

# Social Work Management for the Elderly

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Received June 25, 2018; Revised August 17, 2018; Accepted August 20, 2018

**Abstract** This article discusses the current status of social work management for the elderly from the situation of Thai Nguyen. The survey results show that in addition to the general policies of the state, Thai Nguyen province has issued many policies to support the organization and support of the elderly, such as purchasing their health insurance card, supporting for the elderly work officials. However, implementing policies and policies for elderly people in Thai Nguyen still have some shortcomings, which should be resolved in the coming time, for example: elderly people cannot buy cheap tickets when participating in traffic; a few elderly people have to wait so long for their social assistance and their longevity celebrations, which often come late; some elderly and poor people who are in difficult circumstances are sometimes forgotten to give social assistance. There are a number of factors that affect the management of social work for the elderly, such as policy and ability of managers, awareness of the authority, community and family, facility and budget for elderly work.

**Keywords:** *community service, elderly, manager, Thai Nguyen*

**Cite This Article:** Dinh Duc Hoi, "Social Work Management for the Elderly." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 6, no. 8 (2018): 1182-1187. doi: 10.12691/education-6-8-17.

## 1. Introduction

According to Mary Marshall, people living in social environment affect the social environment and then they also get the reserve impacts of the social environment on them. People are affected by the habitat - ecological environment, so the task of social official is to improve the environment, create favorable conditions for vulnerable groups in the society to access with social services easily, in addition to the efforts of the individual to have a better life [1].

Inheriting the tradition of the Vietnamese people, in the early years of preparation for the foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and "The unity statement to all the elderly" (June 1941), President Ho Chi Minh wrote, "In spite of your grey hair, dizziness, trembling hands, tired legs, a word of an old man influences from the state to the family, to the fatherland. The elderly has been responsible for being chiefs and having a great credibility for villages and neighbours. The elderly call, and the people respond; The elderly do, other people follow. Call what you should call, do what you should do! The rich give properties; the young contribute their strength, turn wind into storms, and steam into clouds. All of people in the country are raising their heads and waiting for the elderly" [2]. On May 10, 1995, the Vietnam Association of the Elderly was founded. On September 27, 1996, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued Directive No. 59-CT-TW on the health care for the elderly. The Directive stated "Caring for and promoting the role of the elderly is to show the good nature of the Vietnamese regime and ethics,

contribute to the strengthening of the national unity block for the objective of enriching people, a strong country, an equitable, democratic and civilized society". The Ninth National Party Congress stated "For the revolutionary elderly people, retired officials and the elderly with rendered services to our country, we must implement the gratitude and healthcare policy, improve the spiritual and material life in new conditions, meet the information requirements, promote the ability to participate in the political life of the country and social activities, to be good mirrors and educate ideals and revolutionary traditions for teenagers and the youth" [3].

Nowadays, the elderly in Vietnam is approximately over 10% of the population and is on the rising trend. They are the class who nurture and educate the descendants; protect the national traditions and patriotism. Taking healthcare, material and spiritual life and make good conditions for the elderly to promote their intellectual and living experiences in their families and in society is the responsibility of the Party, the State and the Community [4].

Vietnam has officially entered the stage of "aging population" or "old population" since 2012 (*the number of the elderly aged 60 accounts for over 10% of the total population*). Old population is an opportunity and a challenge for every nation. We have an opportunity to have a highly experienced, reputable, and responsible workforce; most of the elderly not only participate in labor, work actively for the rest of their lives but also are involved in unofficial employment such as taking care of children and doing household chores [5]. Increasing life expectancy is one of the greatest achievements of humanity, but it is also the challenge of today's society. Firstly, people's perceptions have not responded to aging

society and promoted the advantages of the elderly, considering them as the burden of society. Secondly, the social security system has not met the needs of the elderly, and the healthcare system for them is still limited, especially in the community. Moreover, changes in the age distribution will affect the economy through significant changes in the size and composition of the working-age population and the composition of individual consumption. Finally, the planning and policy making has not fully covered all problems of the elderly [6].

Based on the above issues, we have conducted a research on social work management for the elderly from the situation of Thai Nguyen province.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Subject and Methodology

#### 2.1.1. Subject

The managers from department level of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; officials working directly in the field of the elderly in social protection centers and in communes, wards and townships; the elderly living in social protection centers and in community of Phu Luong, Phu Binh and Thai Nguyen city in Thai Nguyen province.

#### 2.1.2. Methodology

In order to implement the above contents, we used a combination of research methods such as analysis - data synthesis, observation, questionnaires, and collection of experts' opinions, statistical-mathematical processing and sociological, statistical method.

## 2.2. Result

### 2.2.1. The Management of the Policy-making Process for the Elderly

Over the past years, the management of policy-making process for the elderly has achieved the following results:

- Promulgate the plan for implementation of the scheme on development of social work in Thai Nguyen province up to 2020 (2011).

- Establish provincial and district elderly work committees and being regularly strengthened to suit the practical situation; Establish the provincial and district elderly association representatives and the commune-level elderly associations.

- Issue a plan on training officials and civil servants of Thai Nguyen province in the 2016-2020 period.

- Support 30% of purchasing health insurance cards for the nearly-poor elderly households in the area, increase the total budget to support the purchasing of health insurance cards up to 100% for the poverty threshold in the area. By this policy, 100% of the poverty threshold elderly have been granted free health insurance cards instead of paying 30% monthly.

- Implement the monthly social assistance policy for the elderly in the community according to the provisions of Decree No. 136/2013 / ND-CP, and the elderly people being elite artisans who have difficult situations, stipulated in Decree 109/2015 / ND-CP.

- Adjust monthly nursing allowance at social protection centers which is now applied monthly meal allowance of 1.485.000 VND / person / month, higher than 405,000 VND / person / month compared with Decree 136/2013 / ND-CP (1,080,000 VND / person / month).

- Assign the level of remuneration for full-time leader positions in specialized associations. At provincial level, the chairman gets the salary coefficient of 4.0, the vice chairman gets the salary coefficient of 3.6 above base salary; At district level, the salary coefficient of 2.56 and coefficient 2.3 of base salary; At commune level, the chairman of the association gets 0.9 of the base salary, and the vice chairman of the association gets 600,000 VND/ person / month; the monthly allowance for the head of the elderly group at commune is 150,000 VND/ person/ month.

- Establish a fund to care for and enhance the roles of the elderly in Thai Nguyen province in the 2014-2019 period.

- Set the level of wishing longevity, giving money and presents for the elderly aged 70, 75, 80, 85, 95 and over 100 years old.

- Set the age determination for calculation of monthly social assistance according to the provisions of the Elderly Law aged from 60 years and 80 years or older for the elderly without documents that related to date of birth.

- Establish a non-public social protection center. (Huong Ha Nguyet social protection center).

- Invest in upgrading and expanding provincial social protection center, in order to raise the quality of the management and nurturing of social beneficiaries such as disadvantaged children, the elderly, the disabled and the people with severe disabilities. The capacity of the center will be increased from 130 people per year to 300 people per year, and additional functions of managing and nurturing the voluntarily elderly people will be provided.

- Establish a social work center under The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, with 04 professional divisions and this is level 2 center under Circular No. 18/2016 / TT-BLDTBXH.

- Set up the Social Work Department at Thai Nguyen A Hospital, the Social Work Department at Thai Nguyen Neurological and Neurosurgical Center, Social Protection Center; Social Work group at Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Hospital.

- Maintain the operation of legal aid centers (Department of Justice), legal aid branches and legal aid collaborators.

### 2.2.2. Human Resource Management in the Field of the Elderly

#### \* Human resources for management

Results of survey with 20 officials working at provincial and district level showed that:

Gender: 14 males, accounting for 70%; 6 females, accounting for 30%.

Age: under 30 years old (4 people), accounting for 20%; from 30 to under 40 years old (6 people), accounting for 30%; from 40 to under 50 years old (5 people), accounting for 25%; from 50 years old and above (05 people), accounting for 25%.

Professional training: social work (2 people), accounting for 10%; social psychology (2 people), accounting for

10%; social sciences (9 people), accounting for 45% and 7 people in other specialization, accounting for 35%.

When being asked about the level of participation in professional activities related to the elderly such as drafting documents, up to 50% of participants regularly perform; 45% of them regularly participate in propaganda activities; 40% occasionally participate in the implementation of projects related to the elderly; 30% regularly participate in monitoring and supervising the policy implementation of for the elderly.

\* *The direct Human resources provides social work services in centers and units under The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs*

Based on the survey with 20 social workers who have been working directly at the centers and agencies providing services to the elderly, the result showed that:

Gender: 5 males (25%), 15 females (75%).

Training level: intermediate level (15%); college degree (5%); college degrees or higher (80%).

Specialized training: The percentage of official with specialized training is right and suitable for social work, accounting for over 50%.

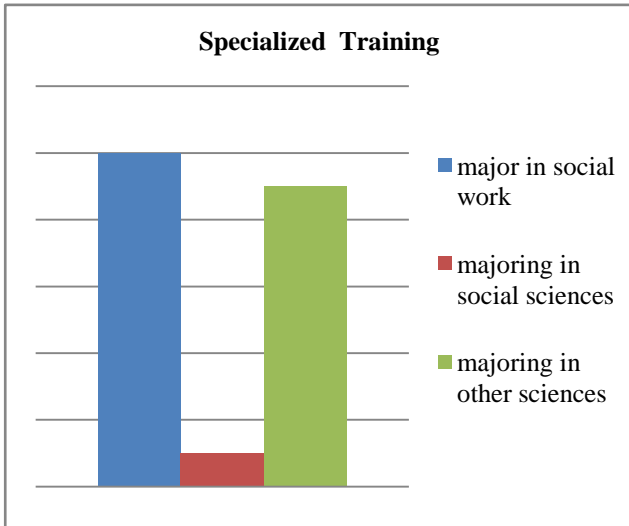


Figure 1. Specialization training of social workers

Age: under 30 years old (25%); from 30 to under 40 (45%); from 40 to under 50 (25%); from 50 to under 60 (5%).

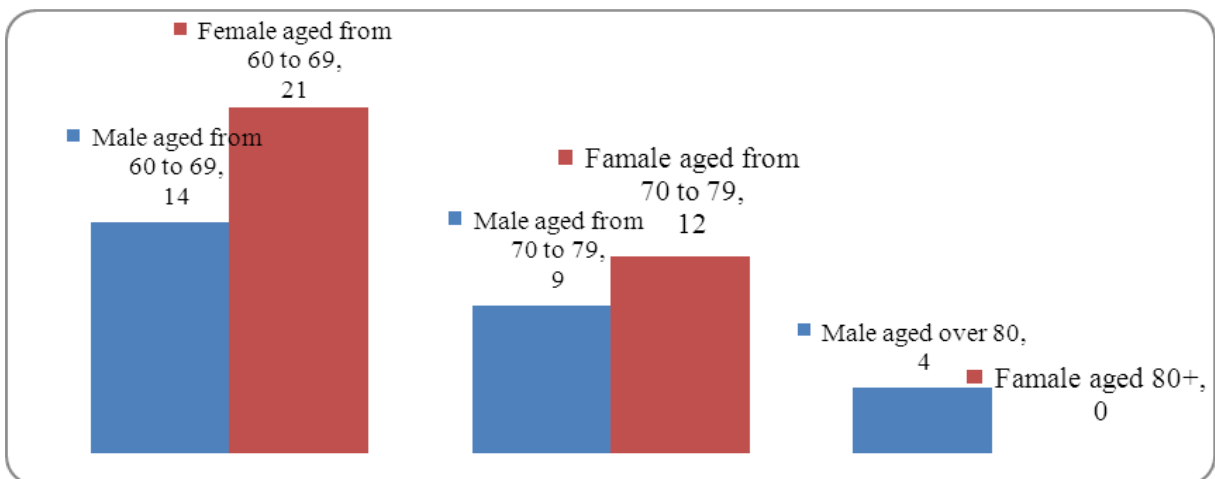


Figure 3. Age of the elderly

Working time: less than 5 years (25%); from 5 to 10 years (55%); more than 10 years (20%).

The above data showed that the social work official of The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs has the following strengths: the high rate of women (75%); having university degree or higher (80%) and having experiences in their work (50%); being trained in the right specialized field or in social work (over 50%).

### 2.2.3. Management of Elderly People

\* About the elderly living in the community:

In fact, the survey was **carried out with** 60 elderly people in Phu Luong district, Phu Binh district and Thai Nguyen city, the results showed that:

Gender: 27 males, accounting for 54%; 33 females, accounting for 46%.

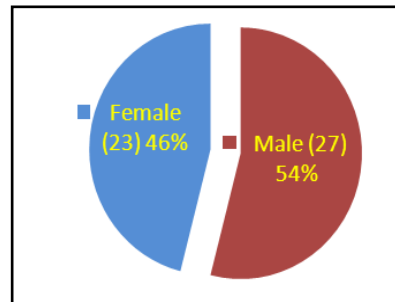


Figure 2. The proportion of the elderly by gender

*The age of the elderly:* There are big differences among the number of the elderly in terms of age ranges. While the number of the elderly aged 60 to 69, accounting for 58.33%, the number of the elderly aged 70 to 79, accounting for 35% and the number of the elderly aged 80 and over, accounting for 6.06%. Of 35 people in the age group 60-69, about 35% of female and 23.33% of male; 21 people aged 70-79, 15% of male and 20% of female, and 6.66% male aged 80 years and older.

About the elderly's marriage: 1 person has never married, accounting for 1.67%; 41 people married, accounting for 68.33%; 18 people whose wives or husbands died, accounting for 30%; It is special that of 18 people whose wives or husbands died, 05 dead people are female, accounting for 27,77% and 13 dead ones are male, accounting for 72,22%.

About the elderly's income: there are 20 old people who get monthly income from the pension, accounting for 33.33%; 3 people get monthly income from the meritorious services, accounting for 5.0%; 2 people have monthly income from social assistance, accounting for 3.33%; 28 people have income by part-time jobs, accounting for 46.67%; 6 people with main income from working as employees, accounting for 10%; 1 person whose monthly income is supported by his or her children in the family, accounting for 1.67%.

About the health status of the elderly: 43 old people said they had diseases, accounting for 71.67%; 6 people with severe diseases, accounting for 10%; 11 people are sure that they are really strong, accounting for 18.33%; 40 elderly people have had health insurance cards, accounting for 66.67%; and 20 people don't have health insurance card, accounting for 33.33%.

About the role of the elderly in their family: of 60 elderly people were asked, 33 people decide themselves the main work in their family, accounting for 55%; 30% of the elderly said that they often ask family members before deciding the main issues of the family; 11.66% of the elderly assigned their children to decide the main family work; **3,33%** elderly let their children decide but ask their parents for opinions.

In the interview, Dam Thi Hong Nhung, Deputy head of The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Dai Tu district, said that: *The elderly in the area were monitored in each hamlet and village by the elderly leaders of the hamlet and groups. However, through the implementation of policies for the elderly under the provisions of the Elderly Law showed that the elderly still have not been statistically monitored in time, leading to the slow implementation of some of the elderly work, for instance, longevity celebration, monthly social assistance; the completion of some paperwork for the elderly is still difficult due to the fact that most of the elderly were born during the war, so identification papers were lost or inconsistent*" [13].

#### 2.2.4. Management of Social Work Services for the Elderly

##### \* Healthcare services

Thai Nguyen has 35 subordinate medical units, including 3 provincial general hospitals, 5 provincial specialized hospitals, 7 district general hospitals, 2 district medical centers with the function of medical examination and treatment, 1 hospital belongs to Thai Nguyen University of Medicine and Pharmacy, 4 private hospitals in the area and 180 medical stations in communes, wards and towns.

According to evaluation in the implementation of healthcare for the elderly, there are some limitations as follows: the network of volunteers to help the elderly at the commune, ward and town levels has not been established; No clubs are founded for the elderly people with chronic diseases; No healthcare records have been done for 100% of the elderly in the area; Communes haven't granted funds from commune budgets for commune health stations and elderly associations to provide health care for the elderly at their places of

residence; the number of the elderly who are unable to be self-served increased in the local places because of their diseases.

##### \* Social Protection

According to data reported by The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Thai Nguyen province, the monthly social assistance for the elderly in the area has increased steadily in recent years.

**Table 1. Increasing Speed of the number of elderly people receiving social assistance (2010 - 2016)**

| Numerical order | Year | The number of the elderly receives monthly social assistance | Annual increasing Speed |
|-----------------|------|--|-------------------------|
| 1               | 2010 | 6.789  | 100                     |
| 2               | 2011 | 13.499   | 199                     |
| 3               | 2012 | 13.977   | 206                     |
| 4               | 2013 | 14.495   | 214                     |
| 5               | 2014 | 15.226   | 224                     |
| 6               | 2015 | 15.102   | 222                     |
| 7               | 2016 | 15.476   | 228                     |

Source: Report on the results of assistance from 2010-2016 (The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs).

The results of [Table 1](#) show that there has been a steady rise in the number of monthly social assistance subjects over the past few years, because the State has reduced the age of assistance from 85 to 80 years old and has not required poor household condition. It can be seen from the above data that the life expectancy of people as well as the living standard has been raised. Along with the increase in the number of subjects that will increase the professional activities in each sector, each level, each local place, that requires the local government to pay more and more attention in the direction of implementation the social assistance policy in the local places.

Regarding the situation of social assistance and the rate of elderly people getting social assistance ([Table 2](#)).

The results of [Table 2](#) show that: the rate of the elderly getting assistance, accounting for 43.74% of the total people who get monthly social assistance; Dong Hy district has the lowest percentage of the elderly receiving social assistance, accounting for 37.01%, and Phu Luong district is following with 39.95%; Thai Nguyen city has highest rate with 50.53%. There is a difference of 13.52% between the percentages of the elderly getting social assistance among the provinces compared with the percentage of the population.

At present, there are two social protection centers in Thai Nguyen province, and one of which is private. The elderly is managed and looked after in the public social protection center of the province. Policies are implemented in accordance with the Decree No.136/2013/ND-CP, and support levels are implemented in accordance with Decision No. 20/2015/QĐ-UBND dated on 21<sup>st</sup>, August 2015 by Thai Nguyen Provincial People's Committee.

**Table 2. The status of social assistance and the rate of the elderly getting social assistance in 2016**

| Numerical order | Districts, cities, towns | Total number of subjects getting assistance | Total number of the elderly getting assistance | Percentage of the elderly |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| 1               | Thai Nguyen city         | 4.546                                       | 2297   | 50,53                     |
| 2               | Song Cong city           | 1.524                                       | 654  | 42,91                     |
| 3               | Dinh Hoa district        | 3.699                                       | 1552   | 41,96                     |
| 4               | Phu Luong district       | 3.640                                       | 1454   | 39,95                     |
| 5               | Dong Hy district         | 3.094                                       | 1145   | 37,01                     |
| 6               | Vo Nhai district         | 1.695                                       | 759  | 44,78                     |
| 7               | Dai Tu district          | 7.135                                       | 2886   | 40,45                     |
| 8               | Pho Yen town             | 4.417                                       | 1932   | 43,74                     |
| 9               | Phu Binh district        | 5.815                                       | 2878   | 49,49                     |
|                 | Total:                   | 35.565                                      | 15.557   | 43.74                     |

Source: Report on the implementation of social assistance in 2016 – The Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs.

#### \* *Longevity celebration*

Based on the Elderly Law, the annual longevity celebration of the elderly is carried out and implemented; Thai Nguyen Provincial People's Committee has issued the regulation on gifts for each age level, celebrating longevity card for the elderly of each local level; making the recommended list of the elderly to hold longevity celebration every year; preparing budgets for the longevity celebration.

The results showed that for 5 year (2012-2016), the local places have implemented the longevity celebration for 60.523 elderly people with the amount of 10.110 million VND; 194 of them are 100 years old, 3.879 of them are 90 years old, and 56.838 of them are at the age of 70,75,80,85 and above 100.

However, through the longevity celebration, there are some problems in managing and monitoring the elderly in the community. The elderly people who are not members of Vietnamese Association for the Elderly are not fully in the recommended list for longevity celebration. The payment contents for longevity celebration are not implemented comprehensively. The organization of longevity celebration is not implemented in the right procedure.

Thus, it can be seen that Thai Nguyen province has been gradually establishing and developing social work services for the elderly in the area. In order to make these services more sustainable and professional, the awareness, the concern and support of local authorities is needed to develop other social services to meet the increasing needs of the society.

#### **2.2.5. Factors Affecting the Management of Social Work for the Elderly**

##### *a) Institution- policy*

The documentary system of guiding the implementation of the Elderly Law has been issued in a relatively comprehensive. However, some documents have been issued late and then they are late to be implemented. This has made them difficult for local places in the implementation process. Some policies are not suitable,

for example, people must be at the age of 80 or more are eligible to consider getting assistance, and the assistance level of 270,000 VND/ person/ month is too low. The regulations on the exemption of transport charges at cultural and recreational centers are not highly enforceable due to the lack of supervisions or incentive measures and monitoring mechanisms.

##### *b) Ability and qualifications of managers*

Ability and qualifications of managers affected the implementation of the Elderly Law and related policies, at the commune level, 11 out of 30 people stated that ability and qualifications have influence, accounting for 36.66%; then 8 out of 11 people have never participated in drafting documents, accounting for 72.71%, and 1 person participated occasionally (12%); the rest 3 people did not have comments, accounting for 37.5%; Of the 11 influenced respondents, only 3 people had participated in social work workshops and seminars, accounting for 37.5%. At the provincial and provincial level, 14 out of 20 people said that Ability and qualifications have influence, accounting for 70%, of which 8 people regularly participated in drafting documents, accounting for 57.14%; 03 people occasionally and 03 had no opinion, accounting for 42.85%; Among 14 respondents, there were 11 people attended training courses and social work workshops, accounting for 78.57%

##### *c) The Awareness of government, community and families*

The results of the survey on 70 people show that awareness and action of different governmental levels have a great influence on the implementation of policies; 65% of managers at provincial and district levels believe that governments at all levels do not participate; the same opinion for official in the centers is 75% and at the commune level is 36.67%. Thus, it can be seen that if the State policies don not received the attention of the authority level, they may not be implemented and in the process of implementation without any attention, the performance of policies will not be successful as expected.

##### *d) Facilities and budget*

The results of the survey on 70 people show that the current facilities have not met the requirements; 80% of

official at provincial and district levels believe that there is a lack of facilities for implementing the law on the elderly; At the commune level, 73.33% and 100% at the centers that provide social work services have the same attitude. About the budget, 100% of provincial and district officials said that annual budgets were not enough and 80% at commune level and 78% at centers have same attitude.

### 3. Conclusion

The management of social work for the elderly from the reality of Thai Nguyen is manifested in four aspects: management of policy making for the elderly; Human resource management in the field of the elderly; Elderly management; and management of social work services for the elderly. The results of the survey showed that: Through researches, the guidelines and policies of the Party and State have been implemented comprehensively in Thai Nguyen.

However, implementation of policies for the elderly in Thai Nguyen province also shows that there are some shortcomings and limitations that need to be resolved in the coming time such as the elderly who have not been exempted or reduced fare for attending traffic; a few elderly people at the age of getting social assistance and age to be given longevity celebration, but these things are not in time, some of them are just forgotten; elderly people with poor background (below the poverty standard, poverty threshold) have not received social assistance. The causes of the above-mentioned shortcomings show that, apart from the lack of attention of the party committees, authorities and families, there is another key element - the lack of social local officials.

The research results will be a suggestion for social work managers to work out solutions to promote the development of social work as well as to apply social work in interactions and support the elderly as well as other subjects in society.

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