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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PERFORMANCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AT CARE CENTERS IN HANOI

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#### Abstract

Elderly people need care from health to basic needs for their daily lives. Needs for social care, safety and security, attention, love, and respect are some of the needs to be adequately addressed. It is an inevitable trend to develop social support services to assist disadvantaged groups. For the highest performance, the system of social support services is influenced by many different factors and in different dimensions, such as (1) laws/policies, (2) service providers, (3) the elderly's family; and (4) the elderly themselves. Stakeholders have made many recommendations to improve the service performance and quality as well as better satisfy the needs of the elderly. Through an assessment of the influence of those factors, the authors proposed solutions for enhanced quality and performance of the elderly care services in Hanoi City.

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#### Introduction:-

Vietnam has observed the increasingly developing and professional social support services to better meet the elderly's needs in society in recent years. Among professional social work services under Circular No. 02/2018/TT-BLDTBXH, some available at care centers are facilities are (1) Consulting and counseling service; (2) Legal aid service; (3) "Supporting the elderly in the integration" service; and (4) Communication service. Thanks to these services, the elderly living in care centers have better access to information and integrate into the community.

An investigation was conducted at two public centers (Social Protection Center 2 Hanoi and Social Protection Center 3 Hanoi) and two private centers (Dien Hong Nursing Home and Bach Nien Thien Duc Elderly Care Center). Four groups of factors influencing the service quality and performance, consisting of (1) laws/policies, (2) service providers, (3) the elderly's family, and (4) the elderly themselves, were assessed. Besides assessing the extent of influence, opinions from the elderly, social support workers, and leaders of centers were collected as a basis for some suggestions and solutions.

#### Literature Review On The Elderly Care Services

Care centers' services belong to an on-demand service delivery system on a regular and as-needed basis. There is currently a diversity of social support services for the elderly at care centers. This article just investigates the following service groups (1) Consulting and counseling; (2) Legal aid; (3) Supporting the elderly in the integration; and (4) Communication (Table 1)

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**Table 1:-** Some social support services for the elderly currently living at care centers.

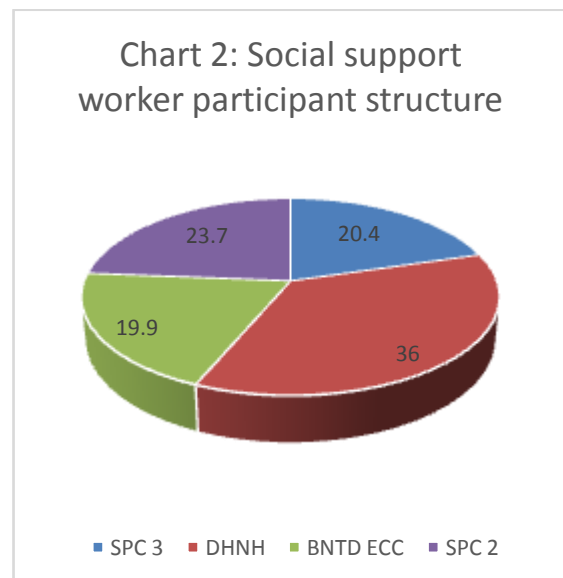
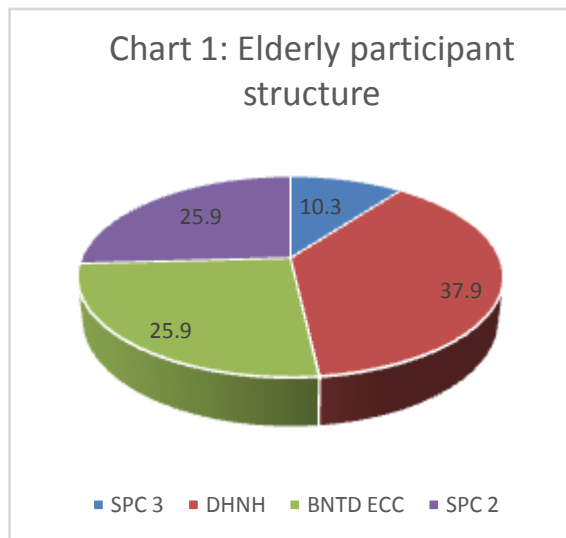
LIST OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES	
Service 1	<b>Consulting and counseling</b>
1.1	Consulting on health care, health examination, and rehabilitation directly at the centers
1.2	Consulting on care for the elderly under health examination and treatment at the hospital
1.3	Psychological counseling for the elderly
1.4	Psychological counseling for the elderly’s family
Service 2	<b>Legal aid</b>
2.1	Assistance in the procedures for entry to and exit from centers
2.2	Rendering of legal consultancy on inheritance, transfer, and property settlement
Service 3	<b>Supporting the elderly in the integration</b>
3.1	Supporting the elderly in the integration with other peers living in the centers
3.2	Supporting the elderly in the integration with their families and community
3.3	Supporting the elderly in participating in sports practice
3.4	Supporting the elderly in participating in entertainment activities
Service 4	<b>Communication</b>
4.1	Communication on the introduction of care centers and services for the elderly
4.2	Communication about the right of the elderly and their families to access the information
4.3	Communication about rights and obligations of care and reduction of discrimination against the elderly
4.4	Communication about resource mobilization

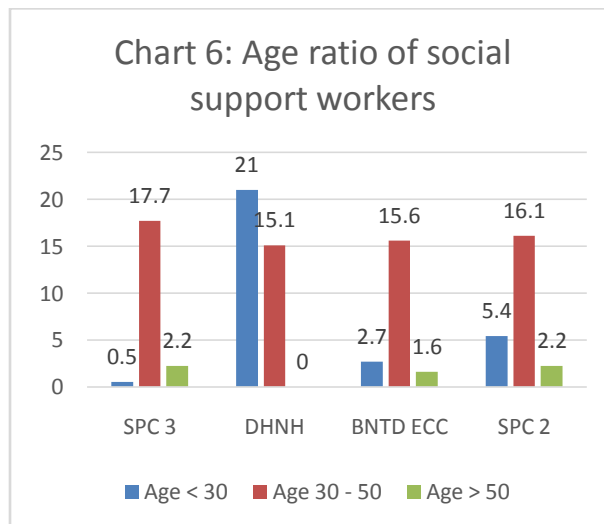
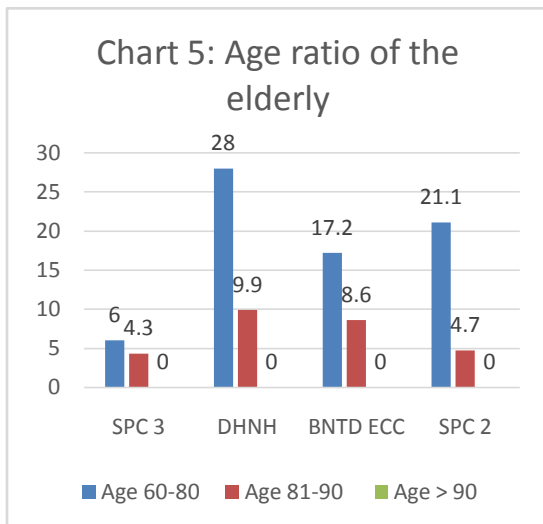
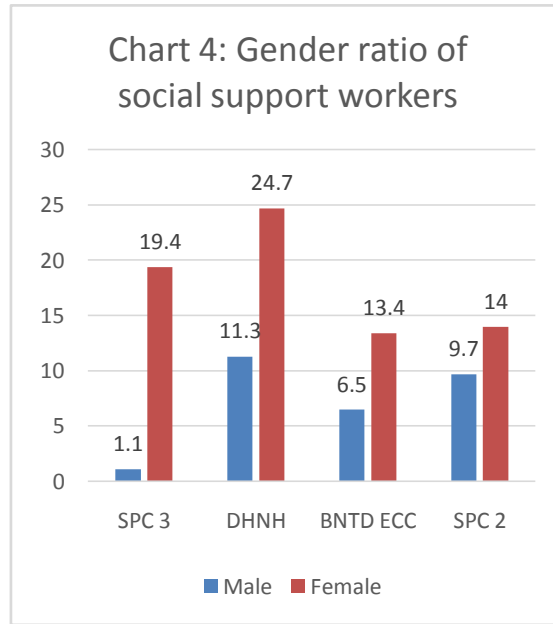
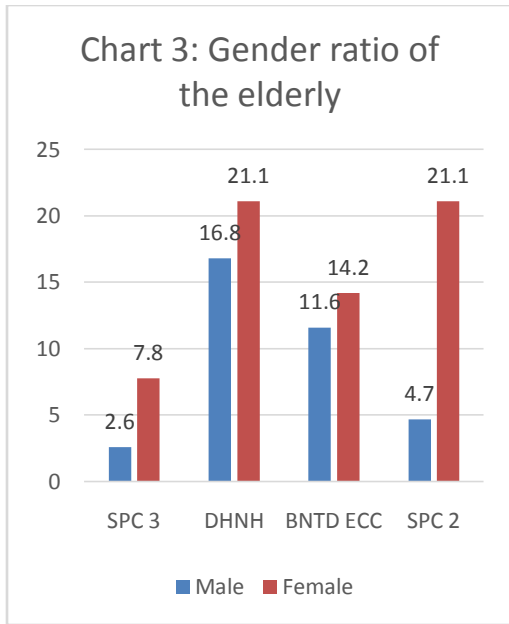
**Methodology:-**

An investigation was carried out at four care centers for the elderly: Social Protection Center 3 Hanoi (SPC 3), Dien Hong Nursing Home (DHNH), Bach NienThien Duc Elderly Care Center (BNTD ECC), and Social Protection Center 2 Hanoi (SPC 2).

Target participants were **232 elderly people and 186 social support workers**.

**Table:-** Participant structure.





Collected data were processed quantitatively using SPSS.22.0 software. A scale of the influencing factors with the average score and standard deviation of the answers was employed. The influence was assessed on a scale of 1-5, of which 1 indicates the highest and 5 means the lowest level of influence.

Statistical results were analyzed on the scale below:

1. From 1.0-2.5: The influence of factors is at a high level
2. From 2.5 to 3.5: The influence of factors is at a medium level
3. From 3.5-5.0: The influence of factors is at a low level

### Service performance influencing factors

#### Laws/policies

Taking care of the elderly is always one of the top concerns of the Party and State. An abundance of legal documents, by-law documents, policies, and service programs for the elderly have been developed and initiated by the State over the years. Several social support documents and policies include:

1. Decree No. 67/2007/ND-CP dated 2007, stipulating support policies for social protection beneficiaries;

2. Decree No. 13/2010/ND-CP dated February 27, 2010, supplementing a number of articles on support policies for beneficiaries under Decree No. 67/2007/ND-CP;
3. Decree No. 136/2013/ND-CP dated October 21, 2013, promulgated by the Government, on social support policies for social protection beneficiaries;
4. Decree No. 20/2021/ND-CP, on social support policies for social protection beneficiaries, including new provisions in Paragraph b, Clause 1 of Article 24 regarding the poor elderly without or with persons who have the support obligation and right;
5. Circular No. 29/2014/TT-BLDTBXH-BTC dated October 24, 2014, guiding the implementation of certain articles of the Government's Decree No. 136/2013/ND-CP dated October 21, 2013, on social support policies for social protection beneficiaries;
6. Circular No. 21/2011/TT-BTC dated February 18, 2011, promulgated by the Ministry of Finance, on the management and use of funding for primary health care at the place of residence; longevity wishing ceremonies, praise and reward for the elderly;
7. Circular No. 127/2011/TT-BTC dated September 9, 2011, promulgated by the Ministry of Finance, on the fees for visiting cultural and historical relics, museums, and scenic spots for the elderly;
8. A legal basis, including a system of policies/laws, is vital for care centers to create and develop social support services. Subject to legislation, care centers are set up with properly qualified staff and choose to provide services suitable to the elderly's needs.

The investigation results indicate the level of influence of laws/policies, with a score of 2.13-2.92. It is found that social support workers assessed the influence of laws/policies at 2.13, higher than that given by the elderly at 2.92.

**Table 2:-** Assessment by the elderly and social support workers on the influence of laws/policies.

No.	Influencing factors	Highest level of influence	Lowest level of influence	Assessed by the elderly		Assessed by social support workers	
				Rate	Standard deviation	Rate	Standard deviation
<b>1</b>	<b>Laws/policies</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	2.92	1.278	2.12	1.033
1.1	State's health support policy	1	5	2.84	1.247	2.08	1.060
1.2	State's funding support policy	1	5	2.97	1.241	2.04	1.119

Source: Investigation data

As shown in the table above, the level of influence of the State's funding support policy was assessed lower at 2.04 by social support workers compared to 2.97 as assessed by the elderly. This is because social support workers are more aware of support policies and their significance, especially those for the elderly living in care centers. In addition, many elder people living in private centers get almost help from their families, so they do not pay attention to these State policies.

### Service providers

Service provider-associated factors are considered to significantly influence the lives of the elderly in care centers in different aspects. They almost directly affect the elderly and the quality of social support services they receive. The elderly and social support workers assessed the influence of service provider-associated factors at a high level, ranging from 1.37 - 1.88.

**Table 3:-** Assessment by the elderly and social support workers on the influence of service providers.

No.	Influencing factors	Highest level of influence	Lowest level of influence	Assessed by the elderly		Assessed by social support workers	
				Rate	Standard deviation	Rate	Standard deviation
<b>2</b>	<b>Service providers</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	1.85	.732	1.72	.870
2.1	Management practices	1	5	1.88	.780	1.71	.907
2.2	Facilities and living equipment	1	5	1.65	.699	1.71	.919

2.3	Regulations of service providers (visits, service fees, etc.)	1	5	1.86	.812	1.62	.831
2.4	Responsibility and discipline of the staff	1	5	1.85	.855	1.44	.705
2.5	Work dedication of the staff	1	5	1.70	.812	1.37	.647
2.6	Professional qualifications of the staff	1	5	1.66	.716	1.61	.758

Source: Investigation data

According to social support workers, the staff's dedication, responsibility, and discipline influence the performance of social support services at the highest level, with an average assessment score of 1.37 and 1.44, respectively. This obviously makes sense because the work dedication and effort to approach the elderly increase the quality of the elderly care work.

Meanwhile, the elderly underrated the influence of management practices at the service providers on services, with an average score of 1.88. This can be easily explained by the reason that regulations of service providers are almost similar and fundamentally very favorable for service performance.

### The elderly's family

Two groups of the elderly, consisting of those living in public and private centers, were considered while assessing the influence of the elderly's family. It is investigated that most of the elderly living in public centers have no relatives and families around them apart from distant relatives but have lived alone for many years. This group does not frequently get in touch with their family members. Meanwhile, most of these elderly living in private centers have children and families and are still cared for by their families. There are different reasons for their living in such centers. For example, because their family members live and work far away, stay abroad, or are too busy with their jobs, they send their grandparents and parents to such centers for better care.

**Table 4:-** Assessment by the elderly and social support workers on the influence of the elderly's family.

No.	Influencing factors	Highest level of influence	Lowest level of influence	Assessed by the elderly		Assessed by social support workers	
				Rate	Standard deviation	Rate	Standard deviation
<b>3</b>	<b>The elderly's family</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	2.21	1.145	1.89	.894
3.1	Psychological support from relatives and family	1	5	<b>2.19</b>	<b>1.130</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>.944</b>
3.2	Financial support for the elderly at the centers	1	5	2.32	1.249	2.22	1.128

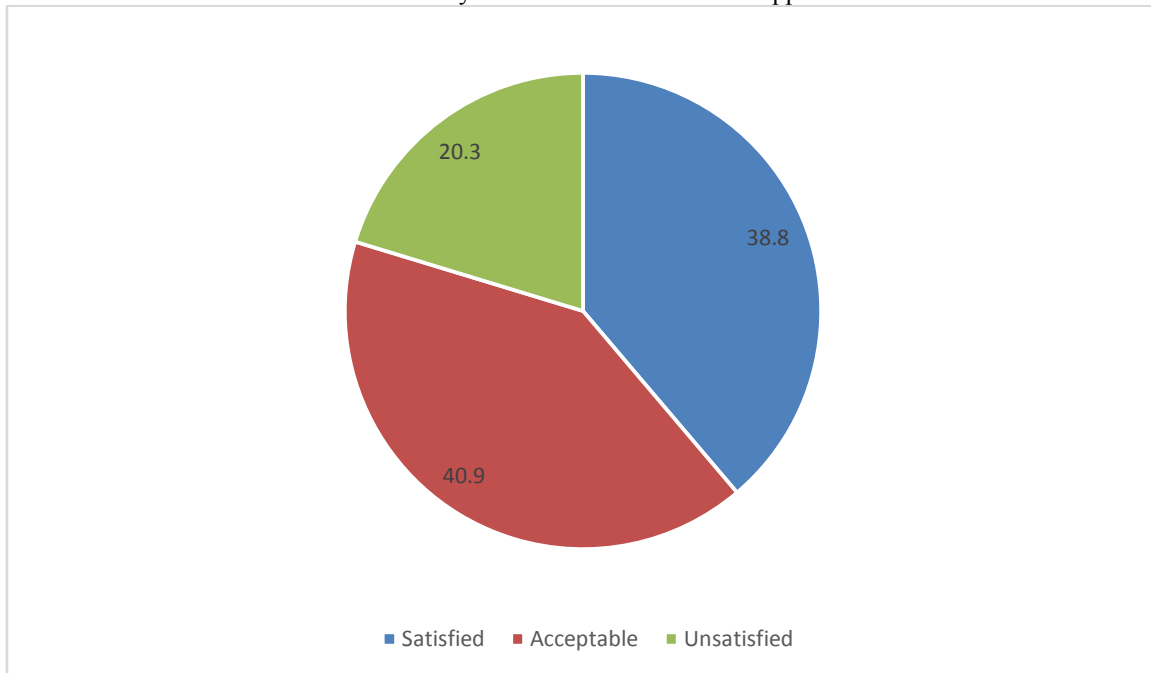
Source: Investigation data

Two aspects of psychological and financial support for the elderly at the centers were investigated in assessing the influence of the elderly's family factors. Regarding psychological support, the elderly assessed it at 2.19, while social support workers gave it 2.01. It is obvious that more family attention will create the elderly's psychological balance and less anxiety and depression. On the other hand, financial support for the elderly living at the centers will also make their lives comfortable. However, the financial support for the elderly living in private centers will be higher than that for those living in public centers.

### The elderly themselves

It is the elderly themselves that constitute an essential factor in assessing the responsiveness of current social support services. Working with the elderly is challenging due to changes in their mind, physiology, personality, thoughts, and actions. They face many difficulties because of changes in relationships, living environment, and adaptation. Therefore, the elderly themselves are one of the factors that strongly impact service performance and quality.

The satisfaction of the elderly with current social support services at the care centers was explored in this study.

**Chart 7:-** The elderly's satisfaction with social support services.

Source: Investigation data

It can be observed from the chart above that the percentages of the elderly totally satisfied, feeling acceptable, and dissatisfied with social support services are, in turn, 38.8%, 40.9%, and 20.3%. The investigation results reveal that they are satisfied because of the staff's dedication (59.5%) or support/assistance (56.0%). Some reasons for their dissatisfaction are the high service fee (29.3%) or the staff's limited professional qualifications (44.4%).

In addition, some factors associated with the elderly themselves (such as fear of costly service fees, unwillingness to change the living environment, psychophysiological changes, and fear of community discrimination) also affect their service quality satisfaction.

**Table 5:-** Assessment by the elderly and social support workers on the influence of the elderly themselves.

No.	Influencing factors	Highest level of influence	Lowest level of influence	Assessed by the elderly		Assessed by social support workers	
				Rate	Standard deviation	Rate	Standard deviation
<b>4</b>	<b>The elderly themselves</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	3.22	1.066	2.05	.932
4.1	Fear of costly service fees	1	5	3.29	1.248	2.26	1.034
4.2	Unwillingness to change the living environment	1	5	3.30	1.200	2.15	.924
4.3	Psychophysiological changes	1	5	2.95	1.074	1.92	.875
4.4	Fear of the community and society discrimination	1	5	3.65	1.267	2.34	.929

Source: Investigation data

According to the investigation results, the views of the elderly and social support workers on the influence of the elderly-associated factors are quite different. The elderly assessed their own influence around an average score of 3.0, from 2.95-3.65, while social support workers rated it at a higher level with a score of 1.92-2.34. The elderly also thought that the "psychophysiological changes in old age" had the highest influence on their lives (2.95). Meanwhile, social support workers paid attention to the community and society discrimination (2.34)

### Proposed solutions for enhanced quality and performance of social support services

On the basis of practices and proposals of stakeholders concerning improving the quality of current social support services at centers and in-depth interviews during the investigation, the following solutions were recommended for higher service performance. (As shown in Table 6)

Table 6: Groups of solutions to improve the effectiveness of social services

**Table 6:-** Solutions for Enhanced Performance of Social Support Services.

No.	Solutions	N	%
1.	Centers should improve service quality through well-equipped facilities and living equipment for the elderly.	114	61.3
2.	The elderly carers should be provided with improved knowledge and skills in social work.	111	59.7
3.	The State should study and develop policies for the elderly living in elderly care centers	83	44.6
4.	Additional policies and regulations on increasing salaries, benefits and allowances for elderly carers should be developed.	131	70.4
5.	Constructing or repairing degraded elderly care centers is necessary to ensure better hygiene and comfort.	99	53.2
6.	There should have different living, dining, and accommodation areas for the elderly with different health conditions.	120	64.5
7.	New primary and advanced social work training and retraining strategies for the staff working with the elderly are needed.	113	60.8
8.	More volunteers, students, and trainees should be engaged in supporting the care of the elderly at the centers.	81	43.5
9.	It is recommended to seek more resources from benefactors, voluntary organizations, and charities to provide material and spiritual support for the elderly living in the elderly care centers	108	58.1
10.	Others	8	4.3

Source: Investigation data

Among the proposed solutions, “Additional policies and regulations on increasing salaries, benefits, and allowances for elderly carers should be developed” accounted for the highest percentage (131 participants, 70.4 %), followed by some other solutions, including “Centers should improve service quality through well-equipped facilities and living equipment for the elderly” (114 participants, 61.3%), “The elderly carers should be provided with improved knowledge and skills in social work” (111 participants, 59.7%), and “There should have different living, dining and accommodation areas for the elderly with different health conditions” (120 participants, 64.5%). Eight participants chose the "Others" option, accounting for 4.0%. To sum up, a high percentage of social support workers assessed the proposed solutions necessary for enhanced quality of social support services at their centers.

### Discussion:-

It is clear that social support service performance is affected by different factors ranging from laws/policies, service providers, and the elderly’s family, to the elderly themselves, in different dimensions. In order to improve service quality as well as better satisfy the elderly’s demands, stakeholders have also made recommendations and suggestions. However, there is an urgent need to further investigate and develop social support services and provide more solutions and policies to further support social support providers, workers, and the elderly. Solutions and policies are goals and tasks for future planners, scientists, and local governments.

### Conclusion:-

The article examined the influence of 4 factor groups on social support service performance, including laws/policies, service providers, the elderly’s family, and the elderly themselves. Among these factors, the elderly and social support workers assessed the significant influence of service provider-associated factors. Therefore, developing and perfecting programs/services and improving the center’s living environment are necessary for enhanced social support service quality. Fundamental solutions were proposed to enhance social support quality and performance. Remarkably, the leaders and staff also suggested that the centers need to strengthen staff support activities and provide social support workers with more social work skills and expertise. This solution will help social support

workers improve their expertise and skills in approaching the elderly and better understanding services to provide better support to the elderly.

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