

FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE ELDERLY IN UDON THANI PROVINCE

Arnupap Kerepat

Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail: arnupap.ke@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to: (1) examine the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province, and (2) establish guidelines for enhancing their quality of life. A questionnaire was employed as the primary tool for data collection, and statistical methods such as percentages, averages, and standard deviations were used for data analysis.

The study found that the elderly in Udon Thani Province generally enjoy a good quality of life, with a high standard of living observed when classified by specific aspects. The guidelines for improving the quality of life for the elderly should focus on promoting both physical and mental health. This can be achieved through health promotion programs and medical care, including regular check-ups to monitor and prevent diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoarthritis. Furthermore, encouraging suitable physical activities, such as walking or Thai dance, can help maintain physical health. Organizing activities that promote social participation, such as joining health clubs or volunteering in the community, is also beneficial. Providing appropriate vocational training, such as selling indigenous products, creating handicrafts, or engaging in agriculture, can supplement their income. Ensuring the safety and suitability of their homes through renovations like installing handrails is essential. Additionally, projects that focus on home improvement and creating clean, safe environments, such as building parks for the elderly to relax, should be prioritized. These measures will enhance the elderly's quality of life in terms of health, economy, and social well-being.

Keywords: development, quality of life, the elderly

Introduction

The shift in demographic structure toward an aging labor society is a critical issue that many countries around the world are addressing. This transition presents challenges across multiple dimensions, including a declining workforce, which may hinder economic growth (Akramanee Somjai, 2023). An "aging society" refers to one in which the proportion of elderly individuals, or those aged 60 years and above, is increasing, while birth rates and the number of working-age individuals are decreasing. For example, Singapore has a similar proportion of elderly individuals as Thailand and is also classified as an aging society. South Korea has entered what is considered a fully aging society, and Japan, with the largest proportion of elderly individuals globally, has reached the highest level of an aging society (Capacity Building and Development Network, Elderly Capacity Promotion Division, 2021). According to the 2022 Report on the Situation of the Elderly in Thailand, the country is transitioning into an aging society, with the elderly population reaching 12,116,199 people in 2022, accounting for 18.3% of the total population (Marketeer Team, 2022). As a country progresses into an aging society, the physical, mental, and social vulnerabilities of the elderly increase, leading to greater dependence on others in various aspects of life. It becomes essential to enhance earning capacity and improve labor efficiency to promote elderly employment and increase their income.

Given these factors, the researcher recognizes the importance of improving the quality of life for the elderly in Udon Thani Province. The aim of this study is to present findings to

relevant stakeholders, helping to develop a better quality of life for the elderly, allowing them to live with dignity. Additionally, the study serves as a guide for relevant agencies to continue enhancing the quality of life for the elderly in a manner that is both appropriate and aligned with their specific needs.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province.
2. To establish guidelines for enhancing the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope

1.1 The population for this study consists of elderly individuals aged 60 years and above residing in Udon Thani Province, totaling 266,889 people (Strategy and Planning Division, Department of Elderly Affairs, 2023).

1.2 The sample for this study includes elderly individuals aged 60 years and above residing in Udon Thani Province. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula (1973).

2. Variable Scope

This research examines the factors affecting the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province, aiming to develop guidelines for enhancing their quality of life. The study focuses on the following dimensions:

- 2.1 Physical
- 2.2 Psychological
- 2.3 Social
- 2.4 Environmental

3. Time Scope

The study period spans from October 2022 to August 2023.

Literature Review

1. Concept of Quality of Life

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1989) outlined six key elements of quality of life as follows:

1.1 Physical domain – The perception of physical strength in daily activities, a sense of happiness, absence of pain, and restful sleep.

1.2 Psychological domain – The perception of one's mental state, including feelings of pride, awareness of one's attitudes, and the ability to cope with sadness or worry.

1.3 Level of independence – The perception of independence, characterized by not relying on others and awareness of one's mobility and self-sufficiency.

1.4 Social relationships – The perception of the quality of one's relationships with others.

1.5 Environment – The perception of the surrounding environment and how it influences one's lifestyle.

1.6 Spirituality/religion/personal beliefs – The perception of one's personal beliefs, including religious or spiritual views.

In 1996, the World Health Organization (WHO) revised its quality-of-life framework by combining elements 1 and 3, as well as elements 2 and 6 from its original six-element model. As a result, the quality-of-life framework now consists of four key aspects:

1) Physical domain – Refers to a person’s physical condition and its impact on daily life, including awareness of health and the ability to function independently.

2) Psychological domain – Involves the perception of one's mental state, including both positive and negative emotions, self-image, thought processes, decision-making, and learning abilities.

3) Social relationships – Refers to the perception of one's relationships with others, including the awareness of both giving and receiving support within a social context.

4) Environment – Refers to the perception of one's surroundings and how they affect lifestyle. This includes the interaction with the environment, feelings of security, and the ability to live independently.

For this research, the factors influencing the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province were studied, using the WHO’s revised framework to develop the questionnaire.

2. Related Research

Thakul Homklin (2022) conducted a study on the quality of life of the elderly in Thayang Sub-District Municipality, Thayang District, Phetchaburi Province. The research results indicated that the overall quality of life for the elderly in Tha Yang Sub-District Municipality was relatively good. When classified by aspect, the findings were as follows: Environment: The elderly reported a good quality of life, ranking this aspect in 1st place. Physical: The quality of life in this aspect was rated as quite good, placing it in 2nd place. Social Relations: The elderly reported a good quality of life in this area, ranking it in 3rd place. Psychological: The elderly's quality of life was rated as quite good in this aspect, placing it in 4th place.

Ridtichai Chasaen (2022) conducted a study on the factors affecting the quality of life of the elderly in the Phanna Nikhom District Area, Sakon Nakhon Province. The research found that welfare and social support factors for the elderly were overall rated at a high level. Furthermore, the quality of life for the elderly in this area was also generally high. The study indicated that welfare for the elderly significantly influenced their quality of life at a significant level of .05, with corresponding correlation coefficients. Additionally, social support factors significantly impacted the quality of life of the elderly at the .05 level of significance, with a correlation coefficient of .696.

Research Methodology

This research employed a quantitative research methodology. The sample size was selected using purposive random sampling, and data were collected through a questionnaire.

1. Research Steps:

Step 1: Data Collection Methods and Procedures:

The researcher utilized two types of data sources:

1.1 Secondary Research: Information was gathered from textbooks, documents, and related studies to guide the development of the questionnaire.

1.2 Primary Research: The research tool was a questionnaire designed by the researcher to comprehensively address the topic under study.

Step 2: Study relevant information to design the questionnaire. Then, submit the questionnaire to experts for review, inspection, and suggestions.

Step 3: Distribute the questionnaire to a sample of 400 elderly people.

Step 4: Analyze and calculate the data collected from the questionnaires using a statistical software package.

2. Data Collection:

Data were collected through a survey conducted between October 2022 and August 2023.

3. Instrument:

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two types of questions: closed-ended questions with predefined answer choices, and open-ended questions allowing respondents to provide their opinions. The questionnaire focused on the factors affecting the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province. The questions were rated on a Likert scale with five levels: most, high, medium, low, and least.

4. Data Analysis:

The data were analyzed using a computer program, employing percentage, mean, and standard deviation statistics.

Research Results

The study found that

1) the elderly in Udon Thani Province generally have a good quality of life. When classified by aspect, it was revealed that they enjoy a high standard of living.

As shown in Table 1

The table presents the average and standard deviation of the quality of life for the elderly in Udon Thani Province.

Factors in the quality of life of the elderly	\bar{x}	S.D.	Comment Level
1. physical	3.41	.512	high
2. menta	3.44	.542	high
3. social relations	3.55	.477	high
4. environment	3.65	.488	high
total	3.51	.406	high

2) Guidelines for Improving the Quality of Life of the Elderly in Udon Thani Province

Guidelines for improving the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province should focus on promoting both physical and mental health. This can be achieved by offering health promotion programs and medical care, including regular check-ups to monitor and prevent diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoarthritis.

Promoting suitable physical activities, such as walking or Thai dance, can help maintain their physical health. Additionally, organizing activities that encourage social participation, such as joining health clubs or volunteering in the community, can benefit the elderly.

Appropriate vocational training should also be provided, focusing on opportunities such as selling indigenous products, creating handicrafts, or engaging in agriculture to supplement their income.

Renovations to ensure safe and suitable housing for the elderly, such as installing handrails, are essential. Projects aimed at home improvement and creating a clean, safe environment, like building parks for the elderly to relax in, should be prioritized.

These measures will enhance the elderly's quality of life in terms of health, economic stability, and social well-being.

Discussion

The study found that (1) the elderly in Udon Thani Province generally have a good quality of life. When classified by aspect, it was revealed that they enjoy a high standard of living. This finding aligns with research conducted by Thakul Homklin (2022), which examined the quality of life of the elderly in Tha Yang Sub-District Municipality, Phetchaburi Province. The results showed that the overall quality of life for the elderly in Tha Yang Sub-District Municipality was relatively good.

When classified by specific aspects, the findings were as follows:

- The Physical Aspect ranked second, with the elderly's quality of life rated as quite good.
- The Social Relations Aspect ranked third, where the quality of life for the elderly was rated as good.
- The Psychological Aspect ranked fourth, with the elderly's quality of life also rated as quite good.

The factors affecting the quality of life of the elderly were measured as follows: The physical aspect had a mean of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 0.512, indicating a high level of quality of life. The mental aspect scored a mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.542, also reflecting a high quality of life. The social relations aspect had a mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.477, showing a high level. Finally, the environment aspect scored a mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.488, confirming a high quality of life overall, with a total mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.406. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Ridtichai Chasaen (2022), which investigated the factors affecting the quality of life of the elderly in Phanna Nikhom District, Sakon Nakhon Province. The study found that welfare and social support factors for the elderly were rated at a high level, indicating that the quality of life for the elderly in this area was also rated as high.

Recommendations

1. Future research should be conducted on the quality of life of the elderly in neighboring provinces to compare data and identify strategies for collectively improving their quality of life.
2. Qualitative research should be undertaken to study the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province. This type of research would help analyze the underlying causes and provide recommendations for effective improvements in the quality of life for the elderly in the region.

Acknowledgement

The research on the factors affecting the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly in Udon Thani Province has been successfully completed. The author would like to express gratitude to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and to all graduate schools and executives who provided opportunities and support in developing a thorough and continuous research routine that made this study possible.

References

- Chasaen, R. (2022). Factors affecting the quality of life of the elderly in Phanna Nikhom District area, Sakon Nakhon Province. *Journal of Graduate School Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University*, 19(87), 161-173.
- Homklin, T. (2022). Quality of life of the elderly in Thayang Sub-District Municipality, Thayang District, Phetchaburi Province. *Research and Development Journal, Loei Rajabhat University*, 14(49), 85-93.



17th International Conference
December 5-7, 2024 in Osaka, Japan

- Network Capacity Building and Development Group, Elderly Capacity Promotion Division. (2022). The current aging society and the economy in Thailand. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://www.dop.go.th/th/know/15/926>
- Somjai, A. (2023). Model of the process of promoting and developing the productivity of informal older adult workers in Sam Khok Sub-District Municipality, Sam Khok District, Pathum Thani Province in the situation of the epidemic of COVID-19. *SSRU Journal of Public Administration*, 6(2), 295-306.
- Strategy and Planning Division, Department of Elderly Affairs. (2023). Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://www.dop.go.th/th/know/side/1/1/2387>
- World Health Organization. (1989). *European charter on environment and health* (p. 7).
- Yamane, T. (1973). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (3rd ed.). London: John Weather Hill, Inc.