

Building Social Connectedness and Active Aging in Community Settings: Evaluating a Lottery-Funded Program for Older Adults in Taiwan Region

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Abstract

This study evaluates a neighborhood-based community initiative funded by public welfare lottery profits in Taiwan Region, designed to promote active aging, strengthen social connectedness, and enhance well-being among older adults. Adopting a qualitative-dominant single-case study design, with multiple program cycles from March to October 2025 treated as one embedded case to enable in-depth process tracing of mechanisms rather than statistical generalization, the research synthesized data from project proposals, results reports, attendance records, pre-post learning-efficacy questionnaires, satisfaction surveys, open-ended feedback, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. The program engaged 40 community-dwelling older adults who collectively generated 1175 person-times of participation across 75 sessions in six learning modules focusing on exercise and health, spiritual life, technology and lifestyle, social participation, local culture, and travel learning. Key quantitative outcomes included a 95% average attendance rate and a mean satisfaction score of 4.6 on a 5-point Likert scale, with 94% rating the program as very satisfying. Drawing on the World Health Organization's active aging framework, healthy aging perspectives, and social capital theory, thematic analysis revealed enhanced participant confidence, reduced loneliness, stronger neighbor relationships, psychological safety, peer learning, and the formation of a self-organized learning group that continued beyond the funding period. Limitations include the single-site design, non-probability sampling, the researcher's dual role as organizer/lecturer/observer, use of self-developed instruments, and absence of a control group or long-term follow-up. The results demonstrate the potential of lottery-funded NGO-private commu-

nity partnerships to generate meaningful social impact by channeling public resources into innovative, community-led programs for older adults. Findings highlight how low-barrier, neighborhood-embedded activities can mobilize local communities as sustainable human resources in super-aged societies.

Keywords

Active Aging, Social Capital, Community Engagement, Lottery Funding, Preventive Welfare, Social Connectedness, Psychological Safety

1. Introduction

Taiwan Region officially entered a super-aged society in 2025, with the population aged 65 and older exceeding 20% of the total population (approximately 4.7 million people) as of the end of June 2025. According to Department of the Interior statistics, 25.8% of these older adults live alone, highlighting growing concerns about social isolation, limited family support, and increased demand for community-based care services [1]. This rapid demographic transition varies regionally—Chinese Taipei City recorded the highest proportion at 24.18%, while Hsinchu County had the lowest at 15.08%—and coincides with a record low of 107,812 newborns in 2025 [2]. Together, these trends indicate that Taiwan Region's aging challenge extends beyond fiscal welfare burdens to a structural erosion of everyday social and caregiving “human resources.”

This demographic shift has profound implications for social welfare systems, particularly in urban communities where traditional family structures have weakened due to urbanization, declining fertility, and changing work patterns [3]. Many older adults now experience heightened risks of isolation, reduced social participation, and declining physical and mental health, increasing dependency on formal services [4]. Recent aging research has emphasized that older adults' well-being is shaped not only by health and long-term care services, but also by social participation, neighborhood environments, meaningful roles, identity reconstruction, and opportunities for continuing engagement in later life [5]–[7].

The World Health Organization's Decade of Healthy Aging 2021 - 2030 calls for coordinated action to improve the lives of older people, their families, and their communities [8]. This perspective is highly relevant to Taiwan Region's aging policy context because it shifts attention from late-stage care to prevention, participation, and age-friendly community environments. In this study, active aging is therefore understood not only as individual health maintenance or physical activity, but also as older adults' continued participation in social, cultural, learning, spiritual, and civic life [5]–[7].

Social isolation and loneliness have become central concerns in gerontology and public health. More recent research further suggests that social disconnection is associated with poorer health status, lower life satisfaction, and reduced well-being among community-dwelling older adults [8]. Effective community programs

must create repeated, low-pressure, and trust-building opportunities through which older adults can form durable relationships and regain confidence in everyday life.

In response, the government in Taiwan Region allocates profits from Public Welfare Lottery sales to support preventive social welfare initiatives delivered primarily through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While lottery funding is frequently viewed as a mere financing tool, its potential as a governance mechanism capable of activating community capacity and generating relational social outcomes remains underexplored. The Public Welfare Lottery in Taiwan Region, reintroduced in 2002 under the Public Welfare Lottery Issue Act, channels revenue into social welfare programs for vulnerable groups, including the elderly. This study positions lottery funding as a form of “preventive welfare investment,” whereby modest program costs can yield downstream benefits such as reduced loneliness, improved daily confidence, and strengthened neighborhood support networks.

Although early research raised concerns about potential adverse social impacts of lotteries (e.g., increased gambling among lower-income groups), subsequent studies in Taiwan Region affirm its role in redistributing voluntary gambling revenue into community services [9]. The program examined here exemplifies this model through collaboration between a private long-term care provider and a national NGO. Prior to the program, many participants had limited neighbor interactions and structured activities, often leading to feelings of disconnection. The initiative introduced diverse modules combining instrumental learning (health promotion, digital literacy, legal knowledge) with relational activities (shared meals, group discussions, and cultural trips). This design is grounded in evidence that sustained social connection is most effectively fostered through routine, low-pressure, embedded engagements rather than standalone interventions.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of such lottery-funded programs in enhancing elderly well-being, promoting active aging, and activating community engagement. Rather than focusing only on attendance and satisfaction indicators, this study examines how the program generated psychological safety, peer learning, identity reconstruction, and self-sustaining group formation. In doing so, it responds to calls in aging research for more context-sensitive studies of how community environments and social participation shape later-life well-being [5] [6] [8]. Specifically, it investigates three guiding questions: 1) How do lottery-funded community programs influence older adults’ perceived well-being and daily confidence? 2) Through what mechanisms do repeated sessions convert weak neighborhood ties into durable peer support networks? 3) What features of public-NGO-private partnerships support effective delivery and long-term sustainability in super-aged societies?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Active Aging Theory

Active aging, as defined by the World Health Organization (2002), is the process

of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance quality of life as people age [9]. This framework emphasizes three interrelated domains: physical health (e.g., maintaining mobility through exercise), mental well-being (e.g., cognitive stimulation through learning), and social engagement (e.g., community involvement to prevent loneliness). More importantly, active aging shifts the analytical focus from dependency, decline, and service consumption to autonomy, participation, dignity, and continued contribution in later life.

In rapidly aging societies such as Taiwan Region, where traditional family-based care is increasingly strained, active aging programs are vital for promoting independence and reducing reliance on institutional services [10]–[12]. Recent scholarship extends this framework by conceptualizing active aging within “age-friendly community ecosystems,” in which accessibility, continuity, and social participation are shaped by neighborhood conditions rather than individual factors alone. Neighborhood-based programs thus serve as enabling infrastructures, particularly for older adults facing mobility limitations or weakened family support.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate the benefits of community-based interventions aligned with active aging principles. Structured activities—including fitness classes, educational workshops, and group outings—have been shown to improve physical function, cognitive health, and emotional well-being among older adults [7]. Lottery-funded NGO initiatives help overcome these obstacles by providing free, localized, and flexible programs that resonate with Taiwan Region’s cultural emphasis on community and relational support. Recent evidence further indicates that interventions embedded in familiar community environments are especially effective, as familiarity lowers barriers and sustains long-term engagement [13]. From a behavioral perspective, the repeatability of low-pressure sessions, such as regular scheduling, familiar peers, and predictable settings, plays a key role in habit formation and anxiety reduction among older adults.

2.2. Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory offers a robust lens for understanding lottery-funded community engagement programs for older adults. Putnam defines social capital as networks of relationships, trust, and norms of reciprocity that generate benefits for individuals and communities, distinguishing between bonding social capital, *i.e.*, strong within-group ties and bridging social capital, *i.e.*, cross-group connections [14]. For older adults, social capital is associated with reduced loneliness, greater resilience, and improved health outcomes [15]. In Taiwan Region’s context of urbanization and shrinking family sizes, community programs are crucial for rebuilding weakened social networks [16].

Empirical research supports the role of community activities in enhancing social integration. Studies show that structured leisure, learning, and participatory programs strengthen social capital and life satisfaction among seniors [17] [18]. Elder-led initiatives, in particular, foster bonding, expand networks, and promote

sustained participation [19]. Recent study further highlights how social networks buffer against exclusion while being shaped by structural inequalities related to class, gender, and life-course experiences [20].

Routine, low-pressure interactions—such as shared meals and informal discussions—often produce more durable ties than one-off events. The present case illustrates this mechanism: repeated small-group activities gradually transformed weak neighborhood ties into supportive peer networks. This social-capital perspective also illuminates key qualitative themes, including psychological safety and later-life identity reconstruction, whereby participants feeling “safe to try” and “valued as contributors” strengthened reciprocity and sustained engagement beyond the funded period.

2.3. Lottery Funding for Social Welfare

Public lotteries serve as an important funding mechanism for social welfare programs in many countries, enabling governments to support preventive and participatory initiatives without direct tax increases [21]. In Taiwan Region, lottery revenues have been channeled through NGOs to address elderly care, disability services, and community development, often filling gaps in formal long-term care systems. Such programs appear most effective when integrating health promotion, education, and social elements [11] [22].

This study applies active aging and social capital frameworks to evaluate how lottery-funded activities contribute to elderly well-being and community resilience. While proposal-based competition encourages innovation, periodic reporting requirements can impose administrative burdens on implementers. Consequently, social impact hinges not only on funding availability but also on governance design, including review criteria that prioritize sustained participation, learning outcomes, and community spillovers.

2.4. Health States in Aging Populations

In aging populations, the concept of subhealth is particularly salient as an intermediate state between full health and clinical disease. Subhealth is characterized by minor physiological, psychological, or biochemical abnormalities without diagnosable pathology [23] [24]. This condition is linked to lifestyle factors and elevates the risk of progression to chronic illness if unaddressed.

Although the concept of subhealth is useful, this study adopts a broader prevention-oriented view of older adults' health and well-being. In community gerontology, prevention includes maintaining functional ability, strengthening health literacy, supporting daily routines, preserving social roles, and reducing psychological risks such as loneliness, fear, and withdrawal. Community-based programs can play a preventive role by promoting physical activity, health literacy, and social engagement, thereby supporting functional independence and delaying deterioration. In this study, modules on exercise, health and spiritual life align with prevention-oriented approaches, focusing on daily confidence,

safe routines, and health literacy (e.g., medication safety) rather than replacing clinical care. A Recent study show that a healthy lifestyle intervention using wearable feedback was meaningful not simply because of technology itself, but because it supported awareness, behavior change, and well-being among older adults experiencing cognitive decline [25]. In this study, the program's preventive value therefore lies in its combination of physical activity, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, emotional support, and practical life knowledge. This combination helps explain why participants reported not only satisfaction with individual sessions, but also stronger confidence and willingness to continue participation.

2.5. Public-Private-NGO Collaboration in Lottery-Funded Programs

The initiative examined here was delivered through collaboration between a private long-term care provider and a national NGO, supported by public funding. This arrangement combines public legitimacy, NGO relational trust, and private-sector operational flexibility, a model increasingly used in Taiwan Region to scale aging-related community services without expanding public-sector staffing. NGOs contribute community trust, advocacy experience, and outreach capacity, while private providers offer service delivery expertise and adaptability to participants' changing needs. Together, these actors create conditions not only for effective service delivery, but also for the cultivation of peer leadership and community capability. This partnership structure is particularly important in aging policy because older adults' participation often depends on trust, familiarity, and the perceived safety of the program environment. A purely administrative model may secure compliance and reporting, but it may not generate the relational conditions needed for long-term engagement.

Public-private-NGO collaboration can therefore be understood as a governance arrangement for converting financial resources into social infrastructure. Public funding provides legitimacy and basic resources; NGOs provide mission orientation, advocacy, and relational access; and private providers contribute operational capacity, professional knowledge, and service responsiveness. When these roles are well integrated, community programs can move beyond service delivery toward co-production, where older adults themselves become participants, peer supporters, and informal leaders.

Using this case, the analysis examines how structured, neighborhood-embedded activities support older adults' well-being, social connection, and sustained engagement. By tracing both immediate outcomes and longer-term continuation, the study identifies mechanisms through which repeated participation fosters psychological safety, strengthens peer relationships, and supports later-life identity reconstruction. Importantly, this model supports sustainability by fostering participant-led continuity and peer leadership, shifting the program from external service delivery toward community capability building.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant single-case study design to examine the social impact of a lottery-funded community initiative. The program is treated as a single embedded case, with embedded units including multiple program cycles, from March to October 2025, different data sources including documents, surveys, observation, interviews, and the six learning modules. This design enables in-depth process tracing of participation dynamics, social mechanisms, and perceived outcomes rather than statistical generalization. Primary data were drawn from project proposals, results reports, attendance records, pre-post learning-efficacy questionnaires, satisfaction surveys, open-ended feedback, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. Methodological triangulation across these sources strengthened credibility by allowing convergence between quantitative indicators and qualitative insights.

The program, titled “Aging-care, Make Older Adults Shining,” was funded through Taiwan Region’s Public Welfare Lottery profits and implemented through collaboration between a national NGO (International Association of Families and Employers with Disabilities—IAFED) and a private long-term care provider (Manyuan Long-Term Care Services). It was delivered at a designated community care station in Kaohsiung City from March 3 to October 9, 2025. A total of 75 sessions generated 1175 person-times of participation across six learning modules: 1) Exercise and Health, 2) Spiritual Life, 3) Technology and Lifestyle, 4) Social Participation, 5) Local Culture and Current Affairs, and 6) Travel Learning. Activities combined indoor classes, practical workshops, and outdoor cultural trips designed to be accessible for community-dwelling older adults.

3.1. Participants and Recruitment

Inclusion criteria were community-dwelling adults aged 65 and above who were physically and mentally capable of active participation. Participants were recruited through existing community networks and word-of-mouth referrals, a recruitment strategy commonly used in neighborhood-based programs for older adults. Although the initial recruitment target was 30 participants, enrollment increased to 40 participants, reflecting the influence of peer encouragement and informal social networks on participation decisions among older adults [23].

All participants resided within the same local community. Recruitment followed a snowball pattern, whereby early participants invited neighbors to join subsequent sessions. The final participant group comprised 5 men and 35 women, a distribution that reflects gendered life-course patterns in Taiwan Region, where women are more likely to retire earlier and remain locally embedded through household and caregiving roles. Participants were informed that data collected through questionnaires, observation, and interviews would be used for research purposes. Participation in all data collection activities was voluntary, and individuals could decline or withdraw at any time without consequence.

3.2. Data Collection

The researcher served as both lecturer/organizer and observer. Therefore, participant observation and in-depth interviews were applied for qualitative data collection. Questionnaire surveys on learning efficacy and satisfaction were also applied. The pre-test for learning efficacy was administered on the first day of the program, and the post-test was administered on the last day; all participants were invited to complete both.

Participant observation was conducted throughout the program cycle because the researcher also served as lecturer and organizer. Observations focused on 1) engagement behaviors (attendance stability, willingness to speak, question asking), 2) peer interaction patterns (greeting behaviors, mutual help, information sharing), 3) emotional climate (signs of anxiety, confidence, laughter, encouragement), and 4) emergent informal leadership (participants who initiated reminders, coordinated seating, invited neighbors, or proposed follow-up activities). Fieldnotes were recorded immediately after each session in a structured template containing: date/time, session type, key activities, notable interaction episodes, and brief analytic memos linking observations to active aging and social capital constructs. To reduce recall bias, notes were written within 24 hours of each session, and reflective memos were updated weekly to capture change over time.

Because the researcher held dual roles (facilitator and observer), steps were taken to strengthen credibility. First, observational claims were triangulated with a) attendance records, b) open-ended survey comments, and c) interview excerpts. Second, analytic memos explicitly distinguished descriptive observations (what happened) from interpretive inferences (what it might mean). Third, negative cases were recorded, including moments of disengagement, confusion, or complaints, to avoid only reporting positive accounts.

In-depth interviews were conducted with a small purposive subset of participants who a) attended frequently, b) initially hesitated but later became active, or c) played informal peer-leadership roles. Interviews were semi-structured and asked about perceived changes in daily routine, confidence, loneliness, neighbor relationships, and reasons for continued participation. Interview notes were anonymized and integrated into the thematic analysis alongside open-ended survey data.

3.3. Learning Efficacy and Satisfaction Assessment

The evaluation of learning efficacy and participant satisfaction was conducted using paper-based questionnaires, deliberately chosen for their readability and accessibility among elderly participants. As there were 20 sessions of classes, learning efficacy was measured through a pre-post design with two identical sets of 20 knowledge-based questions. Each question was tailored by the respective instructors to the content of their specific module (e.g., for the legal literacy session, questions included: “What is required for a will to be legally valid: handwritten, oral declaration, lawyer endorsement, or typed document with signature?”). The pre-test

was administered in the first week of the program to establish baseline knowledge across all professional topics. The post-test was administered on the final day during the closing ceremony. Comparison of correct responses between pre- and post-tests served as the primary indicator of learning outcomes. Results showed a statistically significant increase in the proportion of correct answers following instruction, indicating substantial gains in accurate knowledge and understanding of the professional content delivered.

Participant satisfaction was assessed using a 17-item self-developed questionnaire covering 5 key program dimensions: 1) course content, with 4 items, 2) instructor performance, 5 items, 3) learning proficiency, 3 items, 4) administrative service quality, 4 items, and 5) overall satisfaction & expectations, 2 items. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Overall satisfaction was very high, with strong positive responses across all eight domains, reflecting the program's success in meeting participant expectations and delivering a positive experience.

Because the survey instruments were self-developed for program evaluation, this paper treats it as a pragmatic monitoring tool rather than a validated psychometric scale. However, using multiple dimensions (content, instructor, learning, administration, overall satisfaction) strengthens interpretability and aligns with common program evaluation practice in community interventions. These assessment methods provided both objective evidence of knowledge gain and subjective feedback on program delivery, supporting the overall effectiveness of the initiative in promoting active aging and social engagement among older adults.

3.4. Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

The researcher's dual role as organizer, lecturer, and observer introduced potential social desirability bias. To mitigate this, surveys were anonymous, collected with assistance where possible, and participants were assured that feedback would not affect future services. Negative cases and disengagement moments were actively recorded. Observational claims were triangulated with survey and interview data. All personal information was anonymized. Ethical considerations were addressed by informing participants that data would be used for research purposes and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence.

3.5. Data Analysis

The participation rate was calculated after the completion of the program. Data analysis involved thematic coding using NVivo software. Coding was hybrid (deductive from active aging and social capital frameworks + inductive from the data). Themes were derived through iterative coding and discussion of selected excerpts, with codes focused on: 1) activity content and delivery; 2) participation levels and satisfaction; 3) social outcomes (e.g., neighbor interactions, sense of belonging); 4) perceived benefits (e.g., improved health, renewed purpose, community cohesion); and 5) sustainability (e.g., formation of self-learning groups).

4. Findings

4.1. Satisfaction toward the Program for the Elderly Is High

The program delivered a total of 75 sessions between March 3, 2025, and October 9, 2025, reaching 1175 person-times of participation across five thematic clusters and one travel-learning module. Attendance averaged 95%. The satisfaction survey yielded exceptionally high results, with 94% of participants rating the program as "very satisfying" (5 on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree/very dissatisfied and 5 = strongly agree/very satisfied). Participants, primarily adults aged 65 and older who were physically and mentally capable of active involvement, reported benefits across physical, emotional, cognitive, and social domains.

Overall, the training program received overwhelmingly positive feedback, reflecting strong perceived value and effectiveness among this demographic. Participants reported high overall satisfaction with the program (Mean = 4.6, N = 40), indicating an exceptionally favorable reception. This global rating underscores the program's success in meeting or exceeding expectations for elderly learners, who often prioritize accessibility, relevance, and supportive delivery in educational interventions. When examining the five recategorized dimensions, the results show (Table 1):

1. Course Content achieved a very high mean score of 4.62, suggesting that participants found the material highly relevant, appropriately paced, balanced between theory and practical application, and well-aligned with the intended theme. This strong rating highlights the program's ability to deliver content that resonates with the needs and interests of older adults.

2. Instructor Performance received the highest subscale mean of 4.69, reflecting excellent perceptions of the instructors' clarity in communication, mastery of teaching points, effectiveness of delivery methods, sufficiency of prepared materials, and responsiveness to questions. These results point to highly competent and engaging facilitation as a major strength of the program.

3. Learning Proficiency scored a mean of 4.59, indicating that most participants successfully understood the course content, could articulate its key points, and perceived direct benefits to their current daily lives or work-related activities. This dimension confirms meaningful knowledge gains and practical applicability for the target group.

4. Administrative Service Quality was rated at a mean of 4.53, demonstrating solid satisfaction with pre-course notifications, registration processes, training venue suitability, and overall administrative handling. While slightly lower than other domains, this score still reflects a positive logistical experience with minimal reported issues.

5. Overall Satisfaction & Expectations yielded the highest mean of 4.7, with participants affirming that the program met (or exceeded) their anticipated outcomes. This category, encompassing global assessments of the instructor's teaching style and professionalism, reinforces the program's holistic success and high endorsement by elderly attendees.

Table 1. Participant satisfaction by dimension (N = 40).

Dimension	Mean Score	Items
Course Content	4.62	4
Instructor Performance	4.69	5
Learning Proficiency	4.59	3
Administrative Service Quality	4.53	4
Overall Satisfaction & Expectations	4.70	1

In summary, across all dimensions, mean scores consistently exceeded 4.5 on the 5-point scale, evidencing robust participant approval and perceived impact. These quantitative findings suggest the training was well-designed, effectively delivered, and highly valued by older adult participants, with no major areas of dissatisfaction identified in the structured responses. From a program-evaluation perspective, these high satisfaction scores are meaningful because older adults often discontinue participation when content is either too difficult, too fast, or socially uncomfortable. The consistently high ratings across content, instructor performance, and overall expectations suggest the program reduced common participation barriers (fear of embarrassment, difficulty following instructions, lack of belonging), which helps explain the strong attendance stability.

4.2. Positive Feedback toward the Government-Funded Age-Appropriate Program

Participant feedback was collected through open-ended survey questions and analyzed thematically. The following themes emerged:

1) Activity Content and Delivery

Participants consistently praised the practical, age-appropriate design of the sessions. One respondent noted: “The exercise classes were easy to follow, and the instructor explained everything slowly. I now do safe stretches at home every day.” Another highlighted the technology group: “I never thought I could use AI on my phone. The teacher repeated things until we all understood—it was patient and clear.” Life planning sessions were described as “useful and not scary,” with simple real-life examples that encouraged questions and engagement. Participant observation notes reinforced these perceptions: instructors who used repetition, humor, and hands-on practice generated more peer-to-peer helping behaviors (e.g., participants teaching each other how to open an app or adjust posture), suggesting that the delivery style indirectly strengthened social capital through cooperative learning.

2) Participation Levels and Satisfaction

Attendance and satisfaction were exceptionally high. One participant stated: “I came to almost every session because the schedule was convenient and the atmosphere was so welcoming. I give it full marks—5 out of 5!” Another commented: “The classes were fun, not boring like I expected. I always looked forward to com-

ing.” The overall satisfaction rate of 94% reflected strong positive reception, with many noting that facilitators made them feel respected and included from the start. A repeated pattern in observation memos was that social motivation increased over time: early attendance was often driven by curiosity or invitations from neighbors, while later attendance was maintained by relational commitment (“my friends will be there”) and role identity (“I am a regular learner”). This temporal shift supports the argument that program success depends on the conversion of initial participation into habit and belonging.

3) Social Outcomes

Social bonding was a prominent outcome. Before the program, many participants reported minimal neighbor interaction. One respondent shared: “I barely knew my neighbors before, but now after shared meals and group outings, we greet each other every day and chat on the phone. I feel like I belong again.” Another said: “We were strangers in the same building, but now we share stories and support each other. It feels like a big family.” The program significantly reduced feelings of loneliness, with participants noting a renewed sense of community belonging. These narratives reflect both bonding social capital (stronger ties within the community group) and practical reciprocity norms (checking in on each other, sharing local information), which are especially important in super-aged societies where emergency response and everyday assistance increasingly depend on neighborhood-level coordination.

4) Perceived Benefits

Participants reported improvements in multiple domains. Physical health benefits were common: “My legs are stronger now, and I sleep better after the exercise classes.” Emotional and existential benefits were also evident: “I have renewed purpose. Learning AI made me feel capable, and group discussions helped me reflect on my life.” Community cohesion was frequently mentioned: “We share resources and look out for each other. It’s not just activities; it’s a support network that makes me happier and healthier.” While most feedback was positive, a few participants noted initial hesitation or difficulty keeping up with technology sessions, indicating that some barriers remained despite overall high satisfaction.

5) Sustainability

A key outcome was the formation of a self-sustaining learning group. One participant explained: “After the program ended, we formed the ‘Feng Yu Life Self-Learning Group’ with 12 members. We meet weekly to plan our own activities and share what we learned.” Another added: “We’re now organizing our own trips and health talks without needing the NGO. This shows the program really planted lasting seeds.” The emergence of this group indicates the program’s success in building long-term community capacity. From a social impact perspective, this is a critical indicator because it suggests the program created “continuation capacity,” meaning the benefits can persist even when funding ends. In super-aged societies, this form of sustainability is especially valuable because it reduces reliance on continuous external staffing while preserving peer support and routine social

contact.

6) Psychological Safety and Confidence

Participants frequently described a sense of psychological safety emerging from the program environment. Several respondents emphasized that the activities were “non-judgmental” and “pressure-free,” which encouraged participation even among initially hesitant individuals. One participant remarked: “Here, no one laughs if you forget things. We all help each other.” Another noted: “I used to be afraid of learning new things at my age, but seeing others like me try made me brave.” These accounts suggest that the program fostered emotional security, which is critical for sustained engagement in later life. This psychological safety is consistent with active aging principles because it lowers perceived participation risk and supports continued contribution, especially for older adults who fear stigma around memory decline or unfamiliar technology.

7) Identity Reconstruction in Later Life

Beyond functional benefits, participants articulated shifts in self-identity. Several elderly respondents described transitioning from passive recipients of care to active learners and contributors. One stated: “I thought retirement meant waiting for time to pass. Now I feel I still have value.” Another shared: “My grandchildren respect me more when I tell them I learned AI.” These narratives indicate that the program supported positive aging identities, reinforcing dignity and self-worth. Identity reconstruction also appeared to support sustainability: participants who described themselves as “learners” or “helpers” were more likely to initiate follow-up activities, invite others, and maintain group contact outside formal sessions, suggesting that identity change can be an intermediate mechanism linking program participation to long-term community capacity.

These findings suggest that the lottery-funded initiative was associated with improved active aging and social capital outcomes. High participation and satisfaction rates, coupled with the formation of a self-learning group, demonstrate the program’s ability to reduce isolation, enhance well-being, and create sustainable community networks among older adults.

5. Conclusion and Practical Implications

This case study of the lottery-funded “Manyuan Aging-care, Make the Elderly Shining” program demonstrates that community-based initiatives can meaningfully enhance elderly well-being, reduce social isolation, and foster sustainable social networks in Taiwan Region’s super-aged society. Through 75 carefully designed sessions across six learning modules (exercise & health, spiritual life, technology & lifestyle, social participation, local culture & current affairs, and travel learning), the program achieved high participation (95% attendance) and satisfaction (94%), while successfully forming a self-sustaining community-based program that continues to operate independently. These outcomes align with active aging theory and social capital theory, showing how structured social, educational, and recreational activities can improve physical vitality, emotional resilience, dig-

ital confidence, and sense of belonging among older adults.

The findings reveal that before the program, many elderly residents in the target community had minimal neighbor interaction and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement. The initiative deliberately created regular occasions for mingling, through shared meals, group discussions, exercise, health talks, life-planning workshops, and cultural outings; it helped participants rediscover purpose, build friendships, and develop a renewed sense of community. The findings are consistent with previous research indicating that group interventions with educational or social support are effective in alleviating isolation [26]. The emergence of a self-organized learning group after the funding period ended further illustrates the program's success in planting lasting seeds of social capital and autonomous participation.

5.1. Practical Implications

Taken together, the findings suggest that elderly well-being initiatives should be evaluated not only by attendance metrics, but by their capacity to generate self-sustaining social systems, peer leadership, and community trust. Lottery-funded programs are uniquely positioned to fulfill this role because they operate outside rigid welfare bureaucracies while retaining public legitimacy. The program's design and outcomes offer several actionable lessons for Taiwan Region's aging policy and social welfare funding mechanisms.

1. Effective Use of Government Lottery Funds for Elderly Care

Public lottery profits represent a stable, voluntary-source revenue stream that can be channeled to support preventive and participatory elderly programs without increasing tax burdens. The high satisfaction and sustained impact of this initiative demonstrate that lottery funding is particularly suitable for community-led, low-overhead projects that directly address social isolation and promote active aging. Policymakers should prioritize allocating a larger share of lottery revenues to similar NGO-run initiatives that focus on social connectedness rather than solely on institutional or medical care. In particular, funding criteria can explicitly value social outcomes such as reduced perceived loneliness, increased neighbor contact, and the formation of peer-led continuity groups.

2. Leveraging Local Communities as Sustainable Human Resources

The formation of the self-learning group highlights how elderly residents themselves can become a sustainable, voluntary human resource for ongoing community support. When given structured opportunities to interact, learn, and take ownership, seniors shift from being passive recipients of care to active contributors within their neighborhoods. This reduces long-term dependence on formal services and builds resilience against future demographic pressures. Future programs should intentionally include mechanisms such as peer-led planning sessions that empower participants to continue activities independently after funding ends.

3. Utilizing Private-Sector Expertise and Flexibility

Private companies bring market-driven efficiency, operational know-how, and service delivery capacity that public agencies often lack. Private providers are more flexible, quicker to adapt to real-time needs, better at understanding community demands, and experienced in marketing and outreach which skills essential for attracting and retaining elderly participants. Because private companies survive in a competitive economic environment, they are incentivized to deliver high-quality, user-centered services. Government should actively partner with private long-term care providers to execute community programs, allowing public funds to focus on oversight and equity rather than direct service delivery. This flexibility is particularly valuable for older-adult programs because participation barriers can change quickly (weather, health fluctuations, family obligations), requiring rapid adjustments that are difficult in rigid public procurement systems.

4. Harnessing NGO Reputation and Expertise

NGOs possess strong positive brand image, deep understanding of the needs of elderly and disabled populations, and established trust within vulnerable communities. Their advocacy experience and support networks enable effective outreach, culturally sensitive program design, and emotional support for participants. By positioning NGOs as lead coordinators, government can leverage their legitimacy and relational capital to ensure programs reach those most in need and are perceived as trustworthy. This partnership model maximizes the social impact of public funds. In practice, NGO trust can also reduce stigma: older adults may feel more comfortable participating in a community program coordinated by a familiar NGO than attending an unfamiliar institutional service setting.

5. Improve Project Review Mechanisms

To encourage innovation, the government should recruit multidisciplinary review panels when evaluating lottery-funded project proposals. Including scholars from gerontology, public health, social work, psychology, business management, and community planning would allow more nuanced assessment of feasibility, creativity, and social impact. Such diversity would also reduce the risk of conservative funding decisions that discourage experimental or cross-sectoral initiatives. A practical mechanism is to require each proposal to be reviewed by at least one subject-matter reviewer (aging/health), one community practice reviewer (social work/community development), and one sustainability reviewer (management/operations), ensuring balanced evaluation criteria rather than single-discipline dominance.

6. Reduce Administrative Burden

Administrative efficiency is critical. Excessive paperwork and reporting requirements consume limited NGO capacity and reduce time available for direct engagement with elderly participants. Streamlining application and reporting procedures, focusing on outcome indicators rather than procedural compliance, would significantly improve program effectiveness and staff morale. A simplified reporting template could prioritize a small set of outcome indicators already collected in this case (attendance stability, satisfaction means, qualitative theme sum-

maries, and evidence of sustainability such as follow-up group formation).

5.2. Research Limitation and Future Study

No individual identifiers were used, and the analysis focused solely on aggregate patterns and qualitative feedback. Limitations include reliance on self-reported outcomes, non-probability sampling, and the absence of a control group, which precludes causal inference. Despite these constraints, the rich qualitative and quantitative data provide valuable insights into the program's impact on elderly well-being. Future studies can strengthen evidence by 1) tracking individual-level changes (matched pre/post learning scores, loneliness scales), 2) adding a comparison community or waitlist group when feasible, and 3) conducting follow-up measurement 3 to 6 months after program completion to assess whether peer networks and activity routines persist.

5.3. Conclusions

Based on the experience from this case and feedback from the participants, this study suggests that the government should encourage more innovation through a diverse expert review committee. To stimulate more creative and impactful proposals, the government should recruit a multidisciplinary review panel; it is to evaluate lottery-fund applications. A diverse panel can better identify innovative ideas, ensure scientific rigor, and encourage NGOs to propose bold, evidence-based programs that address emerging elderly needs. Future elderly programs should prioritize fostering social capital to address diversity and inequality in later life, as structural divides continue to shape older adults' access to supportive networks [16].

The project manager from this case mentioned the heavy loading of paperwork, which is often a challenge in government-funded projects in Taiwan Region. It is suggested to reduce administrative burden and prioritize direct service delivery. Excessive paperwork and reporting requirements often divert NGO time and resources away from actual activities. The government should streamline application and reporting processes, focusing evaluation on measurable participant outcomes (attendance, satisfaction, sustained engagement) rather than procedural compliance. This would allow NGOs to concentrate on delivering high-quality events and responding directly to the real needs of elderly participants [25].

In conclusion, lottery-funded community programs, when executed through effective public-private-NGO partnerships, offer a scalable, cost-effective model for enhancing elderly well-being in super-aged societies. By combining public resources, private efficiency, and NGO legitimacy, such initiatives can reduce isolation, strengthen community bonds, and empower older adults to live more active, connected, and meaningful lives. Policymakers should expand and institutionalize this collaborative approach to meet the growing care and social needs of Taiwan Region's aging population.

Overall, this case suggests that the most valuable social impact of lottery-funded

elderly programs may be their capacity to convert public funds into community capability: routine participation creates psychological safety; psychological safety supports identity reconstruction; and identity reconstruction supports peer-led sustainability. This pathway provides a practical framework for designing future lottery-funded interventions that remain effective even under the demographic constraints of super-aged societies.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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