

3836727 SHES/M : MAJOR:ETHICAL STUDIES; M.A.(ETHICAL STUDIES)

KEY WORDS : MORAL REASONING/DELINQUENTS

NAOWARAT CHALERMSRI : A STUDY OF MORAL REASONING OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS IN THE CENTRAL OBSERVATION AND PROTECTION CENTER. THESIS ADVISORS : SIVALEE SIRILAI, M.A., NIRAN PANTHARAKIT, M.A., POL.LT.COL. CHAVENGSAK SINSOONGSUD, M.A. 156 P. ISBN 974-663-636-7

The purpose of this research was to study the moral reasoning of juvenile delinquents involving their family background. The target groups consisted of 200 males from the Central Observation and Protection Center in Ban-Karuna, Thailand, and 50 females from the Central Observation and Protection Center in Ban-Pranee, Thailand.

Five ethical principles; fidelity, tolerance, carefulness, compassion, and critical thinking in problem solving were emphasized in this study. Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory and Buddhist Ethics were used as a base for this study.

The findings of the study show that moral reasoning concerning fidelity, tolerance, compassion, and critical thinking of both male and female juvenile delinquents were high in the 5<sup>th</sup> stage; fulfilling societal expectations. Carefulness was in the 4<sup>th</sup> stage; conforming to social convention. However moral reasoning concerning avoiding punishment, serving one's own needs, and self interest were low, in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stages.

In spite of similar family backgrounds, the moral reasoning of female delinquents was in the 5<sup>th</sup> degree, while male delinquents were in the 4<sup>th</sup> degree. Most delinquents possessed moral knowledge and sensitivity, but did not exhibit this in their actions. Lack of affection, low education, poverty, and an inadequate family environment were significant factors affecting their behavior.

Family, school, religion, and government should work collaboratively to bring the youth back to a decent life. Especially in Thai society, a Buddhist society; Buddhist ethics should be applied actively.