



Developing the Potential of Community Enterprise Groups to Enhance Economic Opportunities in Supporting an Aging Society in the Border Area of Surin Province

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Enhancing the potential and capacity of community enterprise groups to improve their operations is essential for promoting better well-being and increasing social resilience among the elderly in the community. This, in turn, supports the development of strong communities that drive community development, create economic opportunities through local support, and generate jobs. This leads to the goal of the study, which is to determine how community entrepreneurship groups can boost economic prospects to help the aging population in Surin Province's border region.

Materials and Methods: The study employed a qualitative research methodology that included document analysis and pilot studies in addition to participatory action research in the four districts of Surin Province's border region. Purposive sampling was used to choose thirty key informants, and open-ended structured interviews were used to collect data through the continuous management cycle. In-depth interviews and non-participatory observation were combined to yield the lessons learned. After 12 key informants participated in a brainstorming session to validate the consensus conclusions, the focus shifted to improving the findings for appropriateness and coming to an agreement on the efficacy of the results. To understand the situation and interpret significant findings, content analysis was employed for data analysis. Based on the results, a model and components for potential development were created using a connection mapping tool.

Results: The research findings revealed as follows: The structure of the development guidelines for enhancing the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities and support the aging society in the border area of Surin Province, which is both appropriate and interconnected, consists of 9 components: 1) Direction - "Sustainability"; 2) Vision of the Leader - "Adherence"; 3) Membership and Participation Management - "Family"; 4) Management and Operation Planning - "Knowledge"; 5) Product Production and Management - "Distinctiveness"; 6) Marketing - "Integrating Diversity and Marketing Channels"; 7) Cost and Finance - "Resource Allocation"; 8) Knowledge and Information - "Digital Media"; 9) External Interaction - "Digital Network".

Conclusion: The integration of elderly groups and networks, presidents and members, and staff and volunteers dedicated to elder healthcare, along with the operation and management of community enterprise groups by the framework of the development guidelines for enhancing their potential to increase economic opportunities in supporting the aging society in the Surin Province border area, is a preparation to effectively cope with the dynamic changes in the economy, society, culture, and environment, ensuring long-term successful outcomes.

Keywords: Development, Grouping Potential, Community Enterprise, Supporting an Aging Society, Border Area

Introduction

National development strategies prioritize the enhancement of human resources capacity. The government focuses on building the foundation for national development. The demographic shift in the 21st century, with an increasing proportion of elderly people contrary to the working-age population, results in an aging society, which affects a variety of factors, including economic factors. The government recognizes the importance of preparing for and being able to support the transition into an aging society comprehensively (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.). At the same time, the social systems that have been supported are facing several significant challenges, including the ongoing economic



crisis, the aging population phenomenon, diverse social needs and expectations, and pollution. All of these factors put special pressure on traditional social protection systems. As a result, the social economy is increasingly seen as a potential solution that provides creative ways to address social and environmental issues (Venig & Bungău, 2024).

Retirement for entrepreneurs in rural areas is a process of aging and categorizing the elderly that cannot be explained solely by biological or physiological reasons. Age is a social construct, and the classification of individuals as elderly depends on theoretical understanding, practical interests, and research that considers empirical evidence while focusing on policies, perceptions, and beliefs about the elderly, legal retirement age, and current life expectancy (Bohlinger & van Loo, 2010). Beyond the psychological process of aging, age also has various contexts, such as cultural, generational, gender, professional, and human resource management (Aaltio et al., 2017). This includes the changing perspective of older workers in terms of aging, which links employment, career, and entrepreneurship (Thijssen & Rocco, 2010). Meanwhile, the lack of research on the impact of aging, especially as life expectancy increases, has made senior entrepreneurs increasingly important in economic activities related to efficiency, policy frameworks, and business growth (Isele & Rogoff, 2014).

If we consider community enterprises, which are community-based businesses focused on producing goods, providing services, or other activities operated by a group of individuals who are connected, share a common lifestyle, and unite to carry out business to generate income and achieve self-reliance for their families, communities, and between communities, whether in the form of a legal entity or not (Community Enterprise Promotion Act, 2005), they arise from the collaboration of farmers engaging in community-level businesses. The community must be the primary operator, and the products must come from processes within the community. The community is the originator of product creation through learning processes and innovation development. The community possesses local wisdom, which is integrated with other forms of knowledge, ensuring stability and legal recognition under laws promoting knowledge. The community operates in an integrated manner, connecting various activities systematically and operating as a network of enterprises. It involves continuous learning, the ability to apply and pass on knowledge to others. Importantly, community enterprises emphasize self-reliance, which is a key goal that ensures the growth and sustainability of the community enterprise. Data shows that community enterprises have a clear impact on the Thai economy, with over 85,000 community enterprises and a membership of no less than 1.4 million people. These enterprises contribute significantly to the economy, generating an average of 25.5 billion baht. The grouping of community enterprises is seen as a collective effort to create products, add value, utilize local wisdom, and develop products through universal knowledge that can elevate them to higher levels of entrepreneurship. Community enterprises are considered the starting point for building a strong and sustainable economic foundation at the national level, supporting the government's policy to strengthen the grassroots economy (Lertvirote Kowatana, 2018). Therefore, community entrepreneurship groups are essential in fostering local economic growth and reducing poverty and unemployment by putting grassroots business ideas into action. These companies use social capital, local resources, and community involvement to promote sustainable lives and inclusive growth. With the correct support—including funding, training, and policy incentives—these organizations could become more capable and expand their impact. They are especially effective at integrating excluded populations into the economy, fostering entrepreneurship in industries like tourism and agriculture, and increasing community resilience (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Lyons et al., 2012; Smith & Woods, 2015).

Surin is a province located in the lower northeastern region of Thailand and is one of the provinces with a large number of community enterprises, totaling 2,480 enterprises (Community Enterprises, 2019). While the majority of the population living in the border areas of Surin face challenges in accessing government services, which are located far away, key issues include security, the quality of life, access to healthcare, labor mobility, and the shortage of local workers. The working-age population has migrated to cities, leaving only the elderly in the communities to care for grandchildren, creating burdens that prevent participation in community development. There is a high cost of living, no jobs, and no income (according





to the Health Department Report of Surin Province, 2019). Additionally, it was found that rural areas in Surin have local wisdom that is a valuable asset for the community, but lacks the transmission of knowledge due to the inconvenience of travel, old age, and family burdens. This includes local wisdom in various areas such as culture, handicrafts, agriculture, and community product enterprises. Some community enterprises have been able to operate continuously and are strong, while others have struggled to do so due to a lack of experience, absence of member participation processes, a failure to learn from local wisdom, lack of networking, and the absence of innovation to add value to products (Pajuwang, 2014). There is a need to learn local wisdom to address the problems of local communities, as the knowledge of local wisdom resides with the elderly, and in the future, this knowledge will disappear from the community. Therefore, we should recognize the importance of learning and creating continuous learning networks to ensure the stability and quality of life for people in local communities and the border areas of Surin Province.

Thus, the commitment to work and meaningful activities serves as a motivation for elderly entrepreneurs, who may have social, personal, and financial reasons suitable for entrepreneurship. This includes having economic support methods, being part of a community, having self-fulfillment and lifelong learning, being part of a network, actively engaging, and expressing their way of life (Römer-Paakkanen & Takanen-Körperich, 2022). Along with lifelong learning in later life, it is becoming more common and requires more privacy, such as curiosity, the desire to understand the environment, integration, happiness, or living actively, which are goals to improve personal quality of life. Therefore, research studies can help enhance well-being and self-awareness, as well as understanding of society. Finding personal goals helps the elderly feel that they are contributing and are part of society (Escuder-Mollon et al., 2014). This supports the aging society and highlights the need to maximize the potential of community enterprises to create economic opportunities, particularly in rural and border areas where population aging poses severe economic and social challenges (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015). By utilizing local resources, expertise, and creativity, community enterprises can help elderly populations become more financially resilient, generate income, and create sustainable livelihoods (Foster & Walker, 2018). Additionally, these groups can play a significant role in preserving cultural heritage, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the needs of the elderly through targeted economic activities and community development initiatives (Ogg & Renaut, 2019). Moreover, driving community enterprises to achieve their goals and mobilize resources requires strong leadership with a broad vision and effective communication skills (Bäck-Wiklund et al., 2020).

Therefore, the overall key information above leads to the urgent need to find ways to develop the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities in supporting an aging society, particularly in the border areas of Surin Province. This can answer questions and provide data for use as a guideline for the operations and management of community enterprise groups. It will serve as a reference for other interested community enterprise groups, as well as researchers, academics, promoters, and relevant agencies, to use as an example in their work and to promote the development of community enterprise potential for sustainable success.

Objectives

To study the development of the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities in supporting an aging society in the border areas of Surin Province.

Literature review

The theory of sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). It is a type of human activity that nurtures and sustains the achievement of the historical outcomes of all life communities on Earth (Engel & Engel, 1990). This is under the management of various organizations that treat the environment and are part of a business activity management system, which permeates the organization systematically and functionally (Lueg & Radlach, 2016). It defines the concept of social development by using the principles of economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social equity,





emphasizing that all of these must be supported in sustainable economic development (Bansal, 2005). Social enterprises are used to promote sustainable development in communities, including using labor as a source of quality of life, gender equality, sustainable resource utilization, and the equitable distribution of benefits across economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Vázquez Maguirre et al., 2018).

Concept of Community Potential: From a theoretical perspective, proactive work involves actions based on foresight, planning, and measurable execution to achieve better outcomes. This is grounded in the increasing demand for innovation and efficiency across various areas, within a framework that encompasses the development of proactive behavior in different aspects and ensures proper implementation. It emphasizes the importance of attitude in achieving competitive advantage and sustainability, alongside key indicators such as the frequency of individual initiatives, the level of planning, preparedness, and success in achieving long-term goals. This requires an appropriate development approach, continuous evaluation, and effective strategies, such as creating a culture that supports innovation, providing access to necessary resources, and promoting open communication and teamwork (Phakdeeying, 2022).

Sociological Concept of Community: The sociological concept of community emphasizes both social and physical units that are managed collectively within the dimensions of villages, communities, districts, and cities, as territorial units that make the community tangible. It has a definite location, and its members can identify their place of residence. As a social system unit, it is a network of human interactions, consisting of statuses, roles, groups, and institutions. A community is, therefore, a chain-like relationship where one subsystem receives necessary inputs from other systems, and in turn, provides its outputs to other subsystems. The inputs and outputs exchanged among communities or subsystems may include forms of financial resources, labor, social pressures, and various resources (Poplin, 1979).

Concept of Community-Level Enterprise Groups: The concept of community-level enterprise groups focuses on businesses that emerge from the collaboration of people within a community, utilizing local resources, labor, knowledge, wisdom, and capital to produce goods and services that address community issues and meet market demands. These enterprises can generate income for members involved in the business and encourage mutual assistance within the community in the form of community enterprises. This leads to sustainable self-reliance within the community. Key characteristics include: community-based businesses related to the production of goods or the provision of services, the collective operation of the business by a group of individuals with shared bonds and lifestyles, and whether or not they are legally recognized entities, to generate income and ensure self-reliance for families, communities, and between communities. Additionally, community enterprises are recognized by both the public and private sectors and receive promotion and support from the government (Department of Agricultural Promotion, 2019).

Concept of an Aging Society: The concept of an aging society has drawn attention to the Activity Theory, which suggests that older adults will maintain a high quality of life if they continue engaging in the activities they did during middle age, and if they find alternative activities to replace those they can no longer perform for survival, such as volunteering after retirement (Havighurst et al., 1968). Similarly, the Continuity Theory posits that older adults who remain active and engaged in activities that allow them to maintain their previous level of activity will sustain a high quality of life (Atchley, 1999). The Role Theory suggests that older adults take on different social roles throughout their lives, with age being an important factor in determining

the roles of individuals at different life stages (Allport, 1961). The Modernization Theory explains societal and cultural changes resulting from the growth of industry and technology, focusing on a key phenomenon: in every society, individuals considered elderly are treated differently from others. They tend to have advisory or supervisory roles with less physical exertion, show more interest in group matters than in economic production, value life, and seek measures to extend life. The theory also addresses the shifting phenomena between different societies (Cowgill, 1972).

Related Research on the Framework of Management, Operations, and Community Enterprise Group Formation was as follows: 1) Development of Operational Capacity by Phakdeeying (2020) found that it is related to aspects of product management, services, and production; leadership; management; marketing;



financial systems and income allocation; membership management and participation; knowledge management, information, and networking; 2) Success Factors of Community Enterprises by Tupkrut et al (2020) found that it is related to internal factors such as the age of the enterprise, external factors including age, technology, and the use of personal capital, structural factors, workload factors, and social and cultural factors.

Related Research on the Framework of Management, Operations, and Community Enterprise Group Formation found as follows: 1) Guidelines for Developing Community Enterprise Groups by Piyatat (2022) found that it is related to the knowledge level of the group in each area, specific expertise, the creation of bargaining power, and support from various sectors; 2) Study of Community Enterprise Potential by Tancharoen et al (2020) found that it is related to the following elements of potential: leadership in change, commitment to advocacy and preserving wisdom, learning from practice and acquiring new knowledge, organizing learning processes and networks, knowledge and wisdom, and government support; 3) Development of Investment Models for Preparing for Aging in a New Lifestyle by Yathip et al (2021) found that it is related to investment planning, organizational processes, skills, experience, and expertise, business status, innovation in financial products, investment risk diversification, creating investment opportunities, fostering intergenerational relationships, developing an aging society, and targeted support according to government measures; 4) Factors for Developing the Operational Capacity of Community Enterprise Groups by Buadee and Funkeaw (2019) include factors such as direction, leadership, membership, membership management and participation, management, operational planning, production and product management processes, marketing, costs, financial services, knowledge and information management, and interaction with external parties.

In conclusion, the formation of community enterprise groups is firmly anchored in the fusion of sociological frameworks that stress shared responsibility and collaborative action, proactive community potential, and sustainable development principles. Through inclusive and locally driven business models, community companies are well-positioned to fulfill the need for balanced growth across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, as highlighted by sustainable development theories (United Nations, 1987; Vázquez Maguirre et al., 2018). These businesses fulfill local needs while embracing ideals like equity, resource efficiency, and creativity. They also make use of community resources, encourage collaboration, and advance long-term self-reliance. Strong leadership, planning, and resource access are also critical components of proactive plans and ongoing review, which are vital for improving competitiveness, sustainability, and social impact (Phakdeeying, 2022). Additionally, the sociological view of communities as interdependent systems emphasizes how crucial social structure, communication, and collaboration are to community enterprise organizations' success (Poplin, 1979). Theories like Activity, Continuity, and Modernization provide insights into how older persons might continue to be actively involved through community-based efforts as communities deal with changing demographic issues, particularly those associated with an aging population (Atchley, 1999; Cowgill, 1972). According to empirical research, effective community enterprise operations rely on leadership, knowledge access, internal capacity growth, and cooperation with the public and private sectors. When properly managed, these organizations contribute to a more resilient and inclusive society by preserving indigenous knowledge, promoting social cohesion, and giving people of all ages fulfilling roles in addition to boosting the local economy.

Conceptual Framework

The literature review and synthesis of key issues based on related concepts, theories, and research led to the creation of the research conceptual framework titled "Development of the Potential of Community Enterprise Group Formation to Increase Economic Opportunities in Supporting an Aging Society in Border Areas of Surin Province," as shown in Figure 1.

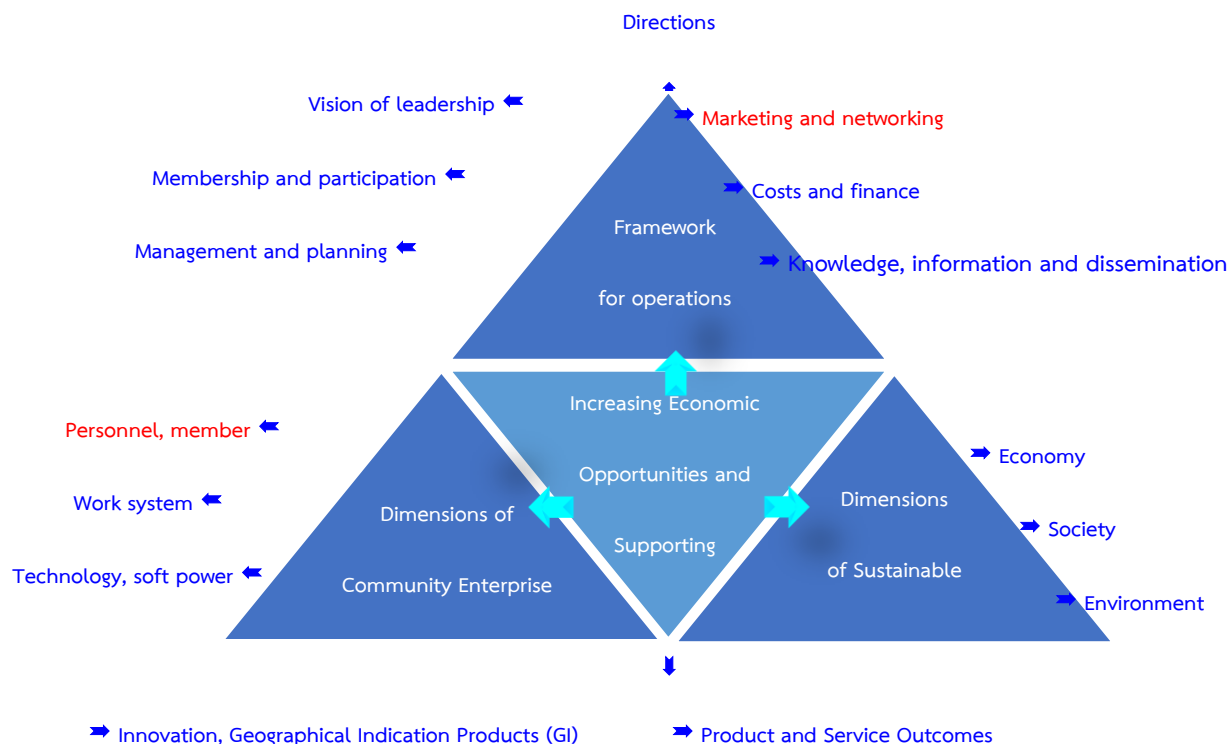


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Developing the Potential of Community Enterprise Grouping to Increase Economic Opportunities and Support an Aging Society in the Border Areas of Surin Province

Methodology

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is defined as a collaborative process of research, study, and action (Hall, 1981). It involves the relationship between the researcher and the research topic, knowledge and power, and research and social action (McTaggart, 1997). This approach is based on existing formal knowledge and assumptions about objective truths that can be measured, analyzed, and predicted, reflecting a way of producing knowledge beyond individuals with the appropriate qualifications (Kindon et al., 2007). This study is a pilot study, and this research methodology has been applied in this research. The research's scope is focused on the border areas of Surin Province, covering four districts: Sangkha, Bua Chet, Kab Cheung, and Phanom Dong Rak.

The research population consists of community enterprises within the border areas of Surin Province, covering four districts, totaling 368 establishments. These include: 187 establishments in Sangkha District, 40 establishments in Bua Chet District, 83 establishments in Kab Cheung District, and 58 establishments in Phanom Dong Rak District (Community Enterprises, 2019).

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling from individuals involved in the development and operation of community enterprises. This group includes community enterprise leaders, members, and participants, totaling 30 people. The selection criteria were as follows: 16 elderly individuals from the community enterprise network; 1 agricultural officer from each district, totaling 4 people; 6 community enterprise leaders and members; 1 healthcare volunteer or staff from each district, totaling 4 people.

The research tool used is a semi-structured open-ended interview, developed based on a review of the literature and the application of factors from the systematic management of community enterprises (Buadee and Funkhiew, 2019). This tool was designed to include two pilot question areas. The instrument



underwent review, consultation, and refinement before being used to collect data from experts with experience in field-based research as follows:

1. Community Context: The context of the community is analyzed through six areas, which include: General condition of the community, Social and cultural condition, Economic condition, History and background of the group, Problems and obstacles, and Development strategies. This analysis aims to explore the connection between the data and the potential for developing the capacity of community enterprise groups to enhance economic opportunities and address the needs of an aging society in the border areas of Surin Province.

2. Management: The management of the community enterprise is examined across nine key aspects: Direction, Vision, Leadership capacity, Membership and participation management, Management and operational planning, Production and product management process, Marketing, Cost and financial services, Knowledge and information management, and External interactions.

The data collection for this research was conducted from January to August 2022. The methods used included in-depth interviews, where interviews were recorded, and non-participant observation to observe the community context and the overall environment. This was done by organizing and synthesizing the issues and opinions in a unified direction, within the framework of the research concepts. Additionally, the data from the interviews was cross-verified. The research team employed the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, collaborating with key informants. The focus was on managing outcomes effectively to achieve the goals, with attention to organizational culture, commitment, clear communication, resource availability, and continuous improvement initiatives using the Plan-Do-Check-Act management cycle (PDCA) (Lillrank & Kano, 1989; Imai, 1986). This methodology served as the foundation for the pilot study and the operational implementation within the research area.

1. Planning (Plan: P): The planning phase involves creating an operational plan to gather data on the environment, needs, issues, and obstacles encountered from previous operations. This plan is aligned with the research objectives and the data collection tools to be used in the research process.

2. Implementation (Do: D): This phase involves carrying out the planned fieldwork for data collection through interviews and observations. The aim is to draw lessons from the previous operations in collaboration with key informants, including elderly members of the community enterprise network, community enterprise leaders, members, agricultural officers, and personnel and volunteers responsible for elderly care. Afterward, a brainstorming session is conducted to gather opinions and insights. The outcome is a summary of methods and approaches for developing the potential of community enterprise groups to enhance economic opportunities and support the aging society in the border area of Surin Province. This is done in alignment with the shared development objectives.

3. Checking (Check: C): In this phase, the research team conducts a meeting to present the conclusions, methods, and approaches for enhancing the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities and support an aging society in the border areas of Surin Province. The goal is to verify and reach a consensus on the conclusions in collaboration with key informants, including elderly members of the community enterprise network, leaders, and members of the community enterprise groups.

4. Action (Action: A): This phase involves conducting small group discussions to present the conclusions, methods, and approaches for developing the potential of community enterprise groups to enhance economic opportunities and support the aging society in the border areas of Surin Province. Participants provide feedback on necessary improvements, in collaboration with key informants, including agricultural office staff, personnel, and volunteers providing elderly care. Afterward, the results are summarized and agreed upon by consensus to proceed with data analysis.

The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), which is conducted in an interpretive manner to understand in-depth insights from interviews, feedback, and understanding of the situation within the area. This approach is used to develop a model and components for the operation of enhancing the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic

opportunities and support the aging society in the border areas of Surin Province. The method employs Rich Pictures (RPs) (Checkland & Haynes, 1994), which is a tool for illustrating a map of interconnections between various components for improving performance, enhancing potential, and increasing economic opportunities in a multidimensional way (Cristancho, 2015). This approach is important for extracting knowledge, thoughts, and emotions related to the situation, events, or experiences, making what was previously hidden become clear. It enables a better and simpler understanding of complex phenomena (Bell & Morse, 2012).

Results

Development of the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities and support an aging society in the border areas of Surin Province, targeting group leaders, group members, and participants according to the framework of management, operations, and capacity- building for community enterprise groups, with 9 key components as shown in the following research findings.

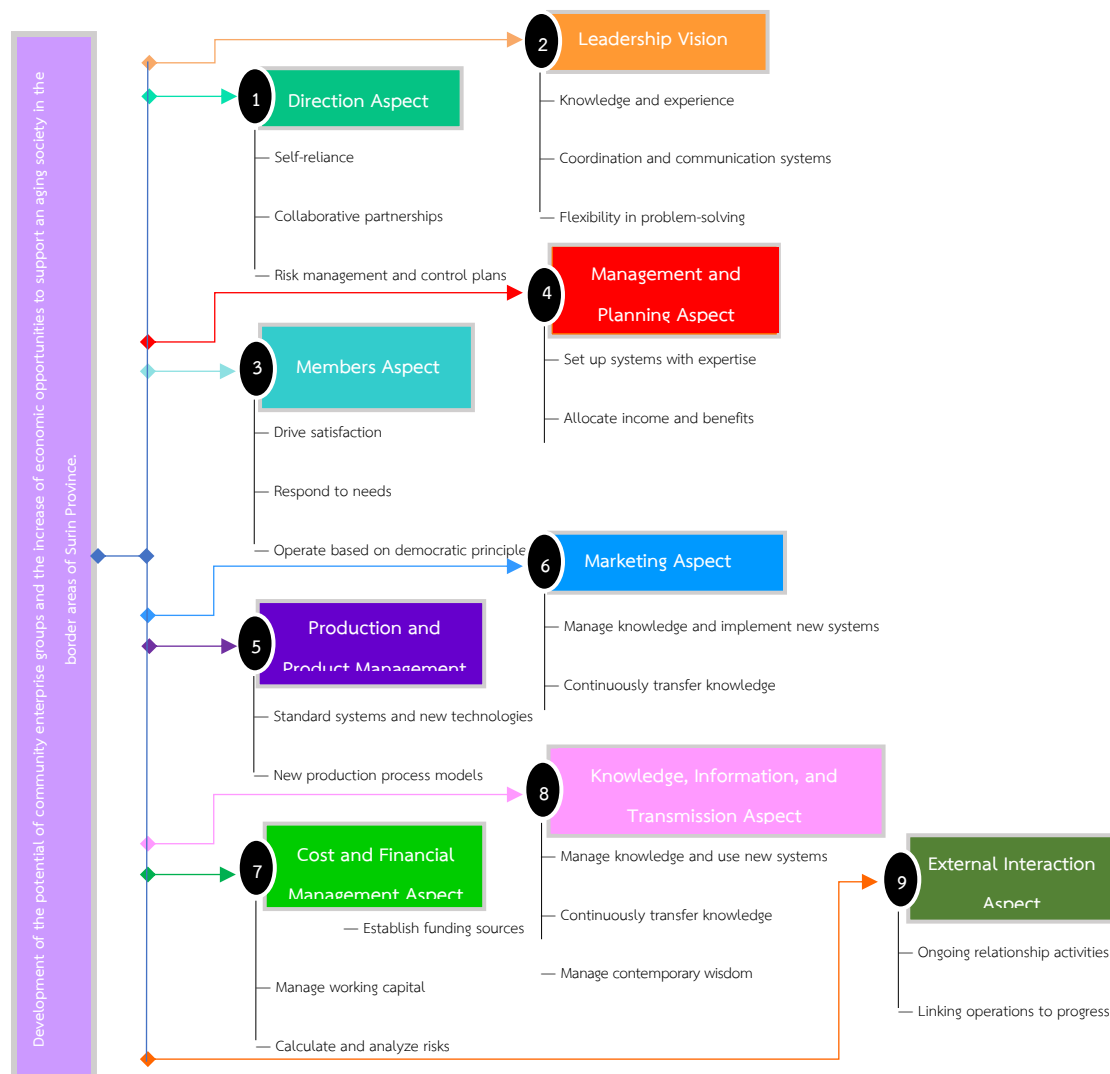


Figure 2: Development of Community Enterprise Group Potential and Economic Opportunities to Support an Aging Society in the Border Areas of Surin Province

Figure 2 shows the development of community enterprise group potential and economic opportunities to support an aging society in the border areas of Surin Province, with 9 aspects and examples of information provided from interviews and group discussions as follows:

1. Direction Aspect refers to “Sustainability,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Self-reliance; 2) Partnership coordination; 3) Risk management and control plans; 4) Readiness for change impacts; and 5) Appropriateness in reviewing and continuously improving plans.

“... Emphasize self-reliance, reducing external dependency, and ensuring balance according to the conditions of each community. There is a strong enthusiasm in working towards the shared direction, with particular focus on the group...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 16, 2022)

2. Leadership Vision Aspect refers to “Commitment,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Knowledge from broad experience; 2) Effective coordination and communication systems; 3) Problem-solving with flexibility; 4) Responsibility based on ethics; and 5) Mechanisms to enhance access and creatively develop members.

“... A thinker, planner, and marketer who is committed to doing what is right, especially in the type of community enterprises of the group. The leader has a vision and initiative in managing community enterprises and continuously promotes the self-development of members...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 23, 2022)

3. Members and Participation Management Aspect refers to “Family-like Unity,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Principles of driving collective satisfaction; 2) Principles of responding to feasible needs; 3) Principles of operating based on democracy; 4) Principles of collaborative thinking and decision-making; and 5) Principles of proactive learning and development.

“... It has a family-like characteristic where members can exchange opinions. It allows members to be involved in sourcing or selecting materials to meet the group’s needs promptly...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 16, 2022)

4. Management and Operational Planning Aspect refers to “Knowledge,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Development based on the approach of establishing group structure systems and expertise; 2) Creating economic opportunities based on the principles of income and benefit allocation; 3) Clear division of roles based on capabilities; and 4) Establishing transparent and continuous operational systems.

“... The community enterprise has established an operational system with clear positions and organizational structure, as well as a clear division of responsibilities. However, modern technology should be incorporated to improve the efficiency of the work...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 30, 2022)

5. Production and Product Management Aspect refers to “Distinctive Excellence,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Standardized systems and the use of new technologies; 2) Production processes developed and improved locally; and 3) Product quality control systems.

“... The group operates with quality and standard in their production processes/services, starting from the planning stage and systematically defining the steps...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 23, 2022)

“... The products are of standard quality and widely accepted. There is a consistent quality check on the products and services before they are sold, and the pricing is standard and acceptable...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 16, 2022)

6. Marketing Aspect refers to “Integration of Diversity,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) New products and services, creating a local brand; 2) Appropriateness of quality and price; 3) Integration of distribution channels – trade areas, online markets; and 4) Continuity in sales promotion.

“... Marketing is managed to develop the potential of the community enterprise group by considering the components of the marketing mix (4P), including the creation of a local brand...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 15, 2022)



7. Cost and Financial Management refers to “Resource Allocation,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Establishment of operational funding sources; 2) Management of working capital; 3) Risk calculation and analysis; 4) Security of financial transaction database systems; and 5) Fairness of the transparent compensation management system.

“... Compensation and dividends are paid to members systematically and fairly, with clear and transparent financial accounting. Members are employed as workers in the production process...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 15, 2022)

8. Knowledge and Information refers to “Digital Media,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Knowledge management and the use of new operating systems; 2) Continuous knowledge transfer; 3) Management of contemporary local wisdom; and 4) A system for collecting and storing knowledge and identity data.

“... The board and members manage knowledge, such as producing marketing customer databases and product information, to pass on to the next generation of members...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 23, 2022)

9. External Interaction refers to “Digital Networks,” consisting of the following potential components: 1) Ongoing group-based relationship activities; 2) Business advancement through connecting enterprises; and 3) Adapting ideas and practices within the enterprise network.

“... We have built networks with other enterprises, allowing for the exchange of a wide variety of information...” (Key informants, personal communication, August 16, 2022)

In conclusion, according to the results, the growth of community business organizations in Surin Province's border regions has shown a great deal of promise for improving economic prospects and assisting an elderly population. Direction, leadership, member engagement, planning, production, marketing, financial management, knowledge sharing, and external networking are the nine main elements that the study found are essential to their success. Essential ideals like independence, moral leadership, democratic engagement, and knowledge-based operations are emphasized in each facet. For example, member management was compared to a family structure that promotes respect for one another, democratic decision-making, and ongoing learning, while leadership was defined by vision, adaptability, and ethical responsibility. These results imply that community enterprise organizations' strength is found in their integrated and comprehensive approach to development. Their readiness to handle social and economic difficulties is demonstrated by their capacity to establish local branding, adopt standardized processes, adjust to change, and uphold open financial practices. In order to ensure sustainability and generational continuity, it is especially noteworthy that digital media and networks are being used to save information, impart expertise, and connect with wider markets. In addition to improving these communities' economic stability, this all-encompassing development paradigm encourages inclusive engagement, especially from senior citizens, which builds a robust and intergenerational local economy.

Discussion

The formation of community enterprises consisting of elderly individuals, leaders, and members, along with staff and volunteers providing elder care and health services, has led to the development of potential and increased economic opportunities, effectively supporting the aging society in the border areas of Surin Province. This is due to the application of management frameworks and operations to address the dynamics of change with successful outcomes in each area, which includes the following key issues:

The sustainable direction focuses on self-reliance and reducing dependence on external sources, based on the management of potential and the reasonable and balanced creation of economic opportunities. It can be said that this is a vision challenge that rural areas are currently facing in order to develop strong, self-sustaining communities over the long term. This requires covering the three main pillars of sustainability: mission, profit creation, and stakeholder management (Deloitte United States, 2019), aligning with an economically feasible structure that is connected with institutions, organizations, and



practices that create and maintain social benefits (Fowler, 2000). However, McCulloch and Ridley-Duff (2019) argue that creating value for social purposes through entrepreneurial business innovations, while striving for profit, is what truly differentiates communities.

Adhering to a leadership vision that emphasizes responsibility, integrity, fairness, and non-discrimination with sincerity, alongside utilizing knowledge, experience, expertise, and the pursuit of learning as a framework for group empowerment in operations, leads to smooth economic opportunities and income growth for the community. This represents a positive attitude and high confidence that supports business, social efforts, and entrepreneurial models, resulting in a more just, balanced, and sustainable future (Alexandru, 2024). It is a way of demonstrating transformative and compassionate leadership capabilities that align with effective frameworks and performance indicators, creating value, driving economic development, and ensuring the long-term success of the organization (Uzule et al., 2024).

The involvement of members as a family, focusing on satisfaction, perception, opportunities, exchange, and facilitating joint group management with continuous commitment, is related to the varying levels of well-being about settlement, inequality, migration, time-space dynamics, and contextual impacts. These include the influence of living in different economic, social, and cultural environments (Morrison, 2021). For Wiklund et al. (2019), the emphasis is on experiences of satisfaction, positive emotions, and work related to the development, initiation, growth, and operation of entrepreneurial ventures. Kautonen et al. (2023) found evidence from the core hypothesis of research, showing a positive relationship in the context of perceived relationships, which is moderated by changes in self-discovery over two years, before returning to the previous self-discovery after four years. Additionally, Desjardin and Rubenson (2013) classified barriers to adult participation based on individual habits or attitudes, personal preferences, life situation (individual life circumstances), and institutions (practices and requirements of service providers).

Knowledge in management and operational planning focuses on the potential for collaborative use of skills and expertise according to job responsibilities, which leads to the transfer, learning, and exchange of knowledge, as well as the prioritization of operations within the group. This involves stimulating behaviors in the context of learning from real-life situations, experiential learning through doing, reflection, experimentation, and collaboration. This dynamic process enables entrepreneurs to make decisions and develop both their businesses and themselves (Pittaway & Cope, 2007). However, emphasizing the need to enhance interdisciplinary learning skills both in local and online settings through training should provide participants with the opportunity to plan and test their ideas, transforming concepts into commercial products and services. This approach is based on literature reviews, surveys, and expert testing from external sources (Römer-Paakkanen & Suonpää, 2023). This process will help participants develop new interests in learning and respond to the needs of operational environments in diverse contexts (Kern, 2014).

The distinctive difference in the production and management process lies in the use of new technologies to develop systems and improve quality procedures transparently, correctly, appropriately, and fairly, with openness to all sectors. This is due to the increasingly complex business challenges and the constantly changing environment, which makes the key factors in designing and implementing systems essential for promoting efficiency aimed at creating knowledge, innovation, and outputs through targeted development areas, appropriate workplace development, economic growth, and establishing the foundation for sustainable work performance (Uzule et al., 2024). This approach emphasizes creating value for customers and investors by procuring and developing internal resources and capabilities that maintain a competitive advantage. The fundamental difference lies in the perspective an organization uses to assess the environment, focusing on the dynamics of the industry (Figuerola Herrera, 2024).

The integration of marketing diversity involves using marketing mix elements to develop new products and services that are quality-appropriate for their price and cost, while expanding opportunities by developing market channels for sales, communication, publicity, and financial transactions. This allows services to be consistently and continuously provided both locally and online. It is a method for creating economic and social opportunities for the community, enhancing the attractiveness and vitality of rural areas, reducing demographic challenges, decreasing migration, and promoting local resources and



traditions, all while preserving the essence of rural life (Örgütü, 2020). In addition, it leverages advancements in communication and information technology to enable accessibility, accurate targeting, cost-effectiveness, and increased customer engagement (Indrawati, 2024). This approach underscores the necessity of a holistic economic development strategy and supports practical entrepreneurship initiatives (Pavel & Pia, 2024).

Cost and financial resource allocation begins with the establishment of a group using members' capital as the primary funding source for resource management. This involves creating a simple and auditable accounting system, which increases opportunities for external entities to invest, provide funding, and manage the group internally. This may be due to an expanding network of developed entrepreneurs, which strengthens financial standing and enhances the ability to leverage resources, creating more credible businesses. This positions the group to have a better and more successful start-up experience compared to younger generations (Römer-Paakkanen & Suonpää, 2022). Additionally, integrating both financial and non-financial data into a unified format improves transparency in operations and value creation outcomes that align with key objectives, with the capital structure serving as both an input and output factor within the business model (Uzule & Verina, 2023). However, organizational performance and success not only cover achieving financial and internal organizational goals but also include non-financial and external goals (Aguilera et al., 2024).

Digital knowledge and information dissemination involve the management of new technology to gather and store information for distribution through digital media channels within the group. This facilitates both personal development and group member growth while ensuring the rapid, systematic use and accessibility of information. Innovations are often driven by the need to address existing social issues, with many entrepreneurs seeking solutions that address urgent concerns through social innovations (Peek, 2020). Therefore, promoting digital literacy and technology is crucial in bridging the skills gap in the current digital era. It helps promote social mobility and economic development in diverse contexts (Junaedi et al., 2024) and serves as a valuable tool to explain the mechanisms for overcoming digital channels through digital transactions (Lybeck et al., 2024).

Digital external interaction networks focus on building networks, fostering relationships, providing support, and promoting collaboration among group members, network members, and external organizations, including government agencies, private sectors, and non-profit entities, all within the digital network of the current online world. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of participation, creating local business networks, sharing knowledge and experiences, and mutual financial support helps promote products and services to customers (Römer-Paakkanen & Suonpää, 2023). Additionally, expanding the concept of responsibility by focusing on stakeholders—defined as everyone who may be affected by an organization's activities—helps increase accountability that emphasizes value creation for all involved parties and broadens the concept of efficiency to encompass a wider scope of responsibility (Freeman, 2010; O'Dwyer & Unerman, 2006). This approach underscores the significance of social relationships in promoting economic activities and enhancing community resilience. A strong social support network facilitates economic transactions (Indrawati, 2024).

Knowledge Contribution

The new knowledge gained from developing the potential of community enterprise groups to increase economic opportunities for supporting the aging society in the border areas of Surin Province consists of frameworks and key factors that can be used as guidelines to enhance the potential and increase economic opportunities for community enterprises in response to global changes, as shown in Figure 3.

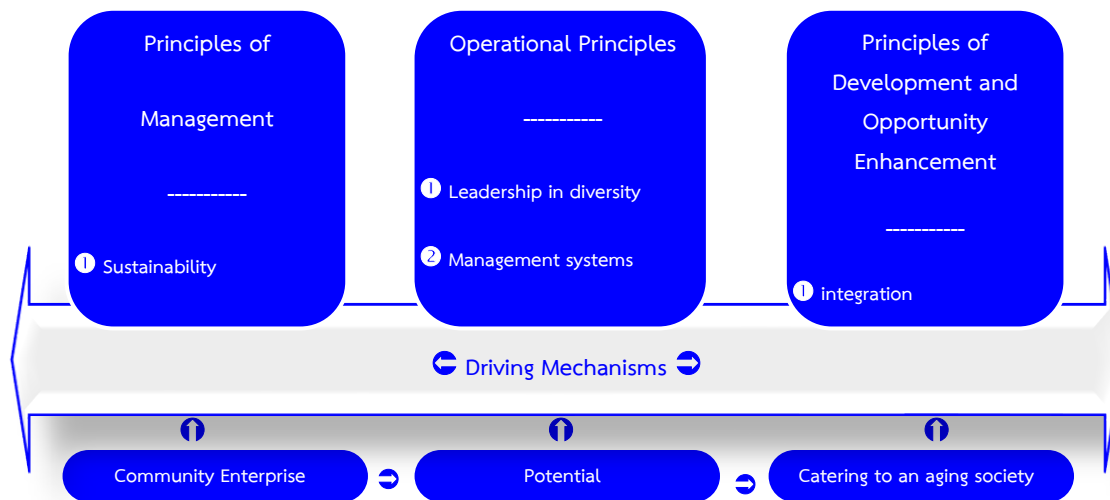


Figure 3: Driving Mechanisms for Developing Potential and Increasing Economic Opportunities to Support an Aging Society for Community Enterprise Groups in the Border Areas of Surin Province.

Figure 3 illustrates the framework and key factors that serve as driving mechanisms for developing potential and increasing economic opportunities to support an aging society for community enterprise groups in the border areas of Surin Province. It consists of 3 main frameworks and 9 key factors as follows:

1. Framework of Management Principles, comprising 3 key factors as follows:
 - 1.1 Sustainability: Developing an operational plan focused on continuity and generating long-term results for the community enterprise group.
 - 1.2 Resources: Allocating appropriate resources in terms of capital, labor, and natural resources.
 - 1.3 Networks: Building partnerships both within and outside the community to enhance market connections and promote collaborative learning.
2. Framework of Operational Principles, comprising 3 key factors as follows:
 - 2.1 Leadership in Diversity: Supporting leaders who possess creativity and the ability to establish a unique identity for products and services.
 - 2.2 Management Systems: Developing efficient management processes from production to distribution.
 - 2.3 Participation: Promoting community involvement at every stage to foster a sense of ownership.
3. Framework of Development and Opportunity Enhancement, comprising 3 key factors as follows:
 - 3.1 Integration: Linking knowledge and resources from various sources to add value.
 - 3.2 Knowledge: Developing new skills and knowledge that align with market demands.
 - 3.3 Artificial Intelligence: Utilizing modern technology in production and management to enhance efficiency.

The section's conclusions provide a thorough framework for maximizing community enterprise organizations' capacity to address the issues of an aging population in Surin Province's border regions. Three interrelated frameworks—Management Principles, Operational Principles, and Development & Opportunity Enhancement—each comprising three essential components, are highlighted by the newly created knowledge. These are useful recommendations for community businesses looking to increase sustainability, optimize resource utilization, and grow via efficient networking. In particular, the Management Principles framework emphasizes the development of solid partnerships to facilitate learning and market access, efficient capital and labor allocation, and long-term continuity. The Operational Principles also place a strong emphasis on diverse leadership, organized management practices, and



widespread community involvement—all of which are critical for fostering a sense of creativity and ownership within the team. In order to increase efficiency, the third framework, Development and Opportunity Enhancement, emphasizes the value of combining various information sources, consistently learning new skills, and utilizing cutting-edge technology like artificial intelligence. When taken as a whole, these frameworks promote a comprehensive approach to bolstering community businesses' ability to adapt to changes in the world, boost local economic resilience, and encourage active aging in their local communities.

Recommendation

1. Policy Recommendation

Policymakers are advised to create a multi-sectoral framework for community businesses' support that takes community networking, resource allocation, and sustainability into account. This means that only companies that serve the needs of the elderly should receive government funding, training support, and digital infrastructure. Government agencies should also establish legislative incentives and legal recognition for community entrepreneurial organizations that incorporate senior participation and intergenerational cooperation in order to provide them with access to markets and government procurement programs. These policies should prioritize inclusive economic resilience and aim to reduce dependence on external aid by promoting autonomous community-based businesses.

2. Practice Recommendation

To improve production, marketing, and financial transparency, community enterprise leaders and practitioners should employ a three-pronged operational strategy based on (1) participatory leadership, (2) structured management systems, and (3) the use of technology (such as artificial intelligence and digital platforms). Programs for developing local leaders should prioritize diverse and moral leadership, democratic engagement, and creative problem-solving. To improve internal collaboration, guarantee quality control, and promote continuity in knowledge transfer, particularly when it comes to involving older adults in worthwhile economic roles, useful tools such as knowledge-sharing platforms, digital customer databases, and transparent compensation systems should be implemented.

3. Further Research Recommendation

Future research should look into longitudinal studies on the socioeconomic effects of aging-inclusive community companies, with a focus on quality of life, intergenerational cooperation, and sustainability over time. Comparative studies between regions or across borders may reveal a range of contextual advancements and challenges. The potential for using artificial intelligence and digital networks to increase older people's involvement in and success in community businesses should also be investigated. This will help find scalable models suitable for older and more rural populations and improve existing frameworks.

In addition, the research should be conducted on the legal framework that supports or hinders the integration of community enterprises in border areas, particularly by reviewing laws related to business registration and tax benefits, in preparation for accommodating an aging society. This will also help the government design policies that are suitable and conducive to the continuous development of the community's potential.

Finally, the community enterprises in the border areas of Surin Province have diverse characteristics and sizes, including types of businesses, available resources, and varying levels of potential. This makes it difficult to implement a development approach that is suitable for every group. The approach must be adjusted to meet the specific needs of each group. Therefore, a comparative study with community enterprises in border areas of other provinces in Thailand, which have similar contexts, should be conducted to identify success factors and best practices that can be adapted to Surin's border areas.



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