



Problems and Challenges related to Chiang Da Herbal Tea Community Enterprise, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The objective of this qualitative research is to report the problems and challenges related to Chiang Da herbal tea Community Enterprise (CE), Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province.

Methodology: In-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus groups discussion (FGD) were conducted to obtain genuine comprehension from the CCE leader and members. The data were evaluated using content analysis.

Finding: The finding was reported in 4 aspects of problems and challenges: 1) Human resources and membership, 2) marketing, 3) Budget, Finance, and Accounting and 4) Application of modern technology and information technology. The CCE member should develop knowledge and skills related to the issues mentioned above to be able to operate an enterprise group effectively.

Practical implications: The government should play a role to promote and support the development of knowledge, skills, and capacity of the group by supporting policy, finance, equipment, and personnel providing advice. Furthermore, it is critical to use a successful community enterprise group as a model for learning and application.

Contribution to literature: This study contributes to the existing literature as it is applied to other communities with similar characteristics and contexts, particularly community enterprises in rural areas that produce community products using local resources. The emphasis should be on developing the group members' potential.

Keywords: Accounting, Budget, Challenge, Community enterprise, Elderly, Finance, Human resources, Marketing, Problem, Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand has focused on human resource development in all age groups, particularly the elderly. Because of its increasing growth rate and the overall aging of Thai society, the importance of the aging group has gained public recognition. The results of previous studies showed that the preparation of the elderly would be in four main aspects: health, society and culture, conservation, and learning, which was the most needed among the elderly (Isarapon, 2014; Thanakwang, Isaramalai, & Hattakit, 2014). Previous studies showed that the elderly were doing activities that generated small amounts of income in their free time, such as making and selling homemade products. Elderly people in some areas have grouped to produce products from local wisdom. With limitations and many factors such as knowledge and readiness to operate, as a result, it is not successful and unable to generate income as planned. Besides, the 2nd National Development Plan for the Elderly (2002-2021) determined five major strategies: 1) the preparation of the population to ensure high quality of life among the elderly, 2) the promotion of the elderly, 3) the system of social protection for the elderly, 4) the management for work development and 5) the processing and cognitive development of the elderly. All these five strategies had their action plans that covered income guarantee, education and life-long learning of the elderly, raising awareness to realize the value and dignity of the elderly, promotion of health knowledge, prevention and self-care, promotion of work and earnings, supporting the potential elderly to enter services and networks, the management for elderly

development, etc. (Boonkoun, Ngern, & Namsomboon, 2015; Seniors Coordinating Board of the Office of the Prime Minister, 2021).

Elders over the age of 60 in the Cheong Doi subdistrict, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province, have insufficient education, employment, and income. Some of them are farmers, but their income is insufficient to cope with volatile commodity prices. They would be unemployed after the harvesting season, stay at home, and have no other source of income. People in the community should be the most knowledgeable about career advancement. The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan emphasized human development by eradicating poverty and improving the country's overall quality of life (Office of the National Economic and Social Department Board, 2016). All related agencies and organizations rely on community leaders to encourage, create, and develop sustainable occupation development. Chiang Da herbal tea community enterprise is a gathering of community members, particularly the elderly, who want to bring agricultural produce from the community, specifically, Chiang Da leaves with good health properties, to make herbal tea and sell it to increase income for members. The operation of the community enterprise is still fraught with difficulties. As a result, this community enterprise has not been successful and has been unable to generate income for members as expected, causing members to experience financial difficulties and low quality of life. The majority of this community enterprise's members are elderly people who lack the knowledge and capacity to operate, but all members are eager to develop their potential (Cheong Doi Subdistrict Municipality, 2021).

When the need for the development of the elderly to meet changes in the present and near-future society was taken into consideration, it showed the elderly, particularly in remote areas, had less opportunity to exchange knowledge than those in urban society (Matysiak, 2017). One major problem for the elderly was insufficient income for their living. They had to depend on public welfare and needed to find more income by having a career they could manage. Moreover, the elderly could do daily activities with a group of other elderly in the community (Polsri, 2021). They would have good physical and mental health, a supportive community, and could supplement their family's economy. Additionally, support for the elderly to learn useful skills not only benefitted their career but also supported their creation of new products learning from experience, and application of local wisdom in career and living. Thus, research on knowledge of the elderly was necessary to determine the policy of the elderly development in the future and be able to support them to live happily in the changing society (Boonkoun et al., 2015; Kurimoto, 2015; Polsri, 2021). Normally, developing countries would prioritize the development of people in rural areas because they still house the majority of the population. People continue to learn from norms, culture, and local wisdom (Gorman, 1999). In this instance, Training is essential for increasing knowledge, skills, and perspective. It would be advantageous for the advancement of a suitable occupation (Clark, Van Kerkhoff, Lebel, & Gallopin, 2016).

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the problems and challenges related to Chiang Da Herbal Tea Community Enterprise (CCE), Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand.

2. METHODS

2.1. Settings and Study Participants

Cheong Doi Sub-district, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province was purposely chosen for this study. The population is 4,667 from 1,831 households. Agriculture employs the majority of the population. Rice farming is the primary occupation, with secondary occupations including the farming of other crops, general labor, and livestock production. The average annual income is 98,878 THB per person (Cheong Doi Subdistrict Municipality (2021)). In 2010, villagers came together to find a solution to increase household income in the community, starting with Chiang Da herbal tea production group. This group has steadily grown and, in 2012, it became a small community enterprise. The authors discovered that elderly members of the Chiang Da herbal tea community enterprise were 30 in number, both male and female. The village chief also served as the group supervisor. This group was occasionally supported by related organizations, but this support was infrequent and did not meet the group's needs. When the harvesting season ended, this group would begin to look for a way to process Chiang Da herbal tea products. Their products were primarily distributed to members of the community and occasionally sold at community festivals. This group encountered a limitation problem with product standardization during their operations, the most serious of which was a lack of marketing management. As a result, the products could not be sold or were sold in insufficient quantities to generate income for the group's members. They decided to

participate in many government projects, such as the Department of Business Development, to provide group development and to create products that meet the required standard for further distribution.

In 2021, CCE participated in the University to Tambon (U2T) project in partnership with the Faculty of Public Health, Chiang Mai University, and has been supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) of Thailand. The project has been carried out to increase the potential of members of CCE. The main activities focus on training and transfer of basic knowledge necessary for the implementation of community enterprises and adding value to community products. Activities consist of developing teamwork and participatory skills (3 hr.), developing marketing and community product management capabilities (6 hr.), basic financial and accounting potential development (6 hr.), developing the potential for information technology and social media (6 hr.), and customer management skills development (6 hr.). Six weeks of training were conducted from August to September 2021 by the expert focus on practice so that members can put the knowledge they have gained into action.

Purposive sampling was used to collect informants for this study. The CCE members and their leader were the primary informants in this study.

2.2. Data Collection

A qualitative approach was used in this study to learn and understand the problems and challenges encountered by the CCE members. All of the interviews were conducted in the Lanna language, Thailand's northernmost language, with the results later translated into official Thai. As a result of this strategy, participants became more open and provided full insight and information to the researchers. The entire data collection took place between March and November of 2021. The following sections go into detail about the IDI and FGD.

IDI was conducted to obtain comprehension from the CCE leader and members. In-depth information was also required when open-ended questions were appropriately constructed and in accordance with the study's objectives. The entire interview was scheduled to last 45-60 minutes ([Cavite, Kerdsriserm, & Suwanmaneepong, 2021](#); [Gurkan & Kocak, 2020](#)).

FGD, a one-hour discussion with CCE members was held to gather comprehensive perspectives. Participants were CCE members who were chosen using the convenience sampling method due to their ease of access, and time effectiveness. Based on their interactions within the group, this method was used to elicit more detailed information from the participants. Moreover, the information derived from the discussion was based on a group approach rather than the participants' personal experiences ([Gurkan & Kocak, 2020](#)).

2.3. Data Analysis

The data of the study are qualitative research data. IDI and FGD with key informants collected primary data, which was combined with all types of data collected from the documentary study for data interpretation and fulfillment of research objectives. Secondary data from relevant theories, papers, evidence, and research works were evaluated using the content analysis approach and a data table was created. The second researcher examined all interviews independently to eliminate bias. Any inconsistencies in the topic assignment were discussed and resolved.

3. RESULTS

Several problems and challenges related to CCE were discovered during the qualitative analysis in human resources and membership; marketing; budget, finance, and accounting; and the application of modern technology and information technology. The sections that follow describe each problem.

3.1 Human Resource and Membership

In the human resource aspect, the majority of CCE members are aging. As a result, they are hesitant to adopt new production methods. Furthermore, some of them lack managerial abilities, which has an impact on the quality of their productivity. The area's population is aging, and there is a lack of new-generation farmers. In the context of Thai society today, the younger generation has more education and wants to work in the company, factories, and/or business section. They would rather live and work in cities than in rural areas. Human resource issues could be a significant impediment. The CCE is experiencing a labor shortage as a result of aging workers and a lack of new workers for value creation. As a result, work is interrupted. Even though the manufacturers have manufacturing

expertise, some of them lack managerial, information technology, financial, and marketing knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the older member's conservative attitude prevented them from innovating and creating new products in response to the changing market.

3.2 Marketing

Other issues discovered in the CCE are marketing-related. The CCE members were discovered to be lacking in marketing environment and customer behavior analysis, which would provide insights into how to improve the marketing system of their products. The market for herbal tea products is extremely competitive. Nowadays, customers are increasingly interested in ordering products through online platforms because it is more convenient and alleviates travel issues. CCE members are unable to function in this marketing channel. The company continues to use a typical marketing strategy that does not target specific market categories. Furthermore, they lacked a distinguishing brand, making it difficult for customers to recognize their products. Their current packaging is unappealing. They stated that they want to develop and improve this issue, but that due to a lack of marketing and branding knowledge, such developments are limited.

3.3. Budget, Finance, and Accounting

As a result of the IDI and FGD processes, The CCE group is unable to write projects to obtain government support. Also, members of the group lack the know-how to write a business plan to receive a loan from a financial institution because writing projects and business plans take a lot of expertise and experience. As the majority of the group members are older villagers who have rarely had the opportunity to contact and interact with government institutions, they are unfamiliar with project writing and business strategies. As a result, there is insufficient funding for the group's operation and development. Furthermore, it was discovered that the group members lacked accounting management experience and thus did not have an account, no accounting, and financial data or evidence is preserved, thus the true cost of manufacturing is unclear. There was also an unorganized usage of money, with personal money mixed in with CCE money. This has an impact on product pricing, and there is an issue when it comes to sharing earnings from sales with group members.

3.4. The Application of Modern Technology and Information Technology

Because CCE members are largely elderly individuals, they have limited access to modern technologies, notably information technology. They are unable to utilize simple computers. As a result, they are unable to use various computer applications such as Microsoft Office, instant accounting programs, websites, e-mails, and internet banking. It was also discovered that the members of the organization employed traditional ways of management, such as writing information down in a notebook or on paper. The issue was that the storage of collected data was not systematic, resulting in data loss, data confusion, obsolete data, and the inability to use the data. Several group members had received training in the use of current technology and basic information technology, but the training was lost and could not be applied to the group. According to the conversation, practically all members can use the Line application, but only for personal communication, not for commercial applications, or to boost group efficiency.

4. DISCUSSION

The human resource and membership aspect is one of the important problems of community enterprises. Due to an aging workforce and a scarcity of new workers, particularly from the younger generation, CCE is experiencing work interruptions. According to [Techaratpong \(2013\)](#), the monk's bowl community enterprises are experiencing a shortage of artisans because of older workers and a lack of young generation workers. Furthermore, this issue hampered the CCE's ability to increase productivity, expand the business, and pass on local knowledge, including the wisdom of producing community products to the new generation. Although the CCE has members with expertise and experience in producing the products, they lack knowledge in other areas such as management, technology, financial, and marketing skills, etc. As a result, CCE missed out on an opportunity to grow its business. Because of the changing society, it is vital to adapt one's mentality. Traditional manufacturers, according to research, face a similar challenge, which could make it difficult for them to thrive ([Techaratpong, 2013](#)). According to [Naipinit, Sakolnakorn, and Kroeksakul \(2016\)](#), to foster understanding among the next generation, the CCE should inform the young generation about the positives and benefits of working in their hometown, emphasize the

significance of community enterprises and encourage them to understand their significance in community development. Furthermore, there should be an opportunity for the new generation to come in and share experiences with community enterprises, such as allowing them to earn extra money by participating in community enterprises, allowing them to play a role, and offering their opinions on how the group operates.

According to the phenomenon, most group members are elderly people. There is no new generation to assist with operations. As a result, problems arise. The majority of the elderly lack ongoing education in technology, marketing, or management. The lack of continuous knowledge development is a weakness in the community enterprise group that impedes the enterprise. Members' training is a process that helps them develop their knowledge, competence, skills, experience, and attitude, and it creates readiness for efficient working. Personnel training promotes knowledge and the completion of internal activities to support employees' tasks. Successful entrepreneurs must conduct organizational personnel development, working instruction, explaining, and employee training on various necessary skills as well as new modern skills. Every time a successful entrepreneur seeks new information, they expand their knowledge (McKenzie, 2021; Sanya, 2018; Wajirum & Inwang, 2018). Methods for developing a community enterprise group include developing members' knowledge of management and improving their production techniques, skills, and abilities (McKenzie, 2021). This will benefit the local community in terms of income generation, career stability, and a better quality of life for themselves and their families (Wajirum & Inwang, 2018). Moreover, collaborative learning between group members plays an important role. To facilitate collaborative learning, knowledge construction, and problem-solving, members of community enterprises should pool their intellectual resources to foster an informal supportive, and value-oriented environment for collaborative learning, knowledge construction, and problem-solving (Kar, 2012; Obeidat, Al-Suradi, & Tarhini, 2016). Sharing ideas, multiple perspectives, specialization, cognitive conflict, discussion, reflection, and synthesis are seven characteristics of knowledge-creating communities (Bielaczyc & Collins, 2002; Kar, 2012).

Another finding from the current study, concerned with marketing is the problems of the CCE. The results of this study are consistent with those of Cavite et al. (2021) and Naipinit et al. (2016). CCE is developed not only by enhancing operations but also by improving market access or marketing channel. Previous research has yielded the following recommendations for the management of marketing problems in community enterprises: 1) Improving market access necessitates the development of products that meet the needs of consumers, and the link between the enterprise and the consumer is required (Cavite et al., 2021). 2) Product certifications ensure long-term consumer service reliability, as well as a company's market commitment to providing their products (Wu, Zhou, & Chien, 2019). 3) Packaging designs will also allow consumers to distinguish the products from those of the competitors (Thitinunsomboon, Chairatana, & Keeratipibul, 2008). 4) Collaboration with academic institutions such as universities or community colleges can also allow researchers to put their knowledge to use and gain access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable within the enterprise (Naipinit et al., 2016; Pandey, Kakkar, Farhan, & Khan, 2019). 5) Social media has been shown to influence consumer purchasing behavior, developing a social media channel such as Facebook, Twitter, E-commerce pathway, etc. can be a powerful tool for establishing their product (Cavite et al., 2021).

Community enterprises face budget, finance, and accounting system challenges because the members lack the knowledge and skills to practice finance and accounting. It is necessary to provide such businesses with finance and accounting knowledge and skills so that they are capable of using accounting systems correctly and effectively, allowing them to gradually manage their finance and accounting systems. Furthermore, according to Naipinit et al. (2016) and Cavite et al. (2021), CCE frequently keeps handwritten accounting records, this is inconvenient and raises the possibility of uncorrected entry errors., as well as making it difficult to find old data and accounting records after a while. Numerous community enterprises do not keep an accounting book or keep track of payments received daily. Math knowledge and skills are required for systematic accounting and financial management. Because they lacked aptitude in math and numbers, the members of the group refused to use accounting (Naipinit et al., 2016). The government should provide personnel to encourage each community enterprise to recognize the value of accounting and to feel compelled to do so. Allow each group to hire a local business accountant with accounting knowledge to prepare accurate financial reports (Lován, Murray, & Shaffer, 2004). Furthermore, government agencies should support computers and instant accounting software. In addition, model community enterprises with expertise in community enterprise accounting should participate in mentoring and providing advice on technical account management issues (Chonkanok, Chanidapha, & Woratthep, 2017).

Modern technology is another important tool in the implementation of community enterprises (Chummee, 2021; Naipinit et al., 2016). All members commented in the same direction that modern technology would be a tool that allowed their enterprises to compete with other manufacturers in the market. They did, however, mention that it is extremely difficult for seniors to learn and apply modern technology effectively. Members of the enterprise group must be encouraged to learn and apply modern technology, including information technology, appropriately. The most used modern technologies are desktop computers, computer notebooks, mobile phones, and tablets. The programs and applications used by members the most include Microsoft Office Program, Zoom Program, Facebook, Line, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Personnel or staff from community enterprise promotion should play a larger role in this matter. The use of modern technology will benefit community enterprises in a variety of ways, including, human resource management, financial management, production management, and marketing management (Naipinit et al., 2016). In human resource management, modern technology can facilitate communication with members of the group together and third parties, quickly facilitate networking with members of other groups, able to train and educate group members through computer media and social media channels (Panyawat, 2016; Polsri, 2021; Zhang, Guo, Lei, & Lim, 2019). Financially, modern technology reduces operating costs, helps to make financial planning decisions, helps to find accurate and up-to-date financial information, and helps make financial transactions quickly. In manufacturing, it has been found that modern technology helps to control the production process, is used to learn, and develop production, helps you find production information, find vendors of raw materials, and assists in production planning. Marketing increases distribution channels, helps collect marketing information, helps to build customer relationships, speeds up orders and delivery of products, and helps with marketing public relations (Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2021; Saheed, Taiwo, & Alebiosu, 2014).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study can be applied to other communities with similar characteristics and contexts, specifically community enterprises in rural areas that produce community products from local resources. The emphasis should be on developing the potential of the group members because group members are important resources for the group's development and advancement. Community enterprises with elderly members, in particular, must pay closer attention and carefully plan their operations. Older adults may be less able than young adults to learn and develop new skills. As a result, government agencies have taken an active role in facilitating community enterprise groups by providing the resources needed to cover all aspects.

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study was approved by the Committee of Research Ethics in the Faculty of Public Health, Chiang Mai University, Thailand (ET033/2020).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

JW was responsible for conceptualization and methodology, contributed to the literature, and collected and analyzed the data. NK, PS, PK, and MJ collected and analyzed the data. JW wrote the original draft and edited the manuscript. This study was supervised by JW. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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