

Rationale

Is happiness good for the health of older persons? Is health good for happiness of older persons? These two important questions are worth to study in the face of population ageing. Globally, people live longer than ever before. This longevity should bring about healthy years to live. WHO defines that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Therefore, happiness and health (commonly referring to physical health) are within the same definition of health.

Today many people can expect to live beyond 70 years old. Many Asian countries follow this trend and even lead the trend of population ageing in this century. As people live longer, physical health becomes an important issue for the older persons. Furthermore, WHO defines Healthy Ageing “as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age”. Additionally, functional ability is about having capabilities that enable all people to be and do what they have reasons to value. This includes a person’s capability to meet their basic needs, to learn, to grow and to make decisions, to be mobile, to build and maintain relationships; and to contribute to society. This scientific group will examine issues within this boundary.

Psychological health is considered an underlying issue for physical health and it remains understudied. One of the most crucial questions in ageing studies is whether older persons can live in good health and be happy. Being healthy and happy can be the most important state people are looking forward to when they become old, though health and happiness may or may not be correlated to each other.

Some studies in more developed countries found that happiness is good for the health. Happy people live longer (Chei et al., 2018 and Veenhoven, 2008) because happiness provides protection to the physical health. Lawrence et al. (2015) examined happiness and longevity in the US and found that very happy persons have the lowest risk of death. If expectancy of life is differentiated between active and happy life, Yang (2005) found that people in the US have longer happy life expectancy than active life expectancy. Frijters and Beaton (2012) examined the relationship between happiness and age and the findings showed that happiness increases at around the age of 60 and then decline after 75 years old.

On the other hand, poor physical health can cause unhappiness and poor health increases mortality (Liu et al. 2016). Previous reports of reduced mortality associated with happiness could be due to the increased mortality of people who are unhappy because of their poor health. Also, unhappiness might be associated with lifestyle factors that can affect mortality. However, the number of studies linking happiness and health among older persons in Asia in particular is still very limited. This scientific group will bring together researchers from some Asian countries to develop and empirically investigate and evaluate the existing data whether information on happiness and health among older persons in Asia exist. Limiting our study in Asia where ageing population is mostly undergoing within the context of low and middle income countries, except Japan, will enable the group to contribute better understanding on this issue at the last passage of life.

This scientific group will bring the awareness of happiness in old age as part of well-being, discuss and compare (if possible) the measurements of both health status and happiness among the members' countries of interests, and discuss further possible improvement. The group proposes that Asia Population Association is the most suitable platform to establish this type of study.

Team members

No.	Name	Role	Affiliation	Country of interest	Gender
1	Evi Nurvidya Arifin	Coordinator	Universitas Respati Indonesia	Indonesia	Female
2	Yusnani Mohd Yusof-Kozlowski	Co-coordinator	Centre for Advanced Research (CARE), Universiti Brunei Darussalam	Brunei	Female
3	Rossarin Gray	Member	Mahidol University, Thailand	Thailand	Female
4	Osuke Komazawa	Member	ERIA (Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia), Jakarta	Japan	Male
5	Sabu Padmadas	Member	University of Southampton, United Kingdom	India, China and UK	Male

Activities:

This scientific group plans to conduct two meetings in Brunei Darussalam. Each lasts for two days and **will be funded**, including travelling cost, by the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

The first meeting will be in April 2020. The purpose is to have an intensive sharing session among research team members about their research work on happiness and health among older persons using the existing data in their respective countries. In addition, the team members will discuss the publication plan and further research proposal for the following years. This discussion will be conducted in the first day. The second purpose is to organize a public forum for the speakers (team members and local experts) to share their research findings and best practices from their studies on ageing for Bruneians to build local capacity. This public forum will be conducted in the second day.

This group will also participate in the APA conference in November 2020 by proposing a panel on “Happy and Healthy in Old Ages”, where each member will give a presentation. Each member **should find their own expenses** to come to the conference.

The Second meeting will be conducted again in Brunei Darussalam in August 2021. Likewise, the format of the activities will follow the first one. First day is for the group meeting to discuss further results and the publications as well as further research agenda. The second day is a sharing session for a public forum presentation by the members of the group and Brunei’s ageing experts. The second meeting **will also be funded**, including travelling cost, by the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Outcomes:

The Scientific group will become a platform for members to build an academic collaboration and to work, network and share their findings and concerns about well-being in older ages. The delivery will be publications in international peer-reviewed journals, twice public forums in Brunei Darussalam and a special session in APA conference.

References

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