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A life on hold: women, drugs, and electronically monitored parole in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) advocate for the increased use of non-custodial measures alongside women-wise criminal justice programs, policies, and practices. In Thailand, since the Bangkok Rules were adopted, there has been increased attention paid to implementing affirmative action to counterbalance the gender discrimination women face behind prison walls. However, there is a sparsity of knowledge and consideration of women's non-custodial involvement, in Thailand and worldwide. In this paper, we present findings from research exploring women's pathways to and experiences of electronically monitored (EM) parole in Thailand. We found that women's criminalisation trajectories were facilitated by a configuration of multifaceted, commonly interconnected, vulnerabilities and harms. While EM parole should, according to governmental rhetoric, be rehabilitative and supportive of reintegration through 'the treatment of offenders in accordance with international norms and standards' in practice, women's needs were barely recognised, let alone met. Instead, rather than supporting women, EM parole was, in many ways, setting them up to fail.

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Introduction

In 2010, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). Before this, international norms and standards had ineffectively considered women's gender-specific needs, both as prisoners and regarding non-custodial alternatives. The 70 Bangkok Rules supplement the Tokyo (UN Standard Minimum Rules - for Non-Custodial Measures) and Nelson Mandela Rules (UN Standard Minimum Rules for the

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[‡]The viewpoints, findings and conclusions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Thailand Institute of Justice.

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Treatment of Prisoners), furnishing a practical and aspirational set of human rights principles. There is recognition within the Bangkok Rules that pathways to criminalisation are gendered, the criminal justice system is patriarchal, and justice-involved women, who are especially vulnerable, pose a nominal risk to community safety (Chuenurah et al., 2022).

The Bangkok Rules advocate for the increased use of non-custodial measures for women alongside gender-wise criminal justice programs, policies, and practices (Barberet & Jackson, 2017; Chuenurah et al., 2022; Penal Reform International, 2013). Since the Rules were adopted, there has been increased attention in Thailand to implementing affirmative action to counterbalance the gender discrimination women face behind prison walls (Chuenurah et al., 2022). However, there is a sparsity of knowledge and consideration of women's non-custodial involvement. Accordingly, in this paper, we present findings from research exploring women's pathways to and experiences of electronically monitored (EM) parole in Thailand. However, before doing so, we first provide an overview of the limited extant research on women, EM and parole, discuss Thailand's EM parole system, and international norms and standards in this space.

Women, EM and parole: previous research

To date, explorations of EM in Thailand have been scoping exercises debating the potential advantages/disadvantages of EM as an alternative to prison, studies examining EM's technological failings and one narrow exploration of women on EM (Siriwato & Poonyarith, 2017; Supchokpul, 2018; Tantikul, 2020). Thus, as argued by Tantikul (2020, pp. 7–8), there is 'insufficient knowledge' about the impacts of EM and 'more in-depth lived-experience studies are urgently needed to inform practice.' Worldwide research on women and EM is also limited (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014; King & Gibbs, 2003; Maidment, 2002). Most EM scholarship is devoid of women, gender analysis, and overwhelmingly western-centric (Hucklesby et al., 2021; Nellis et al., 2014).

Taken together, the limited explorations of women on EM suggest that this approach neither reduces the probability of re-arrest or substance misuse (Gonzalez et al., 2020). However, compared to men, women are more likely to express a willingness to comply with EM conditions. Women are especially fearful of the consequences of non-acquiescence while men frequently 'push' boundaries (King & Gibbs, 2003, p. 119). EM has been identified as an inflexible tool that treats everyone equally without consideration of gendered variance (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014, p. 15). For example, there is no distinction made between leaving designated areas to parent or break the law. Compared to men, women are more likely to request that conditions be varied due to domestic responsibilities, and they more commonly violate due to familial obligations (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014, p. 15; Maidment, 2002). Additionally, women frequently express problems with the design of EM because devices are large, cumbersome, and particularly uncomfortable for them to wear (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014).

Finally, explorations of women's EM experiences show that feelings of stigma and shame are especially acute (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014). This is because women have breached both the law and normative gender expectations of appropriate feminine

behaviour (Jeffries et al., 2020). Stigmatisation and shame are counterproductive to rehabilitation and reintegration. For example, women's employment prospects can be curtailed, and feelings of shame can lead to self-isolation, psychological distress, and a turn toward drugs and/or alcohol as a coping mechanism (Carlton & Segrave, 2014; Opsal, 2011).

Research on women's parole experiences (minus EM) is similarly limited. In theory, parole should assist rehabilitation and reintegration by providing a readymade avenue for service provision and support (Opsal, 2009, 2015). However, parole is instead habitually framed around risk management, surveillance, containment, and compliance (Gelsthorpe, 2013; Opsal, 2009, pp. 311–312). For example, Opsal's (2009, 2015) studies of women on parole revealed generally negative experiences. Here, parole was more punishing than supporting. It hindered rather than promoted women's rehabilitation and reintegration by invoking 'feelings of fear, anxiety and, in some cases, dependency in a group of women struggling to regain control over their own lives' (Opsal, 2015, p. 202). Women also wrestled with the competing and conflicting demands of their parole supervision requirements, employment, and resuming their familial caregiving roles (Opsal, 2009, p. 324; Opsal, 2015, p. 202). Pollack's (2009) parole research showed that women need confidential support spaces where they can be open and honest about their struggles. However, parole officers are primarily concerned with managing risk, not meeting needs. Morash et al. (2015) found that more supportive officers elicit more positive outcomes. Here, by decreasing women's anxiety, parole compliance is increased, and re-criminalisation is reduced. In contrast, officer punitiveness was ineffective or even counterproductive, increasing anxiety and lowering women's self-efficacy to avoid further breaches and law-breaking.

Thailand's EM parole system

EM was first piloted in Thailand in 2013 as a diversionary sentencing measure. It was later expanded into all stages of the criminal justice process, i.e., pre-trial as a condition of bail, as part of a person's sentence, and post-release for those on parole. Currently, EM is principally applied in the latter scenario. From 2020 to 2023, nearly 90% of the 42,798 people on EM in Thailand were parolees. Most people on EM were men with approximately 20% being women (Department of Probation, 2023, personal communication).

Thailand's parole system is underpinned by the tenets of rehabilitation, reintegration, and recidivism diminution. It is a 'community-based rehabilitation measure that supports former offenders to adjust to life in the community, motivates them to behave in a disciplined manner' reduces 'recidivism' and in turn, 'allows them to become a resource for the country' (Department of Probation, 2023). In 2020, the Justice Minister announced that EM bracelets would be used to solve the problem of prison overcrowding and strengthen the parole system. It was argued that EM could support parole by further protecting 'society from re-offending, enhance[ing] rehabilitation and re-integration [and] promoting the treatment of offenders in accordance with international norms and standards' (Department of Probation, 2023; The Nation, 2020).

Around the time of the Justice Minister's announcement, women's prisons were 340% over capacity, the direct result of a penal populist drug war that has been unsuccessfully

raging since the early 2000s (Jeffries & Jefferson, 2022, p. 3). Around 80% of incarcerated women are first-time lawbreakers confined for low-level breaches of illicit drug legislation (Jeffries, Chuenurah and Wallis 2019; Jeffries et al., 2020). Notably, Thai commentators and ‘officials in the Thai Ministry of Justice’ have argued that EM could be ‘especially beneficial for female offenders’ (Supchokpul, 2018, p. 38). Rehabilitation and reintegration are better supported because EM allows ‘for the treatment of addiction’ in the community and could thus ‘solve underlying factors [i.e., addiction] relating to drug offences’ (Supchokpul, 2018, p. 38 & 40).¹

International norms and standards

International norms and standards are clear; non-custodial measures must be rehabilitative and meet women’s gender-specific needs (UN General Assembly, 2010; UN Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020). More specifically, parole should:

- Account for women’s caretaking responsibilities and other needs (Bangkok Rule 63).
- Address the most common problems leading to women’s contact with the justice system, including the provision of therapeutic courses and counselling for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse; suitable treatment for those with mental health problems, educational and training programmes for improving employment prospects (Bangkok Rules 60); and the provision of gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, women-only substance treatment programmes (Bangkok Rule 62).
- Comprise specific measures and ongoing support to protect women from post-release victimisation, stigmatisation, familial disconnection, and other impediments to successful reintegration (UNODC, 2020, p. 54).
- Include government-community partnerships that connect women to ongoing relevant support. Care must be given to women who have lived with or are at risk of violence (UNODC, 2020, p. 54; Bangkok Rule 47).
- Incorporate various educational and vocational training opportunities alongside other initiatives aimed at improving and supporting women’s post-release employment prospects and countering socio-economic vulnerability (UNODC, 2020, p. 15).
- Only have EM attached as a final recourse to protect public safety (UNODC, 2020, pp. 29–50). Before using EM, due consideration must be given to the gender-specific impacts because, for women and their families, the stress, stigma, and shame of being branded a *criminal* is especially severe (UNODC, 2020, p. 56). If EM must be utilised, it should not set women up to fail (UNODC, 2020, p. 47). Rather, it must:
 - Be combined with support and supervision by probation/parole personnel committed to rehabilitation with the leeway to meet women’s changing needs, including not having to report minor breachers to higher authorities (UNODC, 2020, p. 55).
 - Take women’s familial caretaking responsibilities and income-earning obligations into account (UNODC, 2020, p. 55).

¹Recent research exploring women’s reintegration in Thailand found drug rehabilitation programmes inside prisons were somewhat lacking. However, accessing and participating in community-based drug rehabilitation was even more circumscribed (Thailand Institute of Justice, 2021, p. 60 & 83-84).

As noted above, the official Thai Ministerial rhetoric is that EM parole will enhance ‘the treatment of offenders in accordance with international norms and standards’ and may be especially beneficial for women who have breached illicit drug law. Most formerly imprisoned women in Thailand will have been confined for breaching illicit drug laws. Thus, the overarching aim of our research is to understand how this group of criminalised women come to be imprisoned and, in turn, experience EM parole. The Bangkok Rules are unequivocal; non-custodial measures must be rehabilitative and address the most common problems leading women into the criminal justice system. The first step toward enhancing ‘the treatment of offenders in accordance with international norms and standards’ is understanding the factors underpinning women’s justice system involvement. The second step is understanding how EM parole is being experienced by women. To explore both, we utilised in-depth interviews with women on EM parole in Thailand.

Research methods

We thematically analysed 43 in-depth interviews with women formerly imprisoned for breaching illicit drug laws and currently on EM parole in Thailand. We employed a qualitative research framework for several reasons. Qualitative approaches are routinely used in social science research to explore social phenomena where not much is known and where people or groups are socially marginalised. Moreover, as feminist criminologists, we wanted to provide our research participants, who are experts in their own lives, with voice and agency to engage as subjects in the telling of their stories and elucidation of factors central to their experiences. Qualitative studies are crucial to bringing experiences to light with a richness and depth that is simply not possible via quantitative research.

Fieldwork was conducted in several regions of Thailand. To identify possible participants, we worked with the Thailand Department of Probation to invite women to meet with researchers if they were interested. During these subsequent meetings, we explained the goals and aims of the study, the concept of voluntary consent (including the right to refuse or withdraw with no adverse consequences), potential risks, and the confidentiality of the study. No personally identifying information (including names) was collected from participants at any point. Probation staff were not present during interviews. In our results section, below, we protect the confidentiality and anonymity of our participants by not identifying the locations of the interviews, assigning pseudonyms, presenting our results thematically, and changing or masking minor details of their lives of no relevance to the study aims.²

Our interview schedule was open-ended, consisting of broad discussion topics, allowing interviewees leeway to express themselves on their terms. Topics canvassed during the interviews comprised background/demographic information, pathways into prison and life on EM-parole, namely: (1) conditions and impacts, (2) design and technology, (3) violations and re-criminalisation, (4) supervision and reporting, (5) programmes and other support. Interviews lasted between one and two hours and were audio-recorded. Some interviews were conducted in English and simultaneously interpreted into Thai, while others were conducted in Thai.

²Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Griffith University, reference no: 2023/082

All interviews were transcribed into English, collated, and analysed thematically. To aid our analysis, we used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program NVivo. This program works on a code-and-retrieve theme basis. The theme coding process was triangulated across project team members and cross-checked to establish intercoder reliability. The results are presented below following a descriptive overview of the research participants. It is important to underscore that research participant experiences did not always fit, and were not forced, into neat thematic categories. The open and exploratory nature of this study means that themes sometimes overlapped and intersected.

Demographics and backgrounds

Interviewees ages ranged from 20 to over 90 years (mean age was 38). Over 90% were Buddhist, and only 23% had graduated from secondary school. Six identified as Tomboys, a gendered sexual minority group.³ Tomboys are conventionally understood as female persons who look and act hegemonically masculine (Ojanen, 2009, p. 9).⁴ Five came from an ethnic minority group. Thus, some interviewees had specific vulnerabilities at the intersections of multiple subjugated social positions. For example, ethnic minorities and older women (aged over 50 years)⁵ were over-represented in the lowest education categories, with most never completing primary school. Nearly every under-educated woman relayed immutable lifelong financial hardship, and as will be shown, poverty played a key role in pathways to prison.

Pre-imprisonment, most (42%) earned a living in the underground economy (i.e., the sex industry and/or illicit drug market). For those in legitimate work, low-paying occupations were the norm, either as employees on farms, in factories, as general labourers or they sold street food or other products at the market (37%). Few (12%) held higher-paying positions, such as owning a business or working for the government. Post-imprisonment, no one worked in the underground economy. Most were supported by intimate partners/family members and/or sold 'things' on the street, from home or at the market (80%). The reasons for this are discussed later.

Everyone was imprisoned for drug distribution/selling, and in 90% of cases, this involved Yaba (a tablet containing methamphetamine and caffeine). In one-fifth of

³For prior research exploring gendered sexual minority groups and criminalisation in Thailand, please see Jeffries et al., 2023.

⁴Tomboys will for example, don short hair, wear cis men's clothes, bind their breasts, use male particles for polite speech, walk, interact, and generally behave in ways that align with what is understood to be 'properly' masculine (Miedema et al., 2022, p. 3; Ravine, 2014, p. 388). While Tomboy gender identity is anchored in masculinity, it is also pitted against it, being partially situated within frames of hegemonic Thai femininity (Miedema et al., 2022). It is in this masculine-feminine blending that Tomness prevails as a culturally specific gender identity. Miedema et al. (2022, p. 4) note Tomboys describe 'themselves as neither man nor women, but rather, somewhere along a continuum between the two.' Likewise, Sinnott (2004, p. 83) explains Tomboys 'are an extension and manipulation of both masculine and feminine genders, position[ed] between ideal masculinity and femininity, strategically accessing claims to both, while simultaneously distancing themselves from men and women.'

⁵The World Health Organisation defines older adults as 60 years and over (World Health Organisation, see <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-of-older-adults#:~:text=Overview,one%20in%20six%20people%20globally>). Here, we define older as being over 50 years because research shows that the life expectancy of justice-involved women's is ten to 15 years less than that of the general population. This difference is credited to numerous life stressors (e.g., poverty, poor diet, substance abuse, other adversity) typical in the lives of criminalised women that negatively impact health and exacerbate ageing (Easton, 2018; Grant, 1999; Maschi & Aday, 2014).

cases, the drug Ice (crystal methamphetamine) had led to criminalisation, and in one case, it was ketamine (a dissociative anaesthetic).

Interviewees spent between 1.33 and 12.83 years in prison, with an average of 5.7 years served. The mean time on EM parole was 9.8 months (terms ranged from one to 60 months). Only three relayed previous arrests or having been incarcerated more than once. In other words, nearly everyone was a first-time lawbreaker.

Pathways to prison

We identified the following as performing a central function in interviewee imprisonment pathways: (1) childhood adversity, (2) adulthood adversity, (3) addiction, and (4) naivety and injustice. Each is discussed in detail below.

Childhood adversity

Criminalisation is consistently linked to adversity in childhood. Adverse childhood experiences are defined as ‘stressful and potentially traumatic events that occur during the first 18 years of life’ (Basto-Pereira et al., 2022, p. 2). These experiences encompass but are not limited to different forms of childhood abuse and neglect; estrangement from primary caregivers (e.g., parental divorce or imprisonment); a general lack of family stability, warmth, and closeness, bereavement and loss; living with poverty, domestic violence, caregivers who abuse substances or have other mental health problems; residing in disenfranchised communities plagued by violence, illicit drugs and other law-breaking (Basto-Pereira et al., 2022; Bowles et al., 2012; Friestad et al., 2014; Hughes & Tucker, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Vederhus et al., 2022; World Health Organisation, 2020). Those who experience stress and trauma growing up are far more likely to become justice system involved (Baglivio et al., 2015; Basto-Pereira et al., 2022; Bloom & Covington, 2008; Bowles et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2017; Friestad et al., 2014; Grella et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2018; Malvaso et al., 2022).

Nearly half of our interviewees relayed at least one adverse childhood experience, and 20% had lived with multiple harms, including child abuse, neglect, familial substance misuse, poverty, and fractured parent–child relationships. Childhood stress and trauma impacted pathways to prison, causing some women to ‘run away’ (Mookda), become ‘too attached’ (Davika) to ‘bad friends’ (Ranee) and use and/or sell drugs. For example, Arinya grew up in a poor family lacking stability, warmth, and closeness. Her father was an alcoholic, addicted to Yaba and extremely violent. She said:

We had family issues. I saw my parents fighting each other. It was severe. Within my family, no one cared about the other. One time, Mum used me as a barrier to catch the knife Dad aimed at her. My mother was the main financial support of the family; she worked in a factory. We were poor. We [Arinya and her siblings] had to go out and work to take care of ourselves.

By the time Arinya was a teenager, she had left school and home to live with friends whom she described as a ‘gang.’ This ‘gang’ became Arinya’s family; she ‘drinks and uses drugs every day’ as a form of self-medication. Arinya and her friends sold drugs to ‘earn money’ to buy drugs for themselves, and this led to imprisonment.

For some interviewees, structural violences⁶ (e.g., poverty) and state harms (e.g., removal of primary familial caregivers through imprisonment) in childhood were central to their imprisonment journeys. For example, Hu-Bo was raised by a ‘single mother’, and her childhood was marred by financial insecurity. Her mother sold drugs to support the family and was eventually imprisoned for actions she had taken to feed her children. This left Hu-Bo and her siblings to fend for themselves. For Hu-Bo, the suffering of childhood poverty and maternal estrangement propelled her into prison. She said:

It was difficult for me from a young age. It got worse when I was nine or ten years old because my mother was imprisoned for eleven years. It was so hard back then. I never went to school. I had to work to support the family. I had to visit my mother in prison and bring her money. I worked for 40 baht [1 USD] per day. I started selling drugs because I needed to earn money.

Adulthood adversity

Domestic violence victimisation is bound to women’s criminalisation in both direct and indirect ways. Directly, women may be compelled into law-breaking through love and fear. Indirectly, abuse can have adverse economic impacts, limiting the financial means of victimised women and leading them to law break out of economic necessity. The trauma of living with domestic violence can also give rise to substance misuse as a coping mechanism. This then connects to lawbreaking (Jeffries, Chuenurah and Wallis 2019; Jeffries et al., 2022). Nearly a quarter of the women interviewed reported enduring domestic violence, and here, victimisation was indirectly related to imprisonment.

For example, as a child, Zhong grew up in poverty, and her ‘drug-addicted’ father was imprisoned. Zhong married to escape, but her husband was a ‘jobless’ drug user who ‘hit [her], breaking [her] bones.’ Zhong could not ‘leave him’ because, as an ethnic minority woman, children ‘must remain with the husband.’⁷ She explained, ‘I already have two kids with him, so I think I will have to endure him for my kids.’ Zhong’s prospects of securing legitimate, sufficiently paying work were non-existent. She never attended school and lived in a remote area. In addition to bodily violence, Zhong’s husband refused to work or look after the children. As ‘sole caregiver’, Zhong ‘started selling drugs because she ‘needed the money.’ Then she started ‘using drugs to stay awake and work more.’ As a victim of men’s violence, Zhong is eventually imprisoned for actions taken to support her children in the face of masculinist harm.

⁶Structural violence, as defined by Lee (2016, p. 110) “refers to the avoidable limitations society places on groups of people that constrain them from achieving the quality of life that would have otherwise been possible. These limitations could be political, economic, religious, cultural, or legal in nature and usually originate in institutions that have authority over particular subjects. Because of its embedding within social structures, people tend to overlook the ordinary difficulties that they encounter in the course of life. Unlike the more visible forms of violence where one person perpetrates physical harm on another, structural violence occurs through economically, politically, or culturally driven processes working together to limit subjects from achieving full quality of life.”

⁷Many of Thailand’s ethnic minority peoples reside in geographically isolated regions. Here, traditional languages, values, norms, beliefs, and lore remain strong and somewhat unaffected by attempts at assimilation by the Thai state. In some of these communities, women hold no decision-making or political power and are expected to fulfil defined gender roles. Here, women and children are men’s property (see Rao et al., 2022). While mainstream Thai law does not dictate that children stay with fathers, in Zhong’s community, as she explained to us, this is traditional lore.

Sarai's husband was physically abusive, had extramarital affairs, controlled all the household money, and demanded she stay home and be a housewife and mother. Sarai became 'so stressed and lonely' that she 'avoided him and talked to my friends instead', who introduced her to Yaba. Sari was eventually imprisoned for finding an escape from her husband's abuse through friendships, drugs, and alcohol.

Analogously, minus the bodily harm, others relayed intimate relationships with men who maltreated them by having affairs, abusing drugs/alcohol, and negating familial caregiving obligations. Indeed, over half recounted having to cope with problematic men with whom they were romantically involved, and, in many cases, this contributed to their criminalisation due either to economic familial provisioning (like Zhong), self-medicating with drugs (like Sarai) or because they were caught up in their intimate partners' illegal activities.

For others, the structural violence of poverty was the lone precursor to imprisonment. Nearly 80% of our interviewees were mothers. Close to half had struggled to meet everyday expenses during their adult lives, and many needed to support extended family members. For example, Rune grew up in a 'poor family' and left school in grade 6 because her parents could not 'afford to pay'. Thereafter, Rune 'worked in a factory, did odd jobs like clearing land and other menial labour' to support herself and her family. She was married at 16 years of age to a man from her 'village.' He was a 'good man' and they both worked together in a 'factory.' Her entire life, 'money had been a struggle' because Rune was undereducated. She did not want this to be her daughter's fate. Rune sold drugs to pay for her child's education.

Addiction

Childhood and adulthood adversity are linked to substance abuse and as outlined previously, our interviewees frequently reported experiencing both. Thus, it is unsurprising that at some point in their lives, most (63%) had what they described as addictions to drugs, alcohol and in one case, gambling.

We know that substance abuse provides a ready-made coping mechanism, a form of self-medication and thus, an outlet for escaping emotional anguish but can quickly propel people into the criminal justice system (Broidy et al., 2018; Jeffries, Chuenurah and Wallis 2019; Jeffries et al., 2020). Amporn, for example, 'was heartbroken' when her 'boyfriend cheated, my friends introduced me to drugs, it helped me to forget the sorrow.' Women who have been victims of childhood maltreatment and domestic violence are noted to be particularly susceptible to substance misuse and in turn, criminalisation for breaches of illicit drug law (Bloom & Covington, 2008; Grella et al., 2005). Recall the stories above, of Sarai, who used drugs to cope with intimate partner violence, and Arinya, who had lived with child abuse and self-medicated with drugs and alcohol. Likewise, pre-prison Anya 'used three to four Yaba tablets a day because my husband was a womaniser and used violence, he hurt me, critically.' Jet, another victim of domestic violence, used 'Yaba and sometimes drank alcohol because it stopped me thinking about anything'.

Naivety and injustice

Finally, five older women (aged over 50 years) and one young ethnic minority Tomboy were incarcerated because of naivety and injustice. Here, there were correlations between

undereducation (no one had completed primary school), poverty, and being unable to understand, access, pay for justice, or pay off corrupted actors within the system. For example, Ink left school in Grade 4; she was over 80 years old when she was criminalised and sent to prison for the first and only time. Ink knew nothing about illicit drugs until her great-grandson came to stay. She explained:

He used drugs. He was addicted. When the police came, he left it [drugs] under a bed in my house. The police knew I was not guilty. The police prosecutor asked for 20,000 baht [550 USD] for everything to be over. I could not pay. There's no such thing as justice. If you are in the wrong place at the wrong time, you could eventually be arrested and go to prison even though they charged you with something that is not true. Justice is only for the people with money.

Life on EM parole

In this section, we consider experiences of EM parole under the following topic headings: (1) conditions and impacts, (2) design and technology, (3) violations and re-criminalisation, (4) supervision and reporting, (5) programmes and other support.

Conditions and impacts

Everyone was unanimous that being on EM parole was 'better than living in prison' (Fan) because it provided a degree of 'freedom' (Nittha) and meant you could be with 'your family' (Ann). However, what became clear was that 'the only benefit is being released from prison' (Cris). Rather than supporting rehabilitation and community reintegration, EM parole was, at best, typified as neutrally unhelpful and, at worst, proactively obstructive. For most, EM parole was experienced as life on hold, a figurative prison with the probation service offering only nominal support. As noted by Aree, 'I am not yet a Miss; my prefix is still Female Prisoner. EM reminds us that we are not normal people; we are still prisoners, just prisoners on the outside.'

We were told repeatedly, by more than 80% of interviewees, that EM was stigmatising, shameful or anxiety-inducing for interviewees (over 80%) and/or their families (20% approximately). Around 25% relayed that to alleviate these malaises, they stayed within the confines of their homes. Nearly 90% expressed that being on EM parole contributed to financial precarity and in around 30% of cases, EM obstructed familial reconnection in some way.

Stigma, shame and anxiety

Normative community connection is important for reintegration, yet ex-prisoners often experience stigmatisation and, in turn, intense feelings of shame, which is counterproductive to rehabilitation and reintegration. The ex-inmate stigma can be acutely damaging for women who are perceived as doubly deviant; having violated normative cultural expectations of appropriate femininity in addition to the law (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Moran, 2012; Opsal, 2011). By marking women as *deviant outsiders*, EM exacerbates rather than elevates this issue.

Most interviewees relayed feeling embarrassed and ashamed of wearing EM. They explained that 'people keep looking' (Jarinporn), 'gossiping' (Khemanit) and 'staring'

(Sawika). Wearing EM marked you as ‘different from others and weird’ (Nopjira), ensured you ‘attracted negative attention from society’ (Sushar), ‘made people suspicious of you’ (Nichaphat), and ‘served like a stigma, signifying that you are an offender and making you feel alienated’ (Panalee). EM subsequently guaranteed the disenfranchisement of an already marginalised group. As noted by Kluay, ‘people do not accept ex-offenders, and now people in my community who did not know I was in prison, now they know because they see the EM.’

The shame and associated angst of wearing EM was narrated as being part of the ‘struggle of everyday life’ (Beam), and for nearly a quarter of interviewees, fear of ‘leaving the house [led to] not leaving the house’ (Ploy). For example, Dokmai explained, ‘I am not free to leave. I am on the EM. I am scared that people will think I am a bad person, so I don’t go anywhere.’ Camilla reflected on the perception of women as doubly ‘deviant’. She said, ‘women feel more ashamed. Going to prison is more normal for men, but it isn’t good for women; they look at you and wonder what she has done.’ Gam asked ‘what is the point of EM? People only focus on the EM. EM creates more problems. It puts so much pressure on you. Having people point out that you are a problem. How can this help us live in society?’

Several interviewees also expressed discomfort that being branded *deviant* caused embarrassment and shame to their family members. We were told, ‘I am worried about my family’s feelings; my mother said people keep looking at me’ (Preechaya), ‘I am afraid my daughter is ashamed of me’ (Atsadaporn) and ‘I feel sorry for my family, people gossiped at the market that I am an ex-prisoner. I don’t want my family to be ashamed’ (Tipnaree). It was explained that covering up the EM by wearing long trousers granted some resolution, but even then, the device was difficult to keep hidden because it was so large. For example, 90-year-old Nan said, ‘it is such an embarrassment. Whenever I go outside, I need to put on long trousers to cover the device. Still, if I sit down, everyone can see it. People in the village know they negatively look at you.’

Financial precarity

Poverty frequently underpins criminalisation and as such, securing stable employment is crucial to supporting women’s future potential. Finding adequately paying work alleviates financial stress, enriches emotional well-being, provides a sense of purpose, facilitates participation in family, social and community life, and reduces the chances of coming under pressure to earn a living illegally (Van Olphen et al., 2009). Nonetheless, and as noted previously, post-release from prison, most interviewees were either in low-paying occupations or reliant on intimate partners and family members for financial support.

What became apparent was the instrumental role EM-parole had in creating barriers to financial security, thus, impeding rehabilitation and reintegration. We were told that ‘it is hard to find a job on EM’ (Zee) and that having a job is crucial to ‘not being involved in drugs again’ (Lawan). For most interviewees, being on EM parole created significant practical and psychological barriers to employment and monetary independence. More specifically were: (1) shame and stigma, (2) restricting people’s movements, (3) equipment anxiety (4) the requirement to regularly report. Each are discussed below alongside the impacts of post-release underemployment and economic precarity.

Interviewees expressed to us that ‘employers do not accept ex-offenders [they] think that you are a bad person’ (Ruchira), and wearing EM made this difficult, if not impossible, to hide. Yihwa stated ‘if you apply for a job and you wear EM bracelets, they will look at you; they are afraid of you. If you wear EM bracelets, they think you are a prisoner.’ Yingluck hid her EM device under long pants and managed to secure employment as a ‘cleaner’, but every day, she was stressed and anxious that ‘they will expel me if they find out.’ Mai poignantly said:

The community does not understand that people with drug offences are not all bad. I just want to work; I don’t want to be idle. I want society to give a chance to people in prison. I am willing to do any job I can get. There is a lot of wasted potential in prison; good people who still have more to give.

Interviewees also narrated psychological barriers to finding work. This is understandable. EM tags people as *deviant* and *untrustworthy* and, in turn, causes internalised feelings of shame. Interviewees were acutely aware of job market discrimination and the high probability of being subjected to repeated rejection from employers. Thus, Phailin said, ‘I cannot tolerate judgment and rejection. I only have three months left [on EM], so I will wait and start working after it [EM bracelet] is removed.’

Everyone was restricted to certain geographic areas as part of their EM conditions. This created another impediment to employment and financial stability. As explained by Pakpao, ‘if we cannot find a job near home and need to go and explore further opportunities elsewhere—well, it is not possible.’ Saengduean had been offered jobs in neighbouring districts, but ‘my probation officer will not allow it’. Family and friends presented as critical to finding work but confining EM parolees to zones thwarted this employment avenue. Sanun, for example, said, ‘I want to go and work in Bangkok with my brother. I feel so frustrated that I cannot. This is my main problem with being on EM.’ Equivalently, Sirima juxtaposed confinement on the inside with confinement on the outside. She powerfully explained that EM-parole had put her life on hold by restricting movement and earning potential:

If I cannot travel anywhere, then it is like when I was in prison. The only difference is that I get to be outside, but what remains is the same movement restriction. I cannot really work because I must stay in the district. My brother is in another province and has a job for me. The monthly salary is guaranteed. That would help me a lot in terms of restarting my life. EM has limited my opportunity to earn money and my opportunity to start over.

Other interviewees relayed anxiety about leaving home to find work because they were ‘worried about the battery’ (Laila). Lawan said, ‘I must charge the batter twice a day; it takes a long time. I am stressed that the battery will die out [so] after EM, I will find a job.’ Allowing devices to run out of power is a breach of parole and carries with it the threat of being returned to prison. Interviewees were unsurprisingly apprehensive. Choosing to stay close to home and electricity is completely understandable.

A couple of interviewees expressed that the monthly reporting requirement resulted in them losing income because they had to take a day off work. For example, Wila told us, ‘I am aware of people on EM who have no job, or their job does not pay well. They struggle to come because of the travel expense.’

The barriers created by EM parole caused parolees and their families financial and emotional hardship. For example, Amm relayed the distress she felt being ‘dependent

on [her] adult son'. She said, 'I have not had any money of my own since I left prison. My son buys me food. I need to find a source of funding for myself. My son and his wife argued over me; my daughter-in-law called me a burden. That was very hurtful. I want to be independent.' Under these circumstances, and as Isra rhetorically asked, 'if there are no jobs available when we get released from prison, why would we not go back to selling drugs?'

Familial relationships

Compared to men, positive family relationships are more significant in women's reintegration success (Herrschaft et al., 2009). The reasons for this are two-fold. First, and as seen above, families provide practical help, including financial assistance. Second, families are an important reservoir of emotional support (Arditti & Few, 2008; Cobbina, 2010; Heidemann et al., 2016; Jeffries et al., 2020; Leverentz, 2006, 2011; Opsal, 2015).

For the interviewees, family members, including spouses, were invariably (in over 90% of cases) designated as guardians. Before releasing a woman on EM parole, the Department of Probation undertakes a formal, comprehensive screening and assessment of potential guardians to ensure the provision of a safe and supportive (practically and emotionally) space for parolees. This is an appreciable positive of the EM parole system because returning to unhealthy interpersonal relationships can impede reintegration (Bui & Morash, 2010; Few-Demo & Arditti, 2014). In this regard, the system is supporting re-integration. Indeed, everyone told us that their guardians were 'understanding' (That Sani), 'loving' (Urassaya) and 'supportive' (Yihwa). For families, having a loved one home was better than having them behind bars. Nonetheless, supporting a family member on EM parole was not without challenges. Branding women *deviant* with EM caused emotional and economic burdens to families. Recall Amm's upset at being financially 'dependent on [her] adult son', which was causing him to argue with his wife. Mai said, 'I wear EM, people in the community know I am an ex-prisoner, and my family members lose their reputation and good social status. I do not want to hurt them.'

The chances of re-entry success decrease for women who experience familial difficulties, so EM parole needs to bolster rather than obstruct positive relationships.⁸ In addition to emotional and financial distress, we were also told that familial guardians were required by the probation service to function as adjunct police, surveilling and controlling their loved ones. Unsurprisingly, this can strain and potentially cause conflict in these crucial relationships. For example, Boribun relayed:

My mother must be like the police; she must control me. She will not let me go and visit my friends because she is worried that I might get into trouble with the probation office; my mum having to control me is very uncomfortable for us.

Another way that EM parole hindered familial connection was by restricting people's movements. For example, after serving many years in prison and rarely seeing her

⁸Women who are deprived of familial love and support, are more likely to face post-release challenges (Jeffries et al., 2020). Family reunification can also mean confronting issues allied with women's initial imprisonment e.g., intimate partners may be *deviant/criminal*, and abusive, leading women back down a path to substance abuse and lawbreaking (Bui & Morash, 2010; Few-Demo & Arditti, 2014). Likewise, motherhood can act as a motivator for re-entry success, but it can also cause strain and maternal distress increasing the chances of substance abuse as a coping mechanism, and re-criminalisation (Arditti & Few, 2006 & 2008; Brown & Bloom, 2009; Harm & Phillips, 2001).

ageing mother, who suffered from health problems and found travelling difficult, Baifern had to ‘wait until I get rid of my EM [before] I visit my mother [because] she lives in another province, and I must stay within this area.’ Not being able to travel with family, to care for family, and to attend important events with family also obstructed post-imprisonment relational re-engagement.

Design and technology

As noted above, EM bracelets were frequently (82%) described as too large and, in turn, difficult to cover up. We were told by over half the interviewees that the device is ‘very heavy’ (Ink) and ‘uncomfortable’ (Nan). ‘Friction around the area’ (Yihwa) could irritate the skin, causing itching, rashes, and bruising. EM was also ‘uncomfortable at sleeping time’ (Nan), ‘hurt if you have a long walk’ (Samanthachat) and ‘got very hot’ (Maylada) during charging, which caused angst about being ‘electrocuted or burnt’ (Ungsumalynn).

Ensuring EM devices remained in good condition and that the battery was never depleted was a standard parole condition. Charging anxiety was prevailing and commonplace. Nearly everyone (over 75%) expressed fear about the battery running out. We were told that ‘older’ devices could ‘run out [of power] several times a day’ (Fonthip). As noted previously, this apprehension impeded employment, but more generally, it tethered people to the home where electricity was easily accessed. For example, Aokbab relayed ‘I need to charge the device, so it is not convenient for me to go anywhere. I am worried about the battery.’

Battery anxiety was compounded for those living in remote areas where electricity was unreliable and easily severed by weather events. For example, Gao-Jer relayed, ‘where I live, the electricity is not stable, so I worry I will not be able to charge my EM bracelet’. Living in isolated regions also caused angst due to poor signal strength. When batteries were depleted or signals were lost, the EM device alarm would be triggered, and this was described as a nerve-racking experience.

Violations and re-criminalisation

None of the EM parolees were re-arrested or returned to prison. They reflected that EM parole could not stop people from breaching the law because it ‘does not have eyes on you. If a woman wants to use drugs, she will’ (Araya). Others deliberated that EM parole might increase the possibility of re-criminalisation by compounding the adverse conditions giving rise to imprisonment in the first place. Busarakham mockingly asked, ‘how does EM stop people from re-offending? When we get released from prison, we have no money, no jobs and with EM, we are not free to look for work.’ Usa said, ‘it makes women feel pressured, so if a woman is under EM for a very long time, surely, she will do drugs.’

Less than 10% relayed violating conditions, but this was always inadvertent, careless or beyond their control. For example, allowing your EM device to run out of charge constitutes a breach, but as noted above, when this happened, it was habitually a battery, not a person problem. Nalin had inadvertently and unintentionally breached curfew by using the outhouse at night. Her curfew which began at 10 pm, required Nalin to stay within

the four walls of her house rather than the property parameters. Her probation officer was unable (or perhaps unwilling) to expand the curfew exclusion zone by a few meters to include the outhouse, so Nalin had to ‘bring a bucket inside the house at night in case I need the toilet.’ However, it was heartening to hear from the women that probation officers were not reporting these inadvertent breaches to higher authorities.

Supervision, reporting, programmes and other support

All interviewees reported for one-on-one supervisory sessions with their probation officers monthly. This could ‘take all day [because] there are a lot of people coming to report and you needed to wait your turn’ (Beam). Reporting environments were overcrowded, time-poor (a 15–30-minute exchange between a parolee and their probation officer) and devoid of privacy. We were told that ‘when I report, tables are next to one another. There is no privacy; it is over in 15 min. I rarely talk about personal stuff’ (Baifern). While probation officers were ‘polite’ and ‘kind’, these brief interactions were merely a ‘box ticking’ (Dokmai) drill. Yung Ying said, ‘they don’t ask much; they just tick the box.’ One time, Piti ‘raised a problem but was shrugged off and just asked to sign.’

Supervisory meetings were overwhelmingly (in more than 90% of cases) experienced as exercises in surveillance, risk management and compliance rather than supportive spaces aimed at addressing needs, gender-specific or otherwise. While always delivered in a ‘friendly’ (Porche), ‘well-mannered’ (Nan) and ‘gentle’ (Fah) way, this approach still invoked feelings of fear and anxiety and prevented women from asking for help. We were told, ‘my probation officer is kind; they do not want me to end up back in prison, so they keep warning me not to breach my conditions. They never ask if I need help. I am worried I will get into trouble if I ask’ (Malai). Han said ‘they remind me repeatedly about the conditions, what I must do, that I should not breach because there will be consequences. I feel very pressured.’ Some challenged this mollified castigation. Waan articulated:

They do not ask me about my well-being; they just talk about how important it is to comply. They don’t ask about what my problems are; they only tell me what I can and cannot do. They don’t focus on our lives; they only care about the rules; according to the rules, we need to do this and that. They should ask about our well-being, about the situation we are in. They should try and get into our hearts rather than just talking about the rules. How can people dare to speak about how they feel when we are never asked? They don’t care about us. They are just doing a job. They cannot understand our situation because they have lived a different life. They never ask, so how can they understand the things we face?

When asked about programs and other rehabilitative/reintegration supports, nearly everyone (close to 100%) relayed that there was ‘nothing on offer’ (Ink). Finding employment was a key concern for many, yet no one received help to find work from the probation service. We were told, ‘I do not think probation can help us; when I asked about helping me find a job, they told me to go to the Department of Labour’ (Noi). Periodically, EM parolees were involved in group activities that took place on monthly reporting days. These sessions focussed on ‘drug education and prevention’ (Pakpao). Like the

supervision meetings, these group undertakings were characterised by control and risk management. The aim was 'to teach [us] not to get involved with drugs anymore and follow the rules' (Zee).

Summary, discussion, and future research directions

We found that women's criminalisation trajectories were facilitated by a configuration of multifaceted, commonly interconnected vulnerabilities and harms. Our interviewees were predominantly victim-survivors who had endured a plethora of interpersonal (e.g., familial violence), state (i.e., police corruption) and social structural abuses (e.g., poverty). Most significant in terms of pathways to prison were financial insecurity, familial caretaking, victimisation, trauma, addiction, harmful intimacy with men and limited access to justice. These findings support the extensive extant feminist pathways literature (in Thailand and beyond), augment the logic of the Bangkok Rules and adjacent calls for gender-sensitive systems of justice that address women's needs (Chuenurah et al., 2022; Jeffries & Jefferson, 2022).

International norms and standards are clear; non-custodial measures must be rehabilitative and gender-sensitive (UN General Assembly, 2010; UNODC, 2020). More specifically, in line with best practice norms and standards, we would expect to find:

- That the caretaking responsibilities and other gendered needs of women on EM parole were being taken into account by Thailand's Department of Probation (Bangkok Rule 63)
- Interventions being made by the Department to address the most common problems leading to women's contact with the criminal justice system. This should include the provision of therapeutic courses and counselling for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse; suitable treatment for mental ill-health; educational and training programmes for improving employment prospects (Bangkok Rules 60); and the provision of gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, women-only substance treatment programmes (Bangkok Rule 62).
- Specific measures and ongoing support should be provided by the Department of Probation to protect women from post-release victimisation, stigmatisation, familial disconnection, and other obstacles that may impede successful reintegration (UNODC, 2020, p. 54).
- Partnerships between the Department of Probation and community groups including NGOs that can connect women on EM parole to ongoing relevant support. Care should be extended to those who have lived with or are at risk of violence (UNODC, 2020, p. 54; Bangkok Rule 47).
- The provision of various educational and vocational training opportunities by the Department of Probation alongside other initiatives aimed at improving and supporting women's post-release employment prospects and socio-economic vulnerability (UNODC, 2020, p. 15).
- That EM is only being utilised for women on parole as a final recourse to protect public safety (UNODC, 2020, p. 29 & 50).
- That before attaching EM, due consideration is being given to the gender-specific impacts. For women and their families, the stress, stigma and shame of being

branded a criminal is especially severe (UNODC, 2020, p. 56). If EM must be attached to a woman, it should not set them up to fail. Rather it must:

- Be combined with support and supervision by probation staff committed to rehabilitation with the leeway to meet women's changing needs including not having to report minor breachers to higher authorities (UNODC, 2020, p. 55).
- Take women's familial caretaking responsibilities and income-earning obligations into account (UNODC, 2020, p. 55).

On paper, and according to the Thailand Department of Probation (2023), parole and EM should be rehabilitative, support reintegration, reduce recidivism and promote 'the treatment of offenders in accordance with international norms and standards.' However, in practice, our research suggests international norms and standards including the rehabilitative and reintegrative needs of women are being negated. In other words, there is a clear chasm between what the government purports and the lived experiences of criminalised women. Below, we discuss this in more detail and reference back, in brackets, to the applicable bullet points above.

While pre-release screening by probation officers ensured that women were not leaving prison and returning home to family violence (UNODC, 2020, p. 54), there were no interventions to address the most common problems leading to women's contact with the criminal justice system (Bangkok Rules 60 and 62). Namely, financial insecurity, familial caretaking responsibilities, victimisation, trauma, addiction, harmful intimacy with men and limited access to justice. Neither were there any community-departmental partnerships connecting women with relevant support (Bangkok Rule 47, 60 & 62; UNODC, 2020, p. 54).

Women's income-earning obligations were negated. Attendance at supervision meetings was reported to cause financial strain for some (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, p. 55). Rather than encouraging women's income-earning potential, being on EM parole, was practically and psychologically obstructive (UNODC, 2020, p. 15). Given the centrality of poverty to women's lawbreaking alongside the importance of employment and financial security to women's reintegration success, this is deeply concerning (UNODC, 2020, p. 15). There were no educational or training programmes for improving employment prospects (Bangkok Rule 60). Furthermore, EM marked women as *deviant*. This compounded the stigma of the ex-inmate label and paralleling previous research, locked many out of the job market (Carlton & Segrave, 2014; Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014; Opsal, 2011). International norms and standards are clear, women must be supported and protected from stigmatisation (UNODC, 2020, p. 54).

Fear that EM devices would run out of battery and confinement within certain geographic areas, also fraught women's prospects of economic security and independence. Thus, employment and socioeconomic vulnerability were compromised rather than improved by being EM parole (UNODC, 2020, p. 15 & 54). Barriers to successful reintegration were not being addressed (UNODC, 2020, pp. 54–56). Instead, EM parole was setting women up to fail (UNODC, 2020, p. 55). For example, recall what Isra said, 'if there are no jobs, why would we not go back to selling drugs?' Yet, as a testament to the resilience of women, and in line with previous research showing acquiescence is gendered, no one did (King & Gibbs, 2003, p. 119).

Likewise, while positive familial relationships are enormously influential in reintegration success (Arditti & Few, 2008; Cobbina, 2010; Herrschaft et al., 2009; Heidemann et al., 2016; Jeffries et al., 2020; Opsal, 2015) specific measures, and ongoing support to protect women from familial disconnection, were non-existent (UNODC, 2020, pp. 54–56). Again, being on EM parole was counterproductive. The stigma of marking women *deviant* was negatively felt by families who, if appointed guardians, were further required to surveil and shoulder the economic burden of supporting loved ones with limited income-earning potential (UNODC, 2020, p. 56). Restricting women's movements also hindered inter-family reaffiliation.

Currently, EM is not being used as a final resource to protect public safety. Before attaching EM to a woman on parole, due consideration is not being given to the gender-specific impacts (UNODC, 2020, pp. 29–50 & 56). At the directive of the Thailand Ministry of Justice, nearly everyone released on parole will be subject to EM. Nevertheless, as shown in this paper and previous research, women formerly imprisoned for breaking Thailand's drug laws pose little risk to community security (Jeffries, Chuenurah and Wallis 2019; Jeffries et al., 2020). They are imprisoned for relatively minor acts, rarely re-criminalised and express a strong willingness to comply with the criminal justice system-imposed conditions (Jeffries, Chuenurah and Wallis 2019; Jeffries et al., 2020). Also consider, as a candid example, 90-year-old Nan who used a mobility device to move around. The danger Nan posed to society was non-existent, but the shame caused by tagging her with EM was disquieting.

Women's interactions with the probation service were experienced as fleeting box-ticking exercises in surveillance, control, containment, and compliance rather than supportive confidential spaces of care where you could be open and honest about your struggles (Morash et al., 2015; Pollack, 2009). Reporting environments were overcrowded, time-poor and devoid of privacy. Reflecting previous studies in this area, during supervision meetings, women felt like they were risks being managed rather than people with needs to be addressed (Morash et al., 2015; Opsal, 2009, 2015; Pollack, 2009). This is, at best, invalidating, at worst, stress-inducing and unremittingly counterproductive (Morash et al., 2015). As per international norms and standards, privacy, a basic human right as per the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, was being ignored, and gendered needs were not being addressed (Bangkok Rule 63). There was an apparent departmental inability to support rehabilitation (UNODC, 2020, p. 55). Even the EM bracelet itself negatively impacted because women's gender-specific needs were not considered in the design (Bangkok Rule 63). Like their counterparts in the international literature, having been designed by men for men, women subjected to EM in Thailand relayed that devices were large, cumbersome, and uncomfortable to wear (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014).

In line with international norms and standards, probation officers were not reporting minor breaches to higher authorities (UNODC, 2020, p. 55). Nevertheless, paralleling previous knowledge in this area, EM parole was an inflexible tool applied equally without gendered consideration (Holdsworth & Hucklesby, 2014, p. 15) and probation officers seemed averse to varying conditions, even ones that seemed inane (UNODC, 2020, p. 55). For example, recall Nalin's outhouse issue. Being under a night-time curfew meant Nalin needed to stay confined within her main residential dwelling. Going to the outhouse after 10 pm was an EM parole breach. Her probation officer

would not vary this condition, so at night, Nalin had to use a bucket inside her home as a toilet. As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human beings have a fundamental right to dignity. Being forced to relieve yourself in this way is degrading and using a bucket during menstruation, is conceivably a good deal worse.

In the short term, at least, Thailand's Department of Probation should be working toward developing gender-sensitive curriculums of care, support, and rehabilitation for women on EM parole in line with international norms as standards (i.e., Bangkok Rules and UNODC 2020 best practice guidelines for non-custodial measures). In the long term, imprisoning women for behaviours of survival executed in response to subjugation must stop. Additionally, a comprehensive examination of Thailand's drug laws is vital because unrelenting and unnecessary punitiveness continues to propel obscene numbers of women into prison (Chuenurah et al., 2022). The only way to sustainably reduce prison overcrowding is for the ineffective drug war to stop.

In terms of directions for future research, to date, most studies exploring criminalised women's criminal justice system experiences have focussed on prison. This has led to a sparsity of knowledge about non-custodial measures. The research reported in this article adds another voice to the limited body of research exploring women's experiences of EM and parole. However, it is limited to a sample of women formerly imprisoned for a specific type of lawbreaking within one country's system of criminal justice. If we are going to provide a solid foundation for evidence-based policy and practice, further research should be undertaken in Thailand and worldwide to understand women's experiences of EM, parole, and other non-custodial measures. In addition to speaking to criminalised women, it would be useful to get the perspectives of probation/parole staff. Our research showed that despite official government claims that EM parole should align with international norms and standards, from the perspective of criminalised women, this is not translating into practice. Understanding the glaring disjuncture between government discourse and experience was beyond the scope of our study but could be elucidated by speaking with those officially tasked with supporting women post-release. Further, it will be useful for future researchers concerned with gender and non-custodial measures in Thailand to consider the experiences of men, Tomboys, and other gender sexual minority groups. Unfortunately, with few Tomboys in our sample, we could not say anything independently meaningful about their experiences. Likewise, our research suggests that down the line, intersections between gender and other marginalised social status including ethnic minority status and older age, should be comprehensively explored.

Disclosure statement

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