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Adaptation, Positive Thinking, and Happiness in Work Performance Affecting Preparation to Enter Elderly Social Society

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to study levels of adaptation, positive thinking, and happiness in work performance, along with the effect of these parameters on preparation to enter the elderly social society for employees at Siam City Cement Public Company. The research sample (n = 230) consisted of individuals 40–59 years old who worked at three factories. The findings showed that employees possessed high levels of adaptation, positive thinking, and happiness in work performance, while their level of preparation for retirement was moderate. Adaptation and happiness in work performance influenced retirement readiness preparations ($p < 0.05$). Combining these parameters allowed prediction of the level of preparation (37%) for these employees. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: *Adaptation, positive thinking, happiness, retirement preparation, employee engagement*

Introduction and Literature Review

In today's world, society is interested in the demographics of the population, especially since a greater proportion of the population are becoming ageing. The United Nations stated that an "aged society" could be considered to exist when the percentage of the population aged 65 and above is more than 7 percent. If more than 14 percent of a country's inhabitants are 65 or older, then it is considered a "complete aged society" (Promphak, 2013).

If we look at an overview of the region in the year 2015, the Asian countries that are becoming Aged Societies are Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia (Phanwichatikul, 2015). National statistical reports indicate that Thailand has experienced ongoing increases in the percentage of its population that is aging. For example, in the year 2007, this number was 10.7 percent; it increased to 12 percent in 2011, and 14.9 percent in 2014 (National Statistics, 2014). The information above shows that Thai society is moving toward the category of a Complete Aged Society, and this is because of medical development and public health help for aged people, allowing them to remain healthier and live longer. However, when people reach old age, they will experience changes in physical, mental, and social relationships. Hence, preparation for the last stages of life is very important. A helpful suggestion comes from the manual, "Map for a Happy Life." In order to be ready for old age, preparations need to be made in physical, mental, and social aspects before retirement (Rattanaubon, 2015). This agrees with the study made by Kaewsumalee (2009), who found that physical, mental, health, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral aspects need to be addressed in order for people to be ready for retirement. The research of Benchawan (2015) mentions six aspects that need to be addressed to prepare individuals to become members of an elderly social society. These are to: 1) be mentally ready, 2) be ready for physical changes, 3) be ready in terms of financial resources, 4) be ready in the realm of leisure activities and hobbies, 5) be ready for dynamic family relationship changes, and 6) be ready for habitation changes. Well-prepared people will be able to live happily and have a good quality of life in the final stage of their lives.

Readiness to enter aged society is not possible without adjustment, which is to overcome the sometimes overwhelming obstructions that block the way to reaching the goal of making life balanced, feeling comfortable, and happy. Since everyone wants to experience every aspect of the final stages of life in happiness, people need to adjust themselves and develop habits according to their needs and social environments (Lazarus, 1984). Those who are well adjusted will be individuals who understand and accept themselves, as well as have good attitudes toward themselves and other people. These features affect the ability to live a happy life.

Besides self-adaptation, another essential element is positive thinking. Charoenwongsak (2011) suggested that positive thinking means having a positive viewpoint of the situation, irrespective of conditions. This allows one to see the opportunities and possibilities rather than the hardships and struggles. Success, rather than failure, is encouraged by the expression of positive words or actions. In addition, the research of Wiriyasoontharaporn (2012), who studied positive thinking, suggested that workers' job happiness is connected with their mental attitudes. He found that workers with a positive thinking approach were able to change their attitudes, which helped them to work happily. Positive thinking can be correlated with other variables such as optimism, self-confidence, problem-solving, and courage to face problems and struggles, including commitment and other elements that affect happiness at work.

Janthasuwanno (2012:9) indicated that happiness in work performance could help workers feel wanted and happy in their jobs. Happiness is the power of positive emotions. Workers feel enthusiastic and enjoy work, which are important aspects that will help them reach goals that have been set, make them feel valued, and ultimately make them more effective. The feeling of pride and joy that a person experiences will be reflected in their work performance (Chawassiriwong, 2007). Wiriyasoontharaporn (2012) showed that positive thinking forecast happiness in work performance, accounting for 32.7 percent of variance. Happiness in the workplace has also been studied by Kitiwongpratheep (2007), who found that happiness in work is positively correlated with the quality of life enjoyed.

If people know how to adjust themselves and have positive thinking, it will drive them to behave positively around people and be happy in their workplaces, which will result in good preparation to enter the elderly social society. This has been indicated by Kaewsumalee (2009), who found that workers who had faith and a good attitude about themselves were already prepared before retirement, both physically and mentally. This concept was supported by Trilerklith, Rungsayatorn and Hirunwong (2014), who found that preparing before retirement in heart and physically had a positive influence on the quality of life ($p < 0.01$). It is perhaps not surprising that the research of Jiradetprapai (2011) found that old aged people who had different preparations experienced different adaptation and satisfaction levels upon retirement.

It is hoped that this study, conducted at Siam City Cement Public Company Limited, Saraburi Province, Thailand, will allow guidelines to be generated that assist in the guidance and counseling of workers. It may also stimulate activities or other projects that help workers to know how to adjust and think more positively as they prepare for a high quality of life at retirement age.

Ageing Population in Thailand

The Thai government designated a National Day for Older Persons on 14 December 1982, after aging as a policy issue received international recognition at the first World Assembly on Ageing held in Vienna, Austria, in the same year. The slogan for the celebration of the National Day for Older Persons in 2015 focused on the theme "Wisdom of Older Persons Leads to Social Development toward the ASEAN Community." The government has a policy to provide opportunities for senior citizens to share their experiences with younger generations. It wants to see people of different ages – older persons, people of working age, and children – live happily together in harmony (Preparing Thai Older Persons, 2015).

In labor markets, mitigating the decline of the working age population and enhancing the productivity of the shrinking labor force will be a priority. The economic reform agenda to lift Thailand's long-term growth takes on an added sense of urgency in light of Thailand's ticking ageing clock (Thailand Economic Monitor, 2016). The cabinet amended the Labor Protection Act to improve benefits for workers and the elderly. The law compensates retired employees according to the duration of their employment. The planned compensation aims to prepare Thailand to become an elderly society by providing senior citizens with a sum of money to use after retirement.

Nevertheless, compensation by itself will not be sufficient to help Thailand transition into a senior citizen-friendly country; infrastructure should also be improved to help elderly people lead a

productive lifestyle. The planned retirement payout may help the elderly to get by financially. However, it would be more useful if senior citizens were able to continue living productively in their golden years.

However, most Thais are not prepared for this. It is predicted that by 2033, the majority of these people will live alone with inadequate incomes and welfare. Many senior citizens do not have enough savings to live on after retirement. A research study from Mahidol University released in 2015 showed that old people in Thailand had an average income of only 3,013 Baht per month, compared to average expenses of 2,751 Baht. Forty percent of them had an average household debt of 40,179 Baht. Therefore, 58% of senior citizens had to continue working to earn a living. Thailand is still struggling to move past the middle-income trap, making it more challenging than other Asian nations with ageing societies such as South Korea and Japan (A Plan to Age with Grace, 2017).

Changing demographic structure is proving a major threat to the sustainable development of Thailand. The issue has been raised in various platforms and is noted in the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017) and the National Strategies for Long Term Development as a major challenge for Thailand's future growth. Nonetheless, it is important that the public have a proper understanding of this issue and not fall into dismay. All social enterprises have to work hand in hand in order to handle the issue more effectively.

For instance, private companies should be encouraged to hire elderly workers. Some tax incentives may be required to get companies to adjust their working environments, but families and younger colleagues need to change their mindsets about older workers as well. Having said that, local jurisdictions should be more involved in looking after their elderly and children who live in misery. Working adults need to have more financial literacy and discipline for saving for retirement.

Though the country cannot avoid getting older, it can choose to become healthier and well prepared for the future (How Well has Thailand Prepared, 2016). In order to promote good health among the elderly, the government has encouraged the establishment of more clubs, or centers, where the elderly can join social activities and events in local communities. This will help promote physical and mental health among senior citizens.

In 2009, the government made its social pension policy, The Old Age Allowance, universal. This provides greater income security for older persons. Though the sum is not high, the pension does serve a function as a social protection mechanism that is a dependable source of income regardless of economic conditions. As such, it provides some protection from economic shocks, particularly for poor and near-poor older people. Under the income support policy, older persons aged between 60 and 69, receive a monthly allowance of 600 Baht. The more elderly who are aged between 70 and 79 receive 800 Baht, and a monthly allowance of 1,000 Baht is given to persons aged 90 and over (Ageing Population in Thailand, 2017).

The government should remove the institutional and legal barriers that keep older people from working. Many capable seniors would like to prolong their careers, but face obstacles including health care costs, labor laws, pension regulations and corporate attitudes toward older workers. The option of delayed retirement age would benefit not only older people, but also the organizations and businesses for which they work. In many sectors and positions, job experience is crucial. Companies can unlock valuable human resources by allowing older employees to work from home or for fewer hours. Employees in turn can help make these conditions viable for companies by accepting lower benefits and wages (Ageing Population in Thailand, 2017).

In light of the ageing population, the government is also trying to provide more and better services to seniors including: more access to health care, jobs for able-bodied seniors, and continued education to keep older minds active during their golden years, as reported by Thai News Bureau. Secretary-General to the Office of the Education Council, Kamol Rodklai, said the 20-year national education plan clearly states that people of all ages, including the elderly, are entitled to education. The plan focuses on encouraging Thais to be good citizens and to learn skills that are essential to 21st Century careers through various educational platforms. Healthy seniors can learn and use their skills to make a living, even after they reach the age of retirement. The government wants the elderly to

lead meaningful lives. With their considerable experience, senior citizens can also inspire and educate younger generations to make positive contributions to the country (Senior Society, 2017).

According to Professor Worawet Suwanrada, Dean of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Economics, the first challenge Thailand has to tackle is how to ensure good quality of life for the elderly. The second challenge, he said, is about ensuring economic vibrancy in the ageing society. The third challenge surrounds promoting family ties in order to prevent the elderly from being abandoned. Meanwhile, Assistant Professor Supachai Srisuchart recommended that |the government should offer tax incentives or other measures to encourage employers to hire the elderly (Saengpassa, 2016).

To respond to the challenge of Thailand's ageing population, The Pfizer Healthy Aging Society Project was launched last year, implemented by Pfizer Foundation Thailand and Kenan Institute Asia. This project aims to establish a sustainable preventive health care approach for pre-seniors and seniors to support quality ageing in Thailand (Tackling the Challenges, 2017).

Purpose of the Research

Siam City Cement Public Company Limited, Saraburi Province, Thailand is a large industrial factory that is divided into sections of work. Most of the employees are middle-aged between 40-59 years old, which means they do not have many more years before retirement, and for this reason, they should be prepared physically and mentally before reaching old age. This research focused on adaptation, positive-thinking, and happiness in work performance that was expected to affect the preparation of employees for entrance into elderly social society. The research had two goals.

- To examine levels of adaptation, positive thinking, happiness in work performance, and preparation to enter elderly social society of employees at Siam City Cement Public Company Limited, Saraburi Province.
- To study the effects of adaptation, positive thinking, and happiness in work performance on preparation to enter elderly social society of employees of Siam City Cement Public Company Limited, Saraburi Province

Terminology

Adaptation: Involves the process of keeping physical and mental health well-balanced, enabling continuance of life and work under the current situation, and being ready before retirement age to support continuing happiness. There are four aspects to such preparation: physical, mental and spiritual, social and family, and economy aspects.

Positive Thinking: Involves the thinking process, and development of positive feelings about work and ways to reduce stress and conflict. Includes how to overcome problems and struggles with confidence, enabling achievement of goals that were set. Incorporates being able to face disappointments with positive thoughts using four elements — optimism, self-confidence, commitment, and courage.

Happiness in Work: Involves the feeling of satisfaction within oneself that allows a person to operate with determination, have clear goals, feel challenged, experience enjoyment, and have positive rather than negative feelings. It also encompasses the desire to succeed in work and be honored and respected by leaders and co-workers.

Preparation for Elderly Social Society: Involves the realization that one is growing old, and that a planning process is required to face situations for the future in elderly social society. This can be divided into several parts: preparation physically, mentally and spiritually, economically, and in society and family.

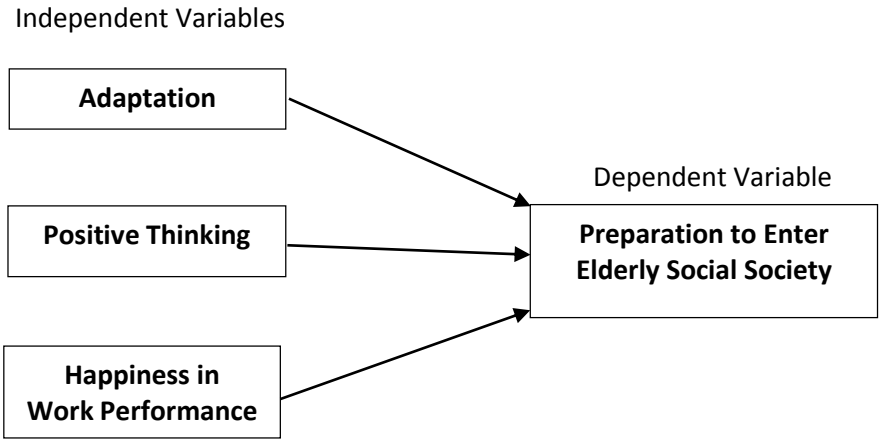
Scope of the Research

The scope of the research was as follows:

- The population consisted of employees (n = 539) who worked at three industrial factories of Siam City Cement Public Company Limited, Saraburi Province, and were aged between 40-59 years old.
- The sample consisted of 230 employees at these three industrial factories of Siam City Cement Public Company Limited Saraburi Province who completed the questionnaire.

The Independent Variables were Adaptation, Positive Thinking, and Happiness in Work Performance; the Dependent Variable was Preparation to enter Elderly Social Society.

Research Framework



Research Methodology

This research investigated the relationships involving adaptation, positive thinking and happiness in work, and their effect on preparation to enter elderly social society among employees of the Siam City Cement Public Company Limited.

The population of employees available at three industrial factories of the Public Company was 539 people, aged between 40-59 years. Simple random sampling of the population, according to the procedure indicated by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), yielded 230 people willing to participate in the survey. The candidates answered a modified questionnaire that was developed by the researcher and incorporated elements from a number of previous such studies, and was distributed by management. All the questionnaires were returned. The data collected was analyzed using a statistical software program that performed stepwise multiple regression analysis.

The reliability coefficients of the assessment scales used were 0.84 for Adaptation, 0.91 for Positive Thinking, 0.92 for Happiness in Work Performance, and 0.76 for Preparation to Enter Elderly Social Society. The regression equation to predict preparation in the form of a standard score was $Z' = 0.40X_1 + 0.28X_3$.

Results and Discussion

Employees of Siam City Cement Public Company Limited were moderately prepared to enter elderly social society: $\bar{X} = 3.38$, SD = 0.65; readiness for entry into elderly society was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Adaptation and the happiness in work were the two variables that affected the readiness to enter elderly society of the company's employees. These two variables accounted for 37 percent (SE_{es} =0.43) of the preparation to enter the elderly social society.

Adaptation was the first variable that influenced the readiness of an employee to enter elderly society ($p < 0.05$; $\bar{X} = 3.52$, SD = 0.60). This result showed that company employees accepted change; they were ready to bequeath changing roles and responsibilities in both family and workplace to others by creating new relationships and adapting to change. They also accepted the physical changes

of their bodies, and the need to modify behavior in their daily routine that retirement would bring. To help prepare for this transition, they were encouraged to exercise regularly, eat sensibly to maintain health, and obtain adequate rest. Positive thinking about the process exerts a significant effect on the mental state of well-being, leading to less stress and anxiety, as well as providing the ability to create viable financial plans for enjoying future comfort. Following this advice would result in the preparation of the company employees to enter retirement gracefully.

Happiness in work performance was another variable influencing the readiness of elderly individuals of Siam City Cement Company to enter retirement ($p < 0.05$; $\bar{X} = 3.77$, SD = 0.50). This company has a good corporate structure. The supervisor(s) treat their subordinates in a friendly manner, and they take care of each other like family. The work environment functions smoothly; it may even generally be regarded as blissful. Although working together can be problematic at times, the employees usually cooperate to find solutions to problems. Moreover, the company encourages employees to develop knowledge and skills by organizing workshops and seminars for personal development, which in turn makes employees love their jobs.

It has already been noted that adaptation and happiness in work performance can explain a significant portion of readiness for retirement (37%). However, employees should also be aware of the importance of preparing themselves physically and mentally, by doing things such as regular exercise and other health preserving activities. Happiness involves both mind and body. Therefore, positive thinking will help resolve problems and obstacles, which assists in ensuring a happy life.

The positive attitude of employees of Siam City Cement was at a high level, $\bar{X} = 3.78$, SD = 0.46, indicating that employees have less fear and do not dwell too much on small issues. Being too preoccupied with such matters might create problems or barriers in the workplace; it is healthier to see obstacles as a test of their patience. This helps them to be more optimistic and develop more self-confidence. It can also allow them to be brave and courageous in decision making, as well as be more dedicated to their jobs.

This research has affirmed the significance of adaptation and happiness in work performance as states of mind that assist in preparation for retirement. Adaptation consists of physical adaptation, by accepting the physical and behavioral changes that take place. Adaptation in mental processes involves adjustment to feelings from negative to positive in order to be ready for the elderly social society. Individuals need to be open-minded and accept the realities of life, and spiritually learn to depend on a Higher Power to allow them to develop a sense of contentment and self-actualization. Social adaptation is also needed, and it involves the ability to accept changing roles and responsibilities in family, work, and society. Adaptation to the new economic realities about to be experienced enables sensible planning and saving to meet the expenses of older age.

Although a high level of positive thinking was reported, this result was likely affected by many factors. Working and environmental conditions were comfortable for all workers, and there was no sense of pressure in the workplace. Since respondents were surrounded by a tranquil workplace atmosphere, perhaps they did not see the importance of positive thinking, and so positive thinking was not reported as a significant factor that influenced their readiness for retirement.

Suggestions and Future Research

Several suggestions arose from the research findings:

1. Adaptation and happiness in work performance are the variables of greatest significance, with the first being the most impactful. Therefore, the Director, Supervisor or Leaders and those with related roles might use this study as a guideline in providing guidance and counseling to employees. They could organize activities or projects to foster and develop employees' adjustment capabilities, as well as to encourage positive thinking, so that they will be ready to face retirement and enjoy a good quality of life.

2. Happiness in work performance is the second variable that has a significant effect on preparation for entering into elderly social society. The results of this research study could be used to

consider activities that promote happiness at work, which will also function to permit them to be more effective in their work.

3. Activities that promote the mental development of employees would be helpful, for this would assist them to realize that planning for retirement is desirable.

4. It would be useful to contrast the results found for this Public Company with preparations to enter elderly social society that are implemented by other companies.

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