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# Innovation policy for older adults: Global lessons and guidelines for Thailand

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## Abstract

This research article examines the current situation, identifies problems, and assesses the impacts on Thai older adults in multiple dimensions, with a focus on the challenges and gaps within innovation policies. Furthermore, it offers a comparative analysis of innovation policies for older adults in Thailand and other countries, culminating in recommendations for the formulation of policies suited to the Thai context. The study utilizes qualitative research methods, gathering data from documentary sources and conducting in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that Thailand's transition to an aging society has multifaceted effects on older adults, including economic, social, health, and environmental impacts. Notable challenges in the realm of innovation policy encompass the integration and collaboration among relevant agencies, the establishment of comprehensive databases, and the enhancement of awareness regarding aging-related issues. Comparative analysis with international policies underscores critical aspects such as the engagement of local entities, operational frameworks, the promotion of research, and the enforcement of stringent regulations. The study posits that innovation serves as a potent mechanism to improve the quality of life for older adults. Recommended strategic guidelines entail the integration of diverse functions, the creation of a specialized unit for innovation concerning older adults, the provision of supportive resources, the promotion of active participation, the amendment of laws to streamline processes, and the development of a systematic database.

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## Introduction

At present, the global population is undergoing significant growth, leading to a transformation in demographic structure compared to previous years. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the population of older adults, defined as individuals aged 60 years and over. This demographic segment has experienced a substantial rise from 350 million people in 1975 to an estimated 1,100 million in 2025, marking a staggering increase of 214 percent (United Nations, 2001). As a result, population aging has emerged as a global phenomenon. In Thailand, according to the Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, the total population is approximately 66.1 million people, with 12.5 million individuals classified as older adults, representing 18.94 percent of the population (Department of Older Persons, 2020). Thailand officially entered an aging society in 2005, as indicated by the proportion of individuals aged 60 years and over exceeding 10 percent of the total population. Projections suggest a significant further increase in the older adult population in the near future, with Thailand expected to transition to a Super Aged Society by 2033, where individuals aged 60 years and over will comprise more than 28 percent of the total population (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2021).

The transition to an aging society, driven by changes in the population structure, has profound implications for older adults across various domains, including economic, social, health, and environmental aspects. In response to these challenges, governments have endeavored to implement policies aimed at enhancing the quality of life for older adults. Notably, innovative approaches have been integrated into national policies and reforms, such as the 20-year national strategy (2018–2037) and the Thailand 4.0 policy, which prioritize innovation in older adult care to mitigate inequalities within aging societies (Khamhom et al., 2018). Similar efforts are observed in countries like the United States, Japan, Sweden, and England, where the adoption of innovations is central to strategic plans for technological advancement. These plans are in line with global trends and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting the transition to Society 5.0—a paradigm shift that addresses the evolving population structure characterized by a declining working-age population and a growing older adult population. Moreover, there is an increasing focus on harnessing innovation for older adult care and social development in foreign countries, with the goal of preparing for and ensuring the well-being of aging societies and achieving a high-quality aging experience.

However, the progress of these initiatives in Thailand has been less successful compared to other countries, reflecting the inadequate implementation of policies related to innovation for older adults and a limited amount of research on innovations for this demographic (Suwanrada, 2013). Additionally, it has been identified that Thailand still faces significant inequalities concerning older adults, including economic disparity and unequal access to opportunities (Chitsuchon, 2015; Khamhom et al., 2018; Santikul, 2021; Tangkitvanich, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the problems, situations, and impacts faced by Thai older adults across various dimensions. This includes examining the challenges and gaps in innovation policies for Thai older adults, as well as conducting a comparative analysis of innovation policies for older adults in Thailand and abroad. The ultimate goal is to establish guidelines for developing innovation policies for older adults that are suitable for the Thai context.

## Literature Review

### *Social Innovation: Multiple Meanings Toward a Common Goal*

The emergence of aging societies worldwide, including Thailand, has highlighted the urgent need to develop new approaches that can effectively respond to the complex and evolving needs of older adults. As the proportion of older people increases, traditional welfare and care systems face limitations in terms of coverage, efficiency, and sustainability. This demographic transition, therefore, necessitates not only policy adaptation but also the development of social innovations that can empower older adults, reduce dependency, and promote active and dignified aging. Social innovation has emerged as a promising solution to bridge the gap between the needs of an aging population and the limitations of existing systems.

Social innovation is a term that has been interpreted in various ways by scholars, with the broadest definition encompassing development rooted in society and communal living (Wasi, 2002). Such development enables society to maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium and represents a concept and structure that is desirable within a social context (Murray et al., 2010). This broad interpretation highlights the importance of societal betterment, aiming to address issues or enhance social conditions. It posits that the outcomes of social innovation should facilitate harmonious coexistence. However, this definition remains somewhat abstract.

At a more specific level, social innovation is characterized by enhanced actions and novel methods (Wilmot, 2003). It aligns with the notion that social innovation involves new ideas, processes, or structures that drive social change to address challenges or foster progress (Kutrakul, 2010). Many scholars agree that social innovation embodies the initiation of change to meet societal needs. Its benefits extend beyond organizational efficiency or technological inventions; social innovation also contributes to national development by improving quality of life and enhancing environmental conditions. For example, social innovations may help older adults live longer, healthier lives while reducing social isolation (Sanglimsuwan, 2012). In essence, social innovation is a novel approach that meets fundamental human needs and advances social development while strengthening social capabilities. It involves institutional transformation, the reorganization of structures, and foundational system changes to prepare for future challenges and build a sustainable society. These innovations may take the form of new products or services, foster new types of social relationships or collaboration, or offer effective solutions to modern-day problems.

Moreover, numerous scholars assert that social innovation is a response to emerging social issues, including challenges that directly impact equality, justice, and empowerment (Anderson et al., 2014). It also implies changes in concepts, processes, or products within organizations, particularly in financial dimensions. Social innovation seeks new and creative ways to solve social problems by providing and delivering services that enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities. It creates a framework for integrating new labor markets, skills, employment opportunities, and participatory models. As a result, social innovation is often regarded as a strategy for managing the welfare of individuals and communities—where both groups act as producers and consumers—and where welfare is intrinsically linked to quality of life (Noya, 2011).

A salient feature of social innovation is its focus on the management of individual and community welfare through employment, consumption, and/or participation. Its objective is to address the challenges faced by individuals and communities or to create innovative alternatives that are more effective than previous approaches, thereby expanding spaces and opportunities for contribution. Social innovation is also recognized as a crucial mechanism for promoting welfare because it is inherently connected to local development. Ultimately, the goal of social innovation is to foster social change with the intent of improving people's quality of life (Nonthapathamadul, 2019).

### *Innovation: Applications to Enhance the Quality of Life for Older Adults*

The application of innovation to enhance the quality of life has been the subject of extensive research, yielding consistent results. First and foremost, innovation is recognized as an essential instrument for sustainable and inclusive growth, tackling challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and promoting capacity building and inclusivity. It catalyzes shifts in production and consumption patterns and can incorporate ideas and processes from the grassroots level, leading to grassroots innovations executed by communities in partnership with networks. Secondly, innovation is relevant for both advanced and emerging economies, which encounter new risks and disparities that could jeopardize social harmony (Mihci, 2019; Mostaghel, 2016). It is pivotal in fulfilling the need for novel development paradigms, ensuring the preservation of human connections and societal welfare across various sectors, including the economy, healthcare, education, and care for older adults. Innovation involves the conception and application of fresh ideas and methodologies across diverse societal layers, with the goal of altering power structures, augmenting human capabilities, and refining problem-solving mechanisms. In the face of contemporary societal issues such as climate change, energy shortages, demographic transitions, and poverty, the deployment of innovation is indispensable.

In summary, innovation signifies the changes that arise from new inventions or the evolution of existing concepts into innovative practices. It encompasses the generation of novel ideas with the potential to transform social relations and tackle pressing social dilemmas, whether they originate from poverty, income disparity, demographic shifts, or political exclusion. Effective innovation, nurtured through the engagement of community members, has the capacity to surmount barriers to social progress and enhance the overall quality of life. Fundamentally, innovation embodies the pursuit of establishing greater equality within society.

In the context of this study, the terms innovation and innovation policy are closely interrelated and are, at times, used interchangeably. This is because the study focuses on policies that not only support the development of innovations but also promote the integration of innovative approaches into practice. Therefore, innovation policy, as used in this research, broadly refers to both the strategic direction and the practical implementation of innovations aimed at enhancing the quality of life for older adults.

From the literature review, the theoretical framework can be summarized in the following Figure 1.

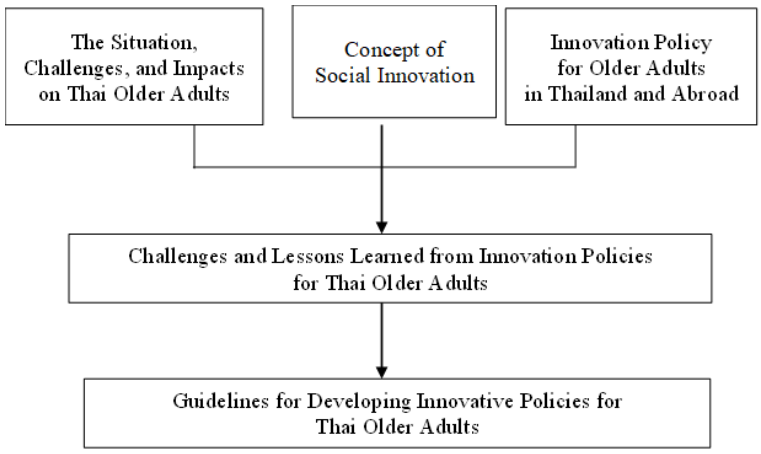



**Figure 1** Theoretical framework of the study

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing phenomenology as the foundational theoretical framework. The data collection methods are categorized into two primary types:

1. Documentary Study: This method involves the compilation of information from a variety of sources, including books, academic papers, journals, articles, theses, and relevant research reports, spanning both print and electronic formats. The information is related to innovation policies for older adults, both within Thailand and internationally. Sources are collected in both Thai and English from two main channels: (1) online databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals Online, JSTOR, Springer, ThaiJo, and ThaiLIS, and (2) academic textbooks and documents that focus on innovations for older adults. The collection encompasses over 100 documents. To ensure relevance and recency, the researcher used the keyword "social innovation" to search each database and selected documents that were directly related to the topic and published between 2014 and 2024, covering a timeframe of no more than 10 years.

2. In-depth Interviews: Field data are gathered through visits to specific locations and conducting interviews with key informants who are selected via purposive sampling. These locations are sites where innovations for older adults have been developed and implemented. The inclusion criteria for key informants are as follows: Individuals must possess knowledge and understanding of social innovation practices for older adults, and they must have been involved in or contributed to the implementation of such innovations at the local level for a period of at least one year. All participants were willing and voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. The key informants are categorized into five groups, totaling 30 individuals: (1) A group of eight older adults from Chiang Mai, Pathum Thani, and Chonburi provinces in Thailand, who are either involved in the implementation of innovations or are beneficiaries of such initiatives. (2) A group of eight older adult leaders and community leaders from the aforementioned provinces, who are actively engaged with the older adult population and lead local innovation efforts. (3) A group of eight administrators or officials from these provinces, who are involved in policy-making or administrative work related to older adults. (4) A group of three individuals engaged in innovation policy for older adults at the national level in Thailand, representing the Department of Older Persons, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, National Committee for Older Adults, and Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). (5) A group of three individuals involved in older adult initiatives from government and private organizations in the state of Arizona, USA.

Data verification was performed to ensure the credibility of the research using two methods: (1) Persistent observation, which involves extended engagement in the research participants' environment, with a focus on meticulous observation and detailed note-taking, and (2) Triangulation, which is achieved by cross-referencing multiple data sources and employing various data collection techniques.

In the data analysis phase, content analysis was utilized, starting with the information gathered from in-depth interviews, notes, and observations on different topics. The data were organized by issues and themes, followed by analysis and interpretation. Theories and concepts were compared with contextual factors, and connections within the data were identified. The relationships and meanings that emerged were

then articulated as research findings. The results are presented descriptively, aligned with the research objectives.

Furthermore, this study received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Thammasat University in the field of Social Sciences, certificate number 046/2566. The researcher upheld the principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that participants were fully informed about the study's aims, their right to participate, and their anonymity. Consent was obtained from all research participants.

## Results

### *The Situation, Problems, and Impacts on Thai Older Adults in Economic, Social, Health, and Environmental Dimensions*

The shift towards an aging society has led to multifaceted impacts on older adults, including economic challenges. Many older adults face income insecurity in retirement due to inadequate savings, exacerbated by a shrinking working-age population. Socially, older adults often experience a lack of caregivers and an increased likelihood of living alone. Health-wise, older adults with chronic conditions such as dementia may face dependency, isolation, and mental health issues like loneliness and depression. Environmentally, a significant number of older adults reside in homes that are not age-friendly, and many public spaces lack adequate facilities for their needs.

Three critical issues have been identified concerning the situation, problems, and impacts on Thai older adults in these dimensions. First, the anticipated decline in the working-age population is expected to influence the labor market and future family incomes. Second, the demographic shift is likely to result in a higher proportion of older adults living alone, with the dependency ratio among older adults projected to increase from 16 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2027. This implies that three working-age individuals will be responsible for the care of one older adult. Third, environmental changes, including lifestyle shifts across different age groups, are expected to affect service models and welfare plans for older adults.

### *Policy Implementation: Problems and Obstacles*

In addressing the challenges associated with an aging population, the Thai government has enacted laws and policies focused on older adults. There has been a concerted effort to incorporate innovative solutions to improve the quality of life for older adults, as evidenced by the integration of such initiatives into major national policies and reforms, including the 20-year national strategy (2018–2037) and the Thailand 4.0 policy. These policies include agendas like '6 Sustainable 4 Change,' which prioritize innovation for older adults to mitigate disparities in aging societies.

Despite Thailand's recognition as an aging society and the establishment of an operational framework under the National Older Adults Plan since 2002, along with the Older Adults Act B. E. 2003, progress in resolving issues faced by older adults has been less effective than expected. Past efforts have been hindered by a lack of unified direction and inadequate integration among relevant agencies and network partners (College of Population Studies, 2017). This is supported by research from Senanuch et al. (2023), which identified several problems and obstacles in policy implementation, including: (1) Agencies responsible for older adults' quality of life often views this task as solely the purview of specialized older adults-focused entities. (2) There is insufficient information dissemination to local administrative organizations about older adults' plans, which are not integrated into local development strategies. (3) Operations lack integration, with departments focusing on their specific duties and projects without collaboration. (4) Decentralization and the devolution of responsibilities to local areas are incomplete. (5) The absence of a comprehensive database system for older adults hinders the linkage of information at national and local levels, leading to slow improvements and ineffective problem resolution. These challenges have implications for both current and future initiatives. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data obtained from the documentary analysis were systematically cross-validated with the results of the in-depth interviews. Key themes-such as fragmented policy implementation and the lack of integration at the local level-identified in previous studies (Senanuch et al., 2023; Suwanrada, 2013) were consistently corroborated by key informants. This triangulation process ensured that both data sources reinforced each other and collectively supported the study's conclusions.

### *Challenges of Policies Related to Innovation for Older Adults*

This section delves into the policy challenges associated with innovation for older adults to pinpoint policy gaps. Identifying these gaps is instrumental in shaping the development and refinement of policies aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of future innovation initiatives for older adults. The challenges are outlined as follows:

1. Integrated Collaboration: Innovation initiatives for older adults often operate in isolation, leading to a lack of integration

and, at times, redundancy in both issues addressed and spatial allocation. This fragmentation undermines the overall efficacy of care for older adults. A disconnect from a comprehensive older adults database further impedes the assessment of situations and policy-making at various levels. It is critical to synchronize missions, knowledge, and budgets, and to maintain vigilant monitoring and supervision of progress, particularly at the local level. With the rapid shifts in demographics, economy, society, and environment, regular evaluation of performance against plans and necessary adjustments are vital.

2. Promoting and Expanding Innovation Opportunities for Older Adults: It is essential to harness the abilities, experiences, and wisdom of older adults in the innovation process. Engaging them directly can lead to more sustainable solutions that truly address their needs. This engagement is also key to overcoming the translation of policy into practical applications (Russell et al., 2022).

3. Participation: Encouraging the active participation of local administrative organizations and the private sector is crucial for the efficiency and effectiveness of innovation initiatives for older adults. This includes building the capacity of local governments to implement innovative projects for older adults, ensuring comprehensive care that addresses all facets of their quality of life.

4. Creating Knowledge and Understanding: Cultivating knowledge, understanding, and awareness of an aging society is imperative. It is important to communicate that the responsibility for addressing issues related to older adults extends beyond the older adults themselves. This communication is necessary to foster awareness and comprehensive understanding across all age groups, promoting participation from various sectors in advancing innovative policies for older adults. It also involves preparing individuals of all ages to become quality senior citizens in the future.

5. Database Creation: Developing a systematic database for innovations related to older adults is of paramount importance. Currently, the technological development and innovation in the context of an aging society are not sufficiently emphasized, and research on innovations for older adults is scarce. A systematic database that consolidates information and research on innovations for older adults, supported by empirical evidence, is needed to inform future policies, measures, and practices.

6. Leveraging the Potential of Active Aging: Statistical data indicate that the majority of older adults in Thailand are in the early stages of aging and are capable of living independently. Empowering this group to maintain self-sufficiency can reduce government expenditure on care. Additionally, fostering an appreciation for the human value and dignity of older adults is critical. Encouraging older adults to become key contributors in transferring innovations to their communities or other interested parties is a significant challenge that, if met, can unlock their potential and ensure the practical application of innovations.

The challenges outlined above also offer an opportunity to develop knowledge in innovation and related fields. A crucial consideration is the establishment of mechanisms that stimulate continuous creation of new innovations for national development. Sweden serves as a prime example of successful promotion and development of innovation for older adults, attributed to a strong social support network that fosters freedom of thought and action (United Nations, 2023). The Swedish government's investment in infrastructure, such as railways, telecommunications, and internet networks, has made technology more accessible. The emphasis on education and research enables Swedes to convert their studies into societal advancements and quality of life improvements. Sweden's success is not merely a result of visionary thinking but also of concerted efforts, including the comprehensive development of various elements. Knowledge derived from research leads to developments that cater to the majority's needs, while government policies support and facilitate ongoing innovation. These concerted efforts culminate in effective policies that enhance the quality of life for older adults and all Swedish citizens (Hall & Löfgren, 2017).

### *Lessons Learned from Abroad: Analysis of Innovation Policies for Older Adults in Thailand Compared to the United States, Japan, England, and Sweden*

The analysis of policies related to innovation for older adults in foreign countries, when juxtaposed with Thailand, yields several key insights:

1. The Role of Local Government Organizations: The role of local government organizations in driving the implementation of laws and innovation policies for older adults is a commonality shared between Thailand and other countries. Typically, these mechanisms operate in a top-down fashion, with central agencies setting policies that are then disseminated to regional entities. However, execution varies. In countries like Japan, local agencies are empowered with significant roles and responsibilities, actively engaging in policy operations. Japan's government emphasizes the crucial role of local governments in effectively supporting an aging society through strong connections with families and communities (Global Coalition on Aging, 2018).

In Thailand, despite having defined operational mechanisms, the actual implementation often lacks the effectiveness seen abroad. Redundancies and insufficient integration and collaboration among agencies and local

government organizations are prevalent, leading to suboptimal realization of laws and policies.

2. Diversity of Overseas Operations: Models of older adult care abroad showcase a variety of approaches, with a strong emphasis on coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. These models often involve joint financial support and collective efforts from government agencies, ministries, private sector partners, and civil society. A notable feature is the active participation and cooperation across government, private, and non-government sectors, including partnerships with both for-profit and non-profit entities and volunteer groups. For example, Arizona State University in the United States spearheaded an innovative older adult care program called Millabella, which provides comprehensive care and promotes lifelong learning for older adults (Maxfield et al., 2023). Thailand, however, has limited operations of this nature, indicating opportunities for growth and development.

3. Establishment of Key Personnel Responsible for Innovation: Foreign countries recognize the importance of innovation for economic, social, technological, and environmental development. They have established clear policies and specific agencies to oversee innovation efforts. Sweden, for instance, has formed a National Innovation Council led by the Prime Minister and includes representatives from business, labor unions, and academia to guide the country's innovation policy (Hall & Löfgren, 2017). Agencies like Vinnova are tasked with supporting innovation creation, policy formulation, and operational guidelines, aiming to foster sustainable development and minimize redundancy (Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, 2014).

4. Research to Lead Development: The promotion of research and development of innovations for older adults is essential. While Thailand recognizes the importance of technological advancements for economic growth, it has not prioritized technological development in the context of an aging society, and domestic research on innovations for older adults is limited. In contrast, foreign countries place a strong emphasis on research and development, using research to guide development and viewing robust research infrastructure, especially within higher education institutions, as crucial for innovation. England, for example, is recognized as a knowledge-based nation where national development is informed by extensive studies and research (Walshe & Davies, 2013).

5. Serious Implementation of Laws and Policies: Countries like Japan, the United States, Sweden, and England are exemplary in their approach to innovation in older adult care. Their success stems not only from visionary planning but also from a commitment to taking decisive actions. This includes developing various elements in tandem, such as knowledge from research and government policies that encourage innovation. As a result, these countries have effectively implemented policies that enhance the quality of life for their older adult populations and citizens at large, in a manner that is both appropriate and efficient. The key lessons from abroad can be summarized in the following Table 1.

**Table 1** Lessons learned from Japan, United States, Sweden, and England

| Thailand | Japan | United States | Sweden | England |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Although operational mechanisms are in place, implementation remains less effective than in other countries due to redundancy and limited inter-agency coordination. | The role of local government organizations: Empowering and increasing the roles and responsibilities of local agencies or government organizations to actively participate in policy implementation. | The diversity of overseas operations: Coordination, collaboration, joint financial support, and joint hosting by government agencies, various ministries, and related partners, including the private sector and civil society. | The establishment of key personnel responsible for innovation: Reducing the problem of redundant work by creating a department primarily responsible for management, with direct authority and clearly defined duties. | Research to lead development: Fostering innovation requires promoting a strong research base within the country, particularly in higher education institutions, which are essential for innovation development. |
| The serious implementation of laws and policies: Successful operation requires not only vision but also a serious commitment to action. | | | | |

### *Guidelines for Developing Innovative Policies for Older Adults Suitable for the Thai Context*

1. The government should encourage integration and cooperation within various sectors, fostering partnerships between government, non-government, for-profit, and non-profit organizations, as well as volunteer groups. This collaboration will enhance the quality of innovation operations for older adults. The government should also extend support to these sectors beyond service provision, including financial subsidies, partnership establishment, and ongoing operational oversight.

2. A specialized agency for innovation for older adults should be established to streamline efforts and reduce duplication. This agency would have clear authority and responsibilities, managing initiatives more effectively. Local coordination centers in government organizations or universities could facilitate participation from families, communities, private sector, businesses, academics, and multidisciplinary teams, ensuring a unified and targeted approach to innovation.

3. The government should allocate funds and resources for research on innovation for older adults. A robust research infrastructure, particularly within higher education institutions, is vital as a foundation for innovation development. Research outcomes should be leveraged to address the needs of older adults and the public, aiding the implementation of policies that improve their quality of life.

4. Local administrative organizations should be encouraged and supported to take a more active role in operating innovations for older adults. This includes enhancing the capacity of personnel, officers, and operators through resource support, knowledge sharing, supervision, and training. This empowerment will enable local workers to address the needs of older adults professionally and comprehensively.

5. Local government organizations should incorporate innovation development projects for older adults into existing development programs. Initiatives such as schools for older adults, club centers, career development programs, and the work of village health volunteers (VHV) and social development and human security volunteers (SDHSV) should be integrated into standard activities to foster tangible innovations for older adults.

6. Laws and regulations should be revised to better facilitate operations, especially for local government organizations. This will support the realization of innovation work for older adults in communities and the organization of activities that promote and enhance their quality of life.

7. Active aging should be encouraged within communities, involving older adults in innovations designed for them. This participation not only utilizes their potential effectively but also promotes volunteerism, instills pride, and enhances the recognition of human value and dignity, reducing the risk of dependency.

8. Establishing a comprehensive database for innovations for older adults is essential. It should serve as a tool for planning, policy setting, and guideline development. An in-depth database that categorizes older adults by age, gender, address, health status, income sources, family situation, caregiving needs, potential, and interests will enable strategic planning for each demographic group. Additionally, the development of information technology systems for data access and sharing among relevant agencies is crucial for integrated information exchange.

The guidelines for developing innovative policies can be summarized as shown in the following Figure 2.

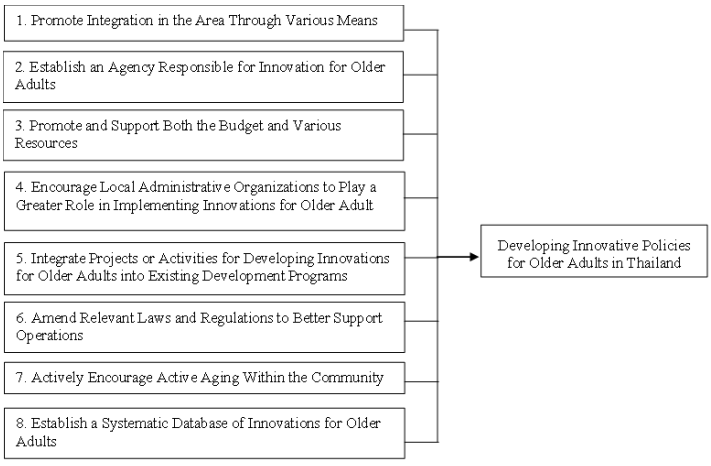



**Figure 2** Guidelines for developing innovative policies for older adults in Thailand

## Conclusion

This study emphasizes the significance of innovation policies tailored for older adults, with the objective of enhancing their quality of life, catering to their needs, and fostering societal well-being across various domains. By facilitating access to resources, such policies have the potential to mitigate social disparities. International examples provide valuable insights into innovative practices for older adults in Thailand, emphasizing the necessity of not only conceptualizing but also actively executing comprehensive developments. This involves utilizing knowledge from research to address the needs of the majority and enacting supportive government policies that encourage continuous innovation. Based on the findings, the study proposes that effective innovation policies for older adults must be grounded in an understanding of the current demographic, economic, social, and environmental challenges facing the aging population in Thailand. Key strategic guidelines should include promoting inter-agency collaboration, empowering local governments, establishing dedicated innovation units, and supporting research that leads to context-appropriate solutions. These recommendations directly align with the study's objectives and are supported by both documentary analysis and field data from key informants.

Therefore, when implementing innovation in Thailand, it is imperative to consider the unique needs and capabilities of the older adult population. A thorough understanding of the relevant conditions, factors, and existing barriers is essential to inform the development of suitable policies. Moreover, selected innovations must be congruent with the local context and environment, with a focus on integrated efforts that involve all sectors. This inclusive strategy-including government, private entities, civil society, and local agencies-ensures the effective delivery of services to both older adults and society as a whole in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

## Recommendation

### *Policy Recommendations*

1. Establish a dedicated agency: The government should create a specialized agency responsible for innovation for older adults to coordinate efforts and prevent work duplication. Promoting integration among relevant agencies is critical to improve the efficiency of innovation operations. Ongoing monitoring and supervision are also vital for effective implementation.

2. Empower local administrative organizations: The government should incentivize and empower local administrative organizations to take a more proactive role in implementing innovations for older adults. Providing adequate budgetary and knowledge resources is necessary. This includes enhancing the capabilities of personnel, officers, and operators with a thorough understanding of older adult-related issues, innovations, and pertinent policies, which will support the development of more effective and responsive policies.

3. Review and revise laws and policies: The government should thoroughly review existing laws and policies to ensure they align with current circumstances and effectively tackle existing problems and limitations. Introducing operational flexibility for older adult-related initiatives, based on sound and appropriate practices, is recommended.

### *Operational Recommendations*

1. Develop a comprehensive database: An integrated and systematic database on older adults should be established as a centralized resource for all agencies involved in planning and policymaking. This database should encompass detailed information such as age, gender, address, health status, income sources, family conditions, caregiving arrangements, and interests of older adults, enabling strategic planning tailored to the specific needs of different demographic groups.

2. Promote active aging groups: The government should actively promote and encourage participation in Active Aging groups, which represent a valuable social resource within communities. The deep local context knowledge possessed by these group members is crucial for the effective implementation of innovation policies for older adults. Encouraging participation also serves to instil pride and enhance the recognition of the dignity and value of the older adult population.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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