

**Understanding school violence in Thailand and
the effectiveness of intervention programs**

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by

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DECLARATION

I certify that this work does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nualnong Wongtongkam".

Nualnong Wongtongkam

May 4, 2012

Abstract

School violence among technical college students in Thailand has been a topic of great national concern in recent decades. This study sought to understand the causes of school violence and to evaluate the effects of two school-based interventions in three phases: a qualitative pilot study to document the meaning of violence, a cross-sectional study to identify the prevalence of violence, and a randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of interventions that aimed to reduce violence.

In the first phase, semi-structured interviews with 32 male students were conducted at a technical college in Bangkok. The results showed that a strong bond developed between junior and senior students, and that violence typically occurred in the context of fights against students from other colleges. Self-protection, anger expression, and revenge were motivating factors for the fights.

In the second phase, a cross-sectional study was conducted in nine technical colleges across two provinces of Thailand. These included five technical colleges in Bangkok (BKK) and four in Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat), with a total of 1,778 students (20% of total students) participating. The cross-sectional survey included self-report instruments assessing violent behavior, violence classifications (offender, direct and indirect victim, witness), protective and risk factors, anger expression and depression. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to analyze the data and the association between violent behaviors, negative emotions (anger and depression), and risk-protective factors were measured using odds ratios. The findings showed that approximate 20% of students in both provinces had high levels of anger expression, but that Bangkok students experienced higher levels of anger across every mode of expression (Anger-

Out, Anger-In, Control-Out, and Control-In). Additionally, anger-out and anger-in expressions were strongly related to violent behavior, and anger control was shown to be a protective factor against violent behavior. Depression was strongly associated with violence. Additionally, nearly all commonly identified risk factors were strongly related to violent behavior, especially those in the peer and family domains.

In the third phase of the research, a randomized controlled trial was conducted in one technical college in BKK, with students allocated into either a Mindfulness Meditation intervention group (MM, n=28 students), Aggression Replacement Training (ART, n=23 students), or a no-intervention control group (n=48 students). Self-report data were collected at three time periods: pre-intervention, one month, and three months post-intervention. Semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with 83 students in order to further evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. The interventions were not clearly shown to reduce violent behavior, or to reduce negative emotion (anger expression and depression). However, the semi-structured interviews provided additional data on how students controlled their emotions and how they had learned strategies to reduce violence from both interventions.

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