

## BOOSTING MENTAL IMMUNITY FOR THE LIVES OF THE ELDERLY IN THE POST COVID-19 SOCIETY

Kantaphon Nuthongkaew<sup>1</sup> and Nattha Muansutha<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This article on "Boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society" has the following objectives: 1) To study the concept of mental immunity enhancement of the elderly. 2) To study the approach to boosting mental immunity for the lives of elderly people in society after COVID-19. 3) To present guidelines for the enhancement of mental immunity for the survival of the elderly in society after COVID-19, through the study of documents, textbooks, research papers, including various technological media and specific in-depth interviews from experts in mental health Buddhist psychology and leaders of the elderly. The results of the study found that boosting the mental immunity of the elderly is related to various interacting factors that allow the elderly to be able to restore their emotional and mental states and return to live balanced lives. Mental immunity is the mediator between mental characteristics, (personal behavior) family factors, as well as social and economic environmental factors. The guidelines for enhancing mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in society after COVID-19 will create mental fortitude for the person to create an awareness of living and to accept their condition. In fact, there are reviews, improvements, and lifestyle changes needed in order to create happiness for the elderly in the post COVID-19 society. The primary aspects of enhancing mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in society post COVID-19 are represented by 4 adjustments, namely, adjusting mood, adjusting thoughts, adjusting behavior, adjusting goals, together with the principles of positive thinking, and recognizing, checking, and managing.

**Keywords:** Boosting mental immunity, Elderly people, Post COVID-19 Society

### Introduction

The current world situation has health disasters that cause impacts on security, economy and society in many dimensions. With the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Thailand, it was found that although the COVID-19 disease has disappeared, the social situation after COVID-19 still has an impact the economy and society. Social and

mental health problems arise from fighting the epidemic over a long period of time. As a result, people experience stress, anxiety, mental health problems, and physical illnesses. People also become prone to emotional exhaustion affecting the occurrence of problems in the family, society and the country's economy (Department of Mental Health, 2022, p. 33). These conditions impact all age groups.

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor Dr., Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand.

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand.

E-mail: kantaphon\_27@hotmail.com, corresponding author

Received: 23 February 2023, Revised: 1 June 2023, Accepted: 30 June 2023

The elderly is an age group that can be stressed more than normal due to deteriorating physical conditions combined with a new way of life in the post COVID-19 era, resulting in stress causing a lot of depression in the world today. Therefore, the elderly are an age group that needs to be given special attention more than other ages because if there are problems, whether physical or mental, they will affect family members. This creates a wide range of economic and social burdens on family members and causes continuous effects in many stages. Mental resilience or mental immunity is the practice within the individual towards oneself and society in order to protect one's mind against the damage caused by the effects of hardships and severe events of life. The importance of mental immunity is that it gives a person the ability to face life-changing events that everyone must encounter without exception (Grotberg, 1995, p.71) and to manage to solve problems that affect both physical and mental health in a successful and healthy way.

Today's world is a world that has stepped into a completely aging society from changes in the structure of the population with birth rates and death rates continuously decreasing. It was found that since 1960, there has been an increase in the number of elderly people and this is expected to increase twice in 2025 to 14 million people in the total population (National Statistical Office, 2019, p.33). According to a survey and data collection on mental health of Thai people (Department of Health, 2020, p.67), it was found that most people had problems with stress and stress rates were related to age. The elderly are more prone to stress and mental health problems. From the document review textbooks and literature, it was found that the development of cognitive factors in building relationships and networking with peers society and family helps to develop one's own potential to have the ability to make decisions that can protect oneself. These are factors that can cause

a person to protect themselves from suffering, both physical and mental, and be able to adapt to live in a normal society. That is the factor of mental immunity (Resilience) (Department of Mental Health, 2022, p.64). In other words, it is an important protective factor that empowers individuals to learn to face life-changing events appropriately.

Mental immunity could be called willpower, mental strength. mental health power mental immunity It is a person's ability that is inherent in themselves and used when overcoming problems, obstacles or difficulties that arise which is what allows people to get through a crisis or bad situations and may turn crises into opportunities. They can elevate the mind in a better way after the event has passed with quick emotional and mental recovery, and be overwhelmed with sorrow. They can be flexible, well adapted, and able to return to normal life again (Nithiuthai, 2017, p.21 From the study of various textbooks on mental immunity, mental immunity variables have been used in various situations as a tool to develop mental skills and ability to live a life ready to face problems and deal with crises effectively. The results showed that components of mental immunity affected emotional intelligence, family atmosphere relationships with friends, social support and physical immunity helping change lives for the better (Pimpakarn, 2018, p.46). Mental immunity can be developed to a higher level through practice, and learning skills for positive behavior. This is mentally prepared to face every situation with confidence and be able to properly resist the problematic factors able to self-revive with the ability to return to normalcy quickly after facing difficult situations (Hoover, 2006; Luthans et al., 2007, p.23).

The current era of post COVID-19 society means the elderly have to face changes in social conditions and environment, including economic

conditions. The system of family and community institutions caused by the impact of the COVID-19 situation, there are both mental and physical affects, resulting in long-term chronic frustration, causing chronic anxiety. The person will not be able to reduce their anxiety by using old, familiar behaviors, leading to more psychological illness.

The important thing to deal with is preventing depression or other psychiatric problems that will occur in the future for the elderly. The author therefore saw that “Boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society” will benefit and generate knowledge about mental immunity for the elderly and also affect their well-being and elderly sustainably. The authors, therefore, conducted this study to meet the needs of developing a good quality of life for the elderly and creating a sustainable development in building health conditions for the elderly.

### **Instrument and Methods**

This academic paper is a study of primary sources and secondary sources, which consist of Thai Tipitaka, research papers, dissertations, thesis, textbooks, books, articles, information media, including in-depth interviews, By focusing on content related to concepts and guidelines for boosting mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society. The authors have established a research methodology for the implementation of the following steps:

1. The population and the sample were 5 persons with qualifications related to mental immunization for the living of the elderly in a post COVID-19 society, one monk who is an expert in specific fields related to research, 4 secular experts in Buddhism Psychology, an expert in mental health and psychology, a sociologist, and a leader of an elderly group There is a method for collecting data by using in-depth interviews from knowledgeable

people, qualified and experienced in research-related issues, 5 persons, classified as key Informants, will collect facts in depth to ensure that information is reliable.

2. For creation of data collection tools, the authors used an interview form which is structured (Structural In-dept Interview) as an interview using open-ended questions so that the interviewee who is the target group can express their thoughts freely. The question is broad and highly flexible and the interview form was created from the analysis. The content was synthesized from academic documents, books, and research papers, including principles from the Tripitaka to be relevant to the content according to the objectives in order to integrate the body of knowledge for this academic work.

3. For Instrument quality testing, the confidence of the interview tool was examined by bringing the interview tool to 3 experts to check their confidence (reliability) of field questions to get the most accurate and reliable information which the confidence (reliability) of the interview tool was equal to 1.

4. For the data collection process, the authors prepared a letter asking permission for an interview to contact for interview permission and went to the interview on the date and time convenient for the expert to give the interview. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews according to the questionnaires that were reviewed by experts to meet the research objectives perform data analysis. The researchers analyzed and synthesized the data obtained from the survey of primary data and field data obtained from in-depth interviews. The work was presented in order of the step by step method of narration in a qualitative format. After that, data was compiled and presented for the integration of knowledge about “Boosting mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society.” The data analysis method uses thematic analysis.

5. For data analysis, The researchers analyzed and synthesized the data obtained from the survey of primary data documents and field data obtained from in-depth interviews using thematic analysis and analysis techniques. Data in the document (document analysis) included the content in accordance with the components of the research objectives. Therefore, the research results are presented in sequence by descriptive method in a qualitative format. After that, data was compiled and presented for “Boosting mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society” in a new knowledge model.

## Results

In this study, data from all stages of the study were carried out according to the study objectives, operated in accordance with the conceptual framework of the study that defined to know the facts on each issue, analyzed and synthesized to present guidelines on “Mental Immunity Promotion for the Living of the Elderly in a Post COVID-19 Society”. The study results are as follows.

1. The concept of strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly is that the mental immunity of the elderly is a mental trait that consists of the ability to rely on self-reliance of the elderly to face problems and be flexible in adapting to survive in today's society. For the elderly to live a valuable life in society, they must have good self-immunity. Mental immunity is one of the features that will help prevent someone from being at risk of problems that threaten the mind or being stuck in a situation they can't handle. It is important to prepare the elderly to face the impacts and changes that occur in society, including being able to deal with various problems. Mental immunity will be the key to help the elderly live a quality life and create a balance of life.

For the analysis, the authors synthesize information in the form of documents, textbooks,

research, including in-depth interviews among experts in mental health. Buddhist psychology and the leaders of the elderly group found that the factors caused mental immunity promotion were factors related to personal behavior, family factors and social and economic factors. These factors stimulate the elderly and drive them to have the encouragement to live life in every dimension under the changing situations of every condition. In addition to the key factor in enhancing the mental immunity of the elderly, core factors involved in strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly are as follows; 1) Strengthening self-esteem. Self-esteem is a person's sense of self-worth that develops complete trust in themselves and others. 2 ) Enhancing individual abilities and a person's talent and feeling of success in life and work. Recognize that they have abilities and potential. 3) Realizing the potential for self-development and growth in dealing with the problems and obstacles faced effectively, and 4) Enhancing optimism. Optimism is a feeling of hope in life to overcome obstacles and to have a meaningful outlook on life. It is important to have goals and try to achieve them. It is important to provide encouragement and get support from outsiders. They should look at the problem constructively. Strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly is an action that makes the elderly mentally strong and able to have a good view and able to adapt and adjust the mind in order to quickly recover from problems. The building of mental immunity will be mental strength that does not come from internal factors of the person alone. It is also related to the environment or others and can develop in nature and interact with the person's environment. The concept of strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly will be the core of practice so that it can be applied at all levels for living according to changing situations. They should achieve a balance in life and be able to exist stably and sustainably under the changing social trends in the post COVID-19 era and

be ready to deal with the impact of change by relying on knowledge, prudence and caution in planning and executing life activities at every stage.

2. Guidelines for boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society include boosting mental immunity in the post COVID-19 society. This will help the elderly be able to live in a post COVID-19 society in balance, have a healthy way of life, which is an approach to strengthen the immune system. Psychology will bring together different concepts to promote mental immunity, which consists of concepts about the social environment, social behavior management, mental health management, ability to solve problems, and living an economically sustainable life. It will deal with factors within the individual which includes the mental and biological characteristics of a person and external factors which includes environment and social transmission. These two factors will be integrated to affect the well-being of the elderly (Stokols, 1996, p.33) and social-promoting behavior, i.e. cognitive and emotional processes (Eisenberg & Fabes, 2002, p.71). Mental health management involves continuous self-improvement, building positive relationships with different people, and having goals in life and self-acceptance (Ryff & Kayes, 1995, p.51). The ability to solve problems is social adaptation and involves the ability to handle stress and psychological problems (Dubow & Tisak, 1989, p.13). Living according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is to behave with moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity. (Office of the National Health System Reform Committee, 2006, p.77). These are guidelines for creating mental immunity for the survival of the elderly in a post COVID-19 society. The mental immunity enhancement guidelines for the elderly are in accordance with the information obtained from the analysis of in-depth interviews from experts. The mental immunity enhancement guidelines for the lives of the elderly in society after COVID-19 must start

with the management of prosocial behavior. The management process involves both internal factors and external factors in each person. It consists of mental attributes and external factors. It consists of environment and social transmission. These two factors need to be integrated to affect the physical and mental well-being of the elderly. Mental immunization approaches are cognitive processes. This is a mental health management for continuous self-improvement and create positive relationships in life for self-acceptance, awareness, and understanding in every situation. In order to produce practical results that can solve problems arising in all areas, the things mentioned above must be performed under the conditions of knowledge and morality as the basis of knowledge from various related academic fields. It is important to engage in planning and careful practice. Moral, which consists of raising awareness of morality, honesty and patient perseverance, conditions must be strengthened. All of the above are processes for physical development, behavior development, mental development, and intellectual development. It is important to accept and understand the things that happen and to be able to analyze according to the principles of reality with conscious thought and be able to plan and put into practice to achieve empirical results and a management process that matches the cause and has targeted results. The process of PDCA and PDSA can be elaborated as follows: 1) P means planning with the principle of awareness, seeing the cause of the problem 2) D means the recognition of the problem leading to the provision of management guidelines that match the causes of the factors 3) C or S means checking, analyzing the causes of the factors to find solutions that match the causes of the factors that occur by using a learning system, practice skills, and to apply life skills or life lessons as a learning base; and 4) A is management, which means taking action with mindfulness and use your intelligence to solve

problems. Adjusting emotions, adjusting thoughts, adjusting behavior and adjusting goals are important to create the power of the Thai word “UD, HUD, SU” (Tolerate, Resolve, Fight) (Department of Health, 2020, p.73) They can be used to enhance mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society as well as a sustainable learning plan.

## Discussion

The study on “Boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society” can be discussed as follows.

1. The concept of enhancing the mental immunity of the elderly will be the perspective of managing psychological well-being for the elderly by leveraging their own potential to use their self-reliance. Mental Immunity of the Elderly is a process to prepare the elderly to face the impacts and changes that occur in society as well as being able to deal with various problems. The concept of strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly is a concept that uses the principle of flexibility. The elderly should follow the middle way and not be careless in life, have sufficiency and be ready to deal with the impact of changes by being knowledgeable, prudent, and careful in planning and executing life activities. The results of the study are consistent with the concept of Patcharee Thungkaew (2020, p.12-13) which states that mental immunity is a person's ability to adapt when faced with a crisis situation. It helps to deal with problems, get through crises or bad situations, as well as to quickly restore the emotional and mental state to normal. Managing a person's mental immunity is to build a strong prevention, which is in line with the concepts of Kulthida Thienphati (2016, p.24) and Kwantida Pimpakarn (2019, p.287) who stated that mental immunity can be developed to a higher level by training in different environments and being trained

to live in stressful situations. A person can be mentally prepared to face every situation and have self-confidence. They can control their emotions and quickly return to a calm state when facing stressful situations. The mental immunity, if properly developed, will affect emotional intelligence, family atmosphere, relationships with other people, and social support. Mental immunity will help change life in a better way.

2. Guidelines for enhancing mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society should be developed so that the elderly can live a balanced life and wellbeing in post COVID-19 societies where the approach to mental resilience is to adopt positive concepts and management approaches related to behaviors and environmental factors using purposeful strategies, intelligent assessment emotional control and physical reactions. There should be a continuous management process to create an appropriate mental mechanism to create a protective barrier for the individual elderly. Strengthening the mental immunity of the elderly is a process for physical development, behavior development, mental development, and intellectual development. The elderly would be able to accept and understand the things that happen by analyzing situations according to the principles of reality with conscious thought, plan, manage, and put into practice to match to the cause and finally achieve empirical and targeted results. The process of PDCA and PDSA is to recognize, analyze and inspect and implement the results, which consistent the concept of Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) stating that the management of the process occurs psychologically. The underlying causes of the problem, i.e. problem-oriented management and emotion-oriented management are needed to be addressed through appropriate coordination mechanisms. The guidelines for enhancing mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post

COVID-19 society need to adopt Buddhist principles, enhancing mental immunity to create armor for the mind, as a guideline. The goal is to create mental immunity by creating problem solving skills for the elderly. This is in line with the concept of Somdej Phra Buddhakosachan (P.A. Payutto) (2019, p.84-89), stating that intellect gives people the opportunity to achieve wisdom. That is the light of Dharma, that is, Dharma creates wisdom. Buddhist doctrines show reality and teach to accept, not cling and to find the cause of problems and fix the problems. In conclusion, Guidelines for enhancing mental immunity for the living of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society provide 4 adjustments, which are adjusting mood, adjusting thinking, adjusting behavior, adjusting objective to create the power of the word “UD, HUD, SU” meaning tolerate, resolve, and fight (Department of Health, 2020, p.73) that can be used to balance life and create an appropriate life according to an individual.

## Conclusion

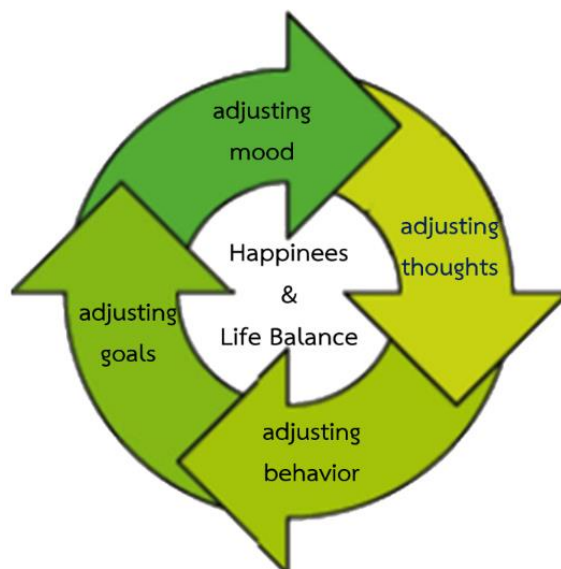
Boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society needs to integrate the concepts of the Social Environment, Social Behavior Management, Mental Health Management, the ability to solve problems, living according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in conjunction with the principles of Buddhism. It will enable the elderly to have a process of thinking and action along with an understanding of moderation. The elderly will be able to manage their own mental well-being through continuous physical and mental self-improvement while building positive relationships with different people, having goals in life, self acceptance, the ability to solve problems with social

adaptation and to deal with psychologically threatening problems. The process of living according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy should be practiced with moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity. (Office of the National Health System Reform Committee, 2006, p.77).

Boosting mental immunity for the lives of the elderly in the post COVID-19 society is carried out under the conditions of knowledge and virtue that are used as the basis for building a life shield through knowledge from various academic fields. Morality, honesty, and patient can boost the mental resilience of the elderly in a post COVID-19 society. This requires a process that creates a balanced life and develop the body, conduct, mind and wisdom to be able to accept and understand and analyze the reality and plan, manage, and put into practice to match to the cause and finally achieve empirical and targeted results. The 4 guidelines are adjusting mood, adjusting thoughts, adjusting behavior, and adjusting goals, which will create the power of the word “UD, HUD, SU” by by learning the way of thinking (head), accepting the truth from within (heart), taking action according to the goal (hand), adhering to the principle of determination of understanding, and integrating the principles of the Dhamma into practice (learning by doing + doing through activities + Activities Based on Understanding + Understanding on what life is) where every process must be connected seamlessly. It is within the framework of accepting or approving, understanding, acknowledging, analyzing, examining and taking action. It is important to reskills, upskills and develop new skills to find balance and create a happy life for the elderly. This can be summarized in the schematic diagram below;

## Schematic diagram

*Boosting Mental Immunity for the Living of the Elderly in the Post COVID-19 Society*



## References

Department of Mental Health. (2020). *Approach to recovery Foo your mind in the situation of viral disease outbreak*. Corona 2019 (COVID-19) (Combat 4th Wave of COVID-19: C4).

Retrieved 2020, December 31, from <https://shorturl.asia/WtHyA>

Department of Health. (2020). Mental health information of Thai people. Retrieved from [http://hp.anamai.moph.go.th/main.php?filename=index\\_th](http://hp.anamai.moph.go.th/main.php?filename=index_th). (in Thai)

Department of Mental Health. Ministry of Public Health. (2022). *Stress Relieve stress*. (Revised edition). 8th printing: Nonthaburi printing. (in Thai)

Dubow, E. F., & Tisak, J. (1989). The relation between stressful life events and adjustment in elementary school children: The role of social support and social problem-solving skills. *Child Development*, 60(6), 1412-1423.

Eisenberg, N., Guthrie, I. K., Cumberland, A., Murphy, B. C., Shepard, S. A., Zhou, Q., & Carlo, G. (2002). Prosocial development in early adulthood: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Personal Social Psychology*, 82(6), 993-1006.

Grotberg, H. E. (1995). *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit*. Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Hoover, 2006; Luthans et al., 2007, p.23 Hoover, A. J. (2006). *A study of study-athletes and coaches views on mental toughness*. Master thesis, M.A. (Art) Marietta. College Marietta College.

Lazarus, R. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. New york: Spriger Publishing company.

National Statistical Office. (2019). Trend of the Thai population. Retrieved from <http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014/Pages/home.aspx>. (in Thai)



- Nithiuthai, S., Jinnge, P. & Choocoom, O. (2018).  
Development of Stress Management Program for  
Lift Crisis of Older People in Elderly Welfare  
Houses. *Journal for Social Sciences Research*,  
9(2), 303-325. (in Thai)
- Office of the National Health System Reform  
Commission. (2006). *A guide to life: love the  
father, for the father to live with the principles of  
sufficiency economy*. Nonthaburi: Ministry of  
Public Health.
- Pimpakarn, K. (2019). The Effects of Integrated Individual  
Counseling to Strengthen the Mental Strength of  
Women Who Have Lost Their Husbands in the  
Unrest Situation in Southern Border Provinces.  
*Journal of Curriculum Research and  
Development*. 9(2), 284-307.
- Ryff, C. D., & Kayes, C. L. (1995). The structure of  
psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of  
Personality and social Psychology*, 69(4),  
719–729.
- Somdej Phra Buddhakosachan (P.A. Payutto). (2019).  
*Body heals from fever and suffering*. 15th  
printing. Publisher: Amarin Thamma. (in Thai)
- Stokols, P. (1996). Translating social ecological theory  
into guidelines for community health  
promotion. *American Journal of Health  
Promotion*, 10(40), 280 – 293.
- Thienpati, K. (2016). *Relationship between Mental  
Strength and Emotional Intelligence of Rugby  
Football Players*. Master of Science Thesis.  
Burapha University.
- Thungkaew, P. (2020). *Study and development of a  
model for enhancing mental immunity and  
restoring integrated physical and mental health  
of teachers and educational personnel on the  
basis of a new way of life*. Office of the  
Committee for Promotion of the Benefits and  
Welfare of Teachers and Educational Personnel  
(Office of the Commission Sor Sor Kor.), Ministry  
of Education.