

Abstract

The qualitative research, 'Development of Communication Process to Create Strength for Elderly People Club of Health Empowerment in Bangkok', aims to study: 1) communication process and communication factors of elderly's health empowerment club 2) characteristics of elderly's health empowerment club, and 3) influential factors that created and strengthened elderly's health empowerment club in Bangkok public parks. Participant observation and in-depth interview were employed to collect data from 22 elders at the age group more than 60 years old who are also members of the 2 selected clubs from Bangkok area. The selected clubs have been set up for more than 10 years.

The research found: 1) There are both one-way communication and two-way communication found in the elderly's exercise clubs' communication process. The communication factors comprise of senders, group exercise leaders who are also in elderly state, receivers, the club members who are also in the retired age and concern on health and exercise, messages, the Qi gong or the Tuk mor slow dance movement and the exercise information together with dialogue between the group leader and members, communication channel, the exercise leader's movement, sound, motion picture and data which were sent to members directly and through new media such as YouTube and email. The communication process happened under the context that may assist in creating and strengthening the health empowerment club, such as health promotion trend and the popularity of exercising in public parks.

2) Since they have been operated as non-official health clubs, the club characteristics involved lenient rules and the only objective is to exercise together. These may result in relaxing when the elder members gather in the clubs. Although there is equality in the group participation, the members seem to maintain distant relations. There is once a year for members to gather together outside the club to enjoy fun activities. The majority come to club only on the purpose of exercising, thus they go back home right after the exercise lesson finishes or after short conversation with others.

3) Exercise teachers who have been unofficially appointed as the club leaders, are one of the most influential factors to create and strengthen the exercise clubs. Some exercise leaders were co-founders apart from being long time club members. The leadership characteristics that have been accepted by members are respectability, decisiveness, positive attitude, self-discipline, and continuity in exercise leading.

The research result is expected to benefit elderly group and the government as it can be the model to set up and manage sustainably elderly health empowerment club in Thailand with a satisfaction of elderly groups.

Keywords : Elders, Aging Society, Elderly's exercise, Elderly's health empowerment club, Health communication