

# Outcome of Alcohol-Free Funeral Policy in Lampang Province, Thailand

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## Abstract

This study aimed to assess outcome of alcohol-free funeral policy, firstly launched in Lampang in 2008, by comparing between three areas of campaign implementation (completed, ongoing, and no campaign). Methodology: A mixed methods study was carried out in 2012. A face-to-face interview of 1,445 villagers with a structured questionnaire was conducted to evaluate perceptions, attitudes and supports of the respondents toward the policy as well as exposure to the alcohol-free funeral. Twelve funeral hosts were elicited about their funeral details and perspectives on outcomes of the policy by a semi-structured questionnaire. Results: People who lived in the completed implementation areas ever attended fewer funerals with alcohol (26.7%) when compared to people who lived in the ongoing areas (37.4%) or in the areas without campaign (40.9%). The proportion of alcohol drinking experience among who had attended the alcohol-serving funeral in the completed implementation areas was quite low as 26% (6.8/26.7) when compared to 37% and 41% of those in the ongoing areas and the areas without campaign, respectively. The funeral hosts in the completed implementation area elaborated that the areas with no alcohol offering at the funeral complied with the community agreement, and hence, helping them to save money. While some of the funeral hosts in the ongoing and without campaign areas still offered the local white spirit for the participants, and hence, had the expenses and some drunk-driven quarrel and violence in the funerals. At the funeral without offering alcohol, there were fewer attendances because people in the community believed that offering alcohol at the funeral was a tradition. This study recommends that the community agreements and social agreements are needed to support the hosts conducting the alcohol-free funeral.

*Keywords: alcohol policy, alcohol-free funeral, evaluation research, Thailand*

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## การศึกษาผลจากการดำเนินนโยบายงานศพปลอดเหล้าในจังหวัดลำปาง

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลจากการดำเนินนโยบายงานศพปลอดเหล้า ที่เริ่มดำเนินการครั้งแรกในจังหวัดลำปางในปี พ.ศ. 2551 โดยทำการเปรียบเทียบการดำเนินการขับเคลื่อนระหว่างพื้นที่ที่ดำเนินการแล้วประสบความสำเร็จ พื้นที่ที่อยู่ระหว่างดำเนินการ และพื้นที่ที่ยังไม่มีการดำเนินการอย่างเป็นทางการ สำหรับวิธีการศึกษานั้น ใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ เป็นการสำรวจภาคตัดขวางเชิงพรรณนา เก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบสอบถามแบบมีโครงสร้างในประชาชนทั่วไปจำนวน 1,445 ตัวอย่าง เพื่อประเมินความเข้าใจ ทศนคติ และการสนับสนุนของประชาชนที่มีต่อนโยบายงานศพปลอดเหล้าในจังหวัดลำปาง สำหรับการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ เป็นการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก จากเจ้าภาพงานศพจำนวน 12 คน เพื่อนำเสนอรายละเอียดของการจัดงานศพแบบปลอดเหล้า รวมถึงมุมมองเกี่ยวกับผลที่ได้รับจากการมีนโยบายงานศพปลอดเหล้า โดยผลการศึกษาพบว่า หลังจากมีการรณรงค์ให้จัดงานศพปลอดเหล้า และขยายพื้นที่ จนผลักดันไปสู่การเป็นนโยบายระดับจังหวัด พบว่าประชาชนที่อาศัยอยู่ในพื้นที่ที่ดำเนินการและประสบความสำเร็จนั้น เคยเข้าร่วมงานศพที่มีการเลี้ยงเหล้า (ร้อยละ 26.7) น้อยกว่าประชาชนที่อยู่ในพื้นที่ที่อยู่ระหว่างดำเนินการ และพื้นที่ที่ยังไม่มีการดำเนินการอย่างเป็นทางการ นอกจากนี้สัดส่วนของผู้ที่มีประสบการณ์ในการดื่มเหล้าในงานศพที่มีการเลี้ยงเหล้าในพื้นที่ที่ดำเนินการและประสบความสำเร็จมีสัดส่วนเพียงร้อยละ 26 (6.8/26.7) ซึ่งค่อนข้างต่ำเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับพื้นที่ที่อยู่ระหว่างดำเนินการ และพื้นที่ที่ยังไม่มีการดำเนินการอย่างเป็นทางการ (ร้อยละ 37 และ 41 ตามลำดับ) สำหรับเจ้าภาพงานศพในพื้นที่ที่ดำเนินการแล้วประสบความสำเร็จ ได้ให้รายละเอียดเพิ่มเติมว่า ในพื้นที่ที่ไม่มีการจัดหาหรือเลี้ยงเหล้าภายในงานศพ ซึ่งเป็นไปตามกฎหมายและข้อตกลงของชุมชน ซึ่งเป็นการช่วยประหยัดเงินให้กับเจ้าภาพอย่างมาก ขณะที่เจ้าภาพที่อยู่ในพื้นที่ที่อยู่ระหว่างดำเนินการ และพื้นที่ที่ยังไม่มีการดำเนินการอย่างเป็นทางการยังมีการจัดหาและเลี้ยงเหล้าชาวแขกที่มาเข้าร่วมงานศพ ส่งผลให้ค่าใช้จ่ายเพิ่มขึ้นและพบเห็นการเมาแล้วทะเลาะวิวาท สร้างความวุ่นวายในงานศพ นอกจากนี้ในพื้นที่ดังกล่าวถ้าไม่มีการเลี้ยงเหล้าในงานศพจะพบว่าคนที่มาร่วมงานมีจำนวนน้อยลง เนื่องจากคนในชุมชนยังมีความเชื่อว่าการเลี้ยงเหล้าในงานศพเป็นประเพณีอย่างหนึ่ง ดังนั้น การศึกษานี้จึงมีข้อเสนอแนะว่า การดำเนินการงานศพปลอดเหล้าจำเป็นจะต้องทำเป็นข้อตกลงของชุมชนและสังคม ซึ่งเป็นการช่วยสนับสนุนให้เจ้าภาพในงานศพสามารถจัดงานศพแบบปลอดเหล้าได้

**คำสำคัญ:** นโยบายควบคุมเครื่องดื่มแอลกอฮอล์, งานศพปลอดเหล้า, การวิจัยประเมินผล, ประเทศไทย

### Background and Rationale

Alcohol drinking is common and becomes tradition in Thailand. In many communities, alcohol drinking has been seen as a subculture that occurred in the Thai traditional merit. However, many problems have been rising because of alcohol, which have the effect on the drinkers, peers, family, community, society and

the country.<sup>(1)</sup>

In Lampang province, located in the North of Thailand, most of the funerals are held at home. People come to the funeral to pay respect to the deceased and the hosts are responsible to provide food and beverages for the guests. In the past, the rural funerals were arranged in an economy manner. People in the community usually

gave their hands to all the works related to the funeral such as making a coffin and sharing food and beverages, with no alcohol offering. Just some hosts organized after-funeral party to thank their guests.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nowadays, arranging funeral ceremony involves the social status of the hosts. Instead of a simple ceremony, the hosts need to arrange a large funeral full of food and beverages including alcohol. Moreover, there is gambling in most of funerals.

This change in funeral arrangement has an effect on the costs of management. There is cost-burden for the hosts. Moreover, there are problems such as drunkenness, quarrel/violence, and accidents, caused by alcohol drinking.<sup>(3)</sup>

According to these problems, the Stop Drink Network Organization has implemented the alcohol-free funeral campaign in Lampang province. The alcohol-free funeral campaign has three key messages as follows: 1) alcohol is forbidden by the five Buddhist precepts, 2) alcohol causes financial burden, and 3) there are more problems related to socialized drinking in the funeral such as gambling. The primary aim of the campaign was to establish a good practice of the campaign at least in one subdistrict of each district. With advocacy from a civil society group in the province, the alcohol-free funeral campaign was first implemented in Ban Dong village. The campaign was successful and has been expanded to the whole district. It was a model of district as alcohol-free funeral. In 2008, the alcohol-free funeral policy has been launched as a provincial policy to prevent alcohol drinking

in thirteen districts. Each district picked up the first subdistrict to launch the alcohol-free funeral campaign.<sup>(4)</sup> Figure 1 shows the framework of the alcohol-free funeral policy in Lampang province, Thailand. The expected outcomes were the reduction of burden of alcohol expense for the funeral hosts, the reduction of quarrel/violence in the funeral, the change of value/life-style, and the related alcohol problems in funerals and other ceremonies.

This study aimed to assess outcome of alcohol-free funeral policy after one year of implementation, by comparing between three areas of campaign implementation (completed, ongoing, and no campaign).

## Methodology

### Participants and sampling methods

A mixed method was used in this study. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among general population aged 15 years and above in 6 districts in Lampang province. First, multi-stage-stratified-cluster sampling was used to select the samples for the survey among general population. The sampling was first done at the subdistrict level, where the subdistricts were classified as completed implementation areas, ongoing campaign areas, and no campaign areas. Then, the villages within those subdistricts were randomly chosen. Finally, the populations in the villages were systematically selected. In total, the sample size was 1,445.

Second, an in-depth interview among key



informants who had hosted the funerals was conducted. Twelve funeral hosts who held the funerals in the past 12 months were purposively selected from three areas of the campaign.

This study was carried out in 2012. The surveys evaluated the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of the respondents toward the alcohol-free funeral policy as well as the outcomes of this policy. The funeral hosts were elicited about their funeral details and perspectives on outcomes of this policy.

### Tools

A questionnaire was used for the survey among general population. The questions were based on the literature reviews focusing on the attitudes and experiences with alcohol-free funeral campaigns as well as alcohol consumption behaviors in the funeral.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among the funeral hosts. The interviews took place at the house of the hosts. The informed consents were given to the hosts before the interview. The key questions for in-depth-interviews included the expenditure in the funerals, the pattern of the alcohol-free funeral arrangement, perceptions and opinions of the alcohol-free funeral campaign and the results of the alcohol-free funeral campaign. All interview information and answers were recorded after asking for the permission, and were later transcribed.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze

quantitative data. The data was presented in frequency, percentage and average, to describe the characteristics of the samples. Inferential statistic was used to test the relationship of the variables by using the chi-square test. All analyses were performed by using the SPSS program (version 15).

Content analysis was used for qualitative data. All information was interpreted and classified into groups, including 1) the pattern of the alcohol-free funeral arrangement, 2) perceptions and opinions of the alcohol-free funeral campaign, and 3) the outcomes of the alcohol-free funeral campaign.

### Ethical consideration

Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Institute for the Development of Human Research Protections, Ministry of Public Health. (Protocol No.800/2012 on June 07, 2012). Informed written consent was obtained from all participants.

## Results

### Quantitative analysis

#### Characteristics and experiences of samples participating in funeral

Table 1 showed the overall characteristics of the samples. The majority were adults aged 41-60 years old. All of the samples were Buddhist. Seventy-five percent completed less than primary school. The samples were mostly married and were born in Lampang province. Most of them were farmers with average 6,000 baht for their

**Table 1** The characteristic data of all the samples and attendance at funerals and experiences in alcohol offered funerals

Factors	Levels of campaign implementation				p-value
	Completed	Ongoing	Without	Total	
	implementation areas (n = 389) (%)	campaign areas (n = 535) (%)	campaign areas (n = 521) (%)	(n = 1445) (%)	
<b>Gender</b>					<b>0.431</b>
Male	141 (36.2)	216 (40.4)	205 (39.3)	562 (38.9)	
Female	248 (63.8)	319 (59.6)	316 (60.7)	883 (61.1)	
<b>Age (15 - 97, SD = 14.9, mean = 53.3)</b>					<b>0.170</b>
Up to 20	11 (2.8)	12 (2.2)	15 (2.9)	38 (2.6)	
21 - 40	68 (17.5)	86 (16.1)	69 (13.2)	223 (15.4)	
41 - 60	181 (46.5)	292 (54.6)	261 (50.1)	734 (50.8)	
61 - 80	116 (29.8)	135 (25.2)	161 (30.9)	412 (28.5)	
>80	13 (1.9)	10 (1.9)	15 (2.9)	38 (2.6)	
<b>Education Level</b>					<b>0.913</b>
Less than primary school	290 (74.6)	405 (75.7)	390 (74.9)	1085 (75.1)	
Primary school and higher	99 (25.4)	130 (24.3)	131 (25.1)	360 (24.9)	
<b>Expense per month (baht) (50 - 200,000, SD = 7,648.2, mean = 5,905.1)</b>					<b>0.080</b>
Up to 2,500	86 (22.1)	112 (20.9)	104 (20.0)	302 (20.9)	
2,501 - 5,000	184 (47.3)	254 (47.5)	248 (47.6)	686 (47.5)	
5,001 - 7,500	52 (13.4)	59 (11.0)	52 (10.0)	59 (11.0)	
7,501 - 10,000	44 (11.3)	70 (13.1)	56 (10.7)	70 (13.1)	
>10,000	23 (5.9)	40 (7.5)	61 (11.7)	40 (7.5)	
<b>Drinking behavior in 12 months</b>					<b>0.697</b>
Yes	74 (19.0)	108 (20.2)	111 (21.3)	293 (20.3)	
No	315 (81.0)	427 (79.8)	410 (78.7)	1150 (79.7)	
<b>People perceived the alcohol-free funeral campaign</b>					<b>*&lt;0.001</b>
Yes	301 (77.4)	366 (68.4)	329 (63.1)	996 (68.9)	
No	88 (22.6)	169 (31.6)	192 (36.9)	449 (31.1)	
<b>People ever attended funeral offering alcohol in 12 months</b>					<b>*&lt;0.001</b>
Yes	104 (26.7)	200 (37.4)	213 (40.9)	517 (35.8)	
No	285 (73.3)	335 (62.6)	308 (59.1)	928 (64.2)	
<b>People who drank alcohol in the funeral in the past 12 months</b>					<b>*0.007</b>
Did not drink alcohol in 12 months	315 (81.0)	427 (79.8)	410 (78.7)	1152 (79.7)	
Yes	5 (1.3)	16 (3.0)	30 (5.8)	51 (3.5)	
No	69 (17.7)	92 (17.2)	81 (15.5)	242 (16.7)	

monthly income. There was no significant difference of characteristics and drinking experiences between groups.

The coverage of people’s perception on the alcohol-free funeral campaign was high in the areas of completed implementation (77.4%), when compared to those in the ongoing areas (68.4%) and the areas without campaign (63.1%).

People who lived in the completed implementation areas ever attended fewer funerals with

alcohol (26.7%) when compared to people who lived in the ongoing areas (37.4%) or in the areas without campaign (40.9%).

The proportion of alcohol drinking experience among who had attended the alcohol-serving funeral was quite low (1.3/26.7) as 5% when compared to 8% and 14% in the ongoing and without campaign, respectively.

Table 2 presents factors contributing to alcohol drinking at the funeral by multivariable analysis

**Table 2** Multivariate logistic regression for current drinkers who drink alcohol in the funeral

Factor	Total	Behavior of alcohol drinking in the funeral (%)		Univariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
		(%) Yes	No	Crude OR [95%CI]	p-value	Adjusted OR [95%CI]	p-value
<b>Three areas of campaign implementation</b>							
Completed implementation areas	74	6.8	93.2	0.27 (0.104-0.715)	0.008	0.21 (0.08-0.59)	0.003
Ongoing campaign areas	108	14.8	85.2	0.74 (0.390-1.421)	0.372	0.46 (0.23-0.93)	0.031
Without campaign areas	111	27.0	73.0	1.0		1.0	
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	183	20.2	79.8	1.74 (0.892-3.384)	0.104	1.70 (0.83-3.50)	0.147
Female	110	12.7	87.3	1.0		1.0	
<b>Age group</b>							
Up to 20	8	25.0	75.0	1.60 (0.315-8.190)	0.569	0.61 (0.02-16.51)	0.771
21 - 40	78	14.1	85.9	0.72 (0.349-1.482)	0.371	0.53 (0.03-9.78)	0.670
41 - 60	171	18.7	81.3	1.25 (0.670-2.325)	0.485	0.78 (0.04-13.74)	0.863
61 - 80	34	14.7	85.3	0.80 (0.293-2.172)	0.659	0.52 (0.03-10.52)	0.669
>80	2	50.0	50.0	1.0		1.0	
<b>Education Level</b>							
Completed graduate school	110	22.7	77.3	1.78 (0.965-3.265)	0.065	1.87 (0.93-3.77)	0.081
Less than primary school	183	14.2	85.8	1.0		1.0	
<b>People perceived the alcohol-free funeral campaign</b>							
Yes	205	14.6	85.4	0.54 (0.292-1.021)	0.058	0.67 (0.35-1.31)	0.244
No	88	23.9	76.1	1.0		1.0	
Constant						0.383	0.525

Note: Enter method

sis. The current drinkers living in the completed implementation areas had lower experience in drinking at the funeral compared to those living in the ongoing and the without campaign areas (6.8% versus 14.8%, 27.0%).

This table showed that current drinkers who lived in completed and ongoing implementation areas were less likely to consume alcohol in funeral when compared to those who lived in the areas without campaign (OR = 0.21; 95%CI:0.08 - 0.59 for completed implementation areas and OR = 0.46; 95%CI:0.23 - 0.93 for ongoing campaign

areas). Evidently, no significant difference in behaviour of drinking alcohol in the funeral was noted in relation to other factors.

#### Attitudes and opinions of people towards the alcohol-free funeral campaign implementation in the province.

The attitudes and opinions towards the alcohol-free funeral campaign among people in Lampang province were presented in Table 3. Most people believed that offering alcohol at the funerals did not reflect high social status, but people in the areas of ongoing and without

**Table 3** Percentage of people who have attitudes and opinions towards the alcohol-free funeral campaign among general population in Lampang province

Attitudes and opinions	Three levels of campaign implementation				p-value
	Completed implementation areas (n = 389) (%)	Ongoing campaign areas (n = 535) (%)	Without campaign areas (n = 521) (%)	Total (n = 1445) (%)	
<b>Offering alcohol at the funeral reflects host's high social status level</b>					<b>**&lt;0.001</b>
Agree	269 (69.2)	350 (65.4)	356 (68.3)	975 (67.5)	
Disagree	29 (7.4)	89 (16.6)	83 (15.9)	201 (13.9)	
Neutral	91 (23.4)	96 (18.0)	82 (15.8)	269 (18.6)	
<b>Alcohol-free funeral campaign would solve the gambling problems in funeral</b>					<b>**&lt;0.001</b>
Solve problem	320 (82.3)	399 (74.6)	363 (69.7)	1082 (74.9)	
Never solve problem	28 (7.2)	27 (5.0)	53 (10.2)	108 (7.5)	
Not sure	41 (10.5)	109 (20.4)	105 (20.1)	255 (17.6)	
<b>Implementing alcohol-free funeral had changed the lifestyle, tradition and culture of the community</b>					<b>0.293</b>
Had changed	250 (64.3)	365 (68.2)	334 (64.1)	949 (65.7)	
Never changed	139 (35.7)	170 (31.8)	187 (35.9)	496 (34.3)	
<b>Alcohol-free funeral campaign would reduce drunkenness and quarrel/violence in the funerals</b>					<b>**&lt;0.001</b>
Solve problem	374 (96.1)	444 (83.0)	417 (80.1)	1235 (85.5)	
Never solve problem	6 (1.6)	15 (2.8)	34 (6.5)	55 (3.8)	
Not sure	9 (2.3)	76 (14.2)	70 (13.4)	155 (10.7)	





campaign had higher percentages of disagreement (16.6% and 15.9%, respectively). Most of the hosts also thought that the alcohol-free funeral campaign would reduce gambling, drunkenness and quarrel/violence in the funerals with the highest percentage of the people in completed implementation, followed by the people in ongoing and without campaign, respectively. More than 64% of respondents also thought that implementing alcohol-free funeral had made changes in lifestyle, tradition and culture of the community and the percentage of agreement were not different between areas.

### Qualitative analysis

#### Opinions towards the alcohol-free funeral among the funeral hosts

The funeral hosts perceived and understood the information about the alcohol-free funeral campaign in Lamphang province by attending the public meeting held by the community leaders. This received information had a profound effect on the funeral hosts not to offer alcohol at the funeral. All information included beneficial in saving their money from offering alcohol and its related expenditure and setting a good standard for the community. In the areas without campaign, the decision of the funeral hosts depended on personal reasons.

#### Experiences of hosts of the funeral in three areas of campaign implementation

There was no alcohol offering in the funeral in the completed implementation area. This could be a result of the community agreement

in prohibition of offering and drinking alcohol at the funeral. However, from the observation and interviewing of some hosts, it was found that some people still drank alcohol nearby the funeral.

*“Participants did not drink alcohol at the funeral because I asked for their collaboration. However, I found that they drank alcohol outside the funeral, such as they drank at my neighbour’s house.”*

Funeral host from Baan Ton Thing Chai village, 1  
October 2012

The funeral hosts found that alcohol-free funeral campaign implementation actually helped to save their money. In this case, they did not have to offer alcohol throughout funeral arrangement.

*“Alcohol is very expensive, therefore it cut down the budget and I could save more money from not offering alcohol at the funeral.”*

Funeral host from Baan Dong village, 19 August  
2012

In the ongoing campaign areas, the decision to not offer alcohol at the funeral depended on the hosts. Some funeral hosts offered the local white spirit to the participants but they did not explicitly show that there was alcohol offering at the funeral, and they offer when there was a request of the participants. As a result, the hosts still had the expense from offering alcohol at the funeral. One host described the effects of offering alcohol at the funeral as:

*“...Offering the local white spirit had the*



*expenses more than 5,000 baht. I did not show the alcohol on the table but I brought it when guests requested.”*

*“...the drinkers in village requested two bottles of alcohol and went home. He did not help me in funeral.”*

Funeral host from Baan Pong Oom village, 4 October 2012.

Although some funeral host in the ongoing campaign areas did not offer the alcohol but the participants could bring and drink at the funeral. As a result, some funeral found that drinkers were drunk and slept in the funeral.

*“He got drunk and slept here in the funeral because he did not go back home.”*

Funeral host from Baan Pong Oom village, 4 October 2012.

In the areas without campaign, the funeral hosts still offered the alcohol at funeral. Some funerals were arranged in the temple but the hosts still offered the alcohol for the participants. Favourite types of alcohol were local white spirit, beer and red spirit. A participant explained the behavior of drinkers at the funeral as:

*“...Local white spirit was most favourite alcohol in funeral. I offered them about 12 bottles per day, and especially in the last day of funeral, I offered more beer and red spirit.”*

Funeral host from Baan Pong Seang Thong village, 10 October 2012.

The funeral offering alcohol had more ex-

penses and could be the burden for the hosts, which they had to pay extra money to cover this expense. Moreover, it was found that the participants who were drunk would be the main reason of quarrel and violence in the funerals. In the funeral with no-alcohol offering, there was less number of attendances because people in community believed that offering alcohol in the funeral was a tradition. One participant described:

*“The funeral without alcohol would have less participants when compared to the ones where the alcohol was offered..However, if we did not offer alcohol, it would reduce the expense in the funeral around 4,000-5,000 baht”*

Funeral host from Baan Pong Seang Thong village, 10 October 2012

## Discussion

From qualitative and quantitative studies, it was found that people in the implementation of the alcohol-free funeral campaign had perceived and complied with the policy more than the ongoing campaign and the without campaign areas. This was because of intensive policy implementation of completed area had a great impact on awareness and understanding among people. The results of this study are relevant to Sottivan et al. and Khorphon et al.’s research, discussing that awareness of people and community were key important factors to support non-alcoholic tradition festivals or events.<sup>(5,6)</sup>

Moreover, the drinking behaviors between the



implementation areas were different according to the intensive compliance levels. This study found that people in the completed implementation area had less opportunities and experiences in drinking alcohol at funerals than in the other areas due to their compliance to community policy. This also showed a strong compliance of people to the community's rule. It is similar to the other studies, presenting that the community and social measure played a role in controlling alcohol drinking, for example setting up alcohol free zone in the religious ceremony and festival. These social measures highly empower the community and have the effect to reduce alcohol consumption in the community.<sup>(7,8)</sup>

The results showed that the implementation of the alcohol-free funeral campaign had changed practices in offering alcohol at the funerals, which allowed the hosts to unlink the alcohol serving to the social status of the hosts within the community. The positive outcomes of the alcohol-free campaign could be clearly seen in the completed implementation areas.<sup>(9)</sup>

From qualitative study, the campaign showed a positive result in cost-saving and the related problems in funerals such as gambling and quarrel/violence had been reduced. This finding corresponds with the results from other studies. For example, a study by Teeraputtigunchai (2010), conducted in Lampang province in 2009 showed that arranging the funeral was one way to show a respectable social status of the hosts. It means that the hosts need to provide the best thing to guests such as offering alcohol (according to their

tradition). This negative situation is called in Thai as “Kon Tai Khai Kon Pen”, meaning that the living hosts become bankrupt in arranging the funerals, and one of the unnecessary costs is alcohol.<sup>(10)</sup> Other studies also mention the abundant amount of money on alcohol is sometimes leading to debt within the household.<sup>(11,12)</sup>

In additional, this study showed that the majority of people started to realize that offering alcohol at the funerals was not the way to show the respectable social status of the hosts. This awareness of the alcohol-free funeral campaign was initiated in Ban Dong village, the pioneer of this campaign.

In 2017, the alcohol-free funeral has been implemented for 10 years. There were some success stories and changes that occurred from this campaign. In the short-term outcome, it was obvious that alcohol-free funeral campaign helped reduce expenditure of funeral hosts. The outcomes of the campaign also helped reduce alcohol drinking in other ceremonies. In the mid-term and long-term outcomes, the alcohol-free funeral policy has changed life-style of people and has set new value for community. Besides, the campaign has shown the unity of the community according to community agreement. People in community participated in (every) steps of policy implementation. According to the research of Khutrakun (2010) conducting in Lampang and Phayao provinces, the alcohol-free funerals have changed the beliefs and values of the funeral arrangement in the community, including the beliefs that when not offering alcohol at funerals,

people still participated and helped in the funerals. Although the present study shows a reduction of alcohol consumption at the funerals and few hosts had offered alcohol at the funerals, the tradition in offering alcohol after the funeral still existed. The campaign could reduce alcohol drinking at the funerals but it could not totally change the tradition of offering alcohol in the after-funeral party.<sup>(12)</sup> Moreover, previous study supports this kind of alcohol-free policy in traditional ceremony or festival that can help reduce consumption and access to alcohol among people in community.<sup>(13)</sup> Studies in Venezuela, India and Korea also stated the role of communities in controlling accessibility to alcohol, such as prohibiting sale of alcohol in villages, sponsoring alcohol-free celebrations, and increasing involvement in religious activities. These can help reduce alcohol consumption, alcohol-related problems and changing norm or culture in the communities.<sup>(14-17)</sup>

The strengths of the present study include, first, this research selected the samples as a representative of populations in Lampang province. In addition, this study compared the outcomes of the alcohol-free funeral policy implementation from three different areas, including completed implementation, ongoing campaign and without campaign areas. Moreover, the key informants (funeral hosts) were included. They provided valuable and in-depth information on the funeral arrangement. The results from the present study therefore show the obvious outcomes and strong evidence to provincial policy makers.

There were some limitations of the present

study. This study collected data one year after the alcohol-free funeral campaign was adopted as a provincial policy. It would take more time to see any changes in tradition and behavior. Therefore, the outcome of implementation of the campaign was not clearly seen. Moreover, the present study did not collect data from pre-intervention period therefore we could not compare the alcohol drinking behavior at the funerals before and after implementing the campaign.

## Conclusion

The alcohol-free funeral campaign had positive outcomes to the funeral hosts and general people who participated the funerals. There was a good public support for this policy. The campaign helped reduce alcohol-related problems and burden of alcohol expense on the funeral hosts. Therefore, the alcohol-free funeral campaign needs to be seriously expanded nationwide. Also, alcohol drinking should be entirely banned at the funerals.

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