

Self-Esteem of the Elderly in Rural Areas of Nakhon Sawan Province

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Objective: Study self-esteem of the elderly and factors related.

Material and Method: A cross-sectional survey of two hundred and seventy elderly, aged 60 or above in rural areas of Nakhon Sawan Province. The data were collected by interview questionnaire from May 12 to May 25, 2003. Statistics used for data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, and Stepwise multiple regression.

Results: More than half of the elderly (65.6%) had a moderate level of self-esteem, followed by a low level (19.3%) and a high level (15.1%). The factors that were statistically significant related to self-esteem of the elderly (p -value < 0.05) were monthly income, activities of daily living, personality, participation in family activities, participation in social activities, and social support. In addition, social support, participation in social activities, personality, and participation in family activities could significantly predict self-esteem of the elderly by 58.2%. The factor with highest predictive power of self-esteem was social support.

Conclusion: Elderly should be encouraged to participate in family and social activities. The level of social support should be high enough for the elderly to maintain their self-esteem so that they can have live happily without burden to family and society.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Social support, Elderly

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When people become elderly, they experience many physiological changes, physical functional decline, specific health problems, psychological and social changes. The elderly are at the age to become ill and have less ability to work. The psychological changes in the elderly may result from many types of deprivation, such as the loss of a beloved person from moving away or from death and loss of social and economic status. These changes influence the mentality of the elderly, making them feel loss of power and self-esteem. Social and economic changes are causes in elderly mental problems. The changes in Thai cultural tradition toward a more Western style could affect the elderly with changes in social conditions, abandonment, reduction of respect, and a feeling of lower self worth^(1,2). The results of physical, psychological, social and economics changes create mental instability

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in the elderly. They may feel lonely and depressed and feel that they have lost their social role.

Self-esteem is an important factor in individuals for coping with problems in daily life and for performing appropriate behavior that would be a guide to their worthy life and community⁽³⁾. The elderly who have high self-esteem are able to maintain their good health and have a sense of mastery. On the other hand, the elderly who have low self-esteem, often have an inferiority complex, anxiety, worry, isolation, are anxious about health decline, and finally, they may become depressed^(4,5). Therefore, self-esteem is a very important factor that maintains the elderly well being. Cooper-smith⁽³⁾ stated that two factors influencing the development of self-esteem are the personal factors such as gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, monthly income, personality, and activities of daily living; another is environmental factors such as family activity participation, social activity participation, and social support. These factors influence the

Table 1. Number and percentage of the elderly classified by general characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender (n)	270	
Male	99	36.7
Female	171	63.3
Age groups (n)	270	
60-69	117	43.3
70-79	113	41.9
80 +	40	14.8
Marital status (n)	270	
Married	171	63.3
Single / widowed / divorced	99	36.7
Educational level (n)	270	
No education	67	24.8
Lower primary education	52	19.3
Primary education	147	54.4
Higher primary education	4	1.5
Monthly income (n)	270	
No income	16	5.9
Low income (<2,029 baht)	192	71.1
High income (≥2,029 baht)	62	23.0
X = 2,029.23 SD= 405.86	Min = 0	Max = 30,000
Number of children (n)	270	
No children	1	0.4
1-2	49	18.2
3-4	73	27.0
≥ 5	147	54.4
X = 4.94, SD = 2.31	Min = 0	Max = 10
Family type (n)	270	
Extended family	157	58.1
Nuclear family	113	41.9
Activities of daily living (n)		
Total dependence (0-4)	0	0.0
Severe dependence (5-8)	4	1.5
Moderately severe dependence (9-11)	17	6.3
Mildly severe dependence (12-20)	249	92.2
Personality (n)		
Introversion (15-36)	146	54.1
Extroversion (37-60)	124	45.9
Participation in family activities (n)		
Low level (7-14)	87	32.2
Moderate level (15-17)	120	44.5
High level (18-21)	63	23.3
Participation in social activities (n)		
Low level (7-14)	144	53.3
Moderate level (15-17)	89	33.0
High level (18-21)	37	13.7
Social support (n)		
Low level (18-39)	144	53.3
Moderate level (40-46)	89	33.0
High level (47-54)	37	13.7

elderly emotional esteem and lead to good quality of life.

The present study aimed to examine self-esteem and to determine the significant factors related to self-esteem of the elderly in rural areas of Nakhon Sawan Province. The results will be used as a guideline to improve the self-esteem and encourage the quality of life of the elderly in the future.

Material and Method

The present study was a cross-sectional survey research. Data were collected from May 12-25, 2003 by three researchers after a pilot study with inter-rater reliability test of 95-100 percent agreement in each item. Two hundred and seventy elderly subjects, aged 60 years and above, living in rural areas (the area outside the municipality) of Nakhon Sawan Province were selected by using the simple random sampling. The instrument used in the study was an interview questionnaire developed by the researcher that consisted of seven parts. Part I was demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, educational level, monthly income, number of children, and family type. Part II determined the activities of daily living by Barthel ADL index⁽¹⁾, and consisted of 10 questions. Part III determined the personality of the elderly and consisted of 15 items. It divided the personality into introversion and extroversion. Part IV evaluated the participation in family activities with 17 questions. Part V evaluated the participation in social activities with seven questions. Part VI evaluated the social support with 18 questions. Part VII evaluated the self-esteem with 20 questions.

The interview questionnaire was assessed by three experts for content validity. Reliability was accomplished with a pre-test by pilot study among 35 elderly in a rural area with similar characteristics to those of the studied population. The results were analyzed for reliability by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability values of questionnaire were as follows: personality = 0.70, participation in family activities = 0.70, participation in social activities = 0.82, social support = 0.84 and self-esteem = 0.78, respectively.

Data analysis was performed by frequency, percentage was used for general characteristic of samples and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used for factors that were related to self-esteem of the elderly. Stepwise multiple regressions were also used to determine the best factors that predict the self-esteem of the elderly. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

General characteristics of the elderly found that 63.3% were female with the average age of 71 years, two thirds were married, over half (54.4%) finished primary school, average monthly income was 2,029 baht, 54.4% had at least 5 children, and 58.1% lived in an extended family. Most of the elderly had mildly severe dependence (92.2%), 54.1% had introvert personality, 44.5% moderately participated in family activities, 53.3% lowly participated in social activities, and 43% had moderate social support (Table 1).

Self-esteem of the elderly was assessed by using Coppersmith Self-esteem Inventory and the scores were then classified into three levels. Two thirds of the elderly had moderate self-esteem (65.6%) followed by low level 19.3%, and high level 15.1% (Table 2).

Analyzing the factor related to the self-esteem of the elderly and the predictive factor of elderly self-esteem, found that the statistically significant factors that correlated to the self-esteem of the elderly (p-value < 0.05) were, monthly income, activities of daily living, personality, participation in family activities, participation in social activities, and social

Table 2. Self-esteem of the elderly in rural areas of Nakhon Sawan province

Level of self esteem	n (270)	%
Low level (20-39)	52	19.3
Moderate level (39-54)	177	65.6
High level (55-60)	41	15.1

Table 3. Correlation coefficient between personal factors environmental factors and Self-esteem of the elderly

Variables	Self-esteem of the elderly	
	r	p-value
Personal factors		
Age	0.025	0.678
Monthly income	0.124*	0.042
Activities of daily living	0.368*	<0.001
Personality	0.382*	<0.001
Environmental factors		
Participation in family activities	0.523*	<0.001
Participation in social activities	0.552*	<0.001
Social support	0.711*	<0.001

* Significantly level of 0.05

Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression analysis of personal factors, environmental factors, and self-esteem in the elderly

Variable	R ²	β	Beta	t	p-value
Social support	0.505	0.528	0.442	8.008	<0.001
Participation in social activities	0.538	0.359	0.162	3.273	0.001
Personality	0.573	0.187	0.139	0.139	0.001
Participation in family activities	0.582	0.347	0.130	0.130	0.009

β₀ = 6.5241 R = 0.691 Sig F = < 0.001

support (Table 3). Factors that had predictive power to predict self-esteem were analyzed by using Stepwise multiple regression. They showed that social support, participation in social activities, personality, and participation in family activities could predict 58.2% of self-esteem of the elderly. The factor with highest correlation with self-esteem in the elderly was social support (Beta = 0.44) followed by participation in social activities, personality, and participation in family activities, with the Beta of 0.16, 0.14, and 0.13, respectively (Table 4). Therefore, self-esteem of elderly = 6.5241 + 0.44 social support +0.16 social activities +0.14 personality +0.130 family activities.

Discussion

The present study found that two thirds of the elderly had a moderate level of self-esteem and 19.3% had a low level. The reason that most of the elderly had a moderate level may be because they had the ability to help themselves in the routine daily activities, housework, and other hobbies. These could make them feel that they were not a burden to their offspring. In addition, in the rural society, people still had the value of respecting the elderly, thus, this could help the elderly feel that they were still important. The analysis of factors that had predictive power of self-esteem in the elderly showed that social support was the most important factor. It is possible that this was source of benefit for individuals that interacted with one another in society and created self-esteem for the elderly⁽⁵⁻⁷⁾. The results agreed with the study by Frazier and Cynthia⁽⁴⁾ that found a positive correlation between social support and self-esteem and that lead to the better quality of life in the elderly.

The participation in social activities and family activities were also the important factors related to the self-esteem of the elderly since the activities would compensate for activities or works that the elderly had done in the past. It made them interact and accepted by the surrounding people. The activities that the elderly participated in the family and the society

would help them perceive themselves as still recognized and not dependent on others therefore, lead to positive self-esteem⁽⁸⁾.

For the personality and educational level of the elderly, it was found that the elderly with a positive or outgoing personality would have high self-esteem, according to the personality theory. The characteristics of positive personality would make them accept the changing status with little tension and high satisfaction in life as the age increases⁽⁹⁾.

To promote the self-esteem of the elderly, they should be encouraged to increase their participation in the family and social activities, Regular activity of family members and sufficient social support to maintain the happy lives of the elderly should also be promoted.

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ความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองของผู้สูงอายุในเขตชนบทจังหวัดนครสวรรค์

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การศึกษานี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงสำรวจภาคตัดขวาง เพื่อศึกษาความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองของผู้สูงอายุและปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้อง กลุ่มตัวอย่างผู้สูงอายุที่มีอายุ 60 ปีขึ้นไปที่ย้ายอยู่ในเขตชนบทจังหวัดนครสวรรค์ จำนวน 270 คน เก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์ระหว่างวันที่ 12-25 พฤษภาคม พ.ศ. 2546 วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน การตรวจสอบสัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์ของเพียร์สัน และการวิเคราะห์ถดถอยพหุแบบขั้นตอน

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ผู้สูงอายุส่วนใหญ่มีความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง (ร้อยละ 65.5) รองลงมาคือระดับต่ำ (ร้อยละ 19.3) และระดับสูง (ร้อยละ 15.1) ปัจจัยที่มีความสัมพันธ์กับความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (p -value < 0.05) ได้แก่ รายได้ต่อเดือน ความสามารถในการปฏิบัติกิจวัตรประจำวัน บุคลิกภาพ การมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมของครอบครัว การมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมทางสังคม และแรงสนับสนุนทางสังคม เมื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยที่สามารถทำนายความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองของผู้สูงอายุ พบว่าแรงสนับสนุนทางสังคม การมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมทางสังคม บุคลิกภาพ และการมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมของครอบครัวสามารถร่วมทำนายความรู้สึกมีคุณค่าในตนเองของผู้สูงอายุได้ร้อยละ 58.2 และแรงสนับสนุนทางสังคมสามารถร่วมทำนายได้สูงสุด

โดยสรุปควรส่งเสริมและสนับสนุนให้ผู้สูงอายุได้มีส่วนร่วมในการทำกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ ทั้งในครอบครัวและสังคมมากยิ่งขึ้น รวมถึงมีการสนับสนุนอย่างเพียงพอเพื่อให้ผู้สูงอายุเกิดความรู้สึกว่าตนยังคงเป็นบุคคลที่มีคุณค่าสามารถดำรงชีวิตได้อย่างมีความสุข