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A08: Experiential, Expressive and Equilibrium Belongingness: Psycho-spiritual Therapeutic Values of Senior Citizen Club for Octogenarian Members

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Background: The Health Promotion Center for Older Persons (Senior Citizen Club), Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang was established in 1997 to provide health promotion and rehabilitation services for older persons whose ages are more than 60 years. Nowadays, there are more than 2,300 members whose ages are between 60-80 years. And, there is a group of 30 older persons whose ages are more than 80 years and have been participating in regular provided activities since the beginning of the center. However, the factors that attached the octogenarians with this health promotion centers, and how those factors happen, have not been studied yet.

Objectives: To determine the experiences of the octogenarians in participating with the provided activities of the Health Promotion Center for Older Persons, Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang (Senior Citizen Club).

Methodology: The participants in this qualitative study were 17 octogenarian members: 8 males and 9 females. All participants were in-depth interviewed. Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis technique.

Results: The results showed that participating consistently and continuously of the octogenarian members in the provided activities is a significant development for them as parts of the center, the belongingness emerged from 3 themes: Theme 1, The octogenarian members gained more experiences: Learning and Growth such as doing exercise, and using medicine; Connection such as meeting the old friends, receiving messages, using information technology; Happiness and Joy such as seeing other people, Theme 2, The octogenarian members have self-expression and self-role playing; Aesthetics such as dressing up and make overs in different seasons; Competence such as playing musical instruments, dancing, singing, and being a committee and a leader; Theme 3, The octogenarian members have maintained their psycho-spiritual equilibrium: Compassion, Reduce conflicts, and Leave it be and let it be.

Conclusions and Recommendations: This study reflected the persons who are responsible to be aware of the belongingness of the octogenarian members and the balancement of provided activities to serve the older persons.

Keywords: *older persons, octogenarian members, activities, participation*

BACKGROUND

Thailand has been evaluated effectively in both medical and public health which caused the death rate of the population to decrease and the population has lived longevity. Furthermore, the success of the population and family planning affected the birth rate to decrease while, the proportion of older persons has been increasing. In the year 2012, there were older persons in Thailand with 12.7 of all ages in the population, and this trend is consistently increasing (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2009).

The United Nation Organization (UN) stated that any society that has a proportion of the population whose ages are more than 60 years at 10 % and above of all ages of the population of the country, means that the society is becoming an Aging Society. The UN divided the older person society into 3 levels: **Aging Society** referred to the male and female population aged more than 60 years 10 % or population aged more than 65 years above 7%; **Aged Society** referred to a proportion of the population ages more than 60 years added up to 20 % or the population ages more than 65 years added up to 14 %; and **Super-aged Society or Hyper-aged Society** referred to a proportion of the population whose ages are more than 65 years added up more than 20% of the national population (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2009; Boonchai, & Wongthawasu, 2012).

According to the population statistics of the Information Technology and Communication Center, The Secretariat Office of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, a number of the population whose ages are more than 60 years has been increasing continuously every year. Thailand has been an Aging Society since 2004. It is estimated that Thailand will be an Aged Society in the year 2025 (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2009). And, a study of the present population structure, found that the population of Thailand now is 623,000 people. There are 9,517,000 people whose ages are above 60 years which accounted for 1.53 % and there are 6,408,000 people whose ages are above 65 years which accounted for 0.92 % (Boonchai, & Wongthawasu, 2012).

In Lampang Province, Northern area of Thailand there are 757,534 people and it is divided as follows: there are 124,904 population whose ages are more than 60 years which accounted for 16.49 %, and there are 67,914 population whose ages are more than 65 years which accounted for 11.61 % (Information system for public health management, Provincial Office of Public Health, Lampang, 2013). In 1997, Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang established the Health Promotion Center for Older Persons in order to promote health, perform research, provide trainings, and promote more community engagements for older persons in Lampang province. Furthermore, the center provides health promotion activities and rehabilitation services every Friday for older persons residing in Lampang municipality, and nearby districts. The center focuses on the significance and appropriateness of the exercises for older persons that may help promote a better physical health, mobility, balancement, respiratory and cardiovascular system strength, immunization, and psychosocial health of the older persons. Furthermore, it is established to be a center that promotes human rights for older persons. There are a number of older persons ages more than 80 years that have been accessing to the provided health promotion activities since the beginning of the center until now. The authors wonder the factors that lead the older persons to be attached with the

activities of the center consistently and continuously. The information may be beneficial for the persons who take responsibility in the development of the provided activities to suit with the older persons' physical and psychosocial health, quality of life and the center itself.

OBJECTIVES

To determine the experiences of the octogenarian members in participating with the provided activities of the health promotion center, Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang (Senior Citizen Club).

METHODS

This qualitative study aimed to determine the experiences of the octogenarian members in participating with the provided activities of the health promotion center, Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang (Senior Citizen Club). The authors conducted the study by indepthly interviewing the octogenarian members: 8 male and 9 females. All of them has been accessing to the center consistently and countinuosly.

Protection of Participants' right

After an approval of the proposal from the Research Ethics Committee of Boromarajonani College of Nursing Nakhon Lampang. The authors describe the study project to the expected participants that this study will benefit the octogenarian members and other older persons who access to the helth promotion center. The data were kept confidentially and was presented as a whole. The participants had the rights to withdraw or drop from the study any time and will not lose their member rights.

DATA COLLECTION

The octogenarian members who has been accessing to the center at least 3 times a month were in-depth interviewed during the months of March to May 2016.

Sample interview questions: Coming to the center, what did you receive? What are your reasons for coming to the center?, How did you feel when you come to the center?, At present, what can you say about the provided activities?

DATA ANALYSIS

After in-depth interviewing, the authors had verbatim transcribed all of the tape records. The data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis technique. The authors identified the keywords of the contents, labelled, classified, compared and connected the relationships, and 3 themes emerged.

RESULTS

The results of this study showed that participating consistently and continuously of the octogenarian members in the provided activities is a significant development for the octogenarian members as parts of the center, the belongingness emerged from 3 themes: 1) the octogenarian members gained more experiences, 2) they have self-expression and self-role playing, and 3) they have maintained their inner equilibrium. The relationships that happened caused the octonarian members to receive the benefit naturally. The description of the results is presented as follows.

1. Gain more experiences

1.1 Learning and Growth

Gain more experiences is referred to the octogenarian members feeling of accessing in the center activities, they have knowledge, learning, and growth. For example, one each week, the octogenarian members receive knowledge about exercising provided by the instructors who are in charge in the center, other members, and nursing students. They learned that to do an exercise is to move parts of the body, or to stimulate parts of the body to have systematic function much more than ordinary situation. The exercise is based on sex, age, and physical health status of octogenarian members individually.

As Father Boonteam told that:

"The instructors advise how to exercise correctly, I receive new information and knowledge, we may not stay still, but we can pick this thing up, that thing up. If my son does not stay home I can sell the thing by picking it up to the customer and this is one kind of exercise"

"Coming here, they tell me how to do an exercise, the person who cannot exercise by dancing as the other people dance, just only do sitting exercise" (Mother Som)

"Sometimes, I do not exercise as full option, just only Thai dance, or play a game with other people, I like that, sometimes I feel fatigue, my energy is out and cannot dance as other people do, I only take a rest and watch them and lift my arms softly as the others" (Mother Hom)

"While I am doing exercise and feel tired, I take a seat and observe the other people. They can do that because they are still young, only 65 years, younger than me, I am 80 plus" (Father Boonteam)

"Coming to the center to do exercise as a group exercise, I have fun, there are many people, the music is joyful, and the exercise is correct as the principle" (Mother Fongka)

"I have a chance to do exercise again and the exercises are not repeated." "They are always new" "The students teach me" Exercise is good, it helps physical strength"

"My body is chubby, and we are not comfortable if we do not exercise" (Mother Anusorn)

Received more experiences by learning from the other members and activity providers such as speaking, enhancing positive activities, seeing the relationships of each pair of sprouts that exercise together, support each other, taking care while having the meals, giving and sharing, these activities add up to the experiences and point of view of the octogenarian members to stay together. Knowing how to communicate to the others, speak politely, sweetly, and softly. For example, ...

"Coming to the center makes me feel happy, I found many good things of older persons, and nursing students and instructors' society, they speak sweetly, and softly to other people" (Father Choo)

"Sometimes, seeing the sprouts go to exercise, dancing, I am glad to see that they are healthy, they are accepted, I feel that I have good mental health, I feel good, I feel attached to them" (Mother Na)

1.2 Having news, messages, or information connection

The octogenarian members reflected that accessing to the services of this center made them knowledgeable of new information. If they only stay in their houses they may not know, or have not receive new information especially, health related information. Furthermore, coming to this center, they meet many friends, different ages, the same age, or new members, and receive news and messages, connect with other people using contemporary information technology make them feel relieved from loneliness. For example,

"Staying at home is ordinary, it is lonely, coming here I receive information and message from the doctors or pharmacists, such as, taking the medicine correctly, and at the right time." (Mother Arnusorn)

"Had seen a new video from the internet, the Lord Buddha" "I Received new information a lot from the instructors, students, and key speakers, sometimes, other older persons had searched, looked for road, then they share or tell me, they tell it to me every Friday" (Mother Pankh)

1.3 Feeling about Happiness and Joy

Receiving information and messages led the octogenarian members to be happy and joyful such as they are very happy to have a chance to talk to their old friends, having new friends, and hearing the laughter from the different groups of speaking. Some people speak very funny, they talk about funny stories, some people tell about their international trips such as Laos, Japan, and China. Some people talk about their work such as their volunteer work in the hospital, some people talk about their families. For example, ...

"Coming to this center, I have a chance to meet my old friends, smile and laugh to each other" "Laughing help release stress and feel relaxed." (Mother Baulai)

"They told me about Laos" (Father Dee)

"They talk about their trips to Japan and China" (Father Yai)

Receiving more experiences of the octogenarian members happen based on 3 key aspects: learning and growth, the connection of information and message, and the happiness and joy of participations that are the reasons of the octogenarian members whose ages are more than 80 years to come to the center.

2. Self-expression or Self role playing

Self-expression or Self-role playing is referred to the octogenarian members feeling that there are some parts of their life that are still valuable. Their body changed at the age of 80. They can still be able to do some activities or take some roles. If they are at home, they cannot express their roles to be recognized by other people. However, coming to participate in the activities provided by the center, the octogenarian members get a chance to touch and learn about sciences and arts along with the different ages of octogenarian members. The octogenarian members also feel that they want to bring out their existing value and feelings, trait competence, or concealed competence.

As Father Sri told that...

"I have played a violin since I was young, when I play it with a band I feel very happy, playing alone is not fun"

"When I was young, I liked to sing a song, dance, and play piano. Now, I cannot play piano, playing piano is fun. Every time I see other people play, I feel happy. But right now, I just only dance some steps of Ballroom. In the past, I also used to skate".

Furthermore, self-expression or self-role playing reflected the octogenarian members' aesthetics feelings individually.

2.1 Having aesthetics feelings

Participation at the health promotion center, which is the center that gathers octogenarian members with different kinds of skills and competencies such as playing musical instruments, singing, dancing, performing diverse branches of arts which come in each of their life span is a way of expressing the aesthetic feeling. Some of them used to perform in shows and received applauds, positive responses, and reinforcements from the audiences. The greater number of octogenarian members participating in this health promotion center, is also increasing the number of cultures, local wisdom, and diverse kinds of career. Therefore, this center is a place where the octogenarian members could express out their aesthetics which they kept for a long time. Such as, one older person who used to be a trainer for the ladies competing in the beauty contest has the ability in dressing, and make overs, shows herself neatly by dressing beautifully all in all seasons. Moreover, for the octogenarian members who used to be instructors in the government schools, they are competent in dancing the cultural dance. Some octogenarian members can also dance such as the "Lanna" dance (the Thai northern dance), weapon dance which stimulates the thrills in the heart of the audiences, and the present generation who have not seen this performance.

Mother Baujan told that...

"On Somdej Yaa Day (King Rama 9's mother Day, we dressed ourselves with red silk"

"On the significant days, we would dress up and wear make up, we would not dress ourselves simply"

"The older persons need to dress ourselves in bright colors" (Mother Som)

"Today, we dress up ourselves as beautifully, we have foreign visitors." (Mother Bauleaw)

Taking part their roles reflected the specific abilities of octogenarian members. Therefore, the participation of octogenarian members in the activities that the center provided, this place is therefore used to gathered the octogenarian membersto show their competencies and abilities.

2.2 Competence

The octogenarian members performed many kinds of their cempetencies at the center such as dancing, singing especially Joy-Sor (the Northern style narrative poem), and sewing bang leaves (to make Baisri)

as Mother Hom told that

"Coming here, I can dance, sing a song, and watch the sprouts perform the shows"

"I had practiced dancing, Ballroom step, the foreign visitors will be here, I have to practice" (Mother Bauleaw)

"Who wants to sing whatever song, have to communicate to the Elderly Band, we will not be shy to the visitors" (Father Tha)

"When dancing is performed, we have to dance each pair of the dancers, they are husband and wife" (Mother Na)

3. Equilibrium: the peace of mind

Maintaining lifestyle under the limitation of ages, decreasing of physical functions (such as risk driving caused from eye sights), doing activities as much as possible are the truth that the octogenarian members can accept. These are reasons that help the octogenarian members to live happily with peaceful mind, and the equilibrium of body and mind.

As Mother Baulai stated that...

"What we can do more? It is not the same as we were young. Now, we just only, sit down or sleep, we are not comfortable to go to any place. -We are afraid to fall. Even if driving, we have to be careful. Actually, for us, we like to take it easy, live simply, whatever we can do we will take it as easily as possible"

"We will go to the center until we have no strength, now I have someone younger to drove for me, and I do not go to the center some Fridays. I go to the doctor. Going to the center, I am more happy than staying at the home, I have nothing to do."

"Every Friday, I get up early in the morning, I feel very glad, after dressing, I take the minibus(2-row) to the center. I pay 30 baht to be there, and 30 baht to go back home, I feel comfortable" (Mother Fangkha).

Participation at the center is the way to keep equilibrium of mind and spirit. It could help to have peace of mind. The octogenarian members learned that equilibrium in mind comes from

1). Compassion as Father Jan told that...

"If they sing a song too loud we leave the place for few minutes, we know that they are having fun"

2). Decreasing self-conflict as Mother Hom told that...

"If the music is too loud, we go to tell them to reduce the noise"

3). Leave it be and let it be as Father Jan said that...

"Some people are quite talkative, also, their attires does not suit with the situation, but we just keep quiet"

Maintaining equilibrium and having peace in mind led the octogenarian members to have a chance to understand other people, reduce the conflict in their mind to what they dislike, such as some octogenarian members ignore the loud music or noise from the drum, and dancing too much. They participate in the activities they like instead. Sometimes they leave from the place or situation but remains to be a member of the group, sometimes they talk to their friends, or keep quiet.

The octogenarian members participate consistently and continuously in the activities that the center provides. They feel attached, become part of the Center and deal with their experiences together and relationships. They use the center as the base of their society to express their roles and values. The octogenarian members had adapted themselves naturally which made them happy and have the equilibrium in their late of life.

DISCUSSION

The study focuses on three key factors, experiences, expression and equilibrium, which leads to belongingness. The experiences of the octogenarian through the activities in the health promotion center plays a great role in maintaining the well-being of the octogenarian. A study conducted in the Netherlands found that social cohesion, belonging and changes predicts the social and physical well-being of the older people (Cramm, & Nieber, 2015). In the same study, the researchers showed that the activities and the surrounding of the older people affects their overall well-being, for instance, a poor neighborhood conditions can cause challenges for the older person to gain more support as most of them live alone. This situation is similar with Thailand, where in many octogenarians live on their own because other family members work inside or outside the province. Furthermore, a study conducted with Medicare population participating in senior-oriented programs also claims that the more active the participants are, the more likely to decrease morbidity, accidental injury, health care costs, and potentially even mortality (Hamar, Coberley, Pope, & Rula, 2013). In addition, in a report article, it was stated that participation is associated with social, mental, and physical health benefits. Senior centers promote health by providing health and support services, encouraging active and healthy aging, and by fostering a social environment that is conducive to social participation and well-being. Senior centers are also ideal venues for health promotion interventions, such as falls prevention, influenza vaccines, diabetes management, and so forth (Novek, Menec, Tran, & Bell, 2013). This support the importance of socialization to be able

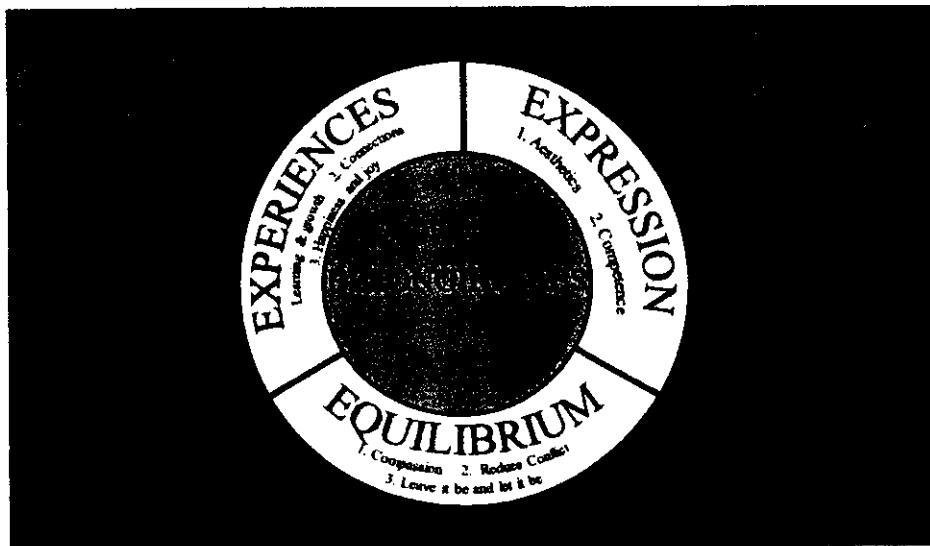
to gain knowledge and be able to apply it. It also provides them updates to current issues, especially about health.

The octogenarian is able to express themselves by creative activities and performances on their own guided by the staff. Through this, they are able to express themselves uniquely in the way they want. Phillips, K. (2007) also concluded that using creative activities in the form of art therapy, poetry, journaling, reminiscence, and groups provide physical and physiological benefits. Being able to participate in different activities boost the self-confidence of the octogenarian. They get the chance to express themselves, show their aesthetic ability and competence which they do not usually express at home and usually forgotten. To be able to express this again, the octogenarian involves themselves to clubs because senior centers offers a range of educational opportunities that promotes learning, creativity, and skills development (Novek, et al., 2013). Elderlies are also known as leaders because of their experiences, but when they reach the retiring age, the opportunities may not be as welcoming to them. In senior centers, volunteering opportunities enable older adults to socialize, contribute to their communities, and share their knowledge and skills (Novek, et al., 2013).

De Frias, C. & Whyne, E. (2014) stated that by being mindful of momentary physical, affective, and cognitive experiences, the individual may improve affect regulation in stressful situations which would then protect mental-health functioning and boost successful aging. This supports the idea that when the octogenarian is able to control unnecessary outburst and calmly deal with situations, it reduces the negative mental effect. This also provides a chance for the octogenarian to create interventions in dealing with different situations. Mindful individuals are less likely to form habits of negative thinking or rumination which tend to increase distress (Epel, et al., 2009), meaning it helps reduce the risk of stress by training the individual to react with caution which makes them more positively reactive rather than being negative in the face of stressful situations.

Overall, the activities that provides experiences, expression and equilibrium are all interconnected leading to a sense of self-worth or belongingness. As mentioned, the octogenarian are mostly alone and the weekly gathering of the octogenarian gives them something to look forward. Hemingway, & Jack, (2013) stated in their study that for some elderlies, they describe attendance at the club as providing the only contact with others, indeed the weekly club for some was the only source of conversation in the entire week. Some elderlies living with their family still described feeling lonely as they did not feel they were truly engaged with their family in a way they enjoyed. In addition, in some cases, some elderlies who live with their family members could not meaningfully engage with their family in a technological world with mobile phones, music, and televisions constantly on in the background. In this way they felt they would rather socialise with their peers than be in a world they did not feel part of or want to belong to. This depicts the importance of the time spent with other octogenarian during gatherings. The activities in the senior clubs give them opportunities to engage and feel their need in the group (Jiradetprapai, 2011). Elderlies thought that the activities provided them with social benefits, allowing them to socially interact, be part of a community, and develop close relationships (Bunnarakorn, 2009; Novek, et al., 2013). Providing a place where in they are not judged for their age provides them solace and therefore makes them feel more confident and assured that they are still part of the growing and developing society and that they are still capable of joining various activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION



Experiences, Expression and Equilibrium Belongingness: Psycho-spiritual Therapeutic Values of Senior Citizen Club for Octogenarian Members

The authors conducted the study about the experiences of the octogenarian members who participated in the Health Promotion Center, Boromrajonani College of Nursing, Nakhon Lampang during March to May, 2016. The results showed that participating consistently and continuously of the octogenarian members in the provided activities is a significant development for them as parts of the center, the belongingness emerged from 3 themes that: the octogenarian members gained more experiences, 2) they have self-expression and self-role playing, and 3) they have maintained their inner equilibrium. This study reflected the persons who are responsible to beware of the belongingness of the octogenarian members and the balance of provided activities. The objectives of the provided activities may serve as: 1) to promote psycho-spiritual health of the octogenarian members in order to maintain the equilibrium, and to make it compatible with the received experiences and shared expression of the octogenarian members; 2) to be a guideline in developing the provided activities and newer designed activities in order to respond to the needs of older person who are getting more older; and 3) to inspire the instructors, staffs, and the administrative committee of the center to be aware about the provided activities for the increasing numbers of the octonarians members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express our appreciation to the octogenarian members who participated in this study, older persons and Boromrajonani College of Nursing Nakhon Lampang who supported the project.

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