การนำนโยบายสังคมสูงวัยไปปฏิบัติในประเทศไทย:
กรณีศึกษาเทศบาลนครนนทบุรี
The Implementation of Aging Society Policy in Thailand:
A Case Study of Nonthaburi Municipality

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้ได้ศึกษาสาเหตุและความจำเป็นของนโยบายสังคมผู้สูงอายุในเทศบาลนครนนทบุรี วิเคราะห์การนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติตั้งแต่ปี พ.ศ. 2545-2564 และได้ระบุถึงสภาวะที่มีผลต่อความสำเร็จหรือความล้มเหลวของนโยบายดังกล่าว โดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ มีการเก็บข้อมูลจากผู้กำหนดนโยบายและผู้นำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ จำนวน 17 คน ผ่านการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลผ่านการวิเคราะห์ประเภทและการสังเคราะห์เชิงตีความ ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าอัตราการเกิดที่ลดลงและการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางประชากรทำให้มีความจำเป็นในการดำเนินนโยบายสังคมผู้สูงอายุ เพื่อบรรเทาผลกระทบทางสังคมและเศรษฐกิจ ความสำเร็จของนโยบายเหล่านี้ขึ้นอยู่กับความสามารถของผู้ที่ทำงานในเทศบาลนครนนทบุรี ซึ่งมีการนำนโยบายไปใช้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ เช่น

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อาสาสมัครสาธารณสุข อาสาสมัครหมู่บ้าน และชมรมผู้สูงอายุ มีบทบาทสำคัญ
ในการดำเนินนโยบาย นอกจากนี้ กรมส่งเสริมการปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นของ
ประเทศไทยได้จัดตั้งมาตรฐานการดูแลผู้สูงอายุ 6 ข้อ เพื่อเสริมสร้างคุณภาพ
ชีวิตผ่านการสนับสนุนจากชุมชนที่มีโครงสร้าง แม้จะมีอุปสรรคเช่น ข้อจำกัด
ด้านทรัพยากรและการขาดแคลนบุคลากรที่มีการฝึกอบรม แต่นโยบายนี้
สะท้อนถึงความมุ่งมั่นของประเทศไทยในการดูแลสวัสดิการผู้สูงอายุ
ข้อเสนอแนะนโยบายรวมถึงการส่งเสริมกลยุทธ์การเปลี่ยนแปลงพฤติกรรมเพื่อ
การดำรงชีวิตที่มีสุขภาพดี การวางแผนทางการเงิน และการสูงวัยอย่างมี
ชีวิตชีวาผ่านการเรียนรู้จากแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีที่สุดจากต่างประเทศ การวิจัยใน
อนาคตควรสำรวจบทบาทของค่านิยมทางวัฒนธรรมไทยในการนำไปใช้ใน
นโยบายและการสนับสนุนระหว่างรุ่น นอกจากนี้ การศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบของ
นโยบายสังคมผู้สูงอายุในประเทศสมาชิกอาเซียนอาจให้ข้อเสนอแนะที่มี
ประโยชน์ในการปรับปรุงแนวทางของประเทศไทย
คำสำคัญ: นโยบายสังคมสูงวัย, การนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ, นโยบายสาธารณะ,
เทศบาลนครนนทบุรี

Abstract

      This study examines the causes and necessities of aging society
policies in Nonthaburi Municipality, analyzes their implementation from
2002 to 2021, and identifies conditions influencing their success or
failure. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from
seventeen policymakers and policy implementers and analyzed
through typological analysis and interpretative synthesis. Findings
indicate that declining birth rates and demographic shifts necessitate
aging society policies to mitigate social and economic impacts. The
success of these policies depends on the capacity of Nonthaburi

Municipality to implement them effectively. Community-based solutions, such as Village Health Volunteers and elderly clubs, play a crucial role in policy execution. Additionally, Thailand's Department of Local Administration has established six elderly care standards to enhance quality of life through structured, community-driven support. Despite challenges such as resource constraints and a shortage of trained personnel, the framework reflects Thailand's commitment to aging welfare. Policy recommendations include promoting behavioral change strategies for healthy living, financial planning, and active aging by learning from international best practice. Further research should explore the role of Thai cultural values in policy adoption and intergenerational support. Additionally, comparative studies of aging policies across ASEAN countries could provide insights for refining Thailand's approach.

Keywords: Aging policy, Implementation policy, Public policy, Nonthaburi municipality

Introduction

The global demographic shift toward an aging society presents significant social and economic challenges. Improved healthcare and declining birth rates contribute to this trend, leading many countries, including Thailand, toward a super-aged society (World Health Organization, 2024). In Thailand, the elderly population has been steadily increasing, reaching 20% in 2023, with projections indicating that by 2033, 28% of the population will be elderly (Department of Older Persons [DOP], 2023). The declining

fertility rate—from six children per woman in the 1960s to just 1.5— further accelerates this demographic shift (Knodel & Teerawichitchainan, 2017). These changes impact labor markets, social structures, and public welfare systems, necessitating proactive aging policies.

Recognizing these demographic challenges, Thailand has implemented several aging society policies. Since 1982, the National Elderly Plan has served as the primary framework for aging policies. The most recent iteration, the Thailand National Elderly Plan No.2 (2002–2021), has been pivotal in shaping elderly care policies. This plan emphasizes a "life cycle" approach, fostering intergenerational connections and promoting the elderly as valuable contributors to society rather than as dependents. The key objectives focus on ensuring good health, safe living environments, economic security, and social inclusion for the elderly (Department of Older Persons [DOP], 2003). Additionally, the Thai government has implemented several welfare programs, including universal old-age allowances, universal healthcare coverage, and community-based elderly care initiatives (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Local governments, including municipalities and Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAOs), play a crucial role in implementing elderly care services, ensuring the well-being of senior citizens through community-driven policies.

Nonthaburi Municipality, part of the Greater Bangkok area, faces similar challenges. With over 64,000 elderly residents, rising living costs, and a growing number of vulnerable elderly groups, effective policy responses are crucial (Nonthaburi Municipality, 2024). The municipality must align its policies with national aging

strategies while addressing local socioeconomic conditions. This study examines the causes and necessities of aging society policies, analyzes their implementation from 2002 to 2021, and identifies conditions influencing their success or failure. Using qualitative research methods, data were collected from seventeen key informants, including policymakers and implementers. The study focuses on Nonthaburi Municipality's policy frameworks, community-based initiatives, and the challenges of policy execution. The findings aim to inform policymakers and local authorities, contributing to more effective and sustainable aging policies.

Methodology

This study explores the implementation of aging society policies in Thailand, using Nonthaburi Municipality as a case study. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study aims to: (1) investigate the causes and necessity of aging society policies in Nonthaburi Municipality; (2) fix out the processes and approaches used in the implementation of these policies between 2002 and 2021; (3) study the effectiveness of the implemented aging policies; and (4) analyze the conditions that affect the success or failure of policy implementation. The research framework encompasses key components such as the research paradigm, conceptual framework, methodology, study area, target groups and key informants, data collection techniques, and methods of data analysis. This research focuses on the 2nd National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021) in

order to evaluate the implementation of existing aging policies and relate the findings to the 2021 Social Situation Report.

Research Paradigm

This study applies policy sciences as a framework for understanding public policy implementation. The policy sciences approach emphasizes interdisciplinary analysis, context-specific solutions, and a normative commitment to democratic principles and human dignity. The study of policy implementation has evolved through three major generations: first-generation studies focused on implementation failures and the gap between policy intent and outcomes, second-generation studies introduced theoretical frameworks distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and third-generation studies sought to integrate both perspectives through hypothesis-driven, empirical research. By applying insights from these generations, this research assesses how policies for an aging society are translated into action in Nonthaburi Municipality.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the conditions influencing the success of aging society policy implementation in Nonthaburi Municipality. Following Sabatier's model, key success conditions include clear and consistent objectives, adequate causal theory, legally structured implementation, committed and skilled implementers, sustained political and interest group support, and resilience to socio-economic changes. These conditions guide the analysis of how Nonthaburi Municipality's strategies—focusing on

quality of life, good governance, and human resource development—impact policy outcomes.

Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the implementation of aging society policies by the Department of Older Persons, particularly within the framework of the National Elderly Plan No.2 (2002-2021) in Thailand, with a case study of Nonthaburi Municipality. The study involves document analysis, gathering information from academic documents, the Royal Gazette, research projects, lecture notes, and books related to policies addressing aging issues in Thailand. Furthermore, it examines international models such as the Community-based Integrated Care System 2025 in Japan, long-term health care in Singapore, and the Age-Friendly City framework from WHO to compare the action plan for the elderly in Thailand. Field research includes semi-structured interviews with key informants.

Area of Study

The study focuses on two primary institutions: the Department of Older Persons (DOP), which formulates policies for an aging society in Thailand, and Nonthaburi Municipality, which implements these policies. The research assesses the success or failure of policy implementation in preparing for an aging society.

Target Groups and Key Informants

The study utilizes qualitative research methods to explore policy formulation, implementation processes, and results in Nonthaburi Municipality, particularly within the National Elderly Plan

No.2 (2002-2021). The research examines conditions for success or failure in the context of the bureaucratic system and Thai society through purposeful sampling. The target group consists of seventeen key informants, ensuring diverse perspectives and information-rich cases.

The target group was selected from individuals holding key roles in organizations involved in policy formulation and implementation, including various government and government-affiliated agencies. Some of these agencies act as both policymakers and implementers. Key informants were identified through snowball sampling to ensure relevant expertise in policy development, implementation processes, evaluation of policy outcomes, and the factors influencing success or failure.

The target group was divided into three categories: (1) Policymakers and Policy Implementers: This group includes legislators, administrators, government officials, and members of the elderly board, as well as officers from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Department of Older Persons (DOP), and Nonthaburi Municipality. They were selected for their direct involvement in policy design and execution. (2) Target group of policy: This includes older persons aged 60 and above who are directly affected by the policies, as well as family members and community representatives who are indirectly impacted. Their insights help assess the socio-cultural relevance and real-world effects of the policies. (3) Stakeholders: This group consists of civil society representatives, private sector actors, NGOs, and

international organizations involved in or influencing policy implementation.

Table 1

Lists of Name and Categorization of Key Informants for In-depth Interview

Group	Category	Number (Individual)	Source of Key Informants
1	Policymakers and policy implementers	6	1.1 Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, former Prime Minister, former leader of the Democrat Party 1.2 Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, former Deputy Prime Minister, former leader of the Democrat Party 1.3 Mrs. Pornnipa Masileerungsie, Deputy Director, Department of Older Persons 1.4 Ms. Patcharaporn Thammawat, staff member of the Elderly Quality of Life Development Center, Nonthaburi Municipality 1.5 Ms. Sureeporn Kaewtima, staff member of the Elderly Quality of Life Development Center, Nonthaburi Municipality

Group	Category	Number (Individual)	Source of Key Informants
			1.6 Mr. Theerapong Pakornram, Officer of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Nonthaburi Province
2	Target group of policy 2.1 Those who were directly affected by the policy 2.2 Those who were indirectly affected by the policy	3 3	2.1 Mrs. Sasilak Khumtaviporn, 66 years old 2.2 Mrs. Nida Phuengphothi, 78 years old 2.3 Mrs. Wanthanee Tanthakamnerd, 70 years old 2.4 Mrs. Charoensri Wangnutat, the president of the village health volunteers in the Lanna Bun Temple community 2.5 Mrs. Sriurai Suksawat, the president and the women's group 2.6 Mrs. Laosri Yenvaree, volunteer, Assistant Community Committee member

Group	Category	Number (Individual)	Source of Key Informants
3	Stakeholders	5	3.1 Mr. Somkrit Khansamree, the president of the village health volunteers at the Sirichot-Sawatkit community
			3.2 Mr. Thanasin Thammasan, the assistant of the village health volunteers at the Sirichot-Sawatkit community
			3.3 Mr. Thanitpol Chaiyanan, a former advisor to the Deputy Minister of Public Health
			3.4 Prof. Dr. Rapeepan Khamhom, President of the Social Work Professional Council
			3.5 Asst.Prof. Dr. Ratchada Thanathirek, an advisor to the National Savings Fund
Total		17	

Data Collection Methods

The study employs a combination of document analysis and in-depth interviews. Documentary research includes primary sources such as the constitution, government policies, laws, cabinet resolutions, public documents from government sectors, and

international laws and conventions on aging policies. National plans, such as the National Economic and Social Development Plans, are also reviewed.

In-depth interviews follow a semi-structured format with open-ended questions, allowing for an organic and flexible exchange of information. This approach encourages key informants to share their experiences and perspectives freely. The research focuses on descriptive data to understand the meaning behind informants' experiences, particularly regarding policy implementation and its influencing conditions. Interviews are supplemented by observational data in some cases. Data collection was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Research Project Code: ECNIDA 2024/0096).

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis involves interpreting messages obtained from in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observations. The study compares the National Elderly Plan No.2 with international models, such as Japan's Community-based Integrated Care System 2025, Singapore's long-term care system, and WHO's Age-Friendly City framework. This comparative analysis identifies similarities, differences, and applications in policy implementation in Nonthaburi Municipality.

Interviews are transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, categorizing findings according to the conceptual framework. The study applies a five-step approach to qualitative data analysis: first, reading and re-reading the data for deeper

understanding; second, identifying significant messages and their meanings; third, determining key themes and concepts; fourth, establishing connections between themes; and fifth, writing the findings based on informants' narratives. Data triangulation ensures validity and reliability by cross-referencing multiple sources.

The study employs a continuous data reduction process, classifying and selecting relevant data from interviews, documents, and observations. Thematic analysis is supported by memoing, ensuring connections between preliminary findings and emerging insights. This iterative process leads to systematic synthesis and study conclusions. By integrating qualitative methods with a robust conceptual framework, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of aging society policy implementation in Nonthaburi Municipality, offering insights into its success, challenges, and areas for improvement.
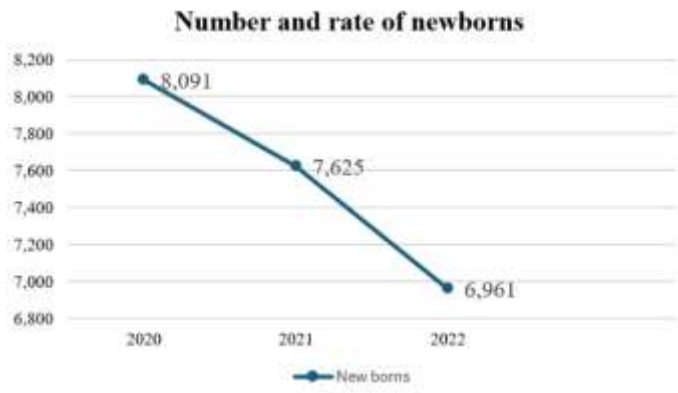
Results

1. Causes and Necessities for Formulating Implementation of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Thailand has been experiencing an aging society since 2010, with approximately 20% of its population being elderly in 2023 (DOP, 2023). Specifically, in 2023, the elderly population was about 13,064,929 people (DOP, 2023). A significant challenge is the lack of income security for most elderly Thais, largely due to insufficient government efforts in promoting savings in the past. As a result, many elderly individuals still rely primarily on financial support from

their children. Although welfare allowances for the elderly have increased, these supports remain insufficient to serve as their main source of income. This reliance is expected to become increasingly unsustainable as future generations of elderly will have fewer children to support them.

Furthermore, data from Nonthaburi Province shows a consistent annual decline in the number of newborns, with 8,091 births in 2020, 7,625 in 2021, and 6,961 in 2022. This declining birth rate underscores the growing need for comprehensive aging society policies to address the demographic and socioeconomic challenges ahead.
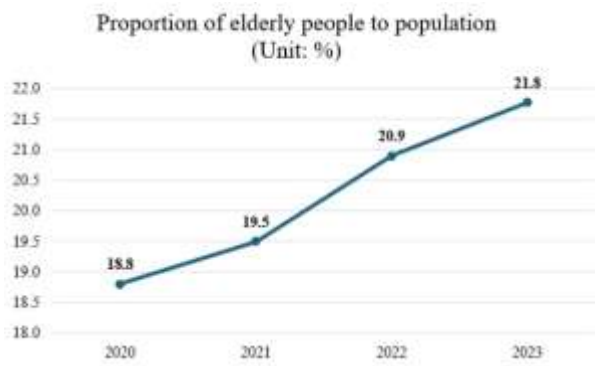
Figure 1

Note. Number and rate of newborns. From *Social situation report 2021,* by Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, 2021 , (https://nonthaburi.m-society.go.th/?page_id=4312).

Examining the ratio of elderly people to the total population in Nonthaburi Province, the statistics are as follows: 18.8% in 2020, 19.5% in 2021, 20.9% in 2022, and 21.8% in 2023. These figures demonstrate a consistent annual increase in the proportion of elderly residents in Nonthaburi Province.

Figure 2

Note. Proportion of elderly people to population. From *Social situation report 2021,* by Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, 2021 (https://nonthaburi.m-society. go.th/?page_id=4312).

The shift toward an aging society in Thailand is primarily driven by two major demographic transitions: a declining birth or fertility rate and a reduced mortality rate among children and working-age adults over the past 20 years, attributable to advancements in medicine and the public health system (National Reform Council, 2015).

In Nonthaburi Municipality, community engagement plays a vital role in supporting the elderly by fostering social connections and providing essential healthcare services (Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, 2021). A local women's group collaborates closely with health volunteers to assess the needs of elderly residents and organize activities aimed at reducing social isolation. Monthly gatherings encourage physical activity and social interaction, while professional nurses conduct basic health assessments. For homebound individuals, the local health promotion hospital provides bi-monthly visits to ensure ongoing medical care. Beyond healthcare, volunteers also offer welfare support, including distributing food supplies and assisting families with funeral expenses.

To strengthen elderly care, the community invests in training programs that empower local leaders and volunteers. These programs focus not only on elderly well-being but also on supporting children and young families. By developing the skills of village health volunteers, the community ensures sustainable and effective care. Additionally, young volunteers and health communicators from the Department of Health are introduced to foundational healthcare tasks, allowing them to contribute meaningfully. This initiative is part of a broader project that connects homes, temples, and schools, reinforcing a network of care that benefits all generations.

Collaboration with healthcare institutions further enhances community well-being, particularly in addressing chronic

illnesses like diabetes and hypertension. A partnership with a nursing college helps educate residents about these silent diseases, which, if left unmanaged, can lead to severe complications. Annual community events, supported by both governmental and local organizations, provide opportunities for residents to learn about disease prevention and management. Through these combined efforts, the community continues to improve the quality of life for the elderly while promoting social inclusion and support services.

2. Implementation and Effects of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Thailand's aging society policies are primarily guided by the Older Persons Act of 2003, which was enacted in 2004 to safeguard the rights and well-being of individuals aged 60 and above (DOP, 2023). This legislation builds upon the strategic framework of the Second National Elderly Plan (2002–2021) and guarantees access to essential services, including healthcare, lifelong education, and financial support. Additional protections include subsidies for public transportation, legal safeguards against elder abuse, and assistance with end-of-life arrangements. To coordinate these initiatives, a National Commission on the Elderly was established, tasked with formulating policies and overseeing their implementation to ensure that older adults receive adequate and equitable support (DOP, 2023).

The Second National Elderly Plan (2002–2021) emphasized the development of a more inclusive society for older persons. It promoted dignity, encouraged intergenerational awareness, and supported

early-life preparation for aging. Evaluations of the plan indicated positive outcomes in areas such as employment opportunities for older persons and overall well-being. However, gaps were identified in social protection measures and knowledge dissemination regarding aging issues (DOP, 2023). In response, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security revised and strengthened policies, targeting four core pillars: economic security, accessible physical environments, healthcare services, and social empowerment.

To clarify this, Nonthaburi Municipality has adapted these national frameworks to suit local demographics and needs. The municipality has introduced programs that align with the national agenda while integrating community-based care models to provide tailored services to its aging population. These include regular health check-ups, welfare support, home visits for bedridden elders, and the establishment of elderly clubs and learning centers. Such efforts demonstrate the municipality's commitment to implementing aging policies in a way that reflects both national directives and localized innovation.

Economic policies aim to strengthen retirement security through improved pension systems and savings plans while also promoting skill development and employment opportunities for seniors, particularly in rural areas. Environmental efforts focus on making public spaces and transportation more accessible, ensuring that elderly individuals can navigate their surroundings with ease. In healthcare, initiatives include the establishment of local care

centers and higher standards for caregiver training to provide better support for aging individuals.

On a social level, policies encourage stronger community involvement by empowering local organizations and promoting intergenerational collaboration. Additionally, mechanisms are being put in place to protect the rights of elderly individuals and ensure their active participation in society. Technology and innovation play a crucial role in these efforts, with advancements in assistive devices, healthcare systems, and digital tools helping seniors maintain independence and quality of life.

At the local level, implementation efforts involve collaboration between Elderly Clubs, Village Health Volunteers, and community organizations. These groups work together to provide essential services and promote social engagement among older adults. To further support elderly care, specialized training programs are being introduced, such as community caregiver initiatives that equip local residents with the skills needed to care for seniors. With these comprehensive measures, Thailand is striving to create a society where aging individuals can live with dignity, security, and continued participation in their communities.

Figure 3

Note. Network for promoting elderly issues in Nonthaburi Municipality area, by Ruesangiam, 2019, (http://www.furd.in.th/cities/e-books/view/ 25MrQq1RQagX/).

Figure 3 illustrates how the Nonthaburi Municipality Elderly Quality of Life Development Center collaborates with a diverse range of stakeholders from the public, private, and civil society sectors to promote health and improve the well-being of the elderly. Key partners include Boromarajonani College of Nursing, the Faculty of Social Administration at Thammasat University, Nonthavej Hospital, Panyapiwat Technological College, and Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding Company Limited, among others (Ruesangiam, 2019). This intersectoral collaboration underscores the importance of coordinated, multisectoral approaches in promoting healthy aging, where the synergy between private

organizations, local governments, and academic institutions strengthens community-based initiatives and ensures comprehensive support for elderly residents.

As a local administrative organization, Nonthaburi Municipality has adopted and implemented the principles of good governance in accordance with the Ministry of Interior's guidelines. In the fiscal year 2022, a committee was established to evaluate the performance of government officials across four key areas:

1. Mission Results
2. Service Quality
3. Mission Value
4. Public Satisfaction

First, Mission Results measures how well objectives and goals of the operational plan are met to maximize public benefit. This includes two indicators: (1) Local Performance Assessment (LPA) criteria across three areas—management, personnel and council affairs, and financial and treasury management—with each area requiring a minimum score of 80%; and (2) the success rate of project implementation according to the operational plan, with a target of at least 80% in each evaluation round. Second, Service Quality focuses on the municipality's commitment to delivering high-quality public services and ensuring user satisfaction. This is evaluated using LPA criteria under Section 1: Management, specifically Unit 4: Public Service.

Third, the Mission Value evaluates the efficiency of budget management. It uses the LPA criteria under Aspect 3:

Financial and Fiscal Management, which must also meet the 80% target threshold. Finally, Public Satisfaction is assessed through one key indicator—the percentage of citizens satisfied with public services. This indicator includes three assessment tools: (1) satisfaction with the implementation of the 2022 Nonthaburi Municipality Development Strategy across all three strategic areas; (2) a questionnaire completed by individuals who interacted with municipal services between October 2021 and September 2022; and (3) data from the Civil Registration and National ID Card Office's electronic satisfaction system.

Therefore, Thailand's approach to aging society policies, as articulated in the Older Persons Act (2003, amended in 2010), reflects a sustained national commitment to enhancing the welfare of older adults through a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy (DOP, 2003). While notable progress has been achieved—particularly in areas such as universal healthcare coverage and local elderly welfare programs—policy evaluations continue to highlight gaps that require further attention. Advancing these initiatives will depend on the effective integration of modern technologies, the strengthening of community engagement, and the expansion of structured training programs for caregivers and local personnel. Local-level implementations, such as those in Nonthaburi Municipality, demonstrate that aging society policies can yield meaningful and sustainable outcomes when driven by robust intersectoral collaboration and active community participation.

3. Effectiveness of The Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Thailand's approach to addressing the challenges of an aging society involves a comprehensive strategy at both national and local levels. The primary goal is to promote "Active Aging" by focusing on health, security, and social participation. Policies aim to support both elderly individuals and younger generations in preparing for an aging society. Key measures include improving welfare and social protection, creating sustainable employment opportunities, enhancing healthcare services, and modifying public spaces for safety. Additional initiatives, such as a time bank system for community support and educational programs for youth, are designed to foster long-term societal adaptation.

At the national level, efforts emphasize strengthening public sector management to address aging-related challenges. This includes prioritizing elderly welfare within national policies, updating legal frameworks to support senior employment, reforming data systems for better policy implementation, and fostering innovation to reduce inequalities among older populations. To oversee these initiatives, national committees and subcommittees work to ensure policy integration, coordination, and accountability across different sectors.

At the local level, the focus is on improving public services and addressing disparities in elderly care, particularly in rural areas. Strategies include developing adaptable welfare models, enhancing infrastructure accessibility, and providing specialized

training programs for caregivers (Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, 2021). Additionally, the design of welfare models aims to improve elderly quality of life while encouraging community participation. Collaboration among various stakeholders is key, alongside efforts to establish comprehensive databases for resource management and the development of dedicated healthcare centers for elderly populations.

The aging policy of Nonthaburi Municipality has proven effective through its emphasis on four guiding principles: participation, coordination, data-driven planning, and operational preparedness. These principles ensure the integration of older adults into community life, collaborative welfare planning, informed service provision, and adequate resource allocation. A practical example of this effectiveness is seen in the work of Mr. Somkrit Khansamree, president of the village health volunteers in the Sirichot-Sawatkit community. Supported by the municipality, Mr. Somkrit leads initiatives such as an elderly club that provides monthly health education sessions on topics like nutrition and exercise. His collaborative approach, alongside local volunteers and caregivers, demonstrates how community-based programs foster health awareness, social inclusion, and responsive care. These local efforts reflect the municipality's successful implementation of aging policies that are both sustainable and inclusive.

Despite various aging policy initiatives in Nonthaburi Municipality, significant challenges remain—particularly in addressing the abandonment of elderly individuals. Mr. Theerapong Pakornram, an

officer from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, revealed that formal care systems are inadequate, placing the burden of care on local communities. He reported that approximately 15 cases of elderly abandonment occur each month, with many individuals left in hospitals by relatives and unable to access proper services. This ongoing issue highlights gaps in institutional support and underscores the urgent need for more robust, state-supported elderly care infrastructure.

4. Conditions for Success or Failure of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi

The effectiveness of aging society policies in Nonthaburi Municipality is shaped by several critical conditions that influence their success or failure. One of the most important factors is the establishment of clear and consistent policy objectives, which serve as a foundation for guiding implementation and evaluating outcomes (World Health Organization, 2015). When local policies are aligned with both national priorities and international frameworks—such as the WHO's Active Ageing model, they provide a structured basis for promoting key goals, including health promotion, economic security, and social participation. This alignment not only strengthens policy coherence but also facilitates the measurement of impact and continuous improvement.

Another important condition is a strong causal theory that underpins the policies. By relying on research and frameworks like the National Agenda on Aged Society and WHO's Determinants of Active Aging, policies are more likely to achieve positive

outcomes. A solid legal framework also plays a vital role, reinforcing policy mechanisms and ensuring compliance from both officials and target groups, which enhances the overall effectiveness of the policies.

The aging policy in Nonthaburi Municipality faces significant challenges stemming from unclear objectives, weak causal theories, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Although the Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021) outlines broad goals—such as improving elderly quality of life and promoting social inclusion—it lacks clearly defined mechanisms to achieve these aims. As noted by former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, the absence of a strong welfare system and unclear objectives for initiatives like the National Savings Fund reflect the government's failure to provide sufficient financial security and integration opportunities for the elderly.

Furthermore, the plan falls short in establishing robust cause-and-effect relationships. While the goals are well-intentioned, they often lack empirical grounding or specific implementation strategies, making them aspirational rather than actionable. For instance, objectives like raising awareness or encouraging life preparation are not supported by detailed pathways to measurable outcomes.

In practice, the legal framework intended to enhance policy compliance has proven inefficient. As pointed out by local officials like Mr. Theerapong Pakornram, policy indicators often fail to meet real needs—particularly in areas like technological access

and elder protection from scams. In addition, structural issues such as excessive bureaucratic layers and communication breakdowns hinder fund disbursement and slow down implementation efforts, as noted by Mr. Thanitpol Chaiyanan. These "veto points" within the system create roadblocks that obstruct effective collaboration and delay progress.

However, the success of these policies also depends on the commitment and expertise of the officials responsible for implementation. Governance bodies, such as the Department of Local Administration and municipal committees, play a key role in ensuring successful policy execution. Skilled and dedicated officials are more likely to drive the intended impact of these policies.

Additionally, the capacity of implementing agents is a key condition of success. Nonthaburi Municipality's Development Strategies focus on three core areas: improving quality of life, strengthening governance, and enhancing human resources with modern technology. These strategies align with the conditions needed for effective policy execution, ensuring that policies are well-implemented and sustainable.

Discussion

This study examined the implementation of aging society policies in Thailand, using Nonthaburi Municipality as a case study, and explored causes, processes, effectiveness, and contextual conditions. The analysis integrates the policy cycle and Sabatier and Mazmanian's (1983) theoretical model, emphasizing how policy

subsystems, legal clarity, causal theory, and administrative structures shape outcomes.

1. Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation: Causes and Necessity

Thailand's rapid demographic aging has necessitated urgent policy attention. The agenda-setting stage of the policy cycle was driven by demographic data, international commitments (e.g., Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing), and increased public concern over elderly welfare. At the policy formulation stage, the Second National Plan for the Elderly (2002–2021) was introduced, outlining strategic priorities in health, social inclusion, and income security.

In Nonthaburi, the municipality responded by initiating localized programs aligned with national strategies, driven by a shared recognition among subsystem actors (e.g., local officials, volunteers, and health workers) of the urgency to address aging-related issues. According to Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), such early consensus among key actors within a policy subsystem facilitates smoother implementation.

2. Decision-Making and Implementation: Processes and Approaches

At the decision-making and implementation stages, Nonthaburi adapted national policies into community-level interventions. These included establishing elderly clubs, mobilizing health volunteers, and organizing monthly health education programs. The policy subsystem—comprising local government

units, civil society actors, healthcare providers, and volunteers—functioned effectively to coordinate activities.

However, barriers such as bureaucratic complexity, unclear fund disbursement procedures, and weak inter-agency communication created "veto points" (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983) that slowed implementation. While the Elderly Persons Act and national plans provided the legal foundation, gaps in operational clarity hindered uniform application at the local level.

3. Evaluation: Effectiveness of Aging Policies

In the evaluation phase of the policy cycle, the effectiveness of Nonthaburi's aging policies shows mixed results. Positively, older adults reported improved access to community health services, increased participation in clubs, and better awareness of aging issues. Community-based strategies, particularly those led by volunteers like Mr. Somkrit Khansamree—demonstrate how local innovation can enhance outcomes.

However, persistent problems such as the abandonment of elderly individuals, underutilization of technology, and lack of comprehensive elder protection policies point to incomplete causal theories (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). For example, while policies aim to integrate technology into aging care, the tools often target younger demographics, revealing a misalignment between objectives and mechanisms.

4. Feedback and Termination: Conditions for Success or Failure

The feedback stage—though weakly institutionalized in Thailand's aging policy framework—is critical to identifying conditions affecting success or failure. Local implementation success depends on leadership capacity, clear legal mandates, adequate resources, and a responsive institutional culture. However, interviews revealed shortcomings in all these areas, particularly in budgetary delays, lack of trained personnel, and inconsistent communication between central and local bodies.

These reflect Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983) conditions for successful implementation:

1. Clear and consistent objectives—National plans provide broad direction but lack operational specificity at the local level.

2. Adequate causal theory—Many initiatives lack empirically grounded pathways linking interventions to outcomes.

3. Structured implementation process—Complex bureaucracies create bottlenecks.

4. Committed implementers and conducive environment—Local champions are often under-resourced or unsupported.

Conclusion

1. Causes and Necessities for Formulating Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

The formulation of aging society policies in Nonthaburi Municipality stems from several factors, including shifting demographics, economic weaknesses, rising healthcare demands, and the growing need for community involvement. These factors highlight the importance of creating policies that not only provide immediate support but also focus on preventive measures to reduce long-term costs related to elderly care. Given these challenges, a cultural shift towards more health-conscious and financially secure aging populations is necessary. This shift requires addressing behaviors and practices that were traditionally ingrained in society. By recognizing the urgency of the aging population issue, the municipality aims to prioritize elderly care, focusing on integrated care systems, healthcare accessibility, and fostering community engagement. Aligning these efforts with national goals ensures that local needs are met through collaborative action among local governments, healthcare providers, and various stakeholders.

2. Implementation and Effects of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Nonthaburi's aging society policies reflect Thailand's commitment to supporting its growing elderly population, guided by the Older Person Act and the Second National Elderly Plan. These policies have led to initiatives aimed at improving elderly well-being

across economic, social, health, and environmental areas. Notable actions include the creation of community-based care systems, the establishment of Elderly Clubs, and the development of centers dedicated to improving the quality of life for the elderly. While these efforts have achieved some success, challenges remain, particularly regarding limited volunteer resources, budget constraints, and the need for better economic support structures. Stakeholder feedback indicates that while the municipality's efforts have been generally beneficial, there is a need for more consistent support and improved resource allocation to effectively meet the needs of all elderly residents.

3. Effectiveness of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Thailand's aging society policies present a comprehensive framework designed to address the challenges of an aging population. At the national level, the focus is on promoting "Active Aging" through initiatives aimed at improving health, security, and social participation for elderly individuals. Key policies include enhancing welfare and social protection systems, creating employment opportunities for older adults, and improving housing and safety standards. The integration of technology and legal reforms also supports these objectives. Locally, the focus is on community-driven solutions, such as improving healthcare, income support, housing accessibility, and social services. Despite challenges in securing adequate resources and trained personnel at the local level, the structured approach underscores Thailand's

commitment to fostering a society that supports its aging population through coordinated efforts and comprehensive support networks.

4. Conditions for Success or Failure of Aging Society Policies in Nonthaburi Municipality

Several key conditions determine the success or failure of aging society policies in Nonthaburi Municipality. Clear and consistent objectives are critical for guiding effective policy implementation. When objectives are not well-defined, as seen in the Second National Plan, policy execution can become misaligned, undermining effectiveness. Additionally, a well-articulated causal theory is essential for identifying the cause-and-effect relationships within policies, ensuring that desired outcomes for the elderly are achieved. A robust legal framework is also necessary to ensure compliance and facilitate cooperation among stakeholders. However, the bureaucratic complexities often hinder effective collaboration, and streamlining regulations could enhance system responsiveness. The commitment and expertise of implementing officials are crucial for translating policies into meaningful action. Ongoing training and involving local leaders in decision-making processes can foster more responsive elderly care. Support from community leaders and interest groups ensures that policies remain relevant and adaptable to evolving needs. Lastly, the ability to adapt policies to changing socio-economic conditions is vital for maintaining their effectiveness in the long term. Proactive

adjustments to the policy framework can help address the impacts of economic crises and shifting public policies.

5. Suggestions for Further Study

Local organizations such as municipalities, Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAOs), and community health centers play a pivotal role in the success of aging society policies. Therefore, future research should prioritize strategies that empower these local actors to lead more effectively. This includes exploring localized approaches to promoting long-term behavioral changes in areas such as healthy living, financial literacy, and active aging among older adults.

One important area for further study is the application of Project Cycle Management (PCM) principles within aging policy implementation. PCM offers a structured, systematic approach to managing projects through stages including identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Research can explore how local organizations can utilize PCM to improve planning, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and outcome measurement in aging initiatives. Investigating best practices in PCM use at the local level could enhance transparency, accountability, and adaptability of policies to better meet community needs.

Comparative research on community-driven models from other countries—such as Japan's integrated community care system—can offer insights for local adaptation. Studies should also examine how local organizations can strengthen intergenerational

support mechanisms rooted in Thai cultural values, such as filial piety and community solidarity, which are vital to sustaining grassroots care systems.

Evaluating the strengths and limitations of volunteer-based elderly support within communities is also crucial. Research should investigate how local agencies can improve volunteer recruitment, training, and retention, as well as enhance coordination between civil society and public service networks. Additionally, it is important to examine how local governments can engage younger generations in aging-related initiatives, including through savings schemes, educational outreach, and digital health solutions that bridge generational gaps.

Urban–rural disparities in service delivery also require attention. Studies should assess how local organizations in different contexts address inequalities in healthcare, mobility, and access to welfare services, ensuring more inclusive and context-specific solutions. Finally, longitudinal studies that track the outcomes of local policy initiatives on elderly health and quality of life would offer essential feedback to improve future programming. Comparative studies of local aging policy implementation across ASEAN countries could also help identify best practices and support policy innovation in Thailand's decentralized administrative framework.

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