
THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY IN THAILAND'S NORTHEASTERN REGION PROVINCES

Phusit PHUKAMCHANOAD¹

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2022.1.02>

Abstract: *The goal of this study is to explore the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy at a household level. The data was collected by the use of questionnaires with 2,000 respondents as well as the interviews with community leaders from 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in 5 provinces (Udon Thani Province, Nong Bua Lam Phu Province, Nong Khai Province, Bueng Kan Province, and Loei Province). The research findings revealed that the local people had faith in the leaders who devoted their time, money, and intelligence to the development of local communities. In other words, the community leaders should be the role-models of success for their people. With regards to the application of the Sufficiency Economy philosophy, saving money was the most applicable method at the household level, while working part-time was the least applicable method. Self-sufficient living was mentally learned and practiced the most, but it was economically learned and practiced the least. Moreover, it was suggested that “E-San (Northeastern)” family structure should integrate the older people’s way of life with the younger generations’ lifestyle in order to promote a sufficient and sustainable way of living. Accordingly, the model of “Great Leaders, Six Directions of Sufficient Way of Living” was formulated. The directions included 1) having a good mindset, 2) understanding the nature and the environment, 3) reducing expenses, 4) supporting each other, 5) having empathy, and 6) saving money.*

Keywords: *sufficient economy philosophy; Esan’s way of life; Upper Northeastern Region; sufficiency economy*

1. Introduction

Since 1974, the teachings of King Rama IX have been given to Thai citizens on various occasions. The impacts of natural disasters and poverty are usually escalated by

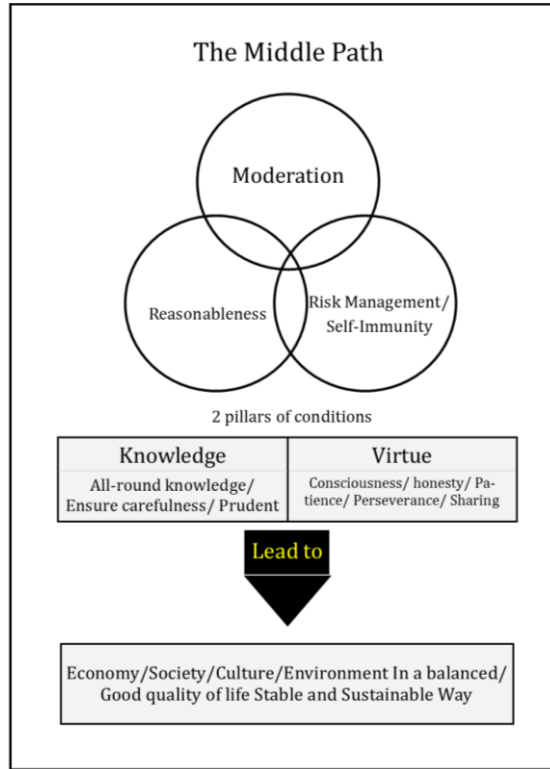
¹ Department of Social and Cultural Development Management, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand, email: phusit.ph@ssru.ac.th

economic factors, geographical factors, socio-cultural factors, and population structure. Poverty, in particular, is intensified by the lack of opportunities in life. It leads to the inability to have a long, healthy life or a good quality of life. Hence, it is a serious challenge to development because, if the citizens still live in poverty, they are unlikely to participate in local and national development (Siriprachai, Wisawesuan, and Srisuchart, 2004; Jitsuchon, 2013; Phukamchanoad, 2018). This issue inevitably needs to be solved timely and properly. Apart from natural hazards such as drought, political competitions also negatively affect the wellbeing of the citizens. They bring about social inequalities, macro and micro economic problems, and a poor quality of life. The researcher thus believes that excellent leaders can lead their people and the society in a good direction. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) has always been concerned about the wellbeing of his people. His speech officially given on July 18th, 1974 focused on the standard of living of the Thai citizens. The speech was delivered at the graduation ceremony of Kasetsart University as follows:

“The development of this country must be progressed in the right order. The first thing to do is to provide sufficient basic needs for the citizens” (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009).

“*Sufficiency Economy*” refers to a philosophy for living of all kinds of people. It can be applied to all levels ranging from the household level, the community level, to the national level. The philosophy is a guideline for developing the country in the Middle Way, especially in terms of economic development in the globalized era. The term ‘*sufficiency*’ means ‘*being sufficient and reasonable*’. It also includes the ability to protect one’s self from both internal and external changes. To achieve sufficiency, individuals are required to use their knowledge, discretion, and attention to apply different disciplines to their life planning and living. In the meantime, it is important to strengthen the mentality of all citizens, particularly state officials, theorists, and businessmen. These groups of people must be ethical, honest, knowledgeable, patient, hard-working, intelligent, and cautious because they need to respond to the sudden, broad changes in culture, society, and environment in the materialistic world all the time (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007, 2017; The Chaipattana Foundation, 2014; Phukamchanoad, 2019) (see Figure 1). That is to say, the development of this country should rely on the principles of Sufficiency Economy and the socio-cultural capitals in Thai society. It requires the collaboration from different sectors, including the public sector, the private sector, and the general public. His Majesty the King once said that “*sufficiency economy is the foundation of life and this country. It is a pillar supporting our home. A house is stable because of its pillar, but people do not really see it or even forget about it*” (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009).

Figure 1: Conceptual of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy



Source: Sufficiency Economy Driving Subcommittee Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. (2007); The Chaipattana Foundation, (2014)

Two years after the economic crisis in 1997, His Majesty the King delivered a new speech on “Sufficiency Economy” on 29 November 1999. Over the past 25 years, from 1974 to 1999, the majority of Thai people had become economically self-dependent. The king suggested “Sufficiency Economy” as a philosophy for all kinds of people to live and survive. Families, communities, and the state were recommended to improve the country altogether in the “Middle Way” based on the teachings of the Buddha (Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King, 2009; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), 2017, The Chaipattana Foundation, 2014). This philosophy is believed to create balance in life by which it should be adopted to solve national problems and promote prosperity of the people and the country (Phukamchanoad, 2018). According to the doctrine, sufficient individuals are those who reduce their extravagance, have ethical and honest careers or professions, avoid competitions, avoid temptations, and adhere to religious teachings. Buasai (2006) and the Chaipattana Foundation (2014) have summarized the Sufficiency Economy

philosophy into five aspects, including the conceptual framework, characteristics, definitions, conditions, and codes of conduct/expected outcomes. Generally, only four aspects are significantly considered. The first aspect is its conceptual framework which integrates sufficient lifestyle with Thai traditional culture and Buddhism's "Middle Path". Second, there are three characteristics of Sufficiency Economy, which include modesty, rationality, and self-protection. Third, there are two conditions for achieving Sufficiency Economy: knowledge and ethics. Finally, the great outcomes are expected to be accomplished when the three characteristics and the two conditions are combined together. This "*3 Pillars, 2 Conditions*" framework can help the citizens to develop their economy, society, culture, and natural resources management in a balanced, stable, sustainable manner (Sufficiency Economy Driving Subcommittee, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007). Even though Sufficiency Economy is a useful philosophy, many people are confused about it. For instance, many people believe that Sufficiency Economy can be applied to poor people or farmers only. They assume that sufficient individuals must deny wealth and prosperity, leading to the lack of development and urbanization, as they only need to live sufficiently (Wachiramedhi, 2007; Phukamchanoad, 2015). As reported by the Chaipattana Foundation (2014), to resolve this confusion, His Majesty King Bhumibol clearly summarized his thoughts about the sufficient way of living into five propositions as follows:

- 1) Save money, reduce expenses in all aspects, and reduce extravagant spending;
- 2) Have an honest and ethical career or occupation;
- 3) Avoid extreme competitions for wealth and interests;
- 4) Never stop finding a way to end one's suffering by acquiring knowledge and more incomes to reach the point of self-sufficiency;
- 5) Be well-behaved, avoid committing a sin, and adhere to the religious teachings.

E-San's way of living is a common lifestyle of the local people in the Upper Northeastern Region of Thailand. In the past, the Northeastern Region (E-San) used to be perceived as a primitive land where poor, underdeveloped people lived. However, the area at the present time has transformed into a strategic center for socio-economic development in the Greater Mekong, a trans-national region of the Mekong River basin in Southeast Asia. It is a major source of food in the world which is full of economic, political, and socio-cultural dynamics. Younger generations are genuinely proud of and confident in their locality for its contributions to not only their own country but also the entire world (Kitiasa, 2014). Settling in this region, the local people prefer to choose productive locations consisting of the following features. First, sources of water are the most essential feature. They could be a big pond, a stream, or a canal divided from a major river. In the rainy season, only some villages located on few low lands could perform farming and animal raising; these villages' titles often start with "Lerng", "Wang", "Huai", "Kud", "Nong", and "Ta" (i.e. Lerng Nokta, Wang Sammor, Huai Yang, Kud Nakam, and Nong Bua Daeng). Second, there would be hills or high lands where floods cannot get it. Third, there would be a forest. Fourth, there would be some plains where water is stored all year round (for example, Boong Pah Tam Forest).

Finally, there would be a grove wood which must be preserved as “*Grandfather's Highland*” according to the traditional belief of Tai-Lao civilization. It should be noted, in this region, the “*Twelve Heet, Fourteen Kong (12 Traditions, 14 Paths)*” have been strictly practiced since the ancient time (Phukamchanoat, 2020). The “Upper E-San” or the Upper Northeastern Region 1 consists of five “*Sabaidee*” provinces, including Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, Loei. Bueng Kan (recently established in 2011), and Udon Thani is the center of this regional cluster. The five provinces cover 34,346.40 km² of land, accounting for 20% of the Northeastern Region's total land. There are 54 districts in total (Office of Strategic Management of the Upper Northeastern Provinces 1, 2016). There is an example of Sufficiency Economy activities in the Upper Northeastern Region (1 and 2 combined), which is “*Ban Huai Yang's Seed and Plant Breeding Group*”. The group is located in Lao Phon Kho Subdistrict, Khok Si Suphan District, Sakon Nakhon Province. The local people have applied the philosophy to their group vision, which is to “*create jobs, increase revenues, distribute knowledge, develop, and harmonize in order to live peacefully and sufficiently*”. They have been successful in breeding more than 62 types of plants such as mlientha suavis, apinau, lime, kaffir lime, papaya, and aquilaria malaccensis. Each group member saves 40 baht per month in the savings group. The merchants would come to pick the vegetables from their farms. Each pack of vegetables costs 2 baht (except mlientha suavis which could be 5-15 baht). Some group members may sell the vegetables on their own or open a vegetable booth in order to earn higher. The average incomes of the members are between 150,000-200,000/person/year (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2020).

Based on the aforementioned principles given by King Rama IX, Father of Sufficiency Economy of Thailand, the researcher developed research instruments to measure the level of public opinion towards Sufficiency Economy activities and the level of application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The research instruments were also used for investigating the innovative approach applied by the local people in the remote areas of Thailand. In this study, the research settings included 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in the Upper Northeastern Region of Thailand. A subdistrict was selected as a research location from each district. There were 2,000 samples in total. The innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy was explored to discover the sustainable way of living and end poverty according to the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

2. Method

This research aims to investigate the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy and how to apply it in 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages in 5 Upper Northeastern Region provinces (Udon Thani Province, Nong Bua Lam Phu Province, Nong Khai Province, Bueng Kan Province, and Loei Province).

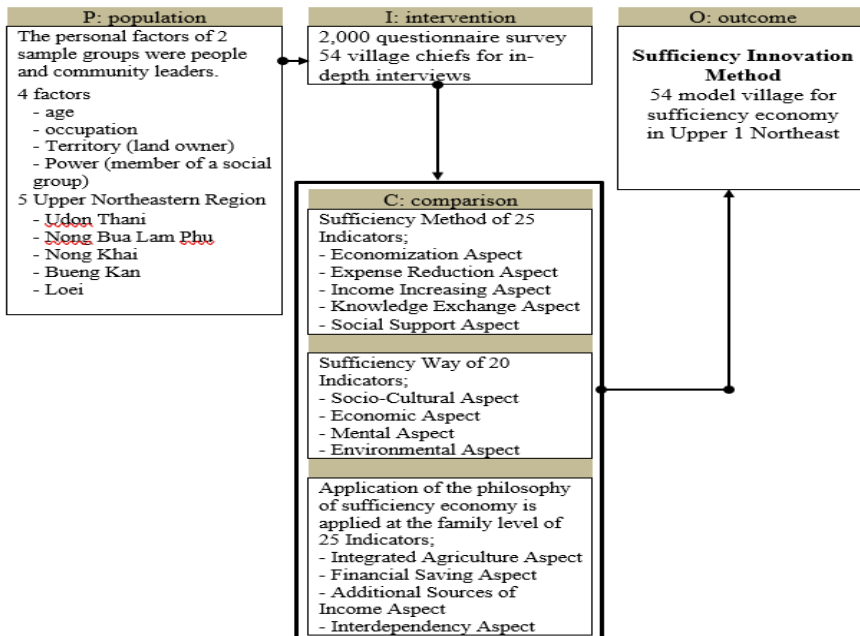
A mixed methods study was selected as the design for this research. The research process consists of the following stages.

- (1) Selection of the unit of analysis: The population and samples in this research included the local people and village chiefs from Sufficiency Economy model

villages in 54 subdistricts in 5 Upper Northeastern Region 1 provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei). 2,000 local people were selected as the respondents of a questionnaire survey, while 54 village chiefs and/or village committee members were chosen as the key informants for in-depth interviews.

- (2) Research instrument development: In this study, questionnaires and interview questions were developed and used as research tools.
- (3) Data collection: The data was collected from questionnaires with 2,000 respondents, in-depth interviews with 54 community leaders. The local researchers conducted a study visit to collect the data from the selected villages in the 5 provinces.
- (4) Data Analysis: The collected questionnaires were reviewed and selected if they had complete responses. Then, a code number was written on each completed questionnaire in order to enter the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics, such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, were used for analyzing and interpreting the general demographic data (the average score range: 1.00-1.80 = lowest; 1.81-2.60 = low; 2.61-3.40 = moderate; 3.41-4.20 = high; 4.21-5.00 = highest) (Silcharu, 2017). For the qualitative data gained from the in-depth interviews, the content analysis approach was applied to analyze the data in accordance with the following conceptual framework.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: author's own representation

3. Results

The findings of this research were divided into three parts: 1) the sufficient way of living and the application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level, 2) the community leaders' attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, and 3) the innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy for the model villages. The details are narrated below.

(1) The Sufficient Way of Living and the Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a Household Level

(1.1) The “self-sufficient living methods” were measured in 5 aspects, including 1) saving, 2) reducing expenses, 3) increasing incomes, 4) knowledge exchange, and 5) interdependency. The collected data indicated that, overall, the acknowledgement of self-sufficient living methods was rated at the high level ($\bar{x} = 4.97$). Considering each aspect, reducing expenses was acknowledged at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 5.39$), followed by interdependency which was also acknowledged at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 5.23$). Even though increasing incomes was the least acknowledged method, it was still acknowledged at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.49$).

Table 1: Shown overall of self-sufficient living methods level

| Self-sufficient living methods | Mean | S.D. | Level |
|--------------------------------|------|------|---------|
| saving | 4.84 | 0.74 | high |
| reducing expenses | 5.39 | 0.68 | highest |
| increasing incomes | 4.49 | 1.39 | high |
| knowledge exchange | 4.92 | 0.84 | high |
| interdependency | 5.23 | 0.62 | highest |
| total | 4.97 | 0.60 | high |

Source: author's own representation

(1.2) The “learning process of self-sufficient living” was measured in 4 aspects, including socio-cultural aspect, economic aspect, mental aspect, and environmental aspect. The research results showed that, overall, self-sufficient living was learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x} = 5.05$). Considering each aspect, self-sufficient living was mentally learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x} = 5.12$). Followingly, self-sufficient living was learned and practiced in relation to environmental and natural resources management at a high level ($\bar{x} = 5.11$). It was also socially and culturally learned and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x} = 5.10$). Although the local people economically learned and practiced self-sufficient living at a high level, it gained the lowest average score ($\bar{x} = 4.88$).

Table 2: Shown overall of learning process of self-sufficient living level

| Learning process of self-sufficient living | Mean | S.D. | Level |
|--|------|------|-------|
| Socio-cultural aspect | 5.10 | 0.64 | high |
| Economic aspect | 4.88 | 0.75 | high |
| Mental aspect | 5.12 | 0.63 | high |
| Environmental aspect | 5.11 | 0.62 | high |
| total | 5.05 | 0.51 | high |

Source: author's own representation

(1.3) The “application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level” was measured in 5 aspects: 1) mixed farming, 2) saving money, 3) working part-time to generate more household incomes, 4) interdependency, and 5) commitment to local wisdom. The research findings demonstrated that, overall, the Sufficiency Economy philosophy was applied and practiced at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.94$). For every aspect, the majority of the local people applied and practiced Sufficiency Economy at a high level. Particularly, saving money was the most practiced Sufficiency Economy activity and it was practiced at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 5.17$). Working part-time was the least practiced Sufficiency Economy activity ($\bar{x} = 4.29$).

Table 3: Shown overall of application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level

| Application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy at a household level | Mean | S.D. | Level |
|--|------|------|-------|
| mixed farming | 5.08 | 0.64 | high |
| saving money | 5.17 | 0.68 | high |
| working part-time to generate more household incomes | 4.29 | 1.44 | high |
| interdependency | 5.13 | 0.68 | high |
| commitment to local wisdom | 5.03 | 0.62 | high |
| Total | 4.94 | 0.61 | high |

Source: author's own representation

(1.4) The comparison between the differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces or E-san, classified by the demographic characteristics, included 1) age, 2) professions (Occupation), 3) territory (the ownership of the land), and 4) power (being a member of a social group) as follows:

Table 4: Comparison between the Differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces by Classified 3 factors; age, professions (Occupation), and territory (the ownership of the land)

| Comparison between the Differences in Demographic Factors | Source of Variance | SS | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|--------------------|---------|------|-------|--------|--------|
| Age | Between Groups | 1.353 | 3 | 0.451 | 1.754 | 0.154 |
| | Within Groups | 513.170 | 1996 | 0.257 | | |
| | Total | 514.523 | 1999 | | | |
| professions (Occupation) | Between Groups | 5.892 | 4 | 1.473 | 5.754 | 0.000* |
| | Within Groups | 470.002 | 1836 | 0.256 | | |
| | Total | 475.893 | 1840 | | | |
| territory (the ownership of the land) | Between Groups | 8.615 | 3 | 2.872 | 11.450 | 0.000* |
| | Within Groups | 445.925 | 1778 | 0.251 | | |
| | Total | 454.540 | 1781 | | | |

*Level of Statistical Significance = .05

Source: author's own representation

The results showed that after testing the data with one-way ANOVA method (when the level of statistical significance was 0.01), the differences between the arithmetic means of more than three groups of the populations, it was found out that 1) the local people had occupations (community trading, housewives, private businesses) more sufficiency way than those who had occupations (general employment and Farmers) and who had occupations (students and government officer) more sufficiency way than those who had farmers, with the level of statistical significance at 0.001; 2) the local people had the ownership of the land less than 5 rai (1.98 acre) more sufficiency way than those who had the ownership of the land from 6 rai (2.37 acre) or more the lands, with the level of statistical significance at 0.001

In addition, the comparisons between the differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces or E-san, by t-test method (when the level of statistical significance was 0.05, and there were only two groups of population to test the different arithmetic means and there were only two groups of population to test the different arithmetic means) showed that the local people who were members of a social group had way of sufficiency in power (being a member of a social group) more than those who were not members of a social group as follows:

Table 5: Comparison between the Differences in the Way of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in 5 Upper Northeastern Region Provinces by Classified 1 factors; power (being a member of a social group)

| power (being a member of a social group) | Members of a social group | | Not members of a social group | | t | Sig. |
|--|---------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|-------|--------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| | 5.03 | 0.47 | 4.93 | 0.62 | 2.807 | 0.005* |

*Level of Statistical Significance = .05

Source: author's own representation

(2) The Community Leaders' Attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

The qualitative data was obtained from the interviews with 54 village chiefs from Sufficiency Economy model villages in the 5 provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei). Demographically, most of the key informants were male (72.22%), aged between 51 and 60 years old (53.7%). The majority of the village chiefs knew their neighbors and had intimate neighbors in their neighborhoods (94.44%). Every village chief engaged in a social group (100%); 83.33% of the key informants were members of community and urban community saving groups, followed by village savings groups (66.67%). According to the in-depth interviews, the village chiefs tended to perform duties within their scope of work and the contexts of their neighborhoods. It was found that the local people were likely to follow successful leaders who taught them about Sufficiency Economy and improved their attitude towards the philosophy. It could be summarized into the following motto: "Leaders must do first. If they succeed, we will follow." This reflects that the village chiefs shared similar attitudes towards Sufficiency Economy in the following aspects:

- 1) Impression: The village chiefs were impressed in Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a guide to job creating and extra revenue generation.
- 2) Appreciation: The village chiefs appreciated the value of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and its practical benefits in daily life. They believed that both individuals and the community as a whole could benefit from the philosophy, especially the Soil Aggravation Project.
- 3) Compliment: The village chiefs praised the application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in every household. They also complimented the king's perspectives towards the sufficient way of living, which promoted money-saving, expense reduction, reasonable spending, and living sufficiently.
- 4) Satisfaction: The village chiefs were satisfied with the set of knowledge they used for life planning and problem solving. They could use the philosophy to generate community revenues and support disadvantaged people to help them live in the Middle Way.
- 5) Agreement: The village chiefs commonly agreed with Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in social, economic, environmental, and educational aspects.
- 6) Acknowledgement: The village chiefs acknowledged the benefits of practicing Sufficiency Economy in terms of poverty reduction and job creation.
- 7) Pride: The village chiefs were proud of their king who taught them about Sufficiency Economy and its application, for instance, the Royal Rain Project.
- 8) The village chiefs believed that Thai people were lucky to have an intelligent king who taught them about Sufficiency Economy. They were proud of being Thai citizens who practiced Sufficiency Economy, for example, establishing occupation guilds and savings group

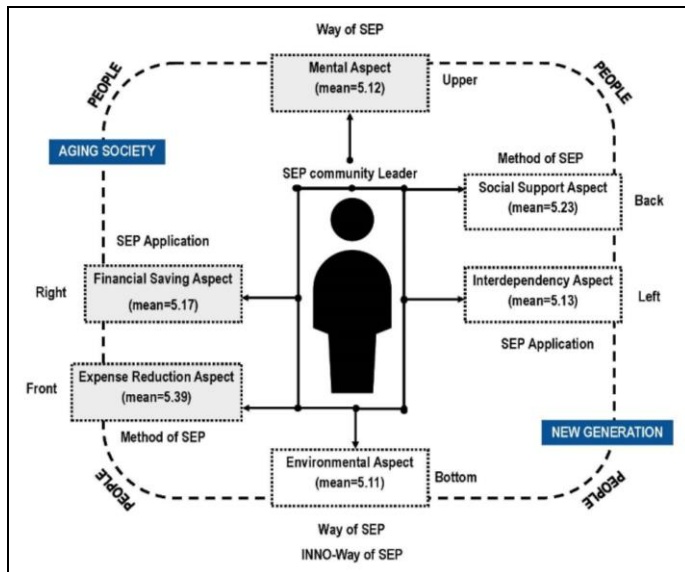
(3) The Innovative Approach to Sufficiency Economy for the Model Villages

The way of living in E-San allowed the community leaders to lead their people without difficulty because of the following reasons:

1. E-San people were generous. They woke up early to give food offerings to the monks every morning. They lived generously and sufficiently because they were farmers who needed to use their own physical abilities to support themselves and their families, so they understood poverty and recognized the importance of interdependency. Even though they had been frequently insulted or exploited, they were patient and modest. They believed they were not well-educated, so they always stayed modest and respected others.
2. E-San people learned to live with the nature and worked harder than people from other regions because their land was not fertile or productive. They could harvest their farmlands only in the rainy season (6 months) of a year. The other six months were dry months which could not support them. Therefore, they understood life difficulties and worked harder than people from other regions.
3. E-San people loved peaceful living. They did not think about the faraway future but their current peaceful and celebrative way of life. They often believed in superstitions which were inherited from their ancestors. They reckoned that they could live happily and have a better life by winning lotteries and making a wish. Thus, they could be easily convinced.

The innovative approach to Sufficiency Economy for E-San people could be summarized into the “six directions of sufficient way of living” demonstrated by their community leaders: 1) having a good mindset, 2) understanding the nature and the environment, 3) reducing expenses, 4) supporting each other, 5) having empathy, and 6) saving money (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Six Directions of Sufficient Way of Living Model



Source: author's work

4. Discussion

It is crucial to clarify why the samples were unlikely to have part-time jobs to increase their household incomes ($\bar{x} = 4.29$), even though they were mostly poor. According to the field visit, it was found that most of the samples in the Sufficiency Economy model villages were farmers who spent their entire weeks and days on farming. When the farming season ended, the working-age population would move to the capital city (Bangkok) or other major cities all over the country to sell their labor power. Furthermore, the local communities were settled far away from the city markets, making it more expensive and more time-consuming to have a part-time job in downtown. In order to avoid the increase of capital costs and traveling expenses, the local people would gather to establish an occupational guild instead of working part-time somewhere else. However, they still received little support from the public sector in this aspect. More importantly, the majority of the Sufficiency Economy model village chiefs were male. The spatial contexts and the dry climate of this region affected the productivity of the land, so it required more physical endurance and force to develop the areas. The male leaders had these strong points, but they still needed cooperation from their people as well as 'time'. The village chiefs needed to work hard to introduce policies, projects, and development activities. They also worked with the external agencies to receive advice to develop their villages based on the Sufficiency Economy philosophy. They were obliged to show successful results to their people as soon as possible in the most visible and inclusive manner. Although they were poor, helping each other could relieve them from merciless competitions and the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Some village chiefs in the 54 Sufficiency Economy model villages were female, but they usually performed the duties of household leaders in the micro-level social structure. In other words, they were family leaders who needed to have great attitudes and regularly participate in social activities with their family members (Phukamchanoad, Pungnirund, and Paisan, 2019). Nonetheless, E-San's way of living still gave more importance to men whose role was 'leaders' in terms of social and community development. Meanwhile, women were 'leaders at home' who were responsible for chores, making clothes, and taking care of children. It should be noted that genders played a significant role in social development. Women's power was also portrayed in some vital socio-structural dimensions. For example, they were the leaders of handweavers guilds, savings groups, or community enterprises in the Sufficiency Economy model villages.

5. Conclusion

The local people from the Sufficiency Economy model villages in 54 districts in 5 Upper Northern Region provinces (Udon Thani, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Nong Khai, Bueng Kan, and Loei) lived sufficiently. The most used self-sufficient method for living was expense reduction, followed by helping each other and saving money in village funds, "Saccha" savings groups, and commercial banks. They mentally learned and practiced Sufficiency Economy, which means they already learned Sufficiency Economy by heart and routinely lived their life based on the philosophy. They practiced and understood the nature as well as the concept of sufficiency by themselves. This led to their active engagement in social and cultural development even before the government gave them a hand. Their way of living also gave importance to the success

of leaders. They believed in their leaders and the motto “*Leaders must do first. If they succeed, we will follow*”. E-San people respected others because they viewed themselves as uneducated individuals, so they were always modest and never criticized others. They had a high reputation for virtue.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the Institute for Research and Development, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, which supported and gave an opportunity in this research.

Funding

The author did not receive any form of funding towards authorship, research, and publication of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declares no conflicting interests.

References

- Bhumibol Adulyadej, His Majesty King. (2009). *The Guidance of His Majesty the King: The Royal guidance and Speeches on Sufficiency Economy*. Pradabos Foundation, 8th ed. Bangkok: Bangkok Printing.
- Buasai, L. (2006, Ed.). *Sufficiency Economy: Learn, Network, Expand Results*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing.
- Cohen, J. M., & Uphoff, N. T. (1980). Participation's place in rural development: seeking clarity through specificity. *World Development*, 8(3), 213-235.
- Jitsuchon, S. (2013). *Research report submitted to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. Under the project to study policy issues on poverty and income distribution*. Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute.
- Kitiasa, P. (2014). *Towards the New Isan Way: Isan Becoming: Agrarian Change and the Sense of Mobile Community in Northeastern Thailand*. Bangkok: Viphasa.
- Office of Strategic Management of the Upper Northeastern Provinces 1 (2016). *The Strategy of the Upper Northeastern Provinces 1 (2018- 2021) (4 years)*. Upper 1 Udon Thani City Hall.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), (2011). *His Majesty the King Working Principles*. Bangkok: Prechrung Printing Center.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), (2016). *Poverty Analysis and Inequality Analysis in Thailand 2015*. Bangkok: Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2017). *King Science*. Bangkok: NESDB. (<http://www.nesdb.go.th/>).

- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2014). *Sufficiency Economy Implications and applications*. Bangkok: Public Policy Strategy Office.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2007). *Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy*. Bangkok: 21 Century.
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2017). *Sufficiency Economy Philosophy points to the way of life*, 11th Edition. Bangkok: Office of the Royal Development Projects Board (ORDPB).
- Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2020). *The Royal Initiative for Sustainable Development*. Bangkok: Sahamit Printing and Publishing.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2009). *The Participation of Community Committee in Sub-community Development in Dusit District, Bangkok*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2016). *Guidelines for Social Network Development towards Environmental Conservation and Ways of People' Lives at Floating Market for Sustainable Tourism in Taling-Chan District*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2017). *Social Development of Happiness Based on Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy affected to Paddy Field and Rock Salt Field with Participation of The Baan Dung District, Udon Thani Province, Thailand*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2018). *Citizen Participation in Community Development Management for the Social Inequality Mitigation in the Three Poor Cities from the Northern Zone Based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2019). *The Model of Human Capital Development for Progressing from Poverty to "the Level of Sufficiency: Happy E-san" under the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy: A Case Study of the Upper North Eastern Region 1 Local Residents*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P. (2020). *"Sabai-Dee E-San" Social Development Approach to People's State Powers' Interdependent Parallel-Farming Way of Living*. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
- Phukamchanoad, P., Pungnirund, B., & Paisan, K. (2019). Antecedents Affecting the Quality of Life of Families Residing in the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy Model Villages. *Research and Development Journal* (Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University), 11(2), 1-15.
- Silcharu, S. (2017). *Research and Analyze Statistical Data by SPSS and AMOS*. (17th ed.). Bangkok: Business R&D.
- Siriprachai, S., Wisawesuan, N., & Srisuchart, S. (2004). Macroeconomic Policy and Poverty in Thailand: A Survey of Knowledge Status. *Thammasat Economic Journal* (22) 3., September 2004.
- Sufficiency Economy Driving Subcommittee Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. (2007). *Application of Sufficiency Economy Principles*. Bangkok: N.P.
- The Chaipattana Foundation. (2014). *Sufficiency Economy and The New Theory*. Bangkok: Amarin Printing & Publishing.
- Wachiramedhi, W. (2007). Confusion about Sufficiency Economy. *Nation Weekend*, 15(763), 12-18 January 2007, p. 50.