

# FACTORS OF LIFE SATISFACTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVING IN PAK PHAYUN DISTRICT, PHATTHALUNG PROVINCE

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## Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Thailand along with many developed and developing nations faces a rapidly aging population. According to World Health Organization, over 11 million Thais, representing 17.57% of the population, are classified as elderly. This demographic shift necessitates a deeper understanding of factors influencing well-being in this growing segment. The Activity Theory provides a foundational framework for this research. The theory posits that continued engagement in activities, particularly during later life, contributes to positive psychological well-being and life satisfaction in elderly people. Culture influences decision making; therefore, cultural and religious belief in term of the collectivism helping others as doing good (Eudaimonia) and staying as a group may increase life satisfaction and psychological well-being than seeking pleasure activities (Hedonia) e.g., listening music, go shopping. There are two objectives on this research: Firstly, studying behavioral factors and psychological well-being influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province; and secondly, utilizing a behavioral and psychological well-being model to predict life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province.

**Methodology:** Employing a quantitative approach, the study analyzed data from 299 Thai elderly. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics. Inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA, were utilized to examine potential differences in means between groups based on activity engagement levels. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore the predictive power of activity engagement (Both Eudaimonia and Hedonia) on life satisfaction and various domains of psychological well-being.

**Main Results:** The findings revealed a significant positively association between both Eudaimonia and Hedonia with life satisfaction and most psychological well-being domains. However, the link with autonomy and personal growth was lowly associated for participants primarily engaging in Hedonia. Interestingly, Eudaimonia emerged as a strong predictor of life satisfaction and psychological well-being, particularly for purpose in life and positive relationships.



**Involvement to Buddhadhamma:** The connection between Eudaimonia and psychological well-being domains aligns with Buddhist teachings on overcoming suffering through meaningful action and positive relationships. The Noble Eightfold Path, a core Buddhist concept, emphasizes right livelihood (Engaging in meaningful work or activity) and right relationships (Cultivating positive connections with others). The focus on Eudaimonia and social connection identified in this research resonates with these Buddhist principles, suggesting potential cultural and religious influences on the impact of activities on psychological well-being. Future investigations could explore the potential moderating role of cultural and religious beliefs in the relationship between activity engagement and psychological well-being.

**Conclusions:** Thailand's aging population had shifted a focus on how to keep elderly people happy and healthy due to the aging population's increasing. This study examined how activities influenced the psychological well-being and satisfaction in life of 299 elderly people. The research found that both activities focused on personal enjoyment (Hedonia) and activities focused on helping others and community (Eudaimonia) were positively linked to psychological well-being particularly purpose in life and social connection. However, engaging in activities for personal growth and independence seemed less important for those who primarily participated in pleasure-seeking activities. This focus on social connection and activities that contributed to a sense of purpose was particularly interesting when considering Thailand's Buddhist culture. Buddhist teachings emphasized overcoming suffering through meaningful action and fostering positive relationships. The study suggested that cultural and religious beliefs might have played a role in how activities impacted psychological well-being in Thai elderly people. Future research could have explored this connection in more detail, potentially leading to social programs and community service designed to promote meaningful activities for this population. This study was limited by its cross-sectional design, precluding causal inferences. It might have not definitively stated whether activity engagement led to higher well-being or vice versa.

**Keywords:** Hedonia, Eudaimonia, Life Satisfaction, Psychological Well-being, Elderly People

## Introduction

Phatthalung, a province in Southern Thailand, stands out for its rich tapestry of tourist attractions and natural resources. Its allure stems from a harmonious blend of tranquil bird sanctuaries, breathtaking natural attractions encompassing waterfalls, mountains, and lush forests, and a vibrant cultural tapestry steeped in art, tradition, and diverse beliefs. This multifaceted appeal positions Phatthalung Province boasts significant economic potential. This development is not just about financial growth. It has the potential to significantly improve the lives of residents. Increased economic activity can translate into improved living standards, with residents having greater access to essential goods and services. Moreover, a thriving economy could lead to better healthcare infrastructure and access for the local population. Ultimately, realizing Phatthalung Province's economic potential could contribute to a higher level of overall satisfaction and well-being for its residents.



While Phatthalung Province offers a peaceful and scenic environment, it also faces challenges that can negatively impact the well-being of its elderly residents. The prevalence of drug addiction can create a sense of insecurity and strain social services, making it difficult for elderly people to access the support they need. Furthermore, income disparities can leave some elderly people struggling to afford basic necessities, impacting their health and overall quality of life. Happiness, a concept encompassing positive emotions and a comprehensive understanding of societal, economic, spiritual, mental health, and overall well-being, has been extensively studied by scholars (Sirgy et al., 2020).

As Thailand transitions into an aging society, understanding the determinants of well-being among the elderly is crucial to prevent issues and promote happiness within the community (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), 2017). Research into the satisfaction and mental well-being of the elderly in Phatthalung Province yields intriguing insights: 1) The serious illness of an elderly family member negatively impacts family well-being; 2) Relocating for income-generating purposes leaves elderly parents responsible for grandchild care, leading to insufficient rest; and 3) Income inequality significantly hinders access to essential consumer services, affecting life safety. This research underscored that happiness extends beyond the fulfillment of basic needs, encompassing psychological factors such as emotions and attitudes. Previous studies have often prioritized attitudes and emotions, which are relatively malleable, while overlooking other impactful factors.

Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to psychological well-being and satisfaction in life among the elderly is particularly important, as this population can face unique challenges that impact the happiness and quality of life. As a result, this investigation delves into behavioral activities, psychological well-being, and the correlation with life satisfaction among the elderly people in Phatthalung Province.

### Objectives

There are two objectives on this research: Firstly, studying behavioral factors and psychological well-being influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province; and secondly, utilizing a behavioral and psychological well-being model to predict life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province.

## Methodology

### Participants

This research employed a survey research design, targeting the elderly population residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province. The total population of elderly people in the district was approximately 5,882. Based on statistical calculations, a representative sample size of 437 elderly people was determined. To ensure a balanced distribution of the sample across the district, cluster sampling was implemented. Consequently, sample groups were proportionately selected based on the population distribution within each sub-district. After eliminating



incomplete answers, the final sample consisted of 299 elderly people. The sample composition included 65 elderly people from Don Pradu Sub-district, 44 elderly people from Koh Nang Kham Sub-district, 52 elderly people from Koh Mak Sub-district, 71 elderly people from Fa Lami Sub-district, and 67 elderly people from Han Thao Sub-district.

### **Research tool**

The research tool used in this study was a questionnaire measuring life satisfaction, comprising questions about the respondent's status, and a measure of life satisfaction which measuring in three assessment such as behavioral activity leading to happiness and psychological well-being.

**Behavioral activities leading to happiness:** This study employed questionnaires adapted from previous research by Steger et al. research (2008) and Zuo et al. research (2017) to assess subjective well-being among elderly residents in Phatthalung Province. The instruments were modified to improve clarity and cultural relevance for the target population. For instance, some items were rephrased using simpler language and examples specific to the Thai context and culture. Additionally, a neutral response option was added to certain questions to capture a wider range of experiences. It assessed the frequency of engaging in behaviors over the past two weeks on a scale of 1 (Never engaged in the behavior) to 7 (Engaged in the behavior very frequently). The measurement quality was indicated by an IOC value of 0.94, and reliability was supported by an alpha coefficient of 0.94.

**Life Satisfaction:** Developed from the translation of the University of Chiang Mai, based on Pavot & Diener's work (2013), this questionnaire consisted of five questions assessing opinions on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The internal consistency was 0.87 and 0.82 upon retesting, with a quality measurement indicated by an IOC value of 0.84 and reliability supported by an alpha coefficient of 0.91.

**Psychological well-being:** A shortened version of the questionnaire derived from the work of Calderson et al., (2020). Comprising 23 questions, it assessed psychological well-being in six dimensions: 1) Decision-making ability; 2) Life management with the environment; 3) Development and growth; 4) Goal-setting in life; 5) Good relationships with others; and 6) Self-acceptance. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The measurement quality was indicated by an IOC value of 0.83, and reliability was supported by an alpha coefficient ranking from 0.81 to 0.90.

### **Data collection**

Data collection from elderly people was conducted by officers and staff from the health promotion hospital in five sub-districts, namely Don Pradu Sub-district, Koh Nang Kham Sub-district, Koh Mak Sub-district, Fa Lami Sub-district, and Han Thao Sub-district. A total of 437 elderly people were initially recruited for the study. However, after the initial screening process, 299 participants met the inclusion criteria and completed all the questionnaires.

### **Data analysis**

The statistics used for data analysis including descriptive statistics, reference statistics such as t-tests and ANOVA to compare the differences in means, and the analysis of models determining

happiness from behavioral activities factors leading to happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being using multiple regression analysis.

Results and Discussion

This research aimed to, firstly, study behavioral factors and psychological well-being influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province; and secondly, utilize a behavioral and psychological well-being model to predict life satisfaction of elderly people residing in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province.

This research generally found that elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province, reported a high level of overall life satisfaction (Mean score of 5.45). This satisfaction was attributed to behavioral activities, both Hedonia and Eudaimonia, as good as psychological well-being, all of which were rated at a high level (With mean scores of 5.06, 4.49, and 4.51, respectively). Upon examining psychological well-being in each dimension, all aspects demonstrated high levels, except for two dimensions: Autonomy and personal growth showed moderate levels (With mean scores of 3.80 and 4.08, respectively), as shown in detail in Figure 1.

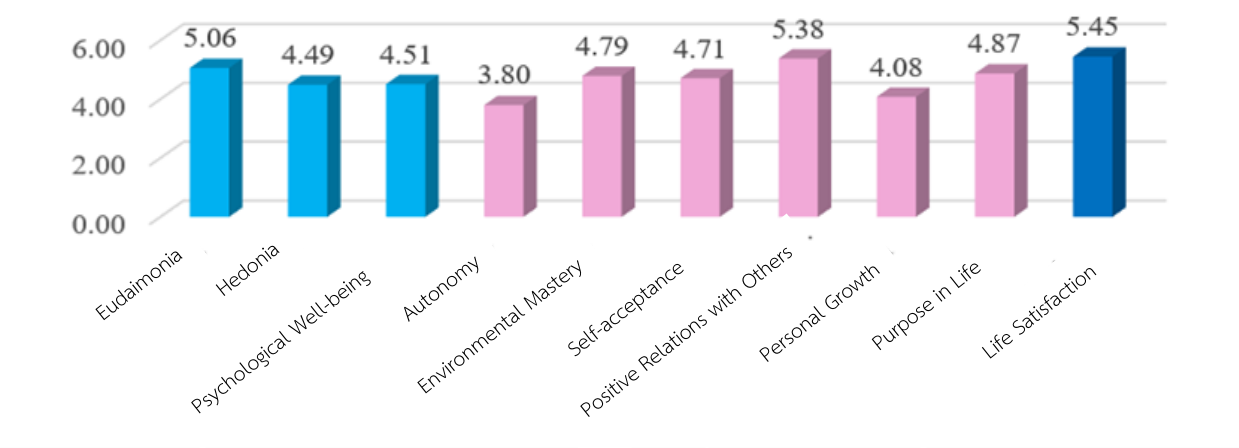


Figure 1 Means of Eudaimonia, Hedonia, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction

Furthermore, the results exhibited a positive correlation between Hedonia and Eudaimonia, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, with statistical significance observed at the 0.01 level. Hedonia demonstrated a positive correlation with both Eudaimonia and psychological well-being, with statistical significance maintained at the 0.01 level. This meant that finding joy in daily life contributed not just to happiness but also to feeling having a meaningful life. This finding highlighted the importance of incorporating activities and experiences that brought pleasure and satisfaction into the later years. Within the realm of psychological well-being, environment mastery, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, and purpose in life displayed positive associations with satisfaction with life, with statistical significance established at the 0.01 level. The research also found that feeling good about oneself (Self-acceptance), having strong relationships, feeling in control of your environment (Environment Mastery), and having a sense of purpose in life (All aspects of Psychological Well-being) were significantly linked





to feeling satisfied with life overall. Conversely, autonomy exhibited a negative correlation with satisfaction with life, reaching statistical significance at the 0.01 level. The study found a negative correlation between feeling autonomous (Independent and Free) and life satisfaction. It might have been linked to feelings of isolation or lack of connection considered a negative association particularly context of elderly people. These findings were detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Correlation coefficient of Eudaimonia, Hedonia, psychological well-being and life satisfaction

Variables	Eudaimonia	Hedonia	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Self-Acceptance	Purpose in life	Positive Relation with others	Personal Growth	Life Satisfaction
Eudaimonia		0.76**	-0.16**	0.36**	0.37**	0.55**	0.57**	-0.31**	0.49**
Hedonia			-0.19**	0.11	0.08	0.25**	0.29**	-0.36**	0.29**
Autonomy				0.04	0.22**	0.04	-0.25**	0.42**	-0.11
Environmental Mastery					0.64**	0.66**	0.60**	0.18**	0.29**
Self-Acceptance						0.61**	0.48**	0.30**	0.33**
Purpose in Life							0.68**	0.04	0.29**
Positive Relation with others								-0.02**	0.39**
Personal Growth									-0.25**
Life Satisfaction									

Multiple regression analysis found factors predicting life satisfaction for elderly residents in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province e.g., enjoyment of daily activities (Hedonia), purpose in life (Eudaimonia), and overall psychological well-being significantly predicted higher life satisfaction ( $P < 0.01$ ). It implied that feeling happy daily, having life meaning, and feeling good contribute to overall life satisfaction for elderly residents here. Moreover, this study developed a model to predict life satisfaction based on these factors. However, the model's accuracy was only 25%. This meant while the factors were linked to life satisfaction, the model could have only correctly predicted life satisfaction in 1 out of 4 cases. This highlighted the complexity of life satisfaction in elderly people, influenced by many factors beyond those studied. The remaining 75% likely stemmed from other experiences and characteristics. The details of the predictive equation were presented in Tables 2 and 3.

$$Y_{SAT} = 17.780 + 0.207 X_{EU} - 0.074 X_{HED} + 0.021 X_X \text{ or standard score equation}$$

$$Z_{SAT} = 0.613 Z_{EU} - 0.176 Z_{HED} + 0.045 Z_X$$

**Table 2** Multiple regression of Hedonia, Eudaimonia, Psychological Well-being influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2,781.119	3	927.040	34.726	0.00
Residual	7,955.428	298	26.696		
Total	10,736.546	301	927.040		

R = 0.509 R Square = 0.259 Adjusted R Square = 0.252

**Table 3** Coefficient prediction of life satisfaction of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.780	2.660		6.684**	.000
Eudaimonia	0.207	0.029	0.613	7.169**	.000
Hedonia	- 0.074	0.035	- 0.176	-2.152*	.032
Psychological Well-being	0.021	0.025	0.045	0.807	.420

**Table 4** Multiple regression of Hedonia, Eudaimonia, positive relations with others influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	786.085	3	393.042	85.016	0.00
Residual	1368.450	298	4.623		
Total	2154.535	301			

R = 0.60 R Square = 0.37 Adjusted R Square = 0.36

**Table 5** Coefficient prediction of positive relations with others of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.014	.594		6.753	.000
Eudaimonia	.124	.011	.808	11.439	.000
Hedonic	-.061	.014	-.320	-4.530	.000

**Table 6** Multiple regression of Hedonia, Eudaimonia, purpose in life influencing on life satisfaction of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	951.464	3	475.732	85.242	.000**
Residual	1651.967	298	5.581		
Total	2603.431	301			

R = 0.61 R Square = 0.37 Adjusted R Square = 0.36

**Table 7** Coefficient prediction of purpose in life of elderly people living in Pak Phayun District, Phatthalung Province

Variance	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7.510	.653		11.498	.000
Eudaimonia	.143	.012	.843	11.936	.000
Hedonia	-.083	.015	-.391	-5.538	.000



According to the Table 4-7 demonstrated that Eudaimonia predicted both positive relations with others and purpose in life for 36 %. This might have explained the perspective of elderly people, the concept of purpose in life often shifted towards a focus on the present rather than the pursuit of goals as seen in younger age groups (Carstensen, 2021). This study drew on this framework, particularly aspects like right livelihood and mindfulness, to investigate factors influencing well-being among elderly residents in Phatthalung Province. As a result, when elderly people facing with illness or death could have prompted elderly people focusing on the present moment. Therefore, it was interesting to find the concept of elderly people's psychological well-being and life satisfaction in various philosophies throughout history. One of the pursuits of happiness was the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path emphasized mindfulness and appreciation for the present which came from the Noble Eightfold Path of happiness consisting of right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This shift in perspective could have contributed to increased satisfaction in life. According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, elderly people faced a new stage of life characterized by life review and introspection (Erikson et al., 1986). This stage often involved reflecting on past experiences and achievements, leading to a sense of generativity and ego integrity. Eudaimonia and psychological well-being, particularly positive relations with others and purpose in life, emerged as crucial predictors of life satisfaction among elderly people. This aligned with findings from previous studies, such as Schwartz & Halliday (2020) identified a positive correlation between meaningful relationships and life satisfaction, while also demonstrating a negative correlation between social isolation and depression. Kim & Kim (2021), Kochanski, (2019) reported that elderly people who engaged in spiritual and creative activities tended to experience greater purpose in life, leading to enhanced psychological well-being.

## Originality and Body of Knowledge

The Noble Eightfold Path is a fundamental structure in Buddhism, offering a roadmap for elderly people seeking freedom from suffering and the achievement of enlightenment. Comprising eight interconnected principles, this path provides guidance for ethical conduct and facilitates spiritual growth as follows: 1) Right understanding achieves a clear and accurate understanding of the essential nature of reality, which includes grasping the Four Noble Truths and recognizing the law of cause and effect (Karma), is what is meant by in the context of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism; 2) Right intention involves fostering positive motivations such as kindness and compassion, while abandoning negative intentions like greed, hatred, and delusion; 3) Right speech entails participating in truthful, kind, and constructive communication, steering clear of harmful expressions such as lying, gossiping, or using harsh language; 4) Right action entails engaging in ethical and virtuous deeds that adhere to principles of non-violence, honesty, and respect for others; 5) Right livelihood involves selecting a profession or occupation that avoids causing harm to oneself or others, and actively contributes to the well-being of society; 6) Right effort requires ongoing and diligent endeavors to cultivate positive qualities,

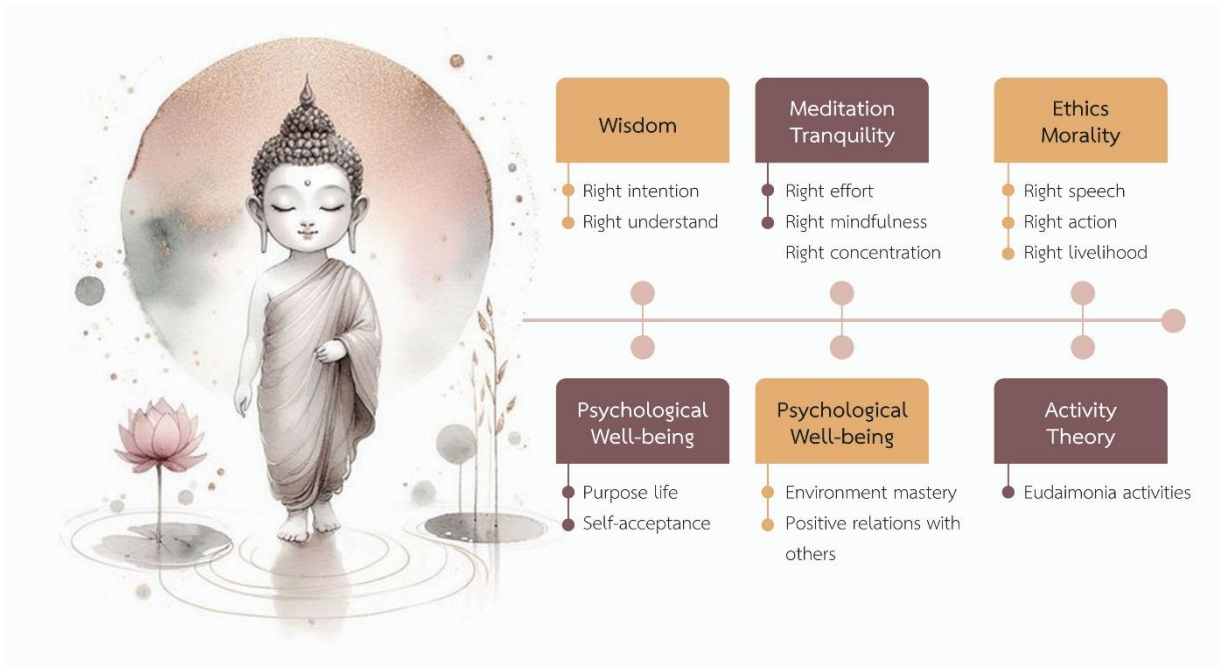


overcome negative tendencies, and advance on the spiritual journey; 7) Right mindfulness involves fostering a present-moment awareness and adopting a non-judgmental observation of one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences; and 8) Right concentration focuses on meditation where a single aspect or select set of aspects in order to exclude of other aspects.

This research investigates factors that contribute to life satisfaction among elderly people. The study indicates that engaging in activities that promote a sense of purpose in life (Eudaimonia factors) are significantly associated with increased psychological well-being ( $P < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, within the realm of psychological well-being, aspects like self-acceptance, feeling in control of one's environment (Environment mastery), positive relations with others, and having a sense of purpose are all significantly linked to higher life satisfaction ( $P < 0.01$ ).

### The Path to Well-being: Integrating Buddhist Philosophy and Psychology

Drawing on these findings, the research explores the potential of Buddhist teachings, particularly the Noble Eightfold Path, to motivate elderly people to engage in activities that enhance happiness and meaningfulness. The Noble Eightfold Path offers a framework for cultivating inner peace and well-being, which aligns with the concept of happiness as a continuous learning process. The following diagram illustrates how Buddhist philosophy (Noble Eightfold Path) can be integrated with Eudaimonia and psychological well-being to identify factors that contribute to life satisfaction for elderly people, as presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** The integration of Buddhist philosophy and psychological aspects to predict elderly people's life satisfaction

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Elderly people were at the stage where they faced many struggles, both physical and mental issues, including the ending stage in life: End-of-life challenges. Therefore, it was very



interesting to know what factors influenced elderly people to live satisfactorily. This research explored factors affecting life satisfaction, such as demographic data, behavioral activities: Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and the six domains of psychological well-being. The results found Eudaimonia and psychological well-being: Positive relations to others and purpose in life played crucial predictors in satisfaction with the life of elderly people. Previous researchers found that meaningful relationships showed a positive relationship with life satisfaction while presenting a negative relationship with depression. Moreover, elderly people engaging in spiritual and creative activities proposed more purpose in life, resulting in increasing psychological well-being. As the policy maker, supporting activities enhanced positive relationships not only in society but also built up a positive environment with family members. While the concept of purpose in life focused on the presence, the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism was a fundamental structure, offering a roadmap for individuals seeking freedom from suffering, and the achievement of enlightenment might have helped elderly people to face the last stage in life with dignity and happiness. The activities might have been conducted to encourage participation in volunteer work or activities that contributed to the community, aligning with the concept of "right livelihood." Additionally, promoting healthy living habits through workshops or training sessions on mindfulness practices to help manage stress and promote inner peace fostered practices that aligned with "right view" and "right action" principles.

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