

A STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY IN THE ELDERLY SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were to study the outcome of the elderly allowance policy implementation and to find its affecting factors. The samples are 80 officials operating for elderly allowance policy. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed by using percentage, mean, standard deviation, one way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis. The findings were as follows:

1. Achievement outcome of the elderly allowance policy implementation was medium rated achieved at the moderate level.

2. Policy standards and objectives, policy resources, inter-organizational communication and enforcement activities, characteristics of the implementation agencies, economic, social, and political conditions, and the disposition of implementers have effected successfully toward the elderly allowance policy implementation with statistically significant at the level of 0.05.

Keywords: Public Policy; Elderly Subsistence Allowance

Condition of the problem

As for the situation of the elderly people in Thailand at present, the number of single families is increasing in urban areas within the rural society changes from an agricultural society to an industrial society resulting in migration of citizens into the urban areas. Many elderly people in the countryside are left abandoned or sometimes they may take responsibility for taking care of their grandchildren. Even in urban society like Bangkok, the shocking news about the death of the elderly appears more apparently more in Bangkok. Regarding the data on the size and trend of the Thai elderly population in 2009 (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute (TGRI) 2009: 8-9), Thai society has been turning into the aging society completely in 2009.

Due to such a situation, the government is well aware of the importance of the elderly popu-

lation. Therefore it does not abandon or ignore this group of people. This can be seen from the fact that the government has prepared to cope with such situations in many areas, such as by providing the welfare of the elderly income, such as living allowance and community welfare fund systems for the elderly. This includes health welfare arrangements such as elderly health care projects at home and in the community, establishment of social welfare development centers for the elderly in order to provide assistance to the elderly in the form of a shelter for elderly people who lack of dependence, being neglected, lack of caregivers or being unable to live with their families including organizing of social activities so that the elderly can participate with the society and communities. In addition, there is also the important policy implementation that is the implementation of the establishment of the Committee of Older Persons (NHSO) as defined by the Elderly

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Act B.E. 2546 and presided by the Prime Minister and with the composition of the committee and experts from the government, educational institution and from 28 public benefit organizations. This committee will play a role in driving the policy regarding the elderly in all aspects including the policy in providing elderly allowance which was designated as an urgent policy of the government during the period of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva in 2009.

Such policies caused many criticisms in the society with the question that whether the change in the original objectives of the allowance policy that only elderly with poverty are offered, into the policy in providing 600 baht for all elderly with no sufficient income, such implementation is appropriate? And the question of how can the state continue to bear such enormous budgets? Therefore it is an interest-

ing issue that whether changes in the standards and objectives of such policies are appropriate or not and once it is implemented, how is the result?

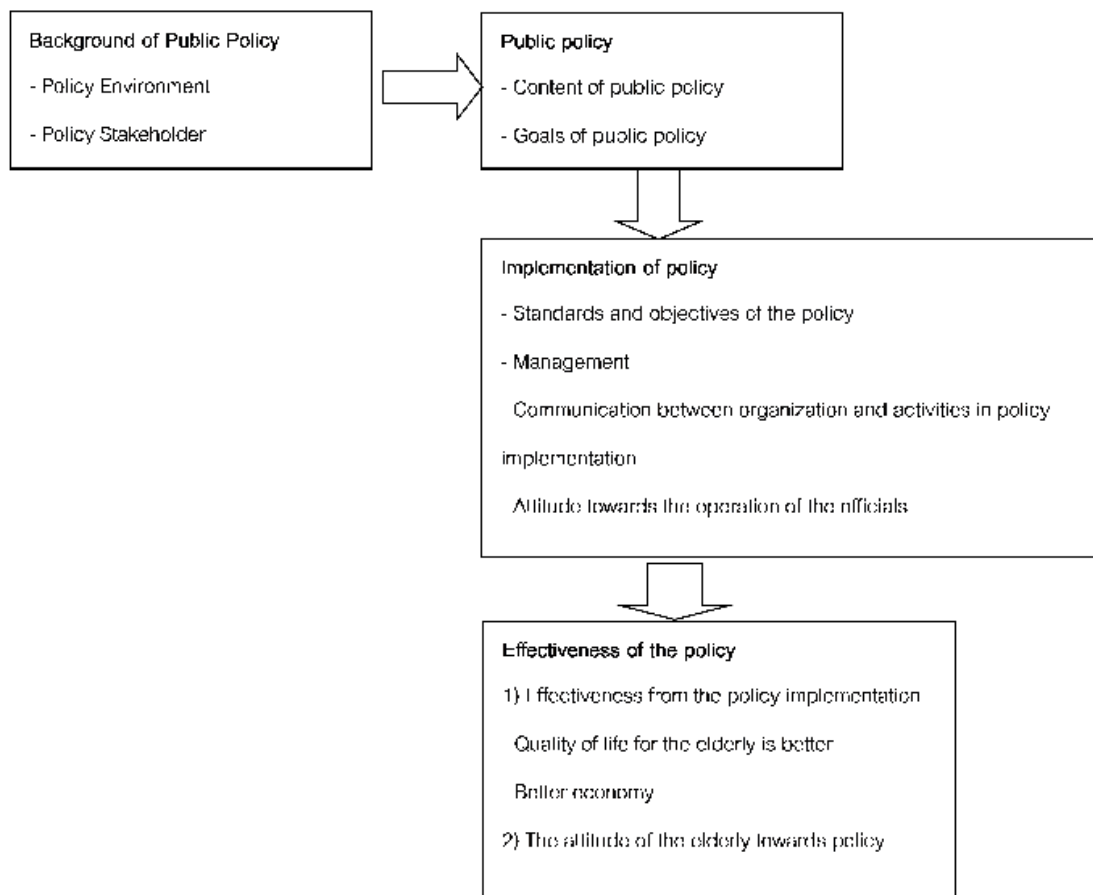
Due to above reasons, the researcher is interested in studying "Elderly allowance policy" by studying both the origin of public policy, content and goals of the policy, implementation of policies as well as the effectiveness of the policy. And the results of the study are believed to be used as a guideline for the development of public policy on the payment of the living allowance, appropriately and effectively.

Research objectives

In this research, the researchers define the objectives as follow:

1. To study the overview of the elderly allowance policy of the Thai government

Conceptual Framework of the Research



2. To study and analyze public policy about subsistence allowance for the elderly

3. To apply the results of the study for making a proposal about the development of public policy regarding the allowance for elderly people appropriately and ways to obtain achievement and efficiency.

Literature review

The researcher studied and reviewed the literature on basic concepts about the elderly in order to know the concepts, theories, the background of welfare management for the elderly and therefore we should understand the basic meaning of the term elderly or which is generally called as old person, in which many definitions are provided as follows;

The United Nations has provided a brief definition of aging as a biological process in stepping into the elderly generation commencing from our birth period and continues until the end of our lives especially during in the period of 1 in 3 or 1 in 4 of our age range with the greatest loss of mental, economic and society.

From the above definition, It can be concluded that the meaning of the word "elderly" means that people who are 60 years of age or older who are physically deteriorated by nature. That is they have decreased strength starting to move slowly and they encounter psychological loss easily. Therefore it is appropriate to have a caregiver and they should receive assistance closely either from family, community, society or government.

From the meaning of the word elder, it can be seen that the elderly need help and more attention than those in other ages although every human being has a different hierarchy of needs in a different order. But for the elderly, receiving care from family members is critical and it can compensate the mental loss that seniors are more vulnerable to than others in other ages, based to the theory of Abraham

H. Maslow, with the desire in socialization, affection, and ownership. And when the elderly can express their opinions and family members appreciate, recognize them and apply their opinions, it will result in being able to meet the needs to be praised and recognized. Which is the hierarchy of demand at a higher level according to Maslow's theory. Therefore, it must be understood for how the elderly need help and attention. Therefore it is essential to first understand the needs of the elderly.

In addition, the researcher reviewed the literature on the hierarchical of need theory of which is a traditional theory about the motivation that Abraham H. Maslow proposed, which could be said that the essence of this theory is to emphasize on human needs that every human being has the needs at all the time, endlessly.

Demand hierarchy theory defines a total of 5 hierarchies of needs as follows.

1. Basic physical and biological needs, which can be considered as a first or fundamental requirement which is not caused by learning, such as hunger, thirst, lethargy, sexual desire, etc. Therefore, the need for food, sleeping, housing is, therefore, necessary to help to survive.

2. Security and security needs
Once all physical needs are fulfilled, people will find ways to make themselves safe from various dangers while seeking for security in life, property, and work, the warranty that they will have work forever or receive an allowance when leaving the job. Since the job is the source of income for a living, it can be seen that the occurrence of a labor union, propelling of various labor protection laws, these are the result of seeking for security in the profession.

3. Social, affection, and ownership needs.
These are the needs of the middle class in Maslow's view which refer to the needs for belongingness or social needs such as the need for affection, prefer-

ence, being a part of the group, participation in various associations in the organization, or in working groups, both formal and informal which contribute to creating a good feelings for the members. Everyone needs love and acceptance from colleagues, followers, supervisors. If anyone feels being overlooked and abandoned by the surrounding people, that person will feel very uneasy.

4. Esteem and Recognition needs. It is a demand in higher level which includes the need for power, success, high status, reputation, praise. Alderler stated that this kind of need is divided into two parts, self-esteem and the need for being honored by others.

5. The need to achieve maximum success. Or the needs of Self-Fulfillment, Self-Actualization Needs which are the highest demand of human beings after other needs are fulfilled. This need means that the person fully understands how much ability and potential he has. Thus he wants to use that ability to meet his own needs.

The theory in the Hierarchy of Need can be classified into 2 types of needs:1) Basic physical and biological needs and 2) Basic mental needs which have many levels of needs. For the elderly, it may conclude that they have the need for both sides of the same degree. If the elderly will be happy and can live their life as a valuable person of society, it must be fulfilled for both needs, with another one being importance no less than the other. Therefore, making the policies that can meet the needs of the elderly, such as income assurance policy for the elderly by subsidizing the subsistence allowance is a very useful policy to the elderly because money is an important factor that makes the needs of the elderly to be responded, whether responding to basic physical and biological needs, such as having hygienic and nutritious food, having a safe shelter from hazards and having the security as well as receiving complete and

adequate public health care, or feeling happy from participating in entertainment activities., etc.

The need for help and care in the elderly is the requirement from both family and level. The government, as a guardian responsible for ensuring for the good order in Thai society therefore, in every government, must provide social welfare for the elderly. Initially, it is necessary to understand the concept of social welfare in Thailand in order to understand the income insurance policy for the elderly by providing a subsistence allowance.

In addition, the researcher reviewed the literature on welfare concepts. Promotion and Development Committee for the National Welfare and Social Work defines social welfare as the social management system to solve social problems due to the fact that people cannot live their own lives in the society or cannot perform their own social duties, and such services offered must meet the basic needs of the people and social security at the standard level in order to improve the quality of life of people.

From the above definition, it may be concluded that social welfare means providing services by social institutions with the aim to solve, improve and promote the quality of life of individuals, groups, and communities so as to be able to develop themselves to be normal, happy, peaceful and for the good order of the society. Social welfare can be classified into social services as follows: (Watchara Chamnanritr. 1997: 14)

1. Education
2. Health
3. Housing
4. Work and income
5. Social security
6. General/personal social services
7. Re-creation

For social welfare concepts in foreign countries, social welfare is divided into 3 types as follows

1. Temporary social welfare for relief of problems or residual model of welfare in which it waits for problems to occur first then provide services to solve. It is in the manner of following the problem to solve rather than preventing problems to occur.

2. Industrial achievement social welfare which considers social welfare as an economic mechanism, using the allocation criteria based more importantly on the ability to work, status or role in the work, productivity and productivity of the work, in the form of social security.

3. Institutionalism and Institutional Social Welfare which considers social welfare as an important social institution that can bring integration into the society.

For Thai society, if considering in the form of social welfare operation since from the early days, it will be seen in the form of relief or residual welfare (Residualism) which is temporary social welfare emphasizing on solving problems in the form of relief rather than preventing the problems. Later, when social and economic conditions turn to the industrial age, then the social security system is started but still incomplete. For example, social security for merely in the case of occurrence of hazards or illness and basic social management such as basic health services, general public utilities, etc.

Welfare management in Thai society is implemented in the manner of a combination of 3 types namely; Public Assistance, Social Service and Social Insurance with the ways in helping by providing service, care, object, and cash. However, when economic and social development has focused on material and industrial progress, the society is then affected causing many social problems to occur which is borne by the state in providing the care although there is a private sector to lighten the burden of some social insurance, it is still unable to provide adequate and thorough welfare especially for those in disadvan-

tagged groups of the society.

Income assurance policy for the elderly by providing subsistence allowance is one of the welfare provided by the government to the elderly in Thailand since 1993. At present, Thailand is likely to expand the extent of policy both in terms of guaranteeing the income of elderly, pension systems (Contributory System) and subsistence allowance (Non-Contributory System). As for the latter, it is the welfare that will play more roles in the near future since there is quite a lot of elderly people in the country who are currently poor. These people may be those who lack the income guarantee when stepping into the elderly age. This part is the solution to the problem of the state which helps to alleviate the residual problem (Residualism) due to the fact that it is not considered as a problem in the long run, but it focuses on solving problems in the form of providing relief rather than preventing problems.

To mention public policy without considering the policy system which represents the relationship model and all factors that contribute to the policy, it is will be about education without entirely considering at the background of the policy. According to William N. Dunn, the analysis of public policy should take into account the key elements of the policy system closely. Therefore, the cause of the policy and the major impact of the income insurance policy for the elderly will be studied. For subsidizing living allowance, in the first stage, public policy system must be studied first to understand policy stakeholders, policy environment and public policy.

In addition, the researcher reviewed the literature on the public policy system. The public policy system refers to the form of relationships with all factors that contribute to the policy with three important factors including Policy Stakeholders, Policy Environment and Public Policy. The public policy can be either Dependant Variable or Independent Variable.

That is if considering that Public policy as the result of those involved in policies and environments, in such a case, the public policy will then be a dependent variable. But if we want to study for how parties related to policies and environments are affected by the policy. In such a case, public policy will then be an independent variable. As for those related to policies and the environment, will then be a dependent variable (Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, 1987: 14-16; as referred to William N. Dunn. 1981: 46).

And in addition, the researcher reviewed the literature on the subsidy allowance system for elderly people in Thailand. Income assurance policy for the elderly appears in the form of elderly allowance welfare project which started since 1993, responsible by the Department of Public Welfare with the objective to help the poor elderly who encounter with troublesome, lack of foster and caregiver. In the first phase (1993-1994) it allocated the elderly in every province, 3 - 5 people in each village to receive the allowance 200 baht per month, accounting for a total budget of 12 million baht (3 months). Later, during the economic crisis in 1997, the government wanted to allocate additional subsistence allowance for elderly people. Until in 1999, the amount of subsistence allowance increased from 200 baht per month to 300 baht per month.

Objectives of public policy, income assurance by providing an allowance.

Background of income guarantee policy by providing subsistence allowance first occurred due to the fact that at that time Thailand faced problems of the elderly being abandoned alone due to the economic downturn resulting the labor population immigrated to find work in the city to earn money for supporting family Causing the elderly to be left abandoned alone in the countryside. Some are abandoned by their children and the family without the help causing the elderly to live a difficult life, lacking

four factors for living and not receiving immediate medical treatment

Research Methodology

Data analysis focuses on analyzing qualitative data obtained from documents and quantitative analysis from data collected from questionnaires and interview. As for the analysis, it will be divided into 2 parts.

The first part will analyze the data from the study from documents by explaining the relationship and influence of important factors affecting the implementation of the policy in creating an income guarantee for the elderly. For the subsistence allowance according to the defined conceptual framework, the analysis approach will use the empirical approach to describe the policies or policy issues related to the elderly in the past by considering the cause of the policy and the consequences as well as by suggesting a framework for analyzing the process of creating income guarantee policies for the elderly with subsistence allowance that is consistent with the context of Thai society.

The second part will analyze the data collected from the questionnaire which is used for the staffs from community and social welfare development department from various district offices for this study. The researcher will use this data for typological analysis with the following procedures.

1. Bring the acquired information to be classified into categories based on the satisfaction of elderly in each area, namely the process of receiving money for the elderly, the behavior of service personnel, information accessibility from public relations media, adequacy of living allowance of 500 baht for the life of the elderly and family, the being of elderly and family after receiving the allowance compared to before receiving allowance, and problems related to the payment of allowances for the elderly and

the operational guidelines in providing services to the elderly who receive the allowance.

2. Analyze the categorized data for if each issue implies any matter related to public policy, income assurance for the elderly by providing an allowance.

3. Summarize the essence of findings for this study to be used as a guideline for further policy development.

In summary, this study of public policy on income assurance for the elderly by providing subsistence allowance is qualitative and quantitative research with a sample group from 8 district offices in Bangkok. As for data collecting process, this study utilizes 2 types of tools: using questionnaires to ask community development and social welfare officers and use interviews to interview the elderly who receive the allowance for living. As for analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire, the software package for social science research will be used. As for analyzing the data obtained from the interview, this study will use the typological analysis technique.

Research results

Overview of the development of the elderly subsistence policy.

Results from the study provide an overview of the development of subsistence allowance services for elderly of the Thai government which first started since 1993. The initial objective of this policy was to create welfare for the elderly who experienced difficulties in their living, lack of family or children to take care of. At the beginning of the policy, the allowance for living expenses was 200 baht per month with the implementation of the allowance policy as responsible by the Department of Public Welfare. In 1999, the amount of subsistence allowance was increased to 300 baht per month. Until in 2006, the cabinet resolution approved an increase in the allowance to 500

baht per month. During this period, the rate of the elderly increased rapidly. Until in 2009, the government of Prime Minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva resolved to extend the qualification of the elderly who were entitled to receive a living allowance to be equally provided, for those elderly without income guarantee by determining the qualification of elderly entitled to receive the allowance to be Thai nationals aged 60 years and above and not receiving any benefits or benefits from the state, to be entitled to receive a subsistence allowance.

The results of the analysis for various factors that affect the implementation of the allowance policy

1. Standard and objective factors of the policy

From collecting of data, it is found that officials provide the opinions that they have a good understanding of subsistence allowance but they think that the objectives of the policy are not very clear. In addition, in term of the operation, they are not confident that it can be easily implemented and they have opinions that the flexibility to change the project implementation model to be in accordance with the reality of the community is still only in moderate level.

2. Management factors

From collecting of data, it is found that the staffs provide opinions that the budget for the policy to create income guarantee for the elderly with subsistence allowance, is sufficient at a moderate level. And they think that they have knowledge and ability in accordance with their jobs at a moderate level. In addition, they also commented that the amount of time for paying subsidy allowance is at a moderate level and they also think that the number of workers is not enough for the amount of work

3. Communication between organizations and the implementing of policies

From data collecting, it was found that operating staffs think that they have a good understanding of the role of their duties and responsibilities. And in performing their duties, they can carefully examine the qualification of the elderly who have the right to receive allowance as well as the duty in providing advance public relations regarding the allowance. However, they provide comments that the duties they are assigned are appropriate at a moderate level and they think that those who are currently entitled to receive subsistence allowance are appropriate at a moderate level including the standard of the allowance of each district office which has the same standard in a moderate level only

4. The attitude of staffs towards the welfare

From the collection of data, it was found that operating officials think that they have a willingness to work in order for the elders to receive full benefits from the allowance. And they think that this policy provides true benefits, at a moderate level for the elderly who face difficulty and poverty. In addition, they still think that the rules used in determining the qualification of the elderly receiving subsistence allowance should have the flexibility at a moderate level only. And they also comment that the allowance of 500 baht is not enough to meet the needs of the elderly

Results of the evaluation after implementation of the policy

As for the results of the study regarding the policy implementation in creating income guarantee for the elderly by providing subsistence allowance in term of a better quality of life, from the questionnaire, it was found that the respondents have overall opinions at a moderate level. And when considering in each aspect, it was found that the respondents have an average level of opinion at a high level, in the following issues; they think that the elderly use subsistence allowance for alleviating family expenses.

They think that the elderly use allowance for the consumption of four factors of living (food, clothing, accommodation, and medicine) and they think that receiving allowance provides elderly a mental stability. Respondents have a moderate level of opinion on the following issues; they think that the elderly use subsistence allowance to pay debts. They think that the elderly receiving allowance when facing illness, they can receive the treatment promptly. And they also think that the elderly receiving allowance can receive regular health services. Besides, respondents have a low level of average opinion on the following issues; they think that the elderly use the allowance as capital in their occupation. And they think that those elderly receiving allowances have sufficient income for expenses.

The results from interviewing with the elderly about the implementation of the policy for income guarantee by giving an allowance, in term of general aspect, the result reveals that most elderly have an income ranging from low to none level. As for their living, most of them live in their own homes or their children's homes or relatives. It was also found that some of them don't have their own house and they live with their neighbors. Most of the interviewed elderly are physically unhealthy. They have an underlying disease that requires frequent medical attention.

Most of the elderly are satisfied with the process of paying allowance for the elderly either for the steps before receiving allowance and methods used for receiving allowance in which they think that it requires fewer documents and the services offered by district officers are at satisfactory or good level making convenience especially for receiving allowance via the bank account which makes the elderly not to have the burden of traveling to receive the allowance by themselves. As for the behavior of service personnel, most elderly agree that the servicing

staffs are good-natured giving good advice, having good manners and being friendly with the elderly. This causes satisfaction in receiving the services

Recommendation

General suggestions.

1. The standards and objectives of the policy should be clearly defined. Such changes in standards and objectives are greatly criticized since many parties agree that the policy is changing differently with the purpose at the beginning of the policy formulation which is intended to provide specific assistance only for "the poor" and the burden in the budget will become a burden of the government that is too heavy for future governments.

2. Supporting the community and the elderly to rely on themselves should be focused by providing less help with more return.

3. The main organization that directly supervises the policy of subsistence allowance should be established.

4. Public forum for the elderly to participate should be organized.

Suggestions for further research

1. Due to the project is implemented with no definite assessment plan, the researcher, therefore proposes the study on the assessment of subsistence allowance for the elderly project so as to be able to know the operating results more clearly.

2. This research is the study of variables that are related to the implementation of the project. It is

a study according to the theory, therefore, in order to benefit more in the study, other additional variables such as leadership, public participation in the community, etc., should be studied.

3. Other areas of operation should be studied in order to compare the performance of the operation, to recognize the problems with similar or different causes, to be used in analyzing the source of the problem, for the purpose of solving the problem.

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