

**LEARNER AUTONOMY AMONG OLDER ADULTS: A VEHICLE FOR LIFELONG  
LEARNING AND LIFE SATISFACTION**



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## 5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary

(Abstract of the research) – 1 page only

Malaysia currently has about 3 million senior citizens, and the number is rising. UN statistics show that Malaysia is likely to reach “ageing nation” status by the year 2035. As the elderly constitute an increasing proportion of Malaysia’s population, it is pertinent to address their needs and concerns, which have direct impact on their well-being and quality of life. This study examined the relationships of life satisfaction, learner autonomy and selected demographic variables of older adults in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia. A convenience sample of 111 adults, age 50 or older, was selected to participate in this survey. T-tests, ANOVAs and Pearson Correlations were utilized to determine the relationships of the demographic variables to Learner Autonomy Profile Scores and Life Satisfaction Scores. The findings reveal that ethnicity, education level and living area correlate significantly and positively with the learner autonomy profile scores of the respondents. Only education level was found to significantly and positively correlate with life satisfaction. In addition, results of this study indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship of learner autonomy profile scores and life satisfaction scores. Implications for practice as well as recommendations for further study and public policy emphases are discussed.

*Keywords: older adults, life satisfaction, learner autonomy, Malaysia, well-being, quality of life*

### 5.3 Introduction

According to a United Nations report, the current world population of 7.2 billion is projected to increase by 1 billion over the next 12 years and reach 9.6 billion by 2050. Overall, life expectancy is projected to increase in developed and developing countries in future years. At the global level, it is projected to reach 76 years in the period 2045-2050 and 82 years in 2095-2100 (*World Population Prospects: the 2012 Revision*). Rapid declines in fertility and increases in life expectancy have created a rapidly aging society. Malaysia currently has about 3 million senior citizens, and the number is rising. UN statistics show that Malaysia is likely to reach ageing nation status (where the number of people who above 60 make up at least 15% of the population) by the year 2035.

Over the past several decades, gerontological research has been emphasizing the issue of life satisfaction. Aging research has predominantly focused on issues of the physical, psychological, social, and economic status of older adults. These questions have led to an increased understanding of the processes and problems of aging and the development of strategies designed to maximize the potential of the later years of these older adults.

Along the same vein, learner autonomy or, behavioral intentions to learn, has generated considerable interest in the adult education literature. However, very few have looked at learner autonomy in older adults. Hiemstra (1975) studied older adult's learning projects and found a strong relationship between a preference for assuming personal control over learning and age. This finding is supported by Hassan (1981) and McCoy (1982). Hassan also looked at the self-directed learning readiness scores of older adults and found a corresponding positive relationship between age and scores on the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale.

In addition, to date, no one has published accounts of any comparisons of learner autonomy and life satisfaction among older adults. If life satisfaction can be improved by learning efforts as, it is important to determine if learner autonomy or behavioural intentions to learn among older adults has a significant relationship to measures of their life satisfaction. Thus, the intent of this research was to examine such relationships.

There are two problem areas the researchers have addressed in this study. First, many older adults face various hurdles that can impact their overall state of well-being. Some adults are able to overcome these hurdles through self-learning efforts, while others find themselves less well equipped to cope with such concerns. The second problem area involves understanding better why some people turn to learning for meeting personal needs, while others do not. In essence, life satisfaction varies considerable among older adults, as does personal propensity to undertake learning efforts. If a link can be established between life satisfaction and intention to learn, then it might be possible to look towards enhancement of learner autonomy as a strategy for promoting a higher quality of life among adults in their later years.