CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES, OPERATIONAL

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is comprised of research questions, objectives and operational definitions and conceptual framework.

3.1 Research Questions

This study aims to develop the model to strengthen social support among elderly people. Therefore, situation analysis and data collection are required to develop the model, strategies and intervention plan. Research questions in this study are as follows;

1. What are the elderly people's characteristics (socio demographic, social network and integration, and health characteristics)?

2. What are the levels of perceived social support and factors?

3. What are the elderly and their social network perspectives, needs in addressing social support among the elderly?

4. What is the strategy, which combines quantitative and qualitative information in the development of intervention, to strengthen social support among elderly people?

3.2 Study Objectives

3.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this project is to develop the plan to strengthen social support among elderly people in Khon Kaen Province through evaluation.

3.2.2 Specific objectives

To answer research questions and achieve the general objective, the specific objectives are set to;

1. to assess the elderly characteristics in four areas; socio demographic characteristics, social network, social integration, and personal health characteristics,

2. to assess the level of perceived social support and factors among elderly people,

3. to determine the data about the elderly people, their social network and community organizations, in terms of activities, needs, in addressing social support among the elderly,

4. to develop the plan, that combines quantitative and qualitative information for the development of intervention, to strengthen social support among elderly people.

3.3 Operational definitions

Elderly

In this study, elderly is defined as people are 60 or older than 60 years old by which following the Thai National Elderly Plan II 2002-2021 and the age of

full retirement benefits from social security of Thailand and UN's definitions (WHO, 2006).

In addition, for more detail explanation, this study divided the elderly people into two group: (1) young old refers to the elderly people who are 60 to 69 years old, (2) old-old refers to elderly people who are 70 and older than 70 years old.

Social support

The elderly social support by definition is the elders' perception of available support from others in terms of needs, i.e., the extent to which the elder's believe he/she can find the kind of support he/she want.

Thus, social support in this study refers to

(1) Availability of personal resources

(2) Social support needs

(3) Perceived social support which is divided to 5 dimensions (Weinert & Brandt, 1987), the indication that one is valued (Worth), that one is an integral part of a group (Social Integration), the provision for attachment/intimacy (Intimacy), the opportunity for nurturance (Nurturance), and the availability of information, emotional, and material help (Assistance).

The using of perceived social support caused more persistently and powerfully related to health and well being than the objective measures (receiving actual support).

Elderly people's characteristics

Elderly people's characteristic refers to a group of individual characteristics which are included;

- **Socio demographic characteristics** which are measured in this study are age, gender, education and income.

- **Social network characteristic means** the elderly web of social relationships. The study focuses on the importance of social network of the elders; family members, friends, community organization staff characteristics, size, type and frequency of contacts.

- **Social integration characteristic** refers to the participation of elderly people in a broad rang of social relationships which are measured by;

  - family relations (marital status and living arrangement),

  - non-family relations (working status),

  - formal social interactions (organizational participation)

  - informal social interactions (visiting children, visiting friends, going to temple, going to market)

- **Elderly people's health characteristics** is defined as elderly people's health status, which are measured by;

  - perceived health status which is evaluated by the elders

  - chronic diseases

  - stress which is measured by the Adults Stress Test (Holmes & Rahe, 1967).

Elderly social network

Elderly social network means family members and people who undertaking responsibilities for the elders care. In this study, it refers to family caregivers, i.e. spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, relatives, and close friends. The elderly social network is invited to give information about elderly people's activities, needs and problems to develop senior social support.

Community organizations

Community organizations are composed of various groups that were initiated by the community for certain objectives; for example, community elderly club, community leaders, community health volunteer, community health staff, and community staff for sub-district administration organization.

Social support activities

Social support activities refer to the activities that the social network of elderly people and related organizations conduct for them. These activities are measured by the qualitative techniques, such as in-depth interview.

Social support needs

In this study, social support needs refers to the elderly, elderly social network and organizations perspective which combined real needs and felts needs (SIL International, 1999). The study is designed to survey both real and felts needs and problems. Thus, the questions were asked about the social support needs and problems, including their opinions about needs and problems of the elderly social support activities. The study attempts to find out their objectives and perceived needs.

Community empowerment

Community empowerment refers to an approach for enabling community to strengthen its capacity and confidence, to succeed in development by utilizing their own resources and help other partnership organizations to accomplish strengthening perceived social support among the elders. The expectations of this approach are decision making of social support activities, developing the strengthening social support project by sharing responsibility and resources. Thus, this study could be applied to the strategies of community empowerment and community empowerment evaluation of Fetterman et al. (1996) which are 6 steps as follows;

1. assessing community concerns and resources by using the empowerment group strategies: community forum and AIC

2. setting a mission and objective

3. developing strategies and action plan

4. monitoring process and outcome

5. communicating information to relevance audience,

6. promoting adaptation, renewal, and institutionalization

The role of researchers is the supporters who facilitate and survey senior social support situation to provide information to the community forum and conduct dialogue, consultation, and using AIC techniques for capacity building and raising awareness to the community members. Moreover, the monitoring and evaluation of empowerment are added in all processes.

3.4 Conceptual Frame Work

A multi approach to empower community initiatives for strengthening social support among the elders by evaluation, is modified by integrating from the a concept model of how social network impact health (Berkman et al., 2000) social support determinants (Cornman et al., 2001), Community empowerment, community partnership, community empowerment evaluation.

The study attempts to survey social support activities by gathering data in all perspective needs and problems of the elders, the elderly social network, and community organizations which are the important parts to reveal the gaps and fragmentation between receivers and providers. In addition, perceived social support and factors were assessed regarding to situation analysis of its level. The related factors also are the important issue to be developed the program social support strengthening. Moreover, the macro factors (social environment such as socio economic, elderly health policy, culture and norm) were assessed to find the opportunity and threat of the project. All kinds of the data are collected in both qualitative and quantitative technique that is the systematic study by research methodology. The findings will be used for the community empowerment process that expected for the elderly satisfaction on social support perceived, better well being and QOL and strengthening social support among the elderly social support program were evaluated for the further development in at last.

However, due to the time and budget constrains, this study will focuses on development of intervention to strengthen social support among elderly people. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 12.

Dissertation

Proposed

Social environments
✓Socio economic,
✓Elderly health policies
✓National elderly policy
✓Culture
✓Norm

The elderly
✓**Socio-demographic data**: age, gender, education, income
✓**Social network characteristics**: social network sources, social network range, and social network ties
✓**Social integration characteristics**: family relation, non family relation, formal social interactions and in formal social interaction
✓**Personal health characteristics**: perceived health status, chronic diseases, stress

Elderly, elderly social network and community organizations perspectives:
✓ Activities
✓Needs and problems addressing social support among the elderly

↦ Perceived social support level among the elders

↦ Factors related to perceived social support among the elders

↦Perceived Social support unmet needs

↦Existing social support problems and gap among the elders

Intervention

Community Strengthening Social Support among the Elders Project

Implementation

Evaluation

Evaluation of the goal:
(1) Social support satisfaction
(2) Improving health behavioral
(3) Better QOL

Evaluation and monitoring of the empowerment process and community partnership
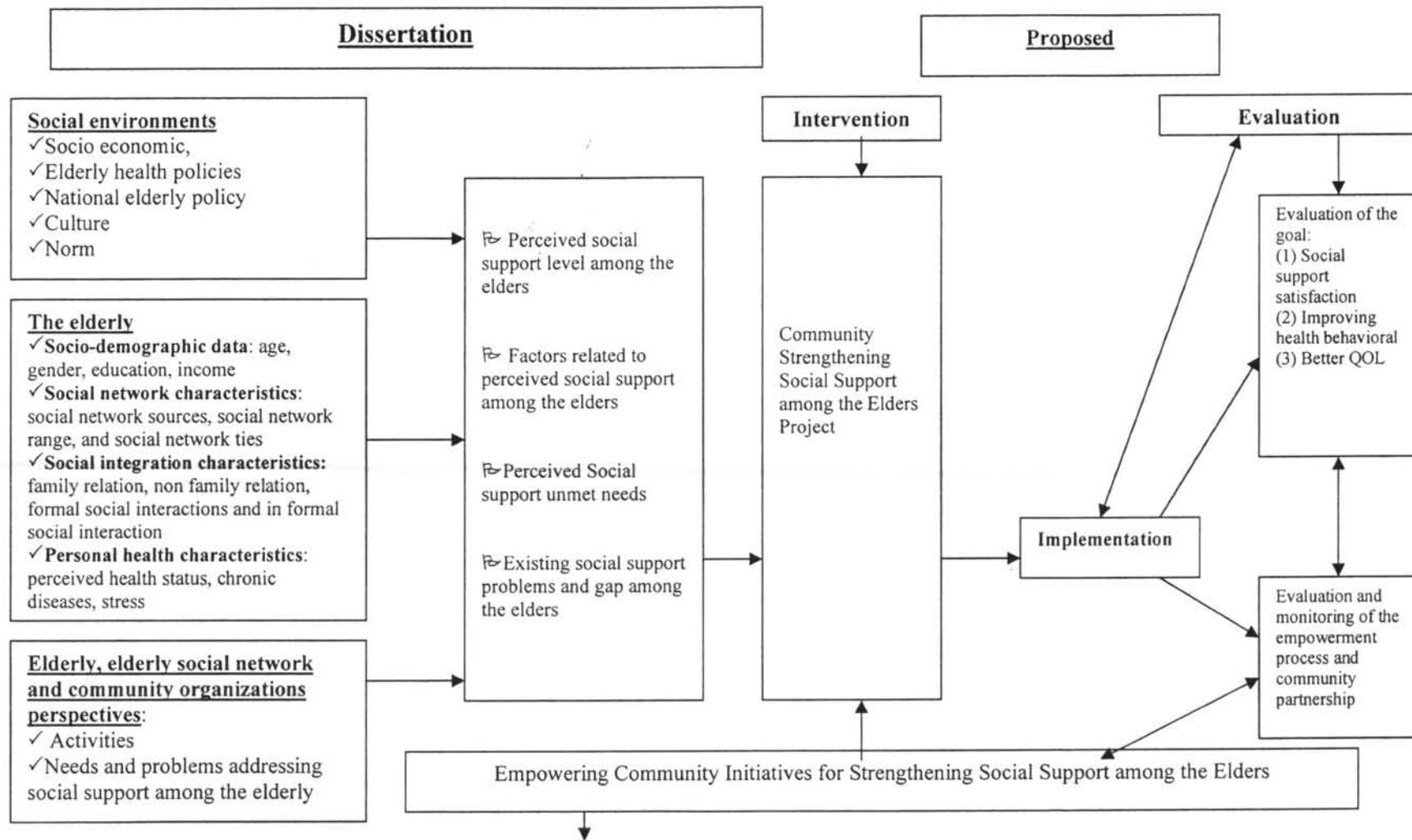
Empowering Community Initiatives for Strengthening Social Support among the Elders

Figure 12: Conceptual Framework of Research