and employee's engagement of probation officers, Department of Probation in Northern Region*. Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University.
- Jalbert, S. K., & Rhodes, W. (2012). Reduced caseloads improve probation outcomes. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 35*(2), 221-238.
- Kennealy, P. J., Skeem, J. L., Manchak, S. M., & Eno Loudon, J. (2012). Firm, fair, and caring officer-offender relationships protect against supervision failure. *Law and human behavior, 36*(6), 496.
- Lewis, K. R., Lewis, L. S., & Garby, T. M. (2013). Surviving the trenches: The personal impact of the job on probation officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*(1), 67-84.
- Lewis, K. R., Lewis, L. S., & Garby, T. M. (2013). Surviving the trenches: The personal impact of the job on probation officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*(1), 67-84.
- Lutze, F. E. (2013). *Professional lives of community corrections officers: The invisible side of reentry*. Sage Publications.
- Macdonald, V., & Nacapew, S. (2013). Drug control and harm reduction in Thailand. Retrieved September 10, 2020 from <http://fileserver.idpc.net/library/IDPC-briefing-paperThailand-drug-policy-English.pdf>.
- Marcum, C. (2020). American Corrections System Response to COVID-19: an Examination of the Procedures and Policies Used in Spring 2020. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 45*(4), 759–768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09535-3>

- Matchon Online News. (2021, March 14). *คุมประพฤติ แจงยับผู้ต้องหาติดอุปกรณ์ EM ถูกจับ ชี้ตำรวจขอพิทักษ์ชายผล*
เครือข่ายยา. Matchon. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from
https://www.matchon.co.th/local/crime/news_2623332
- Ministry of Justice. (2020, May 30). *กรมคุมประพฤติเตรียมพร้อมมาตรการป้องกัน Covid-19*
คลายล็อกศูนย์ฟื้นฟูสมรรถภาพผู้ติดยาเสพติด. Retrieved 19 September 2020, from
<https://www.moj.go.th/view/44356>.
- Morash, M., Kashy, D. A., Smith, S. W., & Cobbina, J. E. (2019). Technical violations,
 treatment and punishment responses, and recidivism of women on probation and
 parole. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 30(5), 788-810.
- Naewna News. (2021, July 19). *กรมคุมประพฤติเผยแพร่สารราชทัณฑ์ ทอยปลดปล่อยผู้ได้รับพักโทษ-คดียาเสพติด*. Naewna.
 Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://www.naewna.com/local/588793>
- Nyingi, J. (2020, June 16). *The 77 Percent: COVID 19 disrupts criminal justice system*.
 DW.COM. Retrieved 17 September 2020, from <https://www.dw.com/en/the-77-percent-covid-19-disrupts-criminal-justice-system/av-54197699>.
- Omair, A. (2014). Sample size estimation and sampling techniques for selecting a representative
 sample. *Journal of Health Specialties*, 2(4), 142. DOI: 10.4103/1658-600X.142783
- Paparozzi, M. A., & Gendreau, P. (2005). An intensive supervision program that worked:
 Service delivery, professional orientation, and organizational supportiveness. *The prison*
journal, 85(4), 445-466.
- Pitts, W. J. (2007). Educational competency as an indicator of occupational stress for probation
 and parole officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 32(1-2), 57-73.
- Reuters Staff, R. (2020, April 2). *Thailand imposes nationwide curfew to curb coronavirus*.
 Reuters. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health->

[coronavirus-thailand-curfew/thailand-imposes-nationwide-curfew-to-curb-coronavirus-idUSKBN21K261](https://www.uskbn21k261.com/coronavirus-thailand-curfew/thailand-imposes-nationwide-curfew-to-curb-coronavirus-idUSKBN21K261)

- Rhineberger-Dunn, G., & Mack, K. Y. (2020). The Impact of Individual Factors, Job Characteristics, and Organizational Variables on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction Among Community Corrections Staff. *Criminal Justice Review*, 45(4), 464-483.
- Schwalbe, C. S., & Koetzle, D. (2021). What the COVID-19 Pandemic Teaches About the essential Practices of Community Corrections and Supervision. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 00938548211019073.
- Schwalbe, C. S., & Maschi, T. (2011). Confronting delinquency: Probations officers' use of coercion and client-centered tactics to foster youth compliance. *Crime & Delinquency*, 57(5), 801-822.
- Schwartz, K., Alexander, A. O., Lau, K. S., Holloway, E. D., & Aalsma, M. C. (2017). Motivating compliance: Juvenile probation officer strategies and skills. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 56(1), 20-37.
- Seal, D. W. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on Persons in Correctional Facilities—A Commentary. *Health Behavior and Policy Review*, 7(2), 161-164.
- Sheth, J. (2020). Business of business is more than business: Managing during the Covid crisis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 88, 261–264.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.05.028>
- Sinthunawa P. (2011). *Roles of Probation Officers During Pre-investigation*. Department of Probation, Ministry of Justice.
- Solomon, A. (2004). From prison to work: the employment dimensions of prisoner reentry: a report of the Reentry Roundtable. Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center.

Strangio, S. (2021, May 27). *Thailand Mulls Prisoner Releases as COVID-19 Outbreak Spreads.*

The Diplomat. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/thailand-mulls-prisoner-releases-as-covid-19-outbreak-spreads/>

Swan H., Campbell W., & Lowe N. (2020). *Pandemic Preparedness and Response among Community Supervision Agencies: The Importance of Partnerships for Future Planning.*

Retrieved 19 September 2020, from

<https://www.abtassociates.com/insights/publications/white-paper/covid-19s-impact-on-community-supervision>

Swan, H., Campbell, W., & Lowe, N. (2021). Pandemic Preparedness and Response among Community Supervision Agencies. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 44(4), 14-21.

Taxman, F. S. (2008). No illusions: Offender and organizational change in Maryland's proactive community supervision efforts. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 7(2), 275-302.

Thailand Institute of Justice. (2020, March 31). *Report on the Covid-19 Situation in Prison and Policy Recommendations for Thailand.* Retrieved 17 September 2020, from

<https://knowledge.tijthailand.org/en/publication/detail/-situation-report-and-policy-recommendations-for-covin-in-prison#book/9>

Thanthong, R. (2021, May 13). *Covid Outbreaks in Bangkok Prisons Push Thai Cases to New Record.* Bloomberg. Retrieved October 30, 2021, from

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-13/covid-outbreaks-in-bangkok-prisons-push-thai-cases-to-new-record>

The Department of Probation. (2020). Performance Report. [online] Available at:

<http://www.probation.go.th/dopedoc/> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020].

- Viglione, J. (2019). The risk-need-responsivity model: How do probation officers implement the principles of effective intervention?. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 46(5), 655-673.
- Viglione, J., Rudes, D. S., & Taxman, F. S. (2017). Probation officer use of client-centered communication strategies in adult probation settings. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 56(1), 38-60.
- White, W., Gasperin, D., Nystrom, J., Ambrose, T., & Esarey, C. (2005). The other side of burnout: Exemplary performance and health among probation officers. *Perspectives: The Journal of the American Probation and Parole Association*, 29(2), 26-31.
- Williams, C. (2020, June 1). *Pandemic Forces Big Changes for Jails and Prisons*. Spectrumlocalnews.com. Retrieved 17 September 2020, from <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2020/05/26/how-the-pandemic-has-changed-the-criminal-justice-system--part-three>
- Wilson D., Ford N., Ngamdee V., Chua A., Kyaw MK. (2007). *HIV Prevention, Care, and Treatment in Two Prisons in Thailand*. PLoS Med 4(6): 204. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0040204>
- World Health Organization. (2021a, October 18). *Thailand: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data*. WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/th/>
- World Health Organization. (2021b, October 18). *WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data*. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://covid19.who.int/>

Wyatt J. C. (2000). When to use web-based surveys. *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association: JAMIA*, 7(4), 426–429.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/jamia.2000.0070426>