

Exploration of Spirituality in Retirees to Create an Art Activity Model for Enhancing Spiritual Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Aging in society is now a global issue. Older adults comprise a big part of our society and their quality of life concerns the ability to live healthfully. The WHO (World Health Organization) explains, "Health is complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being." [10] This study focuses on a group of retired university professors who are lifelong learners, financially stable, though in declining health and with issues of self-esteem and emptiness causing stress and anxiety. Supporting self-awareness in order to tackle late-life changes suits their lifelong-learning temperaments. Enhanced spiritual well-being supports meaning of life, giving them new purpose. This study is part of the research on development of an arts activities model for enhancing spiritual well-being for older adults. The aim of this study is to explore and investigate the concept of activities for enhancing spiritual well-being in a community of retired university professors. Using document analysis and a synthesis of information related to theories of aging, gerontology, need of education, transformative learning, activity theory and the concept of spiritual development, in-depth interviews were conducted with five specialists and five retired university professors in Northern Thailand, aged 61-69 years, regarding the concept of spirituality and spiritual well-being, processing of learning in old age, and a model of art activities to enhance spiritual well-being. These factors were developed via model drafting. Findings are as follows: Principle of the model should connect with the interests of the individual and support aspects of self-awareness and relationships. Purpose of the model should focus on self-esteem, meaning of life, coping with change, and overcoming ego. Process of the model should dialogue deep-listening and reflection. Arts activities should be based on individual choice of interests and be condition appropriate. Evaluation of the model should be based on self-improvement and change in the individual.

Keywords: Arts activities, Spiritual well-being, Lifelong learning, Older adults, Retirees.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of an aging society and the changes affecting retirees

According to The World Bank Thailand in January 2020: In 2016, approximately 11 percent of the population was 65 years or older, an increase from 5 percent in 1995. By 2040, more than a quarter of the population will be 65 years or older. This pace of aging is among the fastest ever seen [35]. The Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Developing Institute (TGRI) report titled "Situation of the Thai Elderly." In 2019, Thailand had a population 69.4 million, where 12.9 million were 60 years old or older (15.2%). In fact, Thailand had already reached aged society status in 2005, with the elderly population increasing at the unprecedented rate of 4% per year. Thailand will become a super aged society by 2031, when 28% of population will be elderly. Thailand has the second largest elderly

population in ASEAN at 16%, with average longevity increased to 72 years for men, and 79 years women [14].

Older adults comprise a big part of our society and their quality of life concerns the ability to live healthfully. The WHO (World Health Organization) explains, "Health is complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being." Spirituality becomes more important for many older people. Although it is largely associated with life meaning, for others it has a specific religious dimension. Over the last couple of decades this has become an area of great interest. There is also increasing interest from within Asia regarding spirituality and ageing [24]

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Retirees

Retirement is usually defined as the time in which people leave the paid workforce and receive finances from a pension scheme ^[17]. It is a significant transitional life stage in our society that affects all workers.

Robert R. Atchley theorized that there are seven phases of retirement adjustment. As all people are unique in their experience of retirement, individuals do not necessarily experience all seven ^[17]. However research has shown that there is a pattern of emotional adjustment as individuals take on the new role of retiree.

- 1) *The Remote phase* – happens when retirement is still far away, people are middle-aged, and still working. They generally do not think about retirement, and if they do, it is only sporadically and set into a distant future.
- 2) *The Near phase* – this phase starts when individuals form a plan for their retirement years and have a perception of the way it will occur, these perceptions will be gained from role models, friends, family, and education.
- 3) *The Honeymoon phase* – in this phase many retirees take advantage of free time to go travelling, however not all individuals will experience the honeymoon phase. This phase is partially based on a fantasy about retirement and what it should be like. The honeymoon phase requires a positive outlook. However, and more importantly, it requires financial assets, which are available only to some retirees. In that case their view of this stage may be negative if they have financial limitations ^[2]
- 4) *The Disenchantment phase* – takes place when retirees realize they cannot adapt to retirement, they become aware that they have not carried out the activities they planned and imagined, or when they are dissatisfied with them. The retirees do not feel that they contribute anything compared to the time when they worked, feel let down and depressed. Disappointment can also be caused by a tragic or disruptive event, such as the death of a spouse or sudden illness.
- 5) *The Reorientation phase* – takes place after the Disenchantment Phase or sometimes immediately after being retired. This stage starts with interventions and using their life experiences to develop a realistic view of retirement in accordance with the psychological and social resources they possess. They may start to participate in new community activities or begin to interact with their family and friends more often. During this period, they actively evaluate the way in which they intend to live their lives during retirement ^[2]
- 6) *The Stability phase or The Retirement routine phase* – occurs when people set guidelines for everyday life. Retirees with a satisfactory retirement routine

have accepted their role as pensioners, know what is expected of them, and are at the same time aware of their abilities and limitations. Appropriate coping mechanisms have been developed, which helps him/her adjust to difficult situations and this assists in retirees feeling safe and protected in their surroundings. This phase can happen at any time in the transitional process, though some individuals will never experience it at all ^[2]

- 7) *The Termination of retirement phase* – occurs when people are no longer oriented towards their role as pensioners. They do not think about themselves as retirees because they are preoccupied with other issues, most often with their own or their spouse's illness, frailty, or loneliness. When they become too weak to participate in daily activities, their role as pensioners is not a priority anymore, and is overshadowed by the role of being frail, which becomes the most important factor in organizing everyday life.

This study focuses on a target group of retired university professors, who are therefore highly educated, having worked in an academic institute the majority of their lives. Most studies of elderly Thai people focus on those with less education than a bachelor's degree, thus possibly having different perspectives and purpose around well-being. Arpaporn Ussanarassamee's study on "A causal model of Thai retirees' subjective well-being" showed that a higher education level directly influences retirees' subjective well-being as well as their activity level ^[3].

In "Retirement preparation of Staff in Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok" Piyada Wongwiwat and Chandaj Charoenwiryakul used quantitative research with 260 samples of staff aged over 45 years. Their research found that the level of retirement preparation for cognitive performance and perceived self-efficacy were at a very good level, while the attitude towards retirement and the characteristic of staff were at just a good level ^[32].

Napasamon Nijarun studied how Ramkhamhaeng University Bangkok lecturers lead their lives after retiring. This qualitative research using in-depth interviews with 21 key informants aged 61 years and above revealed that they continue learning, though less than in the past, while enjoying their favorite activities as well as spending more time with their families during retirement ^[27]. Basically, the university lecturers get stable income and pension, so they live without financial difficulties. Many years after retirement, the retirees are less likely to engage in social activities. They also apply Buddha Dhamma in day-to-day life while creating new plans in retirement transition, aiding psychological adjustment. The studies above show that the retired university professors tend to have active aging lives. They have less struggles than other aging populations,

though that does not guarantee their quality of life by WHO definitions.

2.2 The spiritual dimension and related theories

Spirituality has received much interest in health care services; it can improve strategies for managing stress and can positively influence the immune, cardiovascular, hormonal, and nervous systems. For this reason, it may be implicated in affecting a wide range of physical and mental health conditions^[10]

In the book “Spiritual Dimensions of Aging” Malcolm Johnson and Joanna Walker gather the articles from field leaders such as Robert C. Atchley, Harry Moody, and Albert Jewel. The editor observed that spirituality continues to adapt and evolve new forms because it addresses people’s human needs to connect meaning fully with themselves, with each other, and to a higher power or source of meaning and purpose. Thus, it involves the sources of spiritual inspiration and interaction in the material world as well as through transcendent connection.^[25]

However, until recently, this inner life of older people has been largely ignored or treated as problematic by gerontologists. Research is heavily directed towards only physical and economic dimensions of their lives.

2.3 The spiritual development and aging

Spirituality is primarily an inner experience of being that infuses a person with energy, offering a vantage point for transcending the personal self, opening the experiencer to awareness of a vast inner space, and perhaps offering direct connection with the “ground of all being” (God, Allah, Jahweh, Nirvana, The Absolute). Spirituality is a very important part of life for most elderly people^[1]

Spiritual wellness is something that can be developed based on various principles including principles of learning and other aspects of human development. Many of these aspects are frequently researched and studied. Historically, the development of spiritual well-being has attracted the attention of philosophers, religions, educators, psychologists, physicians, and other thinkers. Friedman, Kruppner, Riebel and Johnson synthesize this as a model of spiritual development^[15]:

- 1) Traditional Model of Spiritual development: One that has been developed over a long time. Beliefs in sacred things and religions are used as guides for spiritual development to a higher level such as indigenous belief, Western – Eastern Religious practices, or any other faith community.
- 2) Integrative – Philosophical Model of Spiritual development: Is one that integrates human-related knowledge across the various fields of psychology,

sociology, philosophy, and comparative religion. According to Ken Wilber (2004), author of “Integral Spirituality,” one of the philosophers cited when studying spiritual development with the concept of transpersonal psychology, the principle of integrated intellectual development (Theory of everything), is a practice which helps achieve the hidden potential within human beings grow and develop to the fullest.

- 3) Neurobiological Model of Spiritual development: Comes from a standpoint that “all spiritual experience has rooted in all neurological processes,” with an approach to combine and explain the level of spiritual development in scientific terms, using emerging technology that can measure the physical expression or concomitants of spiritual variables.
- 4) Psychological Model of Spiritual development: This model of spiritual development often leads to physical development as well. The human mind is used as a guide in conjunction with spiritual development. The psychological model of spiritual development divides into broad categories consisting of the psychology of religious and transpersonal psychology (Friedman et, al., 2010).

Examining the psychology of religion as an empirical scientific tradition, provides many avenues to understanding spiritual development, and typically involves the use of measures and surveys. The best-known stage theory of spiritual development categorizes based on cognitive (Piagetian) and affective (Freudian and Eriksonian) phenomena.

In transpersonal psychology, based on the highly influential work of psychologists William James (1905), Carl Jung (1942), and Abraham Maslow (1948), the focus is on experience of the individual and one’s own sense of identity extending beyond its ordinary limits to encompass wider, broader, and deeper aspects. The concept of transpersonal psychology attracts interest from many in the gerontology field and has led to the concept of the Spiritual dimension of Aging. Robert C. Atchley explained the relationship between spiritual development and the spiritual journey related to aging in several important ways^[1]. Generally, we experience spirituality through the human body, and later the body’s maturation and aging influence how effectively it can perceive spirituality.

In Thailand, there are several studies on the concept of spirituality, most based on work with public healthcare workers.

Wallapa Khunsongkeit et al.^[36] studied the spiritual health of Thai people. They found that spiritual well-being in Thai adults divided into three categories: 1) Connecting in life with both supernatural power and in human relationship; 2) Happiness in life, coming from finding satisfaction and meaning; 3) Living powerfully, which comes from encouragement, individuals’ inner strength, hope and capability of problem management.

Nongyao Mongkhonittivech et al. [30] studied spiritual development and related factors for Thai people, identifying 18 characteristics of spiritual well-being which divide into three groups: 1) Happiness group – being kind, gentle, friendly, responsible, flexible, respectful of other beings; 2) Peacefulness group – being able to control one’s feelings, being hardy, devoted, committed, optimistic, accepting of others, and forgiving; 3) Independence group – being empowered, creative, humble, compromising, sufficient.

Nattawan Suwan [29] studied spirituality via concept analysis. Her findings revealed that inner strength, wisdom and transcendence, sense of connectedness, and happiness and peace are the defining attributes of spirituality. The antecedents of spirituality are humanness, sociodemographics, religiousness, psychological characteristics, and health-related characteristics. The benefits of spirituality are coping ability, easier recovery, quality of life, and well-being.

2.4 Activity theory

The **activity theory**, also known as the **implicit theory of aging**, **normal theory of aging**, and **lay theory of aging**, proposes that successful aging occurs when older adults stay active and maintain social interactions by delaying the aging process and enhancing quality of life. The theory was developed by Robert J. Havighurst in 1961, and further in 1964 by Bernice Neugarten. Activity theory desires that the equilibrium developed in middle age will be maintained in later years and predicts that older adults facing life changes will substitute former roles with other new alternatives^[17].

It is worth noting that activity theory arose as an opposing response to disengagement theory. One author suggests that activity enables older adults to adjust to retirement and is named “the busy ethic.” Critics of activity theory state that it overlooks inequalities in health and economics that hinder the ability for older people to engage in such activities. Also, some older adults do not desire to engage in new challenges.

2.5 The Arts for Elderly

Erik Erickson’s eighth and last stage of psychological development culminates in an integration of the individual’s past, present, and future to confront the conflict between integrity and despair. The result can be either despair or wisdom. When older adults pursue activities that are based in meaning, purpose, and honesty, they can attain the wisdom and integrity about which Erickson writes rather than experiencing longing and despair. Therapeutic art experiences can supply meaning and purpose in the lives of older adults in supportive, nonthreatening ways.

Art’s Positive Effects

Gene Cohen, MD, PhD, director of the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities at George Washington University in Washington, DC, and the first researcher to conduct a national longitudinal study on the quality of life, found that the arts have a positive effect on health and illness as we age^[7,8,9].

Clinicians and healthcare workers in the field of aging recognize and applaud the importance of Cohen’s work. Although the results from his groundbreaking study initiated in 2001 are not yet tabulated, positive significant outcomes continue to be documented. Barbara Bagan the author of *Expressive Arts, Aging, Alzheimer’s, and Parkinson’s*, has asserted that creative art pursuits effectively and efficiently provide older adults with multiple benefits, not the least of which is enhanced cognitive function^[5].

The wide range of benefits include:

- helping individuals relax.
- providing a sense of control.
- reducing depression and anxiety.
- assisting in socialization.
- encouraging playfulness and a sense of humor.
- improving cognition.
- offering sensory stimulation.
- fostering a stronger sense of identity.
- increasing self-esteem.
- nurturing spirituality.
- reducing boredom.

Expressive arts, including visual arts, music, dance/movement, writing, and poetry, are empowering tools that can assist in the aging process, including as therapeutic interventions for individuals diagnosed with chronic disease^[5].

Recognition of Creative arts as a powerful tool to enhance well-being is growing in both the therapeutic and quality of life domains^[8]. The field of Arts programming for the elderly is growing dramatically and shows increasing interest. Kauppinen suggests that life review may be used as a motivation or theme for older adults’ art program activities^[21].

Recently, Singapore based researchers Ho AHY, Ma SHX, Ho M-HR, et al. looked at the effects of arts engagement on holistic well-being among older Asian adults above 50 years of age, with 1067 community-dwelling participants. Their cohort of adults between the ages of 50 and 95 years showed that the arts can play a significant role in sustaining a healthy, active, and resilient elderly populace with greater cost-efficiency than traditional medicine and health service models. The research suggests that under the rubric of rapidly aging population^[17], the need for more evidence-driven arts promotion initiatives is urgently warranted in Asia and around the globe.

There are many studies about arts that benefit the lives of the elderly, but very few that mention the strategy of activities or how to implement those arts activities, especially with respect to spiritual well-being in a Thai context.

3. METHODOLOGY

Question of the study

- *What is an appropriate model for enhancing retirees' spiritual well-being?*

After document analysis, researchers created structured interview questions for specialists experienced in working with Thai seniors concerning the dimension of spirituality and contemplative education for at least five years, following the WHO definition of well-being (doctors, psychologists, social workers, art therapists, university professors), and using the snowball process and the participants' (retired university professor community volunteers) input. The survey questions were as follows:

Table 1. Questions for in-depth interview.

Subject	Items
1. Spirituality and Spiritual well-being	1.1 Definition of spirituality and spiritual well-being 1.2 Characteristics of spiritual well-being 1.3 The importance of spiritual well-being in aging people 1.4 The elements of spiritual well-being 1.5 The factors which enhance spiritual well-being
2. Learning in old age	2.1 Problems and obstacles with learning in older age 2.2 Suggestions on learning for retirees 2.3 Characteristics for learning for older age
3. Model for enhancing spiritual well-being	3.1 Principle of the model 3.2 Purpose of the model 3.3 Process of the model 3.4 Evaluation of the model
4. Arts activities	4.1 Types of Arts activities 4.2 Characteristics of activities that can enhance spiritual well-being 4.3 Samples of Arts activities

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Spirituality and spiritual well-being

4.1.1 Definition of spirituality and spiritual well-being.

Data from interviews with five experts gave meaning to spiritual wellness. It can be concluded that the soul is a part of human beings with both internal and external dimensions, such as human instincts and expressions,

respectively. The spirit is both the power that drives life when faced with difficulties and what controls the expression of raw instincts, consciousness, and the restraint that makes humans different from animals. The soul connects all human things, both within oneself and surroundings, including things beyond what can be seen with the naked eye.

While the development of each aspect of human beings both physically and mentally has a natural sequence, there is benefit to including elements that help people grow in a different direction and evolve their spirit. This development is an internal journey and is practiced in its own context. The specialists divide the level of spirituality into three levels. The first level is self-awareness, self-existence as an individual understanding the value and meaning of life. The second level is understanding that one is only a part of nature, which changes and decays, so we are not attached to anything and there is nothing that belongs to us. The third level is having no boundaries, having no ego, and self-sacrifice, which allows being open to everything around and reverting to a peaceful nature.

The elderly cohort defined two aspects regarding the meaning of spirituality: First there are external factors that include beliefs in the mystical and supernatural. The second aspect is the inexplicable, which gives each person's internal strength. Whether acknowledging these or not, these are what drive our controlling behaviors. Spirituality is something deep within or intrinsic to a person. What is interesting about the point of the meaning of spirituality, is that for elderly people, spirituality was not clearly mentioned in terms of religion – they said that spirituality is independent of religious ritual.

MacKinlay states that the spiritual dimension of life is a vital part of being human. It is from this spiritual dimension that the deepest issues of life meaning, and relationship arise. Although people are not always aware of their spirituality, they are likely to experience self-awareness in times of both great joy and of great trauma or grief ^[24].

Therefore, it can be concluded that the definition of spiritual well-being according to both the specialists and the retirees is the power within the individual that helps to control behavior, thinking, and expression, which can be called upon at the right time. Spirituality can be developed through practice and clear understanding. It can be divided into three levels: First, the level of self-awareness, understanding the value and meaning of being alive. The second level is awareness of surroundings and understanding the changes that occur. The third level is transcending the self or the ego until being able to open up to their surroundings and return to the nature of simplicity, tranquility.

4.1.2 Characteristics of Spiritual well-being.

The specialists' viewpoint can be summarized as follows:

- Internal spiritual characteristics are the balance between individuality and control of consciousness. There is the ability to control, distinguish, perceive and be aware. Additionally, there is the impetus to live a life that is valuable and meaningful. Then, when transcending one's ego, not clinging, being independent of body, material or past, achieving connection with the natural world is possible.
- External spiritual traits that can be expressed include: stillness, forgiveness, generosity and having mercy, and actions toward others without thinking of personal gain or reward.

Similarly, the retirees described the characteristics of good spiritual health within a person as a state of stillness, concentrating on actions, expressing happiness, and when a person is in good health, being generous to those around them in the form of giving, having compassion, and caring for others.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Spiritual well-being can be divided into two aspects. One is the person's inner spiritual side, with an awareness of the balance between being oneself with the control of consciousness through concentration and stillness allowing perception of value and meaning. The second is the external spiritual side of not clinging to ego or needs, connecting with the surrounding material world, and taking actions that others see, such as showing generosity and benevolence.

4.1.3 Importance of Spiritual well-being for the Elderly

The specialists have commented on the importance of spiritual wellness for the elderly, saying that it is something that should be developed over the course of a person's life. However, the direction of spiritual development has different goals for each life phase. According to the context of society and environmental changes in the elderly's lives, often including downturns in physical strength, socio-economic status affecting self-confidence as well as the decreasing self-worth, they begin to realize that they are entering the final stages of their lives. The soul, which is something that can develop independently of the body, should therefore act as an intrinsic force to sustain life. In other words, while the body is deteriorating, a strong spirit removes clinging to the past, supporting mental happiness, so that the mind might return to the original state of purity. This allows improved coping with changes, letting them create new life goals, leading to hope and seeing beauty even in simple things. Ultimately, this gives strength to continue living, including an awareness of being prepared to accept the final moments of life peacefully.

The retirees indicated the importance of spiritual wellness to them, saying it is an important part of life and is the driving force during their changes in social status. Spirituality is also an important part of talking to yourself. It allows them to reconsider and realize the value of the relationship between themselves and their

families, especially in dealing with the outside world and dire situations such as the current epidemic and separation from loved ones.

MacKinlay says that a person's spiritual dimension lies at the very depths of what it means to be human. The way culture is expressed will vary according to regional and specific religious and cultural heritage and custom. However, beneath all the overlay of culture and religion is the common spiritual dimension of all people [24].

Therefore, it can be concluded that spiritual wellness is an important internal force that is an important part of life. It helps people cope with various negative life changes, including various aspects of deterioration including physically, economically, and socially, as well as separation and loss. A strong spirit also allows seniors to reconsider and realize the value of their relationships with family.

4.1.4 Elements of Spiritual well-being.

The components of spiritual well-being can be classified by the specialists as follows:

- The inner dimension of the person is the understanding of one's existence. Individuals can create the power to nourish the mind by itself. There is strength, fulfillment, and peace that comes from a thorough understanding of what is happening. It is possible to make decisions without emotions.
- The environmental and social dimensions involve seeing the connection with oneself, the people around them, and a unity with nature.
- The dimension beyond seeing, having faith, believing in something, means that something binds the mind. It may refer to religious or philosophical beliefs held as the destination of spirituality/discipline to practice.
- The core components of spiritual wellness according to the retirees' opinions can be divided into two dimensions: the dimensions that are external, environmental elements, namely good relationships and love and care from those around them. The elements of a person's inner dimension include having a doctrine that guides expression and practice, including having mindful self-reflection, clearly recognizing their own potential and needs.

Therefore, it can be concluded that spirituality can be divided into three dimensions: 1) The dimension within the person, which is the understanding of one's own existence, consciousness and reflection, and the perception of one's own potential and needs clearly; 2) The external dimension, which is the connection with oneself, the surrounding people, and environment; 3) Finally there is the one beyond sight. It includes beliefs, which may refer to a religion or philosophy that guides the way of life.

4.1.5 Factors that promote spiritual well-being

Factors that promote spiritual well-being according to the specialists are as follows:

- Factors that occur in a person include:
 - Physical readiness – the seniors must be satisfied with respect to the *four* prerequisites (food, shelter, clothing, and medicine) first or have their diseases/ ailments under care and in a managed state. The basics of mental care and support – must be trained and refined to prepare in dealing with change, and they should have goals and anchors in life.
- Environmental factors include:
 - Principles of learning – to understand situations that affect oneself, such as doctrines, beliefs and guidelines, rules, and procedures. There should also be discipline and responsibility,
 - Practical skills/techniques – should be regularly trained, such as regulating breathing, and especially practicing until having self-control and improved consciousness.
 - Companion pairing – so that participants work together to develop with the goal of being prepared for what will change.
 - Learning – through the accumulation of spiritual experiences.

The retirees said the factors that promote spiritual well-being include:

- Physical factors, including having a healthy body with age, having financial or economic readiness to be able to take care of themselves, having the freedom to determine their own beliefs.
- Environmental factors include having good relationships born of trust, having the opportunity to refine themselves, living in a good society, being kind and generous to each other.

Therefore, it can be concluded that two types of factors promote spiritual well-being. First are the physical factors including having a healthy body according to age or being in an otherwise managed state and having an open mind ready to be trained. They should be empowered to develop spiritual processes yet with the freedom to determine their own beliefs, as well as setting goals and being prepared to deal with life's changes. Secondly, are the environmental factors such as having good relationships with those around them. Ideally, there will be companions ready to practice the work together, a good society and a good community, giving them a sense of compassion and generosity.

4.2 Learning in the elderly

4.2.1 Problems and obstacles in learning of the elderly.

According to the opinions of the specialists, this can be divided into five areas:

- 1) Physically, these encompass deterioration of various organs which hinders learning, such as sensory systems, including blurred vision, muscle control, decreased hearing and brain function, dementia, memory fade and confusion, muscle control systems resulting in spasticity, tremors, and various diseases affecting life.
- 2) Psychologically there may be stress, depression, anxiety that arises from life changes that cannot be adjusted to, feelings from hurt or disappointment in childhood, or the loss of life experiences that are still ingrained.
- 3) Socially they may struggle with defining themselves, their character, habits, and interpersonal relationships.
- 4) Environmentally, there will be factors in terms of surrounding area and the community where they are.
- 5) Spiritually, they may lack energy, goals, and hope, and thus feel unwanted or worthless.

The retirees do not think physical condition is the main obstacle to their learning because, if that was their intention, they would put in effort and try to learn. They often also get used to a physical condition that is no longer the same as when they were young, thus adapting as they experience long-term bodily change. However, the real obstacle for them turns out to rather be a mental state or feeling. They said they are worried that their activities will be judged by others, or that no one will enjoy what they do. This factor needs to be considered across the relationship boundary between those who construct the learning and the elderly participants. For example, if they want to learn about technology but the teachers do not understand that they need to adapt and learn gradually, this can make them feel inferior, thus making them uninterested in learning further.

4.2.2 Suggestion for the process of teaching and learning for the elderly

- 1) Physically, participants' condition should be assessed, including information from a personal physician noting any limitations and being aware of underlying disease or limitations.
- 2) Psychologically, a mental assessment should be performed. Then basic adjustments can be given to discussions, as well as including understanding, as there may be a story that is heartbreaking or with a past heaviness to it. Before starting the process or activities, the facilitators must try to

observe the participants as much as possible, noting even the small changes.

- 3) Socially, the seniors need familiarity with each other. The group of elderly participants should have the opportunity of having a trusting space to share their experiences with a trustable partner. The conditions of the event should be clearly stated with clear objectives, including that there is no scoring, judgment, or comparing of beauty.
- 4) Environmentally, everyone must work to create a relaxed atmosphere and/ or have enough physical space.
- 5) Basic adjustment or understanding of any problems must come first. Older people need more listening. The process requires observation and attention in order to understand the context of the participants interactions.

The retirees, who were lecturers themselves, had suggestions for learning activities that they would enjoy: There is no need to focus on lengthy content theory, but rather let them do the activities themselves, allowing them to not be evaluated seriously. They are concerned about weakening their confidence. They thought activities done with others were interesting. They felt the most important things are to listen, because sometimes questions arise, and to share their work with others, because they enjoy appreciation.

4.2.3 Learning characteristics of the elderly.

The specialists have commented on the characteristics of learning suitable for the elderly as follows:

- Consider the context of the elderly learners in terms of physical limitations, experiences, and interests.
- Nature of activities should be simple; the procedure should not be too complicated but a profound activity that is meaningful to everyone who participates, with space to express themselves and share feelings.
- Atmosphere of the event should demonstrate care and respect.
- The learning process should be divided into small groups, should not take too long, have periodic breaks, and encourage activity at appropriate intervals, and without hurry.

The retirees also identified activity learning characteristics as something that should align with their interests, including something that maybe was of interest in the past. It does not have to be a complicated topic. Focus should be on practice, with time to exchange stories and opinions, communicate with classmates about content they are interested in, including in-depth issues, reflecting on understanding life, though still having fun.

4.3 Model for enhancing spiritual well-being

4.3.1 Principle of Model

The principles of style presented by the specialists can be divided into three categories.

- The principles linked to religious principles are the Four Noble Truths (Dukkha – the truth of suffering, Samuthai – **the truth of the origin of suffering**, Nirodha – **the truth of the cessation of suffering**, Magga – the truth of the path to cessation of suffering). And Four Sublime States of Mind (Metta – **loving-kindness**, Garuna – compassion, Muthida – sympathetic joy, and Ubekkha – equanimity).
- The principles linked to philosophy, understanding human nature, goodness, beauty, truth, communicating with oneself through reflection, enabling review and self-reflection of one's own thoughts.
- The principles linked to tenets of psychology, the need for self-development, and clearing mental blocks that cause frustration, that otherwise poorly affect ability to connect with others.

The retirees offered ideas about the principle of the model used in organizing activities to promote spiritual well-being. The scope can be divided into self: It should be an activity that promotes mindfulness, calmness, and contemplation of things within oneself. With respect to environment: It considers one's boundaries, with an emphasis on connection and interacting with others.

4.3.2 Purpose of the model

The summary of the objectives of the spiritual wellness enhancement activity model from the specialists' point of view requires having:

- Objectives to strengthen the self-empowerment of the elderly, including appreciating their own value, their meaning to themselves, their purpose, life goals, understanding of reality, being able to adapt and cope with events and changes;
- Objectives to strengthen independence, awareness of humanity, giving them a recognizable safe space to express opinions and feelings, and gradually being able to let go of their egos;
- Objective of strengthening good relationships among the elderly and surrounding society, with understanding and respect for others, including compassion for other living things, thus connecting self with nature;
- Objective of healing past hurt feelings and wounds, thus easing and lightening life experience, allowing the chance to find peace and happiness.

The retirees' points of view are that the model should help:

- Create value and goals within themselves;
- Cultivate and refine themselves to be generous and kind to others;
- Help reduce ego and support self-insight, letting go of power.

These findings are similar to Edith Draxl et al. in Handmade Wellbeing who, in discussing well-being, notes that the goal of an activity must begin with the visibility of the benefits of the activity. Creative activity is used to play, experiment, have fun, connect with oneself and feelings, along with learning new things as well as revisiting what was previously known but in a new way. The new experiences that arise in creativity may not be calm, but still bring comfort. Often the creative process and spending time together are more valuable than learning a skill or completing a task ^[12]. Atchley has stated such, that spirituality is rooted in our awareness of pure being – our sense of aliveness or unadulterated sense of presence ^[1].

4.3.3. *Process of the Model*

Summary of steps for the process of organizing the activities according to the experts' opinions.

- Steps before the event
 - Participants were assessed both at conscious (based on information from participants and doctors or caregivers) and unconscious (from the observation of the process) levels in terms of physical and mental states, including their limitations, both before and after the event.
 - The data were analyzed with a basic study. The limitations of the learners were managed carefully in the details. In reflecting the overall picture, the differences and the nature of each individual group were considered, and making clear the origins of symptoms, their natures, and habits that may interfere with planning appropriate activities.
- Planning activities
 - Choose a variety of activities that can fix the problem on the spot.
 - Choose activities that correspond to the nature of the group, their interests, and daily life.
- Activity
 - Check-in "Break the Wall - Dissolve Self," get to know each other.
 - Create a safe space by making participants aware of the safety, including the rule of maintaining confidentiality. The key is to build trust.

- Sequence the steps of the process. Starting from the body, going to the mind, and ultimately to the heights of the spiritual level (physical - mental -spiritual) can begin with daily routine. Participants talk about everything, but consideration is given to degree to which participants want to communicate voluntarily.
- Divide the process into phases. Each phase has clear goals and objectives. (Bring up the past – Step over – Let go)
- Use listening to connect with fellow humans as the main tool. Listening requires skills. The process can be learned with focus on respectful interaction with each other.
- Use different senses to recognize the process of being open to experiences and situation.
- Knowingly process by considering what is happening, isolating, and questioning what is happening, reducing ego to see a broader picture.
- Process by accepting that what has happened in the past can coexist with what is happening now.

- Conclusion

- Reflections on various aspects or what has changed
- Taking lessons to show similarities and differences; the difference not being for judgment, but for creating understanding.

- After the activity

- Cool down or conclusion process; or collecting process details, including reflection on what has changed (check-out).

The retiree group indicated that the process to enhancing spiritual well-being for them should have a sequence of steps as follows:

- Establish familiarity and create a safe space to trust each other.
- Provide surveys to help them find their needs. Allow getting to know and understand their true selves through non-judgmental discussion supported by participants' reflections as well.
- Give them the opportunity to experiment and learn to realize their potential, abilities, and limitations.
- Give them the opportunity to have the freedom to decide whether to continue or to stop.

Hold a conversation to determine the outcome of the activity, whether it had a positive or negative result.

4.3.4 The Evaluation of the Model

Both specialists and retirees have similar opinion on the assessment of the model, that it should not be judgmental because the purpose of the activity is not analyzing to treat illnesses. Rather, it should be uplifting by focusing on the changes that occur. Therefore, a good evaluation should be consistent with a person's goals. It should be measured by changes that have developed or differed in any aspect relative to each individual's standards by focusing on the changes that occur. There should be a comprehensive, holistic assessment of all dimensions, using any of a variety of formats. This form of assessment can be done both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition to directly assessing the participants, observers, and familiars such as therapists, processors, caregivers, or physicians who can also participate in assessing and contributing. Evaluations can be done before, during, and after activities.

- The Quantitative assessment can be done using a frequency-recording observation form both consciously and unconsciously, including body language, behavior, and tone of voice. Measurement can be by level or various other assessment measures, including comparison, statistics, behavior frequency, and so on.
- The Qualitative assessment can be done using direct interviews expressing feelings during the activity self-assessment. Participants and coordinators might compare, reflecting on what is inside, considering the point where they might wish to go back and fix the past for a different outcome. Comparative observation of things that happened in the event is another way. They can observe and compare work and actions such as the tone, style, and quality of the work expressed. It is important to notice changes in their bodies such as tone of voice, temperature, eye expressions, posture, and overall behavior.

The retirees were evaluated in activities two ways:

- Self-assessment model – this was both in terms of feeling and performance, using an interview method with short, simple questions.
- External observation – this form of assessment uses outside observation of the participants' behavior.

This is similar to the studies from Irene A. Gutheil and Janna C. Heyman *Older adults and Creative Arts: Personal and interpersonal change*. A qualitative research study was conducted to test and evaluate the results of creative arts activities held at public libraries. Their study examines creative arts programs offered through public libraries. Focus groups captured participants' experiences. Themes that emerged from focus group data analysis generally clustered into two

areas: Personal Change and Interpersonal Change. Personal change captured five perspectives: Healing; Safe Place/Freedom; New/Renewed Self; Creative; Joy/Fun. Interpersonal change entailed two perspectives: Connections and how they are Seen Differently by Others. The positive experiences of older adults who have engaged in organized creative arts programs suggest the potential life-changing possibilities of these programs^[18].

Therefore, the assessment of activities can be summarized as: The positive experiences of seniors who participated in arts activities in the Creative Seniors program tended to bring about a significant level of life change.

4.4. Art activity

4.4.1 Types of arts activities

The specialists have given advice on what types of activities are appropriate for seniors. Activities should be responsive and cover all dimensions of the elderly physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Additionally, they need be suitable for their abilities, consistently harmonious, enjoyable, meaningful, and have value. The participants should produce works that demonstrate their self-worth. The roles of the elderly participants in activities can be as spectators, listeners, or performers, depending on the goals of the activity. Importantly, the activities should enable participants to look back and reflect on what they have created or done and allow meditation on the viewpoints of others.

Recommended activity types

- Visual arts, drawing, painting, patching, clay molding, origami, mandalas, light-dark
- Music, listening to music, singing, karaoke
- Body movement – age-appropriate such as yoga
- Reading, writing, poetry
- Mixed activities such as flower arrangement, puppet shows, sand trays

The group of retirees saw it as types of artistic activities suitable for enhancing spiritual well-being, such as emphasizing meaningful thinking and contemplation, an emphasis on joy, beauty, simplicity, and freedom of creativity, and being able to produce workpieces without complexity, using a minimum of equipment and not much movement.

Diane Barret conducted studies experimenting with choosing a theme – a topic to be used in teaching art to the elderly encouraging the use of life experiences and biographies of learners as a guide for creating artwork. This helps build self-awareness^[4]. Ferrara took Barret's ideas, amplifying them into a postmodern conceptual art event, stating that it is important to understand that everything does not have a single answer, just as no two

elderly people are alike – there are differences ^[13]. Therefore, teaching approach should not focus on a format organized according to standard school curriculum, but should be a more creative, individualized expression, such as proposing a form of art activity which arranges for learners to gather in groups and using a conversational process to share stories. The topics he presents include:

- a. Reflection and life review – reflection and perspective on life which reflects the life experiences of the elderly connected to the psychotherapy process. The highlight is the return to consciousness and past experiences. Emphasis is placed on reviewing unresolved conflicts which can be reconsidered from a different perspective. If bringing back stories from the past is successful, it will bring new meaning to their lives.
- b. Narrative – telling stories, because everyone has their own story. Older learners in particular have more historical narratives than younger learners. Barret (1998) and Kerka (1999) say that lecturing is very important in providing education for older learners, including the use of narration as part of a work of art. It is a form that allows the elderly to share, and sometimes is the most appropriate way of sharing experiences.
- c. Empowerment – giving encouragement because they may be affected by loneliness and isolation. These are common factors among the elderly. Participation in art activities helps promote quality of life among the elderly by creating meaning and connection between what is inside the private world and the outside world. It gives an opportunity for self-expression. Interaction through perception and response to artwork develops interpersonal relationships and is an activity that can offer encouragement, even connecting them to a larger community.
- d. Creativity – Greenberg (1987) says about creativity that, “It’s turning the elements back and forth in a new direction. To promote the relationship with each other.” The idea of creating heaven is not just a topic of creating art but is a flexible process that promotes problem solving. It is a skill that can help lead older adults to live a life of abundance and satisfaction (Barret, 1998, Kerka, 1999). Hoffman (1992) further states that creativity does not come from the work of art alone, as many older learners experience satisfaction with handling materials and developing techniques, understanding that working with the body is creative behavior, as is utilizing existing resources in new ways.

4.4.2 Characteristics of activities that can enhance spiritual well-being

Specialists have suggested characteristics of activities to promote spiritual well-being as follows:

- Have clear goals, giving opportunity to find meaning and what's on their mind. Ask participants questions in accordance with their interests.
- Activities should encourage reflection on previous life experiences promote self-reflection, listening intently without judgment free of worrying right or wrong, thus improving ability to connect with others. Use simple, uncomplicated sharing, with discussion.
- Activities should have a sequence of steps. Have a path of activity with gradual increases in level of depth, focusing on the events of, and reflecting the story.
- Activities should be free from unnecessary distractions or conditions so that participants can concentrate and focus on the individual process of their own minds, consciousness, and awareness.
- Activities should demonstrate a process that requires attention throughout every step. Create questions, consider answers from a different perspective, be meticulous; profound changes may come about through activities.
- Activities that promote human values (self, surrounding people), values of nature (beauty, purity) are emphasized.

The retirees expressed that the characteristics of activities that can enhance spiritual well-being should focus on thought process, be a stimulating experience, connect with things that may have been hidden inside from the past, lead to contemplation, be linked to past points of blocks, take on relationships, and stimulate the search for new meaning in a different perspective.

These characteristics are well suited for “Contemplative Education.” Informed by the many forms of contemplative practice in philosophies and religions the world over, contemplative education invites students to embrace the immediacy of their interior lives as a means for applying their own first-person experiences to what they are learning in the classroom. Contemplative practices invite close observation of phenomena (e.g., natural processes, cultural productions, mental and emotional states, biases, media). These practices provide opportunities to develop attention and focus, increase awareness and understanding, listen and speak across differences, support creative approaches to problem solving, and consider the impacts of our actions on the world at large. Contemplative education is not solely traditional education with, for example, a course in meditation thrown in; it is an approach that offers an entirely new way of understanding for what it means to be educated in the modern Western liberal arts tradition.

For example, to deepen their academic study, learners might engage in mindfulness practices in order to cultivate present-moment awareness, or engage in dialogue and deep listening practices, thus developing interpersonal skills and being more conscious of the body. Contemplative studies encourage students to push the typical epistemic guidelines to learning and live in a more mindful world.

4.4.3 Arts Activity example

Examples of activities previously used by specialists organizing activities with the elderly

- *“Label making activities”* are a good starter activity for participants to familiarize themselves with other living things. Let participants draw pictures of animals that convey something about themselves. Then exchange information with each other: Why did you choose this color? Why did you choose this animal? This will help participants understand each other better.

- *“Coloring activity”* highlights the journey of watercolor by allowing participants to choose only two colors using wet on wet techniques on paper.

- *“Charcoal painting activity”* allows participants to paint freely. Then gradually learn to reflect the story that they as painters intend to convey, and then communicate it with each other.

- *“Mandala Painting Activity”* uses art as a prayer technique originated by Tibetan monks creating artwork within the sacred circle as a votive offering. It is considered one of the most auspicious symbols as an expression of the state of enlightenment. Nowadays, mandalas are used to heal the emotional state of people of all ages, to meditate, give support, reduce stress. Mandalas are infinitely variety of shape, most often starting from simple geometric structures. Gradually interior details are added according to imagination. The drawings may contain people, birds, trees, hearts, flower petals for example, or simply paint. Other times they are made from natural materials such as leaves, flowers, stones, and seeds found in the area. All sides must be equal and fit within the same circle while being created, meaning the mind will not be distracted, cultivating calmness. This stillness leads to mental healing. Participants can additionally be encouraged to ask questions such as how the material deteriorates when exposed to wind or heat, reflecting seasonal changes and more.

- *“Collage activity”* (Pulling the past – Step over – Let go), or life journey activity involves the process of defining the topic or a story that needs to be reflected on that day. Participants use images from mixed print media cut, torn, and patched onto paper telling a story that reminds them of the past. Later they reflect on the story. They are questioned about what changes would they make. Then the participants use the listening process to grow, taking away these lessons with them in the end.

- *“Clay activity”* using clay or clay sculpting. Type 1, sculpting for themselves to reflect the story they want to present, then the participants use the listening process to learn and grow, taking away these lessons with them in the end.

- Type 2 means molding clay for others, such as creating a gift from a lump of clay in order to convey views towards others, showing how they feel about their friends, and then discussing and reflecting on each other's views.

- *“Origami activity”* uses star origami with various patterns by having the participants fold 5-7 pieces of paper in the same way, then put them together at the window. The paper when separated is seen as a triangle or a square. But when they are together, they can change into another unexpected form, this beauty shows the unexpected connections between things.

5. CONCLUSION

Aging in society is well accepted as a global phenomenon. The elderly has become a big part of our community and will soon become an overall larger portion globally. Within aging society there are all kinds of differences that depend on issues such as background culture, religion, education, career, and more. These varied backgrounds play a big part in human development. In Thailand, retirees have their own various communities. Take university professors for example. They are well respected in society, are well-educated as a group, and have a well-planned retirement. However, this may not guarantee their holistic well-being. Well-being is not only about physical and psychological health and economic means, but it also requires continued maintenance of the inner self while aging and experiencing many changes. Spiritual well-being identifies the inner strength that can prevent many kinds of fragility in the elderly. Therefore, there is great need to determine ways to enhance the spiritual well-being dimension of their lives.

There are various spiritual development models, but it is important to use the most suitable model according to each group of elderly people. One of the methods of interest with researchers is the use of arts activities as a motivation that leads to reflection on their inner selves and increases self-awareness. Since art is an international language yet also varies by the individual in its associations with feelings, emotions, experience and insight, this is an excellent beginning point for looking at the bigger context of people's spiritual well-being.

This study focuses on the model for enhanced spiritual well-being in a community of retired university professors. The qualitative research conducted with in-depth interviews and focus groups reveals the ideal concept and process. The concept of spirituality and spiritual well-being is the power within the individual that helps to control behavior, thinking, and expression, which can be called upon at the right time. Spirituality can be developed through practice and clear

understanding. It can be divided into three levels: First, the level of self-awareness, and understanding the value and meaning of being alive. The second level is awareness of surroundings and understanding the changes that occur. The third level is transcending the self or the ego until being able to open to the surroundings and return to the nature of simplicity and tranquility. Once spirituality reaches a sense of fulfillment in the individual, it will show in their character as a calmness, stillness, forgiveness, generosity and having mercy.

The Model of spiritual well-being contains these structures:

The principle of the model should link with the participants' previous knowledge and their interests including activities that promote mindfulness, calmness, and contemplation of things within oneself. With respect to environment, it should consider their boundaries, with an emphasis on connection and interacting with others.

The purpose of the model should focus on three dimensions. The *first dimension* is the personal or intrapersonal connection with the aim to strengthen self-empowerment of the elderly, including appreciating their own value, their meaning to themselves, their purpose, life goals, understanding of reality, and being able to adapt and cope with events and changes. The *second dimension* is to strengthen good relationships among the elderly and surrounding society, with understanding and respect for others, including compassion for other living things, thus connecting self with nature. The *third dimension* is the transpersonal, seeking to strengthen independence, awareness of humanity, giving them a recognizable safe space to express opinions and feelings, and gradually being able to let go of their egos.

The process of the model can be arranged into five steps:

- 1) Pre-activities: get to know the participants through conversation or report. Draw out the overall characteristics of individuals and group, their identity, and background.
- 2) Planning activities: choose the arts activities together with the participants according to their interest in topics. For example, there is Reflection and life review, Narrative, Empowerment, or any Creative exercise.
- 3) Implementing Activities: the process can follow these steps below.
 - Check-in: break the wall and dissolve self, create a safe space by getting to know each other in the group through different kinds of introduction such as verbal, actions, or artwork.
 - Processing: *Bring up the past* by using objects, pictures, stories, memories, and questions, allowing this moment to be expressed in art form.
 - *Step – Over* by using the resulting artwork or performing something to recognize underlying issues. This involves deep listening, dialogue, and reflection.

- *Let go* by using consideration, forming a conclusion, and accepting it, then going back to the artwork making changes that came about after reflecting.

- 4) Conclusion: Reflect on various aspects of the activity or what has changed.
- 5) Post-activities: Conduct the Cool down or conclusion process. This can also be about discussing process details, reflecting on what has changed (check-out).

The Evaluation of the model should be non-judgmental because the purpose of the activity is not analyzing to treat illnesses. Rather, it should be uplifting by focusing on the changes that occur. Therefore, a good evaluation should be consistent with a person's goals. It should be measured by changes that have developed or differed in any aspect relative to each individual's standards.

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