

## บทบาทวิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคมในการจ้างงานผู้สูงอายุในประเทศไทย

### THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT FOR THE ELDERLY IN THAILAND

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#### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทวิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคมในการจ้างงานผู้สูงอายุในบริบทของไทย เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์ โดยเป็นการสัมภาษณ์ 1) ผู้ออกแบบพระราชบัญญัติส่งเสริมกิจการเพื่อสังคม จำนวน 7 คน 2) ผู้ประกอบการเพื่อสังคมที่จ้างผู้สูงอายุ จำนวน 23 คน และ 3) ผู้สูงอายุที่ทำงานในวิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคม จำนวน 258 คน ใน 15 จังหวัด ระหว่างเดือนตุลาคม 2562 ถึงเดือนมีนาคม 2563 ผู้วิจัยดำเนินการถอดความและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลสัมภาษณ์โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์การเข้ารหัสผ่านกระบวนการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ การศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้ยังใช้ซอฟต์แวร์เชิงคุณภาพเพื่อจัดหมวดหมู่รหัสทั้งหมดที่เกิดจากข้อมูลดิบและการจัดข้อมูล โดยมีตัวแปรที่มีผลต่อบทบาทของวิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคมสำหรับผู้สูงอายุ ในมุมมองของผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสีย ได้แก่ สภาพแวดล้อมที่สนับสนุน ความมุ่งมั่นในตนเอง การเริ่มความสัมพันธ์ และการเพิ่มคุณค่าของงาน โดยจากผลการวิจัยเชิงสำรวจเหล่านี้ยังเผยให้เห็นกรอบแนวคิดใหม่ของวิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคมในประเทศไทย นอกจากนี้ยังเปิดมุมมองของผู้ประกอบการเพื่อสังคมในการใช้แนวคิดเชิงกลยุทธ์ เพื่อช่วยพัฒนาทักษะผู้สูงอายุในฐานะหุ้นส่วนเชิงยุทธศาสตร์ในภารกิจขององค์กร

**คำสำคัญ:** วิสาหกิจเพื่อสังคม การจ้างงาน ผู้สูงอายุ การส่งเสริมอาชีพ

#### Abstract

This research study explored the concept of the role of social enterprise in providing employment for the elderly in Thai context. It was a qualitatively designed study using the interview method. The interviews were conducted with 1) 7 participants those who made the social enterprise promotion act; 2) 23 social entrepreneurs those who employed the elderly, and 3) 258 elderly who were employed by these social enterprises in 15 areas from October, 2018 to March, 2019. The researcher transcribed and

analyzed the interview data by applying a coding analysis which employed the process of qualitative research. This research study also used the qualitative software to categorize all the codes that emerged from the raw data and for data management. The major findings of the critical factors that affect the social enterprise role for elderly people in the eyes of stakeholders such as supportive environment, self-determining, rebuilding connections, and job enrichment. In addition, these exploratory findings revealed a new concept of the role of social enterprise. It also opens up the view of social entrepreneurs as employing more strategic thinking, thereby helping develop their elderly skills of being a strategic partner in their company's mission.

**Keywords:** Social Enterprise, Employment, Elderly, Occupational Promotion

## Introduction

Development of the quality of life of people is an important factor for national development. The government of all ages have given importance to developing the people's quality of the life, as evidenced in the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan and other national plans after that, and particularly the public health development plan, which aims to improve the overall public health. However, the problem of demographic change as a result of the decrease in the birth rate and the mortality rate has increasingly led to change in the aging structure. At present, the world has entered the "century of the elderly" because the number or size or proportion of elderly people across the world has risen rapidly, Such a phenomenon has occurred in both developed and developing countries, causing the demographic structure of the world in the 21st century to move to the stage called "population aging." Thailand is no exception. Its demographic structure has changed and the country has moved into the aging society as well [1]. In 2007, the number of elderly people aged 60-79 years or more was 6,172,000. The number of those in the age range of 80-99 was 648,000 and the number of those aged 100 years or more was 4,000. Overall, the elderly people accounted for 6,824,000 out of the total population of 62,829,000 [2]. This estimation was in accordance with that of the Demographic and Social Research Institute, Mahidol University, estimated that Thailand's population would increase but at a slow rate, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** The Estimated Number of Thailand's Population During 2005-2025

Year	0-14 year	15-59 year	60 year	Total
2005	14,274,600	41,465,900	6,422,100	62,162,600
2010	13,202,900	42,926,600	7,522,800	63,652,300
2015	12,301,900	43,311,500	9,034,100	64,647,600
2020	11,172,200	43,011,900	10,954,200	65,138,300
2025	10,441,200	41,746,500	12,901,100	65,088,800

**Source:** The Social and Demographic Institute, 2018

However, change in the demographic and social structure has partly contributed to change in the form of support given to the elderly, who need more employment and social welfare. To provide employment and service for the elderly in the future, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of elderly people in the future, which will be different from those at present [3]. However, with the right policies in place, there is an opportunity to cope with this challenge by extending working lives and making better use of older workers' knowledge and skills.

Theoretical approaches in work and organizational psychology usually considered chronological age as a control variable rather than as a substantive construct. Although age differences at work have been addressed in earlier research, for instance, on stereotyping [4], work values [5], work attitudes [6], or job performance [7], this initial research was rather a theoretical [8]. One reason might be a more general neglect of time and time-related changes in work and organizational psychology theories [9]. Moreover, addressing changes over time empirically requires laborious longitudinal studies. Finally, neglecting workers' age is in line with a general youth centeredness and disrespect of older workers in industrialized societies. However, neglecting age and time renders work and organizational psychology theories unspecific and imprecise. The frequent reliance on younger adults (e.g., students) in empirical research might even lead to wrong conclusions.

Gender diversity and age diversity are an asset for corporate image and help bring a company, its employees, shareholders and customers together, improve their brand image as well as customer satisfaction. [10]. Hence, motivating gender and age diverse workforce is a challenge for the management. The issue needs to be handled efficiently so that they should feel safe, comfortable, confident and satisfied. In addition, they should be treated equal to the younger workers at work. Many of the stereotypes that prevent employers from hiring and making a good use of older workers are merely myths. One of the stereotypes is that older workers are not motivated enough to learn new skills and thrive at work. This, however, cannot be taken as a general rule for all older workers. It mostly depends on managers and their abilities to encourage workers. The benefit of understanding what motivates others is important. Motivation increases productivity, quality and service. It also helps people achieve goals, gain positive perspective, create the power to change, build self-esteem and capability and manage their own development. In line with this, motivation of older workers is better if they are managed well. There is also a growing consensus that these objectives cannot be achieved without a significant improvement in working conditions [11].

Social enterprises trade goods and services commercially for explicitly social purposes and offer potentially innovative local solutions to social challenges [8]. It has also positioned social enterprise activities for older people are therefore challenged with delivering benefit across diverse and evolving cohorts through flexible, tailored experiences if they are to facilitate positive health and wellbeing outcomes [12]. In Thailand the system and form of social enterprise provision for the elderly has some restrictions. Apart from the action plan which is not systematic or is not good enough, elderly people in Thailand receive little attention from the public and the private sectors. The policy and action for elderly people are

considered as not urgent or not important, compared to those for other population groups. The problem in implementing the social enterprise project for the elderly from the past until present has been that it benefits only some groups of elderly people, and cannot serve their real needs [13]. Previous research can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding of social enterprise role for elderly people. For the above reasons and because of change in demographic structure, the problem of accommodating the aging society has received a lot of attention from countries around the world, including Thailand. Its policy, strategies and tactics to cope with the aging society are important and deserve studying. The research, therefore, was aimed at investigating this issue by reviewing related theories and concepts of elderly people and the aging society, and studying the critical factors are factors that are crucial in the decision-making process. These factors play a pivotal role in determining the success or failure of the social enterprise in providing employment for elderly in Thailand. To fill this literature gap, this paper identifies the results of the study to the social context of Thailand and will present some social enterprise roles to accommodate the aging society in the future.

## **Objectives**

To determine the critical factors that affect the social enterprise role for elderly people in the eyes of stakeholders.

## **Methods**

### **Population and Sampling**

This qualitative study included field research to meet the objectives of the study. The key informants who were interviewed in depth, observation, and focus group discussion were those who set the policy, those who implemented the policy, and the elderly who work for social enterprises in Thailand. The data were collected from 15 provinces in Thailand, in 2018. The key informants in the qualitative research were recommended from Corporate Social Responsibility Institute (CSRI), The Stock Exchange of Thailand.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection began in October, 2018 and ended in March, 2019. The key informants were those who set the policy on the elderly, those who implemented the policy, and the elderly who were affected by the policy.

The first method was documentary research to strengthen the data from the field study. Second method was formal interviews in which a set of questions had been formed beforehand and informal interview to obtain profound information. A frame of interest was set for informal interview but the questions were not set in advance, including the order of questions. The conversation was free, leading to what the researcher was interested in. The third method were in-depth and focus group interview. There were both

structured interview and unstructured interview (open-ended interview) and the fourth method was participatory observation, which was used throughout the data collection period. The researcher participated in various activities, such as meetings, seminars and acted like a member of the group. There were both informal observation and formal observation, such as observing care for the elderly by sitting at a certain distance, not participating in management. In informal observation, the research entered the social enterprises for the elderly and did different activities as if he/she were an elderly person. In the way, researcher could observe and analyze the behaviors and opinions of the elderly and the personnel more deeply.

#### Source of Data

The researcher took the data from e-documents, textbooks and interview of those concerned. There were two sources of data.

1) Documents: Laws, official regulations, related research, dissertations, theses, textbooks, academic papers, news and articles in daily newspapers, including e-documents in the websites related to workfare provision for the elderly in Thailand and in foreign countries.

2) People: Interviewees. In this research, people selected were those who set the policy; those who implemented the policy; the elderly who were employed in the public and private sectors. These key informants were purposively selected as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Key Informants.

Key Informants	No of Interviewees	Qualitative Methods
Social enterprise promotion act makers	7	In-depth and focus group interviews
Social entrepreneurs who employ the elderly for work (policy implementers)	23	
Elderly who were employed by social enterprises	258	Observation, and focus group interviews (25 groups)

#### Research Instruments

The ATLAS.ti software proved to be an efficient tool to organize, capture and analyse data; it provided many researchers with an overview of the findings during the analytical process and helped in the optimization of time [14]. Before analyzing the data, the researcher managed the data by transcribing each interview and then saved it as computer files and put all data in a folder and also copied the hard copy to back up the data. For the data analysis, the researcher used the ATLAS.ti software [14], which started with data coding and then moved to the initial coding. In the ATLAS.ti software, it is called open coding, following by family coding and, finally, the researcher developed the themes. Moreover, the

researcher extracted written codes and data, and then moved upward to the theoretical categories, and kept writing memos by using mind mapping throughout the research process.

## Results

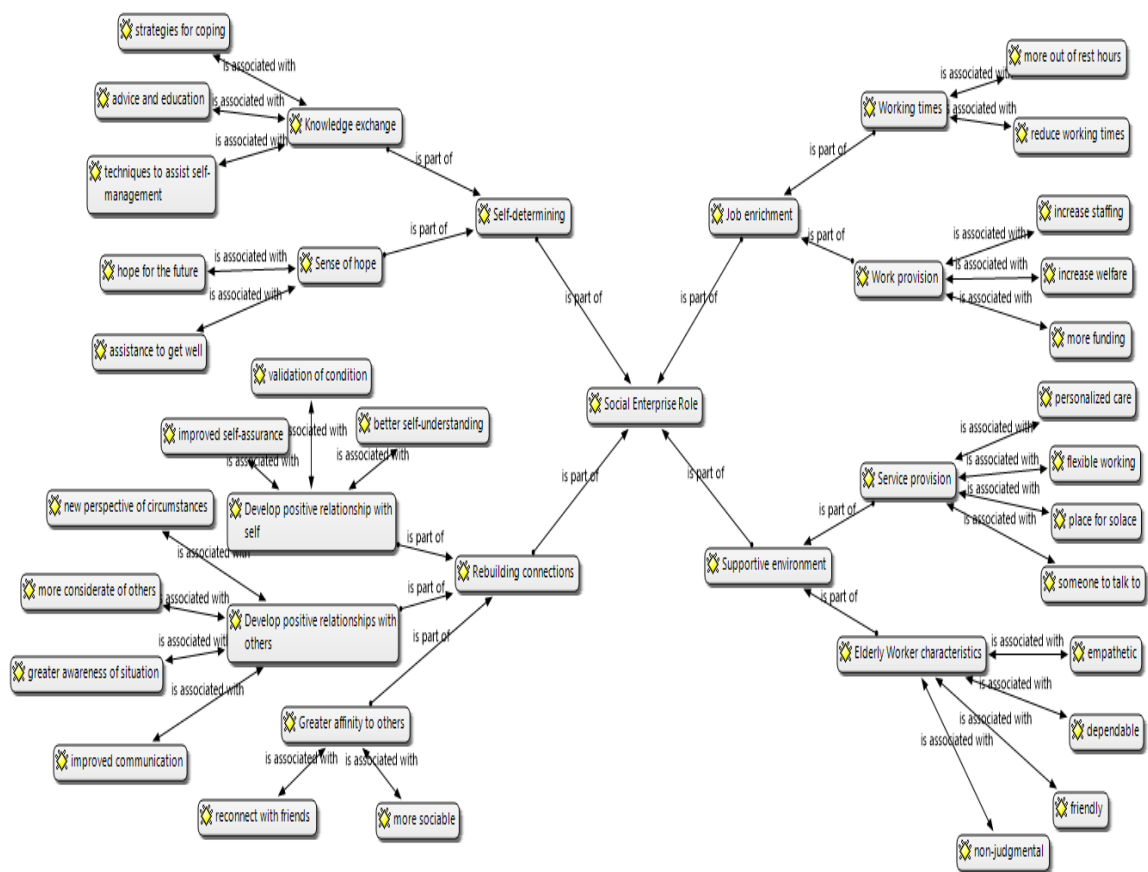
This part describes the results of the qualitative research was analyzed by ATLAS.ti program based on the interview with stakeholders involved in the elderly occupational promotion in social enterprise. The overall results showed some critical factors significantly affected social enterprise role. Based on the data and information obtained from the in-depth interviews, the summary of qualitative findings and results separated in the context of Thai social enterprise can be initially summarized in table 3.

**Table 3** Social Enterprise Role: Concepts and codes.

Category (Factor)	Concepts	Codes
Supportive environment	- Service provision	- Personalized care - Flexible working - Place for solace - Someone to talk to
	- Elderly worker characteristics	- Non-judgmental - Friendly - Dependable
Self-determining	- Knowledge exchange	- Strategies for coping - Advice and education - Techniques to assist self-management
	- Sense of hope	- Hope for the future - Assistance to get well
Job enrichment	- Working times	- More out of rest hours - Reduce working times
	- Work provision	- Increase staffing - More funding
Rebuilding connections	- Develop positive relationship with self	- Better self-understanding - Validation of condition - Improved self-assurance
	- Develop positive relationships with others	- New perspective of circumstances - More considerate others
		- Greater awareness of situation - Improved communication
- Greater affinity to others	- More sociable - Reconnect with friends	

The transcripts used in this study were imported into ATLAS.ti After repeated reading and examining of the transcripts, 452 relevant quotations were identified. Within these quotations, 382 provisional codes were identified and classified into 298 code families. Through further abstraction, 202 code families were categorized into 4 core categories. Table 3. lists the proposed social enterprise role in Thailand based on the data abstraction and concept construction. The bracketed number indicates the number of times the code appears in the provisional codes. The core categories will be presented with the corresponding direct quotes from the participants. All names have been changed to ensure participant anonymity.

However, when drawing up and connecting these themes together, the researcher found that there are common properties of the social enterprise role. There are the representations and reflection of social enterprise role. In addition, there were strong relationships between category and category that emerged, as illustrated in figure 1.



**Figure 1** Critical factors that affect the social enterprise role for elderly people in the eyes of stakeholders.

## Conclusions and Discussion

The findings from this study provide an insight into the value of attending an outreach social enterprise role for old people. Accessing the social enterprises led to a significant improvement in all measures of wellbeing with the majority of participants reporting satisfaction with the work provision and that it helped their situation. Nevertheless, most of the participants were directed to the social enterprises; however, old people often do not seek assistance [15]. The social enterprises by offering facilities in different settings and therefore, being more accessible in their organizations, could potentially, help to improve awareness of health and promote the importance of wellbeing to all its citizens.

Facilitating the creation of self-help groups in the organization, as the peer support and knowledge exchanged between members has been found to be beneficial [16], could potentially provide another cost effective way to offer support to old people in addition, to reaching a greater number of people [17]. The social enterprises, facilitated participants to become more self-aware and educated about their situation, and assisted them to develop strategies to help them to cope. By supporting individuals to become more resourceful in this way, opportunities were provided for participants to become more self-determining, as participants learnt to draw on their own assets to support their individual needs [18]. Indeed, powerlessness and lack of control over one's life are main features experienced by people [19]. Therefore, feeling empowered to self-manage will help to foster wellbeing and a greater life satisfaction [12]. However, some individuals may not wish or, have the capability to take charge of their own management [20, 18].

The social enterprises by encouraging involvement in decisions about their management, facilitated individuals to take some responsibility for their situation, which may help to instill confidence in their ability to take further charge. Also, the social enterprises by instilling hope that there was a better future worth trying for, may offer the encouragement needed for individuals to want to get more involved [21-22]. The social enterprises provided a supportive environment where they were seen to be empathetic, dependable, non-judgmental and friendly. Nevertheless, it has been shown that individuals are more likely to be responsive and accepting of support from others whom they can identify with [17] and it is this sense of an affinity to another that fosters the true feelings of trust [23]. Therefore, nurturing a partnership that fosters co-operation [22, 20] could offer a more efficacious intervention, as the mutual commitment to their wellbeing and shared sense of endeavour in achieving it, could provide the solidarity that connects them both together [17]. In this study, the key informants reported that they were included in decision making and were assisted by the social enterprises to become more resourceful and confident so that they could contribute to their own management. Supporting old people to develop skills, such as these, could be key to promoting a more collaborative relationship [19].

Certainly, A comparison between previous studies and the current study, the social enterprises could offer additional means to support old people in the organization to live a more independent life and



also, free more time for the social enterprises to provide prompt access to their service when most needed. Furthermore, presenting alternative ways for ongoing support could potentially be more motivating to a greater number of old people, as it provides more chances for individuals to engage in ways that are perceived as more appealing for them [24]. Having rebuild connections with others has been found to foster self-esteem [21] and lead to improved wellbeing [17] and gaining supportive environment has been found to be particularly, beneficial to an individual's health [25]. Developing positive social networks in this way and the opportunities for assistance that this affords, could provide an additional resource to support old people to self-manage in the organization [8].

### **Recommendations**

1) The social enterprise should provide their elderly people with supportive environments that facilitate the creation of self-help groups in the organization and support their self-determination on how to work to meet the same standard and to solve problems faced by social enterprise. All social enterprises that were involved in elderly care should be under the same standard and the same law. All elderly people in social enterprises must be evaluated yearly.

2) Social Enterprises should be promoted to create job enrichment continuously. They should be trained on elderly care to serve the elderly's needs better. They must keep the standards of performance and safety. They must have ethics and morality because they have to encounter many problems in elderly care management. Without patience, sincerity, observation of the standards, ethics and morality, they cannot serve the elderly efficiently and effectively. Moreover, they must have always developed a connection with their older employees, building relationships based on respect and trust. Listening to them, spending time with them and creates the understanding.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Because of the limitations in collecting related information in Thailand and in foreign countries, the researcher made the following recommendations for further research on workfare provision for the elderly. Further research should focus on the efficiency and the effectiveness of social enterprise in each region of Thailand and the results should be integrated to improve the policy and the projects related to the elderly in order to improve the operation of social enterprise in workfare provision to the elderly.

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