

## A Model of Self-Development for Enhancing Psychological Immunity of the Elderly

Oraphin Choochom<sup>1</sup>, Umaporn Sucaromana<sup>2</sup>, Jennifer Chavanovanich<sup>3</sup>,  
and Peter Tellegen<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a self-development intervention for enhancing psychological immunity of the elderly. The psychological immunity intervention (PI) was based on an integration of mindfulness, self-efficacy, and optimism approaches. The study was a quasi-experimental design, including pre-test and post-test with a control group. The sample was recruited from senior clubs in Bangkhunthian District, Bangkok, Thailand. Participants were divided into 2 groups. The intervention group (24 participants) participated in the PI intervention activities, and the control group (24 participants) did not receive any intervention. The PI intervention consisted of 10 sessions for 5 weeks which lasted for two hours per session. Participants from both groups completed the questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the intervention. The results showed that participants in the PI intervention group scored significantly higher on psychological immunity ( $F(1, 43) = 15.04, p < .01$ , partial eta-squared = .26) and psychological well-being ( $F(1, 44) = 23.33, p < .01$ , partial eta-squared = .35) than did the control group. More specifically, participants receiving the PI intervention showed significantly greater psychological immunity in the domains of resilience, mindfulness, and hope than did the control group. The findings suggest that the intervention was beneficial for the elderly and senior clubs to improve psychological immunity and well-being. The study provides implications for enhancing psychological immunity from a behavioral science approach.

**Keywords:** psychological immunity, development, intervention, well-being, elderly

Decreasing population birthrates have moved Thailand towards an aging society since 2015. The change in population has also been affected by the fact that Thai elderly are living longer. It is estimated that Thailand will complete the transition to an aging society, where the elderly will constitute 20% of Thailand's population by 2021 and will increase to 30% of the population by 2035 (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2016). Due to an increase in the number of the elderly and the upcoming changing demographic structure, the government has paid attention to the lifestyle of the elderly. The Second National Elderly Plan (2002-2021) for the care and protection of the elderly has been established and implemented (National Elderly Committee, 2009). The plan also promotes the value of the elderly living with dignity and self-reliance.

In addition, the current Thailand's 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021), aims to develop quality citizens, nurture the qualities of Thai society, and enhance chances for everyone to live happily and harmoniously (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017). The plan was developed based on the philosophy of

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor at Behavioral Science Research Institute, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand.  
E-mail: oraphin@g.swu.ac.th

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer at Faculty of Education, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand.

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer at Behavioral Science Research Institute, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand.

<sup>4</sup> SON Test Research, the Netherlands. (Retired Professor at University of Groningen, the Netherlands)

sufficiency economy for sustainable development. It focuses mainly on "People-Centered Development" in which people of all ages are developed and are well prepared for an aging society. The philosophy provides guidance on appropriate conduct covering numerous aspects of life that will lead to a better quality of life and a society that is able to cope appropriately with challenges arising from globalization and other changes.