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Factors Affecting the Quality of Life of The Elderly in Ratchathewi District, Bangkok

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Abstract

This article aims to (1) examine elderly people's opinions on welfare, (2) assess their quality of life, (3) compare differences in quality of life based on personal factors, and (4) explore factors influencing their quality of life in the Ratchathewi District of Bangkok. This quantitative study used a questionnaire for data collection and applied statistical methods including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Independent t-test, Independent sample F-test, and Multiple Regression Analysis. The findings reveal that: (1) Government-provided elderly welfare is generally moderate, with social welfare ranked highest, followed by economic welfare, life security, and education. (2) The overall quality of life of the elderly is high, with psychological well-being ranked highest, followed by physical health, environmental conditions, and social relationships. (3) Elderly individuals with differences in gender, marital status, education, occupation, and income showed varying quality of life, but age did not impact it. (4) Elderly welfare significantly influences the quality of life of elderly people in Ratchathewi, with social factors having the greatest impact ($\beta = .522$), followed by economic factors ($\beta = .188$) and life security ($\beta = .160$). The model explains 53.60% of the variance in quality of life (Adjusted $R^2 = .536$).

Keywords: Elderly, Quality of life, Older Persons welfare

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In the past century, global population structure has undergone significant changes, with the proportion of children under 15 years old decreasing from 34.74% in 1950 to 25.25% in 2022. Meanwhile, the number of elderly people (aged 60 and above) increased dramatically from 7.96% in 1950 to 13.90% in 2022, with Asia having the largest elderly population, particularly in Japan, which has the highest elderly rate in the world. This trend is expected to continue, including in Thailand, where the elderly population has risen rapidly. In response, the government has developed various strategies, such as the "Preparing Thailand for an Aged Society" strategy, focusing on improving elderly care, health services, welfare, and quality of life (Office of the Elderly Affairs, 2022).

In Bangkok, a major urban area with a large elderly population, issues regarding the quality of life for the elderly in densely populated areas with unsuitable living conditions have become a key concern. Research has shown that elderly people in Bangkok are less satisfied with the environment and social-health services compared to those in rural areas or smaller cities. A supportive environment positively impacts the well-being and quality of life of the elderly, highlighting the need for urban environmental improvements to help elderly citizens live better lives in the city's fast-paced and crowded conditions (Houes, 1981)

1.2 Research Objective

1. To study the level of elderly people's opinions on welfare for the elderly in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok.
2. To study the level of quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok.
3. To compare differences in the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok based on personal factors.
4. To study the factors that influence the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methods

This study is quantitative research conducted in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok. The research tool used was a questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to survey elderly people aged 60 and above who reside in the Ratchathewi district, with a sample size of 400 participants. The sampling method followed Taro Yamane's (1973) formula for sample size calculation. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section 1: Demographic data related to personal factors, consisting of 6 items, including gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, and average monthly income, using closed-ended questions.

Section 2: Elderly welfare in the Ratchathewi district, consisting of 12 items covering 1) life security, 2) education, 3) economy, and 4) social aspects, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from "very high" to "very low").

Section 3: A questionnaire on the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district, based on the WHOQOL Group (1994) model, covering 1) physical health, 2) psychological health, 3) social relationships, and 4) environmental quality, measured on a 5-point rating scale.

The validity of the research instrument was assessed using content validity, calculated through the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), with feedback from at least three experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding a reliability value of 0.935.

The statistical methods used for data analysis included frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, independent t-test, Independent sample F-test, One-way ANOVA, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, and Multiple Regression Analysis.

3. Results

Section 1: The analysis of elderly people's opinions on welfare in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok revealed that the overall provision of elderly welfare by the government in the area is at a moderate level. When categorized by specific areas, the welfare services for the elderly in Ratchathewi were found to be at a moderate level across all dimensions. The rankings, from highest to lowest average scores, are as follows: (1) Social welfare, (2) Economic welfare, (3) Life security, and (4) Education.

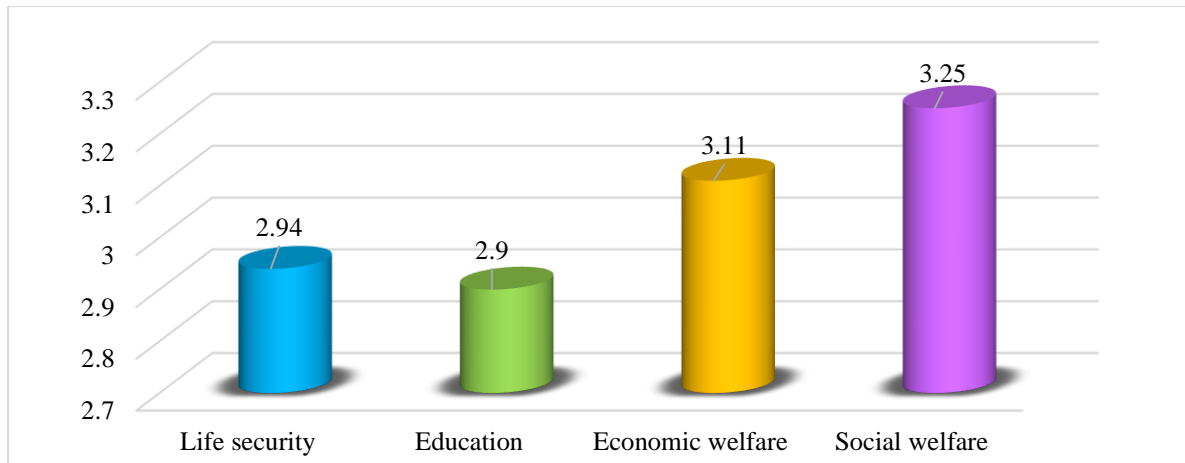


Figure 1: Elderly welfare provision in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok.

Section 2: Quality of Life of Elderly People in the Ratchathewi District of Bangkok, the overall quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok was found to be at a high level. When categorized by specific dimensions, the quality of life was ranked from highest to lowest based on the average scores as follows: (1) Psychological well-being, (2) Physical health, (3) Environmental quality, and (4) Social relationships.

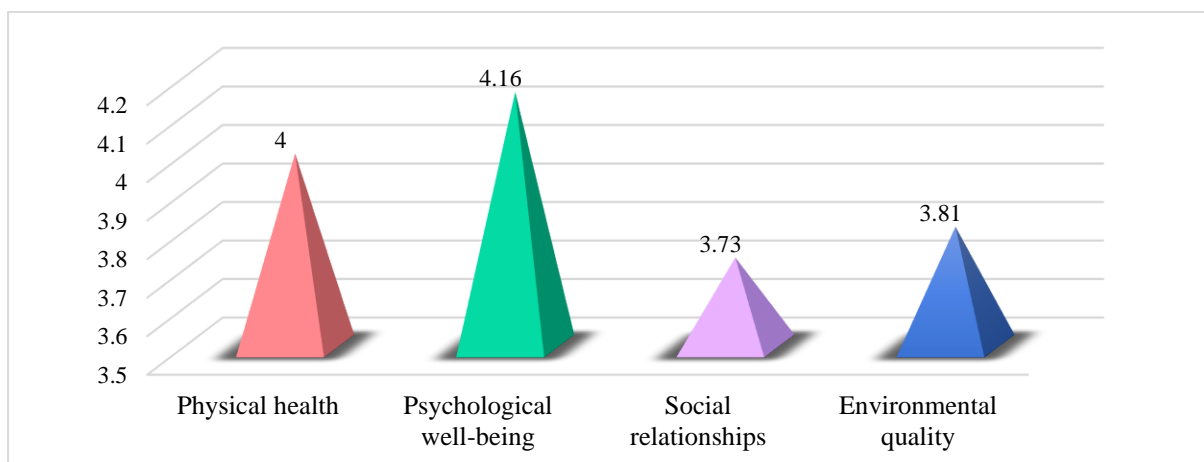


Figure 2: Quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok.

Section 3: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis 1: The government provides elderly welfare in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok at an overall moderate level, which does not align with the established hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The overall quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok is at a high level, which does not align with the established hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok, who differ in terms of gender, marital status, education level, occupation, and average monthly income, have statistically significant differences in their overall quality of life at the .01 level, which is consistent with the hypothesis. However, for elderly people in the Ratchathewi district with

different ages, their overall quality of life does not show significant differences at the .05 level, which does not align with the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Elderly welfare affects the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok. The research findings show that elderly welfare significantly impacts the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district at the $<.05$ level. The social aspect has the highest influence ($\beta = .522$), followed by the economic aspect ($\beta = .188$), and the life security aspect has the least influence ($\beta = .160$). The predictive coefficient is .536, indicating that elderly welfare accounts for 53.60% of the variation in the quality of life of elderly people in the Ratchathewi district (Adjusted $R^2 = .536$).

Discussion

Analysis of Elderly Welfare in Ratchathewi District: The analysis of elderly welfare in Ratchathewi, Bangkok, revealed that overall, the level of welfare is considered moderate. This is attributed to the lack of comprehensive and uniform provision of welfare services across different areas. The public's high expectations of government welfare emphasize the need for the government to provide basic services to reduce disparities in access to essential resources. This finding aligns with the theory proposed by Wanthanee Wasikasin (2004, cited in Thanyarat Chaisang, 2015), which emphasizes that the state has a responsibility to ensure that basic welfare services, including healthcare, education, and economic support, are available to all citizens, as part of their rights. The government's role in guaranteeing basic welfare services is critical for reducing inequality and improving the quality of life for all members of society.

Analysis of Quality of Life of the Elderly: The analysis of the quality of life of elderly individuals in Ratchathewi, Bangkok, indicated an overall high level of quality of life. This result can be attributed to the elderly people's satisfaction with their health, physical abilities, and overall well-being. They reported having the necessary energy to perform daily tasks, including work and personal activities, and expressed contentment with their ability to function as they had in the past. This finding is consistent with the theory of UNESCO (1993, cited in Chumphorn Chamsang & colleagues, 2012), which defines quality of life as a level of well-being where individuals are satisfied with their living conditions and environment. Additionally, the findings correlate with research by Taveemai Udchachon (2023), which found that the quality of life of elderly people is generally high.

Impact of Welfare on the Quality of Life: The research found that elderly welfare has a statistically significant impact on the quality of life of the elderly in Ratchathewi at the .05 level, particularly in areas such as life security, economic conditions, and social support. These results align with the hypothesis and demonstrate the increasing importance that the government places on elderly welfare. Public health volunteers and government agencies actively support elderly people, providing assistance with health and housing. For example, when families request home repairs, the government responds by facilitating repairs, and community funds are used to support elderly residents. The government has also focused on creating policies to improve elderly health and living conditions, as well as enhancing their participation in social activities. This approach is consistent with Wanthanee Wasikasin (2004, cited in Thanyarat Chaisang, 2015) social welfare theory, which posits that social welfare should ensure that all individuals live well and have their basic needs met. The state's role in providing such services is essential to fostering social well-being.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the level of elderly welfare, the quality of life of elderly people, and the factors influencing their well-being in the Ratchathewi district of Bangkok. The findings revealed that while the overall provision of elderly welfare by the government was perceived as moderate, there is a notable disparity in the availability of services across various domains. The social welfare aspect was ranked the highest, followed by economic support, life security, and education. These results suggest that while certain areas of elderly welfare are prioritized, gaps still exist in meeting the comprehensive needs of the elderly population, particularly in terms of education and life security. The findings also indicate that elderly people in the district report a high overall quality of life, with psychological well-being, physical health, and environmental quality being the most positively rated dimensions. This reflects the importance of both physical and mental health in determining the quality of life for the elderly, as well as the role of their living environment in supporting well-being.

Moreover, the study found that elderly welfare significantly influences the quality of life of elderly individuals, with social and economic factors having the most substantial impact. The government's efforts, such as health and housing support, were shown to improve the elderly's overall quality of life, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive social welfare policies. The study highlights the need for continuous development in social welfare programs to address the diverse needs of elderly citizens. Policies aimed at improving elderly welfare should focus on ensuring greater equity in access to services, enhancing economic support, and fostering community engagement. In line with the social welfare theory by Wanthanee Wasikasin (2004), these findings reinforce the idea that welfare services are essential in ensuring a dignified and fulfilling life for the elderly, underlining the state's responsibility in fulfilling these needs.

Acknowledgment

This research was made possible through the invaluable support and guidance of several individuals. I am deeply grateful to my academic advisor, Lecture Khwanta Benchakhan, for her continuous encouragement, expert guidance, and constructive feedback throughout the research process. I also wish to thank Dr. Yaowalak Chaobanpho for her insightful recommendations and thorough review of my work, which ensured its accuracy and clarity. Special thanks go to Dr. Theerawat Phumdara, Mr. Itthiphon Kotamee, and Dr. Chanut Chanhom for their expertise in validating the content and applying the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) to enhance the quality of this study. I am equally thankful to the elderly residents of Ratchathewi district for their participation in the survey, which was crucial to the research's reliability. I also acknowledge the guidance and support of the faculty members and staff of the Department of Political Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Lastly, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family for their unwavering love, encouragement, and support throughout my academic journey. This research is dedicated to them, as well as to all those who have helped and supported me along the way.

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