

Aging Inmates: A New Challenge Of Management For Department Of Correction Of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Increasing of aging prison population, limit budget challenge Thailand to find out the best management for elderly prisoners. The study was conducted by in-depth interviews with experts in criminology, penology, psychology in Thailand's Department of Corrections. It found that new prisons for elderly inmates was not need but separating areas or renovating old building in prisons with providing a ventilated and uncrowded space, installing assisted living can help to reduce huge cost of brand-new prison. Such reducing cost then can benefit to increase budget in medical treatment for aging inmates who have health problems.

Keywords: Correctional Service, Elderly Prisoners, Healthcare of Aging Inmates, Rehabilitation of Elderly Prisoners, Treatment of Aging Inmates

INTRODUCTION

World population currently have reached approximately 7,300 billion people which led to social structure change into aged society, in other words it has changed sex ratio of human above 60 (). According to the aspect of United Nations, it was expected that by 2030 Thailand would become aging society which the person who aged 65 or older passed 20 percent of the total population in the country (National Statistics of Thailand, 2016). Rapidly growing of elderly caused from the decreasing age of puberty or fertility rate decline and the death rate decline (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development institute, 2011) in which led to longevity and likely to increase, as described in population projections for Thailand 2015-2030.

When Thailand entered aged society, the effect would change the social structure as well as population structure in prison particularly elderly prisoner since they were likely to increase continuously every year. Currently, around 6,500 elderly inmates are imprisoned in correctional system (Bangkokbiz News, 2019; Siamrath, 2019; <https://siamrath.co.th/n/98379>).The controversy has raised up with idea of building new prison for elderly prisoners.

Table 1

The statistic of elderly inmates, Department of Corrections

Year	Male	Female	Total
2017	5,477	1,285	6,762
2018	4,621	881	5,502
2019	2,904	918	3,822
2020	6,072	1,334	7,406

Note. The Department of Corrections of Thailand (2020).

With limit budget, this challenges the Department of Correction in Thailand to find out good management, treatment and rehabilitation of elderly prisoners. The research study about physical structure, management, rehabilitation and treatment that be suitable for elderly prisoners in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant Theories

Social Psychology Theory of Aging

McPherson developed the theory of the aging. He said that social physiology of aging is happiness of elderly people when they always do activities and doing activity can make elderly to live with happiness (Wahl et al., 2016).

Treatment for Inmates of the Department of Corrections

Treatment for inmates refers to continued processes used for inmates from admission to missions in treatment for inmates both in providing rehabilitation and controlling inmates to be in order and not to escape under the principles prescribed by the Correction Act, 2017. Measures to control and treat inmates are divided into 3 phrases as follows:

1) Admission: the first step of inmate treatment processes from receiving inmates in prison based on the court order or order of the person in authority, managing properties brought by inmates, and classifying inmates' characteristics, separating, transferring, and disciplining inmates so that they can adjust to environments in prison.

2) Treatment for the inmates during being imprisoned: treatment processes for inmates in prison are important for changing inmates' behaviors. Because of how long inmates will be imprisoned, such processes must be implemented in such length of time so that inmates can return to the right path and do not commit an offense again after being released. At the same time, there must be security in various aspects to be in order. There are 2 sections of practices: (1) supervising inmates with operational principles and (2) rehabilitating inmates to reform themselves to be good people

3) Release: when supervision of inmates is ended, inmates must be released when they have completed their entire sentences according to the court's verdict, or conditional released. Officers must carefully implement this process without any mistakes. Conditional and unconditional also include a case of inmate' death.

Thai Law Related Aging Population

The Act on the Elderly, B.E. 2546 (2003) states all rights of the elderly shall have right to access the following protection, promotion and support:

- (1) Medical and public health services
- (2) Education, religions and useful information and news for their living
- (3) Appropriate occupations or occupational training
- (4) Self-development and participation in social activities, grouping together as a network or community
- (5) Facilities and safety directly rendered to the elderly in buildings, places, vehicles or other public services
- (6) Appropriate support for transport fares
- (7) Exemption from entry fees to government places
- (8) Assistance for any elderly person facing danger of torture or unlawful exploitation or abandonment
- (9) Provision of advice and consultation on other proceedings in connection with a case or the remedy of family problems
- (10) Extensive provision of housing, food and clothing where necessary
- (11) Extensive and fair provision of monthly old-age pension
- (12) Assistance in holding their traditional funerals
- (13) Other matters stipulated by the Committee in an announcement.

Previous Study

In the United States and Australia, a prisoner aged 50 years and over is defined as an older prisoner, while in England, a prisoner with 60 years of age and over. In Canada, the age range of older prisoner is divided, that is, prisoner aged 50-64 years is classified as Older Prisoner, prisoner aged 65 and over is called Elderly Prisoner, and prisoners aged over 70 is called Geriatric Offender. In Thailand, the age range of prisoners is the same as in England that is prisoners with 60 years of age and over (Tunneekul, 2013).

The results revealed that buildings used to supervise and treat elderly inmates do not require a the highest-security prison since the elderly inmate is considered that they do not cause a problem in respect of security. Besides, stringent rules and regulations are not required for these inmates, also it is inconsistent with the physical, mental, and personality states of the elderly. Therefore, a proper prison should be a prison with low or medium security (Nadel, 2001). Moreover, inmates will have health problems such as vision loss and decline in perception in separating colors that these cause distance prediction problem (Justice Committee, 2020; Correctional Service Canada, 2018; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2018; Bretschneider, 2015; Saenkot, 2013; Nadel, 2001). Thus, the stairs should have few steps with handrails on left, right, and middle. Contrasting colors should be painted between the edge of doors, walls, and rooms for security and reduction of accidents (Ahrentzen & Tural, 2015; Jacob, 2014; López, 2014; Nadel, 2001). Additionally, the toilet is another problem for elderly inmates. Due to bowel control and muscle loss causing fascia, the elderly is difficult to move. Thus, the toilet should be in the bedroom (Justice Committee, 2020; Correctional Service Canada, 2018; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2018; Bretschneider, 2015; Saenkot, 2013; Nadel, 2001). There should be rooms for doing activities with seating and handrails. Taking care of building should emphasize cleanliness, good ventilation, quietness, also officers who are responsible to supervise can easily access in case of emergency (Thailand Institute of Justice, 2019; United Nations Office for Project Services, 2016; Jacob, 2014; López, 2014; Saenkot, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative research. The data was collected by in-depth interview with key informants, who were experts in criminology, penology, psychology, social work, and officials in the Department of Correction. The question points can be divided into 4 parts as 1) Part 1 is basic information. Part 2 is opinions about the physical structures of the prison / detention for the elderly inmates in Thailand to seek the form of structures, types of buildings, buildings shape, proportion of buildings. Part 3 is prison management for seeking prison management structure, prison management principles, classification of Prisoners, roles of correctional officers. Part 4 is the opinions, remedies, and development in behavior of the elderly prisoners in Thailand in order to seek solutions. Part 5 is about opinion towards pilot project of management and treatment for elderly prisoners in Thailand.

The researcher spent around 90 minutes to interview each key informants and ask permission of audio recording from the key informants. If audio recording was denied, the researcher took note from interview. After data collecting, the researcher used triangulation to prove the accuracy of data. In case of inaccuracy data, the researcher made appointment to conduct interview again. The data then was conducted by content analysis in order to set topic/category and pattern/themes. Lastly, the result will be present as descriptive content.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Unnecessity of New Prison

The research found that currently the prison aging in Thailand did not separated due to prisoner's age, merely prison medical facilities in central prison were separated while the prisoner of provincial prisons, district prisons and other correctional facilities had to keep in custody together. Due to current situation and living condition, it caused many problems to elderly prisoners such as health issue that easier worse in older prisoner or mental illness because of narrow place as cell were lack of ventilation. Generally, older person would get infected easier than younger person and since the standard of living condition did not meet the international standard, it could lead to mental health such as depression as well.

The key informants also said that the prison model that suitable for elderly prisoners in Thailand should provide facilities such as prison cell-which the cell capacity was no exceed than 3 prisoners, medical center building, religious building and entertainment building so that the aforementioned facilities would be learning center and the relaxing place for prisoners. On the contrary, security building had less important since the elderly prisoners had low risk to escape, due to their age, thus the necessity of building walls, fortress, fences were low. Importantly, nursing building must locate at a center of other buildings. The figure 1 shows the suitable model for elderly prisoners in Thailand.

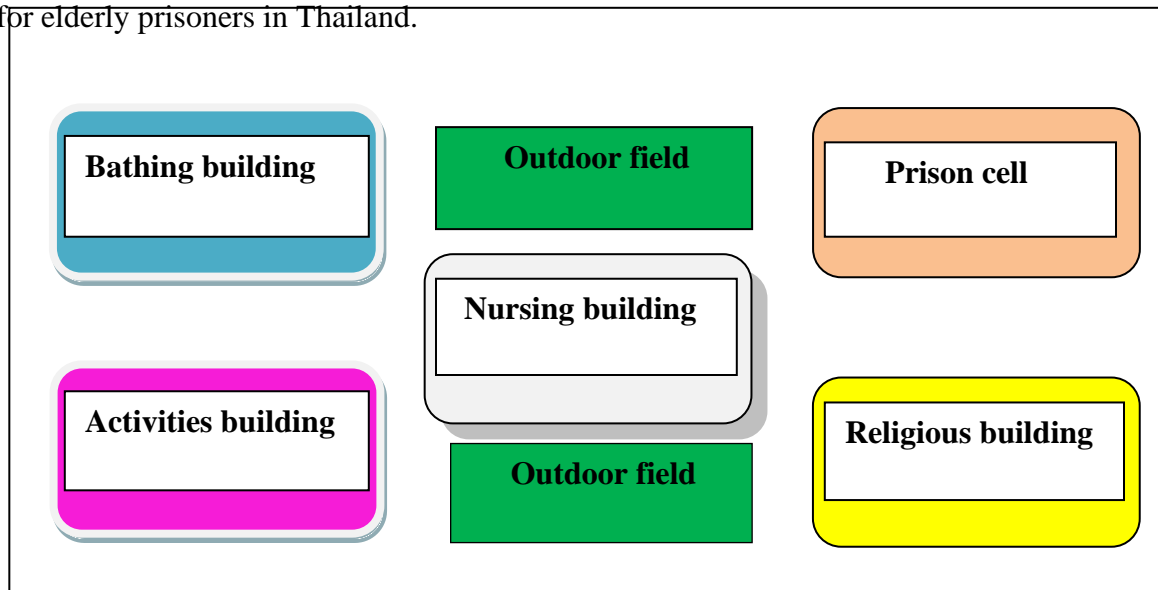


Figure 1 Suitable model of prison for elderly prisoners in Thailand

“Importantly, prison for elderly must have building for sleep, bathing, doing some exercises and activities”.

However, most key informants said that Thailand did not need to build new prison for elderly prisoners because most samples noted that elderly prisoners is a group of low risk in escaping from prison due to physical and health condition. Also, building new prison needs a huge cost.

“I think that budget is a major problem to build new prison. We might not build modern prison for elderly prisoner but we can provide better management for elderly prisoners”.

Pilot Project in Management for Elderly Prisoners

The Department of Correction in Thailand renovated an old building, which used to be an office building of correctional officers. This building was used to be an office building of correctional officers. The old building was renovated and set elder care product and equipment such as grab bars for the bathroom near the toilet and shower, lift chairs for those who have difficulty getting in and out of a seated position, waterproof mattress, etc. Moreover, MOU between Department of Correction and Department of Older Persons was made, that Department of Older Persons would provide development program that appropriate to physical, mental and environment of elderly prisoners. These program assists elderly prisoners during imprisonment or live with their families and societies normally after releasing. The development programs comprise of health program, social program, economic program and environmental program. The health programs mainly focus on exercise and health care for elderly people, nutrition and mental management. The social program emphasizes on education and knowledge about social change, law for elderly rights, welfare for elderly. The economic program mainly highlights vocational training and saving money. The environmental program will help elderly prisoners to adapt living with family and comm unity after release. This pilot project was firstly established in Bangkok and the outcome appeared to be good and satisfaction. The Department of Correction plan to expand the project into reginal prison over the country.

“We possibly bring some old buildings to renovate and increase facilities for elderly prisoners such as activity buildings and nursing buildings. This solution spend money around 10% - 30% when we compare to use a huge cost to build a new prison”.

“This pilot project spends less money if it compares to building new prison. We can save money to manage and provide other needs for elderly prisoners, especially health cares”.

Parole and Compassionate Release

The Department of Correction in Thailand launch a project of parole and compassionate release for elderly prisoners. Parole and compassionate release set for elderly prisoners who are over 60-year-old and meet special qualification that requirement by the Department of Corrections.

“It can say that parole or compassionate release can be an approach to deal with aging prisoner population. Elderly inmates who have serious illness or disability shall be release from prison. This can reduce overcrowding in prison”.

DISCUSSION

Currently, the number of elderly prisoner account to one third of prison population in Thailand. However, building of the new prison for elderly inmates seems to be hard due to huge cost and budget. The internal management of prison also use many human resources. Therefore, separating of section and renovating to making clean, good atmosphere and facilities is able to be suitable, good solution for management for elderly inmates in Thailand. The result is consistent with previous study which said that the building prison for elderly prisoners in Thailand need low security prison (Nadel, 2001).

According to the pilot project in management for elderly prisoner, renovating old building and set elder care equipment can facilitate aging inmates in living and doing activity. The result of this study is consistent with the previous study that due to physical decline; elderly inmates require assistive devices for convenience and quality of daily life (Justice Committee, 2020; Thailand Institute of Justice, 2019; Correctional Service Canada, 2018; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2018; United Nations Office for Project Services, 2016; Bretschneider, 2015; Ahrentzen & Tural, 2015; Jacob, 2014; López, 2014; Saenkot, 2013; Nadel, 2001)

The pilot project in management for elderly prisoner is also accord with the Act on the Elderly, B.E. 2546 (2003). The prison for elderly prisoners must consider the safety and convenience according to the Act on the Elderly, B.E. 2546 (2003), Section 11 (5) states that the elderly shall have right to access the following protection, promotion and support facilities and safety directly rendered to the elderly in buildings, places, vehicles or other public services. The Section 11 (10) states that the elderly shall have right to access the following protection, promotion and support extensive provision of housing, food and clothing where necessary.

According to rehabilitative and development programs in for elderly prisoner in Thailand, it focuses on improvement of personality, training and education, activities and entertainment. The program helps the prisoners to improve themselves and do not recommitting on crime. Rehabilitative programs and development program for elderly prisoner are similar to medical treatment, that base on the criminological theory, crime behaviors seem to be sickness that possibly treat with closely care and control (Khantree et al., 2015). Furthermore, this is also consistent with the study indicating that elderly inmates need to participate in activities to reduce stresses and develop various aspects while being imprisoned. Programs for behavioral rehabilitation and development of elderly inmates should focus on development on social adjustment, education, and economy (Thailand Institute of Justice, 2019; Correctional Service Canada, 2018; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2018; Bedard et al., 2016; Wahl, Deeg & Litwin, 2016; Bretschneider, 2015; Saenkot, 2013).

CONCUSION AND SUGGESTION

It can be concluded that it shall not construct the new prison for elderly inmate due to huge cost and budget as well as many human resources for management. However, it must separate sections in prison for dormitory and nursing building with good atmosphere, uncrowded and easy connection as well as help between elderly prisoners and the officers when the accidents occur. The prison for elderly inmate must comprises of dormitory, bathing, health building, activity building, outdoor gymnasium and religious building. Regard with rehabilitative programs for elderly prisoner, the activities and training shall be simple and use low energy. This is because age and ability of elderly prisoners is very different from young and adult inmates. Also, rehabilitation and development program for elderly prisoners must highlights education, economic and social. It suggests that parole, compassionate release or alternative measures for imprisonment must be taken into account to implement to elderly prisoners because this assist to reduce number of populations in prison (Homnan, 2018) and also, aging inmates do not need maximum secure prison. Also, the officers who had association with elderly prisoners should always improve and enhance their knowledge as well as giving full corporation so that the monitoring and control system would keep the pace with modernization, particularly since Thailand began to enter the aging society.

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