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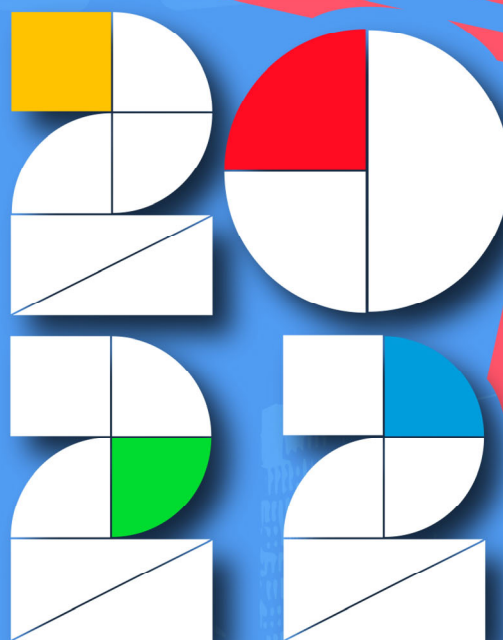
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Reengineering
Knowledge &
Creativity for
Global Excellence

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June



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TeSSH 2022***

**Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity
for Global Excellence**

Copy Editors:

***Nor Azrina Mohd Yusof (Dr.)
Lee Chai Chuen
Juaini Jamaludin
Normaziana Hassan***

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Copy Editors/Layout :Nor Azrina Mohd Yusof (Dr.)
Lee Chai Chuen
Juaini Jamaludin
Normaziana Hassan

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Foreword

The papers compiled in these e-proceedings are papers presented online at Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities International Conference 2022 (TeSSH I 2022) held on 30 June 2022 at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah, Kedah, Malaysia. With the theme, ***Reengineering Knowledge and Creativity for Global Excellence***, the conference has brought together presenters of diverse background who shared their conceptual and empirical papers in broad areas that are subsumed under the fields of Technology, Science, Social Sciences and Humanities. These e-proceedings comprise current researches that were undertaken with the rigorous endeavour of knowledge enhancement to ensure that the world of academia will continue to flourish. It is thus hoped that readers will significantly benefit from knowledge contained in these proceedings.

TeSSH I 2022 and these e-proceedings would not have been possible without the great efforts from the presenters, and the generous support from the TeSSH I 2022 committee members and the Rector of UiTM Cawangan Kedah, Prof. Dr. Mohamad Abdullah Hemdi. A heartfelt gratitude is extended to all involved. It is hoped that these e-proceedings will be an impetus to stimulate further studies and research that benefit the society at large.

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Age-friendly Environment for Older People: Challenges and Plans

Noorlailahusna Mohd Yusof

Universiti Sains Malaysia

noorlailahusna@student.usm.my

Suziana Mat Yasin

Universiti Sains Malaysia

suziana.my@usm.my

ABSTRACT

Currently, there are presently 10.7% older people in 2020 compared to 10.3% older people in 2019. The size of Malaysia's ageing population is predicted to increase to 15% by 2030. Therefore, there is a need for literature to be used as the point of departure for an age-friendly environment discussion. Since the concept is still a relatively new idea in Malaysia, this article aims to serve as a recent review of Malaysia's plans for the well-being of older people in terms of the development of an age-friendly environment. This article first presented the background on the ageing population in Malaysia. Further along, the article summarises the recent development of an age-friendly environment in Malaysia. Findings showed that Malaysia has challenges in terms of the built environment and social aspects in developing an age-friendly environment. Few plans have been initiated for the well-being of older people, including strengthening the healthcare and awareness programs, adopting the universal design concept, building more age-friendly facilities, and introducing a national framework for Age-Friendly City.

Key Words: Ageing, age-friendly environment, well-being, older people.

INTRODUCTION

In 2030, almost 15% of the population will be 60 years and above. The population of older people will be 5.8 million compared to the estimated population of 38.1 million. The changes in Malaysia's demographic profile to become an ageing society will bring about new challenges in health service needs and suitable physical environments. More older people are expected to live in urban areas by 2050, representing one-fourth of the total urban population in developing countries. In 2018, 18.2% of urban people aged 51 years and above lived in cities, demonstrating the importance of developing more liveable and age-friendly cities to accommodate older people (Ministry of Rural Development, 2018). Nowadays, liveability has become one of the core components of a city's competitiveness. Cities must have comprehensive basic facilities, infrastructure, good public transportation, safe neighbourhoods, and a comfortable and clean environment. These changes mean everybody in a city should have equal access to public amenities and infrastructure.

Well-being refers to the condition of an individual or group in terms of their social, spiritual, emotional, financial condition or even health situation. To have a good quality of well-being means that an individual or group enjoys a satisfying life experience. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of objectives that are included in a universal agreement with the goals of putting an end to poverty, protecting everything on the planet that makes it habitable, and ensuring that all people, both now and in the future, live in peace and prosperity. Therefore, developing an environment that responds to older people's needs will benefit the current older generations and the future generations.

In terms of development, population ageing creates social, economic, and cultural challenges to individuals, families, societies, and the global community. There are presently 3.6 million older people (11.2% aged 60 and above) in 2021 compared to 3.5 million older people (10.7% aged 60 and above) in 2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). In Malaysia, older people are defined as 60 years and older. Malaysia has adopted the United Nations definition of older people as those aged 60 years and older because ageing is a progressive state that begins with conception and ends with death, and it is associated with physical, social, and psychological changes (Ministry of Health, 2008).

Developing an ideal environment that supports older people's preferences has become a major government concern in planning the country's future. Age-friendly environments are the cities that promote active ageing by improving health, participation, and protection opportunities to enhance people's quality of life as they get older (World Health Organisation, 2007). This definition means an age-friendly environment should change its structures and services to make them more accessible and inclusive of older people with various needs and capacities. However, an age-friendly environment concept in Malaysia is still a relatively new idea. In addition, there is a need for literature to be used as the point of departure for an age-friendly environment discussion. Therefore, this article aims to explore the plans for the well-being of older people in Malaysia. This paper reviews the recent development, challenges, and strategies for developing an age-friendly environment in Malaysia.

THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF AN AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT IN MALAYSIA

In 2021, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan was presented with the theme of achieving a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Malaysia (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). The key themes of this plan are resetting the economy, strengthening security, well-being, and inclusivity, and advancing sustainability. Four catalytic policy enablers support the achievement of targets set under the three themes focused on developing future talent, accelerating technology adoption and innovation, enhancing connectivity and transport infrastructure, and strengthening the public service. However, in this case, Malaysia must prepare itself holistically to meet the challenges posed by an ageing society by 2030 and the rapid rate of urbanisation. These challenges will not only bring new opportunities to the country but can also pose challenges in managing rapid urbanisation and responding to the needs of older people.

Therefore, in order to enhance the well-being of older people, the Physical Planning Guideline for the Elderly was introduced in 2018 as a guide to planning and designing suitable accommodations for older people and care centres. The main principle of this guideline is planning related to harmony, interaction, and image, practical and user-friendly, accessibility, and safety and comfort. In addition, the guideline also supports social programmes through physical planning (Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, 2017). Senior living settlements such as family homes (ageing in place), retirement villages and care centres become the choices for older people to live in when they retire. By having this guideline, the interior and exterior design of all options in the elderly living settlements meet the needs of older people.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the Home Help Service programme has increased the number of volunteers participating in the volunteer programme by 33%, from 2,242 in 2016 to 2,982 in 2020 (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). This supporting service by the Community Division under the Department of Social Welfare enabled greater outreach for care and companionship, benefitting 8,592 older people in 2020 compared with 6,117 in 2016. This programme is designed for volunteers to reach older people who live alone and have difficulties going to hospitals for their treatment. They provide transportation services and companionship to ensure older people are accessible to the treatment and to ease their burden at the same time. This initiative will enhance the activity of volunteerism and instil the moral values of the young generation to respect and value older people while living in the community (Hamdy & Md Yusuf, 2018).

In addition, the Private Aged Healthcare Facilities and Services Act [Act 802] was enacted in 2018 to safeguard the rights of older people in receiving quality care. This act stipulates the minimum

standard requirement for quality care and services at private aged care institutions. One of the issues of proper and consistent enforcement of this act is the registration of elderly care centres. A special committee should be formed to investigate this issue and review and approve all the processes related to the rules and regulations (The Sun Daily, 28 April 2022). They also should conduct regular follow-up inspections to ensure the safety and security of the older people and employees of the care facilities.

CHALLENGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

However, there are a few challenges in developing an age-friendly environment. In order to create an age-friendly environment, the responsible body such as the government and private developers should focus on developing the nation's age-friendly domains related to the built environment before tackling social interaction domains (Lai et al., 2016; Mohd Tobi et al., 2017). Since the Physical Planning Guideline for the Elderly was introduced in 2018, the guideline has not been adopted by most of the local authorities in Malaysia (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). This issue later will affect the living environment for older people as they always believe that the housing and neighbourhoods they live in should be equipped with age-friendly elements (Ahmad Khalid et al., 2020). According to (Ismail et al., 2020), the housing environment for older people in Malaysia mostly lack representation of design codes, and no consideration is given to the quality of the age-friendly environment. In addition, an age-friendly project was also still not broadly practised and promoted where fewer people were aware of this housing and neighbourhood project (Ahmad Khalid et al., 2020). Most development projects only focus on the present demands without considering the future needs.

Besides, older people also have limited opportunities to participate actively in society due to personal and environmental factors (Economic Planning Unit, 2021). Most of them have limited opportunities because of their poor health factors, the need to allocate more time to improve relationships with family members, a lack of available time, and have the perception that social activities do not come at the appropriate time (Subramaniam, 2019). Whereas most older people are actually happier when surrounded by family members; friends; and provided with suitable facilities (Mohd Aini et al., 2017). While for most Muslim older people, housing and public spaces and buildings should allocated private spaces for their religious activities (Jumadi et al., 2019). This is because housing will positively affect their spirituality. Therefore, both the built environment and social aspects should be addressed to ensure the success of age-friendly environment development.

MALAYSIA PLANS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF OLDER PEOPLE

To enhance the well-being of older people, the government aims to strengthen the healthcare programs for older people. This plan includes the strategic partnerships with the private sector and the responsibility to ensure the design of private healthcare facilities complies with the Private Aged Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 2018 and Care Centres (Amendment) Act 2018. In addition, oral healthcare and awareness programs on healthy ageing are important for older people in domiciliary healthcare. A non-profit organisation like Hati.my has been established to inspire volunteerism and a charitable spirit within our communities. The organisation lists and updates information about charities, fundraising, and volunteerism to the public (Hati.my, n.d). Malaysia Healthy Ageing Society aims to promote the integrative approach towards the ageing process and foster and co-ordinate education, study, and research in Malaysia (MHAS, n.d).

To ensure inclusive housing, private developers will be encouraged to adopt the universal design concept in their housing projects to meet the needs of specific target groups, especially older people. Universal design means simply designing all products, buildings and exterior spaces to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible (Mace et al., 1990). The design aims to create products, buildings and exterior spaces that everyone can use regardless of their ability or disability (Georgiev, 2020). In addition, applying universal design in housing construction and age-friendly

design for public spaces and buildings can ensure older people's safety, independence, and convenience (Zaid et al., 2019). Furthermore, local governments will be urged to build more age-friendly facilities. Older people should be able to stay and enjoy their lives with activities. They will have more time to enjoy parks, recreational activities, and other community facilities after their retirement.

To increase the well-being of the aged population, local authorities will be encouraged to adopt the Physical Planning Guideline for the Elderly, while a national framework on Age Friendly City will also be introduced to promote a more conducive environment for the aged population. In 2019, Taiping was selected to implement the first phase of Malaysia's Age-Friendly City pilot project. For this project, the Women, Family, and Community Development Ministry, in collaboration with the Perak government, Taiping Municipal Council, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), expected that the Age-Friendly City project and the potential lessons generated in Taiping would be used to form national policies as Malaysia prepares for the future (The Star, 31 October 2019).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, even an age-friendly environment still can be considered new in Malaysia's development process. People are aware that the concept is important for their current and future well-being. An age-friendly environment should make changes to the structures and services in order to make the cities and communities more accessible and inclusive of older people with a variety of needs and capacities. The study's findings contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the age-friendly environment concept. The discovered challenges and future plans can be developed as a reference or guideline for effective planning and implementation of policies for age-friendly cities and communities.

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