



## Research Article

# A Three-Dimensional Model for the Development of an Ethical Landscape: A Case Study of the Ethical Environment in the Province of Chiang Rai

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## Abstract

The issue of the development of an ethical landscape in Chiang Rai which forms the basis for this research is in line with the provincial policy to transform society as it now is into a more ethical society with a focus on the key values - discipline, sufficiency, honesty and empathy. The first objective was to study the ethical environment, the second was to analyze the data on ethical issues, and the third was to design an ethics model. This research methodologically uses statistical analysis after exploring news items and other data directly related to the four ethical values over the last three years. Then questionnaires were created for the following six sectors of society namely: private sector, public sector, educational sector, religious sector, media sector, and general social sector. Interviews with key informants were then carried out. The findings reveal both positive and negative aspects in three areas namely; the mental condition of individuals, societal behavior and effects from the environment. Data revealed a high suicide rate indicating a need for the development of self-esteem, an understanding of one's true nature and the cultivation of mindfulness. Data revealed a high rate of road accidents, drug abuse, and the smuggling of goods over the border indicating the need to build trust and cooperation within communities. As for natural disasters a lack of environmental respect still persists; and the evolution from agricultural to non-rural societies has brought about the weakening of social ties and is having a negative effect on the new generation growing up in a fragile ecosystem and without a foundation in ethical values. The development of a strong ethical approach in all of the three main areas mentioned above is therefore imperative in order to build the foundations for a better society in Chiang Rai.

**Keywords:** Three-Dimensional Model, Ethical Landscapes, Ethical Environment

## Introduction

### Background Study

Chiang Rai, the northern most province bordering two countries - Myanmar and Laos, comprises of diverse ethnic communities which live and work in harmony. This reflects at all levels of society - individual relationships, civil society as well as in the functioning of both private and governmental organizations. The Chiang Rai Administration focuses on the overall wellbeing of its people by promoting its unique cultural traditions along with providing security from the looming threats of drugs, crime, social crises and disasters. In order to align the progressive development of Chiang Rai to the Governor's Vision Model, the focus is on four major areas, namely - cleanliness, aesthetic beautification, security, a qualitative standard of living and a strong economy. The achievement of this vision to steer and transform the province into an ethical society rests primarily on four values which are - discipline, self-sufficiency, honesty and empathy. The Moral Promotion Center has acknowledged the necessity of such a development and granted the Mae Fah Luang University the role of undertaking the research in the ethical domain at the grassroot level through an academic framework applying the experimental methodology as a pilot project to achieve the said vision. Subsequently, on behalf of the Academic Organization, the Mae Fah Luang University has undertaken the study of the ethical environment in Chiang Rai.

### Research Objectives

1. To study the ethical environment in Chiang Rai
2. To analyse the research findings
3. To design an ethic model

More clearly, from the above objectives, the points of ethical environment: sufficiency, discipline, honesty and empathy are the main focus for this research. The first step is to gather the data of the four issues from the news over the last three years, then secondly is to study the opinions based on the news data by questionnaires and interviews at both individuals and the organizational levels<sup>1</sup>. However, the importance of ethical environment is specifically related to the daily activities of the people which impact on the society as a whole. The reason is that the ways people pursue their ways of life with proper sufficiency, good discipline, honestly and empathy are necessary for the better society.

For the ethics model, at the end of the research, the ideal concepts of mental condition particularly on individuals, societal behavior and effects from the environment will be organized followed by the systematized design of the circumstances in Chiang Rai society under the development of provincial policy.

### Review of Literature and Previous Study

#### Capital

'Capital' is defined as a possession belonging to a person which can increase in terms of quantity. It can either be in the form of money, machines, tools or facilities offered which is a cumulative capital. Additionally, 'capital' also includes land and the labor - force used for the purpose of production. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (1993) states that the Latin root of the word 'capital' is 'capitalism' which is derived from the word 'capit' meaning 'head'. Hence, it is directly rooted in trading and possession of herds.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals and the organizational levels involve with persons and groups of people who are in charge with the six sectors namely: private sector, public sector, educational sector, religious sector, and general social sector. As the sectors are the significant dynamics to drive and grow Chiang Rai society as a whole.

A prominent German philosophy, Marx (1992), explained the meaning of 'capital' in sociological terms. It can be defined as "that amount of wealth which is used in making profits and which enters into the accounts". In Marxian theory, variable capital refers to capitalist's investment in labor-power seen as the only source of surplus-value. Capitalism mainly aims to achieve profits and advantages by setting accumulation as the major method. Capitalism was widely spread in the 19th century when liberalism and the industrial revolution grew rapidly. In the *Das Kapital*, 'capital' is classified into two forms: constant capital and variable capital (3 vol., 1867 - 1894) So, the concept of the turning point of the word 'constant capital' is the establishment of the turn from capital to culture which can obviously see in terms of 'sphere of circulation' followed by Marx's point in the end of this research (Moseley, n.d.). Adopting slightly more critical stance, as Marx acknowledges 'the amount of wealth which is used in making profits', the fact is that the prominence in the four-ethic culture in Chiang Rai people which is a big amount of wealth (constant capital) is needed to build up much more by the provincial development strategy. And that can be circulated for further sustainable strong points for the better society.

### **Cultural Capital versus Moral Capital**

Cultural capital is defined as that which a person imbibes from the society he/she lives in which comprises the social assets of a person - education, intellect, style of speech, dress, mannerisms that promote social mobility in a stratified society.

Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, defined cultural capital as the familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society. However, he distinguished between three forms of capital that can determine people's social position: economic, social and cultural capital.

### **Concept of Power and the Intellectual**

Another important concept is how to build Idealism through hegemony of the intellectuals. In order to do so, according to Antonio Gramsci, there are two foci, which are - 'War of position' and 'Historical bloc'. Gramsci further explained the concept of 'group history', which is a concept used as a placement of Marxist socio-economic concept termed 'Economism' or 'Economic Determinism' to explain the social relation between different classes.

### **Intellectual**

In Gramsci's view, everyone is considered an intellectual, but not everyone has an opportunity to represent their role as an intellectual. He classified intellectuals into two types: (1) Traditional Intellectuals are the ones who are responsible only for themselves and their original communities. (2) Organic Intellectuals are those who move from their original communities or classes, for instance, those who are actually laborers becoming political activists.

Both types of intellectuals have never separated, but they play an important role that is likely to have an impact on the society. Gramsci saw the role of an intellectual as crucial in creating a counter hegemony. The labor process was at the core of the class struggle but it was the ideological struggle that had to be addressed if the lot of the masses was to be changed.

### **Concept of Morality**

Morality is a code of conduct laid down by a society or a group (religion) delineating that which is acceptable and that which is not. In the Thai society, morality is defined as belief carrying out good deeds that characterize the individual consciousness (Office of the Permanent Secretary for Education, 2017). Moreover, Na Nakhon (2012) states that 'virtue' and 'merit' mean 'goodness', but manifest as two distinct values. 'Virtue' is defined as a spiritual goodness which is intangible unlike 'merit' which is concrete in the form of a good act. Kemmanee (2003) explains that morality is the attribute or condition of one's belief system.

**Previous Study**

Various studies on morality have been carried out in Thailand. For example, Ophap (2017), has done a case study on morality that is needed in Chiang Rai. In order to build Chiang Rai into a moral society, Ophap collected data from various sources such as the government sector, the private sector, civil society, media and the general population. The study shows that to transform Chiang Rai into a society of high ethical standard, there are five aspects of morality that play a major role: honesty, good governance, empathy, consciousness and discipline. Furthermore, Ariya et al. (2019), studied the development of students’ ethical code in Chiang Rai Rajabhat University Demonstration School. The study showed that students elicited a fairly good ethical standard on using qualitative methods in conducting the research. In addition, the school has a clear vision combined with a concrete strategy to achieve the said goal.

**Research Methodology Approach**

To satisfy the objectives of the research, both qualitative and quantitative approach which are mixed techniques have been employed. The findings have been collected from both primary and secondary data.

The major advantage of the qualitative technique is that it is suitable for the small pocket of samples which represent accurate and specific information. On the other hand, the quantitative technique has been used by the researchers to view the number of dates classified into essential types. Thus, in the research, mixed techniques have been used in order to lead to satisfactory results.

**Method of Data Collection**

Based on the objectives of this research, in-depth interviews have been used. Interviews were held with six representatives from each of the identified six areas of population for the research in Chiang Rai which are - the government sector, the private sector, the educational sector, the religious sector, the media and the civil society. The interview questions have been designed based on the prevailing ethical environment in Chiang Rai. In addition, an online survey has been used to collect the data. The researchers chalked out the survey questions targeting the population between the range of 18 to 60 years. The number of responses taken have been in the ratio applicable to make further analysis.

**Table 1** The guideline and the validity of the question

Direction/purpose of question	Points of the question	Examples of the question
To study general problem	Opinions on the four ethics	The ethics studied in this research namely; sufficiency, discipline, honesty and empathy, so we would like to know what are the most and the least ethics do Chiang Rai people have?
To find out the factor	The answer from the surveys to the in-depth interviews	According to the primary results on the issue of sufficiency which showed that most of Chiang Rai people did not likely pay attention to self-sufficiency, what do you think about this surveys’ results?
To cover the solution	The criteria for more discipline	For ‘discipline’, do you think what should be the proper solutions or criteria to drive Chiang Rai people have more discipline for the sake of better quality of life in the future?
<b><u>Validity and of the question</u></b>		
The design of the question has divided into 3 steps. First is most of the questions will start with the general situations or problems in order to realize the overview of the circumstances. Next is to study reasons how and why the problems take place. And the last is to study every aspect of the situations in order to design the model which is about to answer objective 3.		
<b><u>Reliability of the question</u></b>		
- The source of every question firstly comes from the surveys not imagination. - The designs of the questions are followed by the objectives and checked by the academic persons or search scholars.		

## **Data analysis**

The content and data which are gathered from an online survey and interviews are analyzed into categorized themes. To analyze the data, the researchers check the missing data and outliers after which the data is analyzed using statistical software SPSS. Furthermore, the interviews and results from an online survey are transcribed and discourse analysis conducted in order to complete and satisfy the research objectives.

The mixed methods used in this research are most likely to lead to a more accurate result. An online survey which is a quantitative method may not be able to represent the in-depth information, but the data can be categorized into themes which is effective for further analysis, whereas interviews which are a qualitative method, is used as well. To conduct the research, more in-depth perceptions and perspectives of participants towards the ethical situations in Chiang Rai is needed as the results do not reflect the generalized population beyond the display group.

As both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in this research, so, in order to clarify the process of methodology, the next is about to show the steps how data have been collected and analyzed as follows;

Step one is the gathering of the concerned information from the news in the last three years. The examples are in the points of Suicidal statistics and Accidental statistics (on the next

page). The statistics actually are for the database for the next steps.

Step two is the study of the information. The items will be categorized year by year, then it will be analyzed by using statistical software SPSS before making graphs and charts.

Step three is the design of questionnaires followed by points of ethics which are sent to the individuals.

Step four is the data collection and analysis from questionnaires by using statistical software SPSS before additionally making graphs and charts.

Last step is the design of the questions for in-depth interview from the analyzed answers which are shown in numerical results. All interviewed answers will be analyzed and classified in order to draw the model in the end.

### **1. Ethical Environment**

The researchers collected 499 ethical situations related to various sectors of society from 47 online news agencies during a 2-year period from 2017-2019. These were slotted into 4 ethical categories: sufficiency, discipline, honesty and empathy. The 499 pieces of research data were categorized accordingly. On analysis, 275 out of the 499 situations reflected conformity to a reasonably good ethical standard whereas 224 reflected a low ethical standard. An overall analysis of the 499 ethical situations in Chiang Rai showed that these were reflected in the following sectors of society: (1) economy, (2) tourism, (3) supportive neighborhoods, (4) availability of equal opportunities to all levels of community, (5) inter-faith harmony (6) a high level of consciousness of promotion of local art and culture. On the other hand, the areas which reflect a low ethical standard in Chiang Rai are related to a high incidence of (1) suicide, (2) accidents and (3) crime.

### **2. Statistics**

#### **2.1 Suicidal Statistics**

According to the Department of Mental Health (2018), Chiang Rai was one of the top 10 provinces having a high number of suicides which was at 11.70% per ten thousand populations. Moreover, when comparing to the year 2017, the rate of suicide in Chiang Rai increased by 0.30%. Comparison based on gender (2018) showed that the suicide rate among males was significantly higher than females which was 19.16% in males in contrast to 4.52% in females.

#### **2.2 Accident Statistics**

From the year 2017 to 2019, findings have shown that the number of road accidents increase every year. It can be seen obviously from the results of the injured

numbers. They were 5,904,6,140, and 6,618 respectively. Chiang Rai is rated as having the second highest number of road accidents among the 8 provinces in Northern Thailand.

### 3. Surveys

#### 3.1 General Information of the Respondents

The 302 respondents are females, aged between 36-54 years. The educational level of most of the respondents is a Bachelor's Degree working as government officers.

#### 3.2 Findings on the 4 Ethical Categories at the Individual Level: Efficiency, Discipline, Honesty, and Empathy

Findings show 71.52% of the total respondents, 302, in the category of 'honesty' felt that they always stood by that which is just and right; 70.52% of the respondents in the category of 'discipline' stated self-discipline as being practiced; 70.19% of the respondents in the category of 'empathy' expressed their loyalty and gratitude to the country; 45.36% respondents viewed their consumer habits as being 'sufficiency'.

#### 3.3 Findings on the 4 Ethical Categories at the Organizational Level: The Ethical Environment at the Organizational Level in Chiang Rai

At the organizational level, findings reveal a 52% of respondents in the category of 'sufficiency' who expressed that the budget was used appropriately; in the category of 'empathy' 54% of the respondents agreed that the organizations have encouraged and promoted projects for the public good; in the category of 'discipline' over 70% of the respondents agreed that they showed respect and strictly followed the organizational rules; in the category of 'honesty', 70% of respondents stated that they worked sincerely for their organizations.

#### 3.4 Findings on the 4 Ethical Categories at the Community Level: The Ethical Environment at the Community Level in Chiang Rai

Findings show that in the category of 'honesty' 35% of the respondents believed that honesty is rooted in a morality based on one's belief system and traditions; in the category of 'empathy', 35% agreed that unity and volunteering were the values upheld; in the category of 'sufficiency', 36.40% of the respondents felt that an attitude of flexibility under unexpected circumstances was outstanding; in the category of 'discipline', 56.40% of the respondents agreed that people respected and upheld the law.

The overall consensus among the respondents studied from the research on the delineated 4 ethics, namely - efficiency, honesty, discipline and empathy, 'sufficiency' ranked as the strongest ethic in Chiang Rai in contrast to 'discipline' which ranked the lowest. Hence, even the data from the individuals and the details from organizational levels cannot be comparable as the answers from the individuals mostly were numeric whereas the answers from the organizational levels mainly were opinions, but, according to the study from overall aspects, they show that the tendencies on the interest of the four ethics were similar. These can be seen in the next explanations below.

#### Situations in Depth

The researchers have collected data from 6 representatives of 6 main networks. The research data focuses on 3 main areas -

1. To study the existing ethical environment in the said networks
2. To resolve ethical challenges in the existing environment
3. Improvement of the ethical environment.

### **1. Government Networks**

The strategies at the National level are filtered down to various government networks in the provinces. The Chiang Rai Provincial Office implements these projects and policies. The challenges confronted here are corruption and neglect of duty. The existing environment needs to be improved in terms of efficacy in duty, accelerate the functioning of public services in order to render it effective and to focus more on common interests.

### **2. Private Organisations' Networks**

There are various private businesses in Chiang Rai which collaborate under the umbrella of 'associations', thereby assisting each other. The challenges encountered here are- coordination among the organizations; the detrimental effects on the environment; need of expansion of organic products; creating a rapport with the customer; awareness regarding safe consumption; placement of the local product at the global market through government support.

### **3. Educational Networks**

There are both formal and non-formal educational organizations in Chiang Rai. There are multiple challenges in the environment that need to be faced squarely. Some of which are - manipulated school budgets, lack of honesty during examinations, the adolescent population indulging in high risk behaviors resulting in unwanted pregnancies, drug addiction; lacking knowledge of local traditions and culture, lack of discipline, lack of time management skills, lack of social and communication skills.

### **4. Religious Networks**

Chiang Rai is an inter-religious and multi-cultural society. There are many religious networks: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hindu, Sikh and Baha'i. The role of some of these organizations is to evangelize and impart moral education. The challenges faced in these networks

are - the method used to impart the belief system along with tradition to the young generation is prejudiced and alienating. Therefore, it does not sit well with this group of population. To improve the prevailing environment of disinterest and distrust, purposeful programs based on Scriptures need to be implemented.

### **5. Media Networks**

In Chiang Rai, media organizations work from office spaces as well as online and have a close interaction. The problems that the media organizations unanimously agree to are - that there is disunity among their network, reporting of inappropriate news and lack of media ethics. In order to improve the ethical environment, media ethics need to be cultivated and dissemination of accurate information is imperative.

### **6. Civil Society Network**

Civil society network includes the community, family, youth and children. Each of this sector has its supportive structure which inculcates an ethical system. The foremost challenge facing this population is the impending risks to the youth and children due to exposure to uncensored technology; the lack of discipline; disregard for the rights of others; unwillingness to accept differing perspectives. The resolution of this conflict is by creating an environment conducive to respecting the rights of others, acknowledging and accepting differences and inculcating self-responsibility.

Last but not least, the above problems are able to be relevant slightly to the four principles, and even it is true that every network certainly makes the ethics important. But, they vary, as each one of the ethics will be adapted in accordance with the basic policies of its networks.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter clarifies objective 2 and 3 by providing the analysis and discussions based on the previous chapter which deals with facts regarding the study of the ethical environment in Chiang Rai. The research has been

undertaken primarily to support the working process of the Moral Assembly Division and secondly to bring about the Provincial Ethics Model. Indicatively, the numbers from graphs and charts of the four categories of ethic studied have formed the actualizing appearances into two significant points - The three research findings of the ethical landscape developed and the mutual components of the ethical model.

### The Development of an Ethical Model Based on the 3 Findings

The research results have been studied and analyzed according to Pierre Bourdieu's theory which emphasizes

on the 3 Types of Capital. In order to significantly upgrade ethics in the Chiang Rai community, it needs to take into account the development of ethics in three spheres based on Bourdieu's theory, which are - 'Culture Capital', 'Education Capital', and 'Economic Capital'. This suggests that the areas having a strong value for culture, sound education, and a substantial economic level are likely to be creative and wealthy. Based on this assumption, a model of ethics has been created from the findings under the four categories of ethics (honesty, sufficiency, empathy and discipline). The model has been distributed into three domains - a mental domain, a social domain and an environmental domain.



Figure 1 Model of Ethics in Chiang Rai

### Mental Domain

Statistical records of the past three years show that the suicide rate in Chiang Rai is quite high in ratio to its population. However, compared to other northern provinces the rate is much lower. There are multiple causative factors. Therefore, to counter this issue the first step to be taken under the domain of mental development is the strengthening of one's mind. Being patient, having a strong sense of self-esteem, understanding one's true nature - are some of the few

dimensions which need to be inculcated within the individual. According to Bourdieu, the development of mental regulations build up a 'culture capital' in the long run thus ameliorating the incidence of suicide. He further adds, that cultivating morality needs to begin at a tender age and continue through the developing years.

To enhance the development of the mental domain, the creation of harmony in one's mindset and community is of utmost necessity. The Voluntary Project Policy

instituted by the government for the nation has ushered a good response by Chiang Rai. The Chiang Rai society created related networks to support the policy. Volunteers have been recruited from both private and public sectors of the community. As a result of this, during crises, people from all sectors of the community have worked together in harmony to offer assistance.

### **Social Domain**

The existing scenario in the social domain reflects the population's gross violation of traffic rules. This is a serious issue which needs to be grappled with on a war footing. Statistics reveal that Chiang Rai ranks the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country in the highest rate of accidents which peak during festive seasons. Coupled with the above is the highest rate of drug peddling and smuggling of goods which is partly due to sharing a common border with 2 countries which are prime corridors for the movement of this illicit trade. Therefore, building of trust and cooperation in the society is required in both the private and public sectors to combat this existing problem. This can be brought about by raising awareness and organizing campaigns among the public to curb these criminal activities.

### **Environmental Domain**

Chiang Rai faces an acute, unabated crises of wildfires and dense smog every consecutive year. The underlying causative factors are multifaceted and hard to pin down. One of the reasons is the farming of exotic mushrooms by burning the paddy stubs after harvesting prior to the setting of rains - an ideal climate for its production which gets the poor farmer an additional income. Hence, rather than maintaining an ecological balance by allowing the land to lie fallow, mass production of the crop results in smog which is deleterious to human health as well as the ecological balance.

Elimination of hazardous waste -mainly plastic from the tourism industry is another environmental issue which needs to be resolved holistically with the

societal and governmental agencies coming together on one platform.

A case study of successfully encountering environmental deterioration in a small area of Ban Hui Hin Lad Nai, Wiang Papao in Chiang Rai shows how systematic collaboration among the local community, the village chief, land owners and the government agencies paved the way for rehabilitation and restoration of the environment.

Summarizing the findings, the development of a strong ethical environment in all the three domains mentioned above are imperative to lay a foundation of a better society in Chiang Rai.

Based on the previous 3- year records, studies show that the present ethical environment in Chiang Rai has been a result of overlooking the downward spiraling of ethics in terms of discipline, lack of respect for the environment and a change in the family structure. Studies have further shown that communities have evolved from agricultural societies to non-rural societies centered on small businesses. This has brought about a marked change in the social framework of society. Family structures are nuclear as the extended family support has waned leading to weakening of social ties. This has had a negative effect on the new generation growing up in a fragile ecosystem without a foundation of ethics. Hence, the imperative need for an ethical development in the three domains elucidated in this research paper.

Furthermore, an interesting point of the provincial development, apart from the above mentioned, provincial organization should study some developing strategies from other countries, and design the sustainable plans step by step in groups of ten-years period. They can be steps of studying and understanding including making harmony, as it is not only to educate people and make right matters of mutual understandings, but also to realize the necessary values of love for the next generation. In absolute terms, this is

to establish the consolidation within small and bigger societies and to eradicate unexpected or further problems at the same time.

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