

## ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MALAYSIAN WOMEN IN AGEING CARE INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT

*Malaysia is a developing country and a drastic increase in the elderly population is recorded from the year 2005, ageing population age 60 and above recorded as 7 %, which is predicted to be doubled to 14 % until the year 2028. Thus, the ageing care industry in Malaysia needs to grow for healthy ageing. The growth of the ageing care industry will help the government to control the issues, especially in elderly care service and residency. Malaysia is still young in elderly care as compared to older countries. There are 365 registered ageing care centres, and women run very few of them. However, women personality attributes such as soft nature, politeness, care, patience fit to the requirement of the ageing care industry. Among Malaysian women, entrepreneurship is on the rise due to governmental support, whereas; women entrepreneurship in the service industry is limited. However, women entry in the ageing care industry will open new avenues to cater to the demand of the ageing population and help to control the issues of the older population. The service industry also carries immense potential for*



*women entrepreneurship. This study is conducted to understand the entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the ageing care industry. The study adopts the qualitative research strategy and focus group conducted with ten women entrepreneurs in the ageing care industry and five experts. The results highlight that initiative should take for the promotion and encouragement of women entry in the ageing care industry. The study recommends the validation and promotion of Malaysian women entrepreneurial activities in the ageing care industry.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurship, women, ageing, industry, opportunities*

## INTRODUCTION

The ageing population is a global phenomenon and has an impact on all human life traits (Thomas, 2011; Gupta, 2018), social and working life. Hence, developed and developing countries must see the issue of ageing scientifically, precisely the developed countries should foresee it as a linear increase whereas, developing countries could treat it as the exponential growth of the economy (GEI, 2017; ACP, 2018) as this perception leads to the overall understanding of ageing population issues and challenges. Similarly, in Malaysia, it is predicted that the rise of the Ageing Population increase from 7 million or 17.6 % of the expected population of 40 million by 2040 (NPF, 2011; Gupta, 2018) which provides lots of challenges for Malaysia and provides opportunities to tap in the ageing care industry. Previous research, however, showed that older people are not a priority in the international policy development of a country (Samad *et al.*, 2017). In recent years, due to demographic changes in various countries worldwide, older people become significant in development agendas. The government bodies across the globe are engaged in the development of the policy frameworks to meet up with the challenges of the ageing population. Thus, the elderly home or old homes strategy plays a vital role to look after the Malaysian aged population. One of the challenges that the government has to encounter is providing home care for the elderly as it is one of the social development agenda in the Malaysian government. Currently, 365 registered ageing care centres are working in leading states of Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak (ACP, 2018; Noor *et al.*, 2019).

However, many unregistered charity-based care centres are also functioning, including those of a religious foundation. Comparatively, men entrepreneurs run the majority of these centres in Malaysia (ACP, 2018). Recently, women entrepreneurship is on the rise in Malaysia due to governmental support as women are engaged in a variety of business such as child daycare, spa, food delivery and many service-related entities in Malaysia. Despite, playing a remarkable role in the entrepreneurial landscape, women entrepreneurial venture is quite lesser as compared to men (Brindley, 2005; Hamzah, 2012; Farah Zamira, 2013; Gupta, 2018). However, the entry of women entrepreneurs in the ageing care industry is minimal. For instance, Malaysian women are trying to break the label that only the men can be the wage earner in the family (Mustapha *et al.*, 2016; Ariffin *et al.*, 2017). Due to the increasing involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities, women entrepreneurship is an area of greater interest for researchers all around the globe as there have been many success stories showcased.

Consequently, many women who are housewives and employed are inspired to become an entrepreneur (Keyes *et al.*, 2017; Mohamad *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, challenges of the ageing care industry create opportunities for women entrepreneurs in said industry. This study reviews the entrepreneurial opportunities associated with women entrepreneurship in the ageing care industry. Thus, the ageing care industry challenges will create a lot of new business and opportunities for women entrepreneur. Therefore, it is imperative to highlight the issues related to entrepreneurial opportunities of ageing care industry for women in Malaysia. It will help the policymakers in the development of the plans and strategies for women to attain the entrepreneurial potential as gap lies in the ageing care industry.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To identify the entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the ageing care industry.
2. To focus on the entrepreneurial practices for women empowerment in the ageing care industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

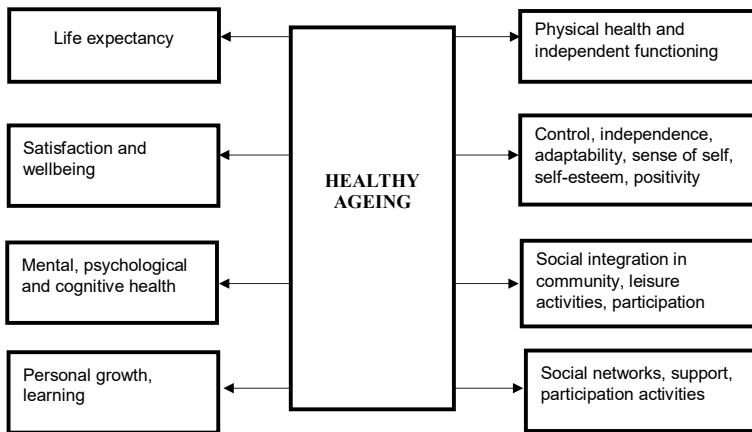
### What is Ageing?

Ageing refers to the older age that starts from the retirement age, which begins from 60-65 years old (Clink, 2013). According to the United Nations, the World Assembly on ageing held in Vienna (1982) 60 years old and above reflects issues on ageing. Krug *et al.* (2002) stated that old age relates to physical decline and inability to perform their work roles. However, variation lies in the circumstances of older people, as they are not identical (Appleton, 2002). Dowell, Haegerich & Chou (2016) explains that ageing is one's ability to live in his own home independently and comfortably apart from age, income and ability level. Hagen (2013) stated that ageing involves the facilities and services that allow the person to stay at home. British Columbia Ministry of Health, BCMH (2004) indicated that the mainstream of older people prefers to maintain their social interaction, independence, networks and remain in a comfortable environment. According to the Clink (2013), an increase of population age 65 and above expected to be rise from 14% (2010) to 25% (2050). It is imperative to recognise the importance of ageing and its effect in terms of developed, developing and least-developed countries because different types of countries create different opportunities for women (Lutz *et al.*, 2004).

### Implications of Ageing Population

Lee *et al.* (2009) stated that the effect of the ageing population is to attain more significant importance in present fiscal and economic crises. Developed and developing countries programmes are going through and show conjunction of the era of ageing population featuring various patterns for economic growth (Aigner Walder *et al.*, 2012; Chawla *et al.*, 2007; Sharpe, 2011; Hock *et al.*, 2012). Keeping in view the increase in the elderly population, the Malaysian Government has formulated the National Policy for the elderly under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Majority of elderly who previously residing comfortably in rural areas has to follow their children and moved to cities as a result of economic growth and economic force (Gupta, 2018). Due to the busy

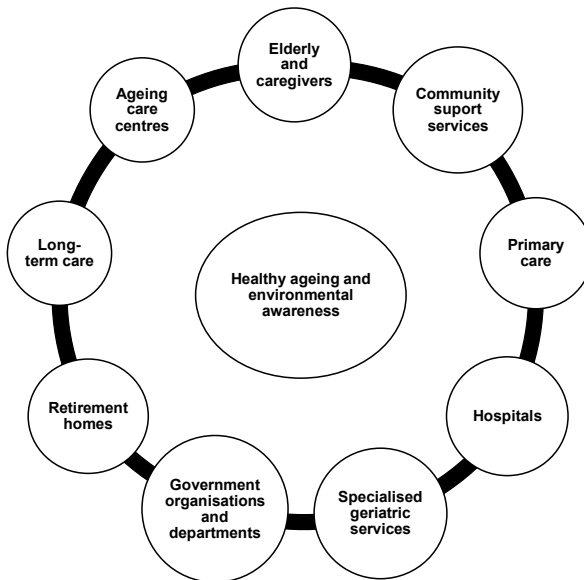
life of children, sometimes, they feel it is challenging to take care of their ageing parents. Therefore, there is a need for more and better-equipped elderly care centres in major cities of the country. However, many centres are not sufficient to cater to the elderly needs properly who are residing these centres. Hence, the responsibility comes on the shoulder of the public and private sectors to fulfil the demands for more advanced elderly care centres. This creates entrepreneurial opportunities for women to penetrate the ageing watching industry (Ong *et al.*, 2017; Akil *et al.*, 2014; Soong *et al.*, 2016). The elderly population is, however, a mixed community (male and female) and affected by health and non-health factors. Thus, the healthy ageing requirements relate to mental, psychological, cognitive, physical health, personal growth, and learning. Similarly, community participation and interaction, along with a sense of positivity and also high self-esteem (refer to Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Interdisciplinary Perspective of Healthy Ageing**  
(Source: Authors adaptation from literature)

Hence, to fulfil the requirements of healthy ageing as mentioned above, the housing requirements concerned with health, care and need, as elderly require a home with freedom, liberty and ability to contact with friends and family (Wagiman *et al.*, 2016; Samad *et al.*, 2017). Thus, well-developed technological ageing care centres with well-trained staff is needed in the ageing care industry for healthy ageing in Malaysia. Thus, providing more opportunities for women to involve in the ageing care industry will empower them and help to create a better and healthier society. As like other

industries, the ageing care industry has a remarkable potential to empower women. To create a healthy ageing society, women involvement in the ageing care industry is highly significant as their personality trait fit to the need of the ageing care industry. Thus, in order to maintain entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the ageing care industry, it is imperative to understand the relationship between stakeholders (refer to Figure 2) such as ageing care centres, caregivers, primary care, hospitals, geriatric services, retirement homes, long-term care, and governmental organisations. Each of these stakeholders will open new avenues’ and opportunities for women entrepreneurs’ business growth.



**Figure 2: Ageing Industry Stakeholders**  
(Source: Authors adaptation from literature)

Even though, the ageing care centres infrastructure in Malaysia are not up to the mark, as the country is still young as compared to other older countries such as Japan, Australia and China (Soong *et al.*, 2016; ACP, 2018). This business has a high potential to grow and sustain in the industry since the ageing population is always increasing, thus requires more ageing care centres to be set up in the future. Based on the discussion regarding ageing care business growth, this study will review the entrepreneurial opportunities associated with women entrepreneurs of the ageing care industry in Malaysia. As in Malaysia, men are more in the ageing care

industry as compared to women. However, the ageing care industry opens avenues regarding entrepreneurial opportunities for men and women equally (Noor *et al.*, 2020). The entrepreneurial opportunities in the ageing care industry mainly comprise on the allied industry such as ageing care centres, retirement resorts, old folk homes, primary care centres and long-term care centres, which are responsible for residential care services of the ageing population. Similarly, the Geriatric society and services along with community awareness programmes for promotion and support of healthy ageing initiatives within local communities are vital for both residents and the community as a whole (Ursulica *et al.*, 2016; Samad *et al.*, 2017).

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology plays a remarkable role in designing the entire schema of the research. The qualitative research methodology is used in this study and interpretative school of thought is adopted. Covin *et al.* (2018) explained that the questions, which are under study, create the base of the research study. For the present study, the focus group discussion technique is used to gather the data. The focus group consisted of seven to ten people who do not know each other and have common qualities. The focus group activity is conducted by a trained moderator systematically (Stewart *et al.*, 1990; Creswell, 2014). A trained moderator plays a vital role in the creation of a welcoming and encouraging environment for different types of ideas and opinion under the area of investigation (Krueger, 1998; Stewart, 1990). Thus, for focus group discussion, the invitation sent to ageing care women entrepreneurs running the centres either in the partnership or in a sole proprietorship. The invitation sent to 15 ageing care industry women entrepreneurs and five ageing expert's academicians from three renowned public sector universities. However, ten ageing care women entrepreneurs and five ageing experts' academicians joined the focus group. The findings show that 66.6% of ageing industry women entrepreneurs and 33.3 % ageing expert participated in the focus group of two hours. The discussion revolves around the entrepreneurial opportunities for Malaysian Women in Ageing Care Industry. The focus group was conducted in one of the renowned ageing care centres in Malaysia. The overall view of the study is as follow:

- A detailed explanation of the research objective.
- Explanation of the interview protocols and interview questions to focus group participants.
- The moderator conducted the question in sequence for more accessible and easier documentation of the collected data. Below would be the Questionnaire Grid:

### **Factors Influencing the Women Entrepreneurial growth**

1. Do you think that financial support from the banking sector influences the women entrepreneurial growth?
2. Do you think that financial support from the government influences the women entrepreneurial growth?
3. Do you think that entrepreneurial education and training from any government or private institutions influence the women entrepreneurial growth?
4. Do you think that ageing care centre business meets the demand of the changing social needs?
5. Do you think that support and motivation from family members influence the women entrepreneurial growth?
6. In your opinion, what are the factors that affect the women entrepreneurial growth in the ageing care industry?

### **Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurial Growth**

1. What do you think on the entrepreneurial opportunities for women in ageing care centre, nursing homes, community care service, retirement resorts, long-term resorts and primary care services?

## **ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

The section demonstrates the interpretation of the data collected from the focus group discussion. The findings revealed that the factors influencing the Malaysian women entrepreneurial growth in the ageing care industry. Majority of the participants highlighted that the financial support from either



the banking sector or the government affects the women entrepreneurial growth. Furthermore, most commented factors are leadership qualities and environmental regulation followed by self-identity, social status and entrepreneurial education of women, lack of support and motivation from family and changing social needs along with less educational training from the government and private institution affect the women entrepreneurial growth. From these findings, it is clear that finance is the most critical factor for entrepreneurial growth of women in the ageing care industry.

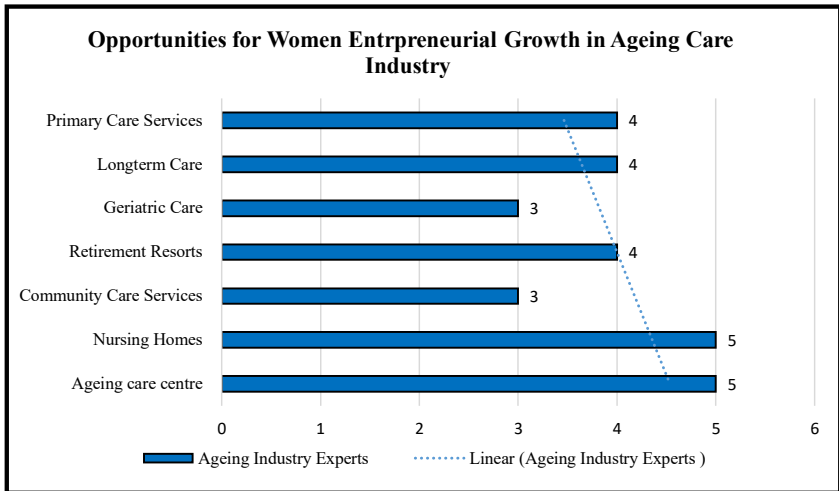
**Table 1: Factors Influencing the Women Entrepreneurial Growth**

Ageing Industry Women Entrepreneurs	Financial Support by Banks	Financial Support by Government	Education and Training by Government and Private Institution	Changing Social Needs	Support and Motivation from Family	Self-Identity	Social Status	Entrepreneurial Education	Leadership Qualities	Environmental Regulations
E1	/	/	x	/	x	/	/	x	/	/
E2	/	/	x	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
E3	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	x	/	/
E4	/	/	x	/	x	/	/	/	/	/
E5	/	/	/	x	/	x	/	x	x	x
E6	/	/	x	/	x	/	x	/	/	/
E7	/	/	x	x	/	x	/	/	x	/
E8	/	/	/	x	/	/	/	/	/	x
E9	/	/	/	/	x	/	x	/	/	/
E10	/	/	/	x	/	x	/	/	/	/

**Table 2: Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurial Growth**

Ageing experts	Ageing Care Centre	Nursing Homes	Community Care Services	Retirement Resorts	Geriatric Care	Long-Term Care	Primary Care Service
AE1	/	/	x	/	x	/	/
AE2	/	/	x	/	/	/	/
AE3	/	/	/	/	/	/	x
AE4	/	/	/	/	x	/	/
AE5	/	/	/	x	/	x	/

Table 2 highlights the opportunities for women entrepreneurial growth in the areas such as ageing care centres, nursing homes that are very close to women personality and provide opportunities for women to grow. This is true, as the women are already in the ageing care business, and it is very close to their personality traits such a softness, tender, patience, and helping nature, which is the demand of the industry. Based on Table 2, Figure 3 provides a clearer understanding of the most highlighted entrepreneurial opportunities for women such as ageing care centres and nursing homes followed by primary care services, long-term care, retirement resorts, geriatric care and community care services.



**Figure 3: Women Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Ageing Industry**  
(Source: Authors adaptation from literature)

## DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that majority of the participants highlighted that financial support from governmental and banking sectors are needed as these centres are working on their own, there is no monetary incentive from the governmental side in terms of initial funding or annual donations. Similarly, there is no banking support in terms of loans facilities, specifically for women entrepreneurs who are in the ageing care industry. Furthermore, women entrepreneurs in this industry experiencing less familial support and motivation and lack of entrepreneurial training specifically in ageing care.

**Table 3: Themes Generated**

	Themes Generated	No of Participants
<b>Factors influencing the women entrepreneurial growth</b>	Financial support by banks	10
	Financial support by government	10
	Education and training by government and private institution	5
	Changing social needs	6
	Support and motivation from family	6
	Self-identity	7
	Social status	7
	Entrepreneurial education	7
	Leadership qualities	8
	Environmental regulations	8

Despite all these issues, women entrepreneurs are trying their best to stand forefront and running the centres on sustainability base. The women have potential, but encouragement and support, along with educational training programmes from the governmental side, are highly required. As women, entrepreneurial opportunities in the ageing care industry required well-developed plan and strategies from the governmental side in terms of policy development. The entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the ageing care industry lead to healthy ageing. This is so as by 2030, 15% of

Malaysian population will be above 60 years of age. This is a quite alarming situation for the Malaysian economy (Vannucci *et al.*, 2017; ACP, 2018). Based on the discussion in order to encourage the women entrepreneurs in the ageing care industry. Following the recommendations have been proposed in order to expand their business growth.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The government should encourage women entrepreneurial opportunities in the ageing care industry by arranging the professional training programmes related to ageing care same like SMEs, cottage industries and enterprises. Similarly, the privilege for women entrepreneurs must be given in getting a loan who are in ageing care business. There is a need to emphasise on awareness programmes related to women education, women development and deployment in the ageing care industry. Furthermore, the government needs to take action regarding the initiation of the degree programme in ageing care in higher education institution all across the country. The policymakers must come up with entrepreneurial action plans, specifically focusing on the ageing care industry and emphasising on women participation. The government should acknowledge the existing women entrepreneurs in the ageing care industry and encouraged them by giving awards and recognition from industries, institutions and governmental bodies.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on this study, the results highlight the entrepreneurial opportunities for Malaysian women in the ageing care industry, e.g. ageing care centres, nursing homes and retirement homes specifically. The study highlights that more initiatives should be taken up to promote and encourage women participation in ageing care, and women entrepreneurship should not be restricted to SMEs, cottage industries and enterprises. The government should take necessary actions regarding women participation in service industries, especially in the ageing care by arranging professional pieces of training related to ageing care due to unawareness of the dilemma of ageing population and elderly care services entrepreneurial opportunities.

For recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities for women folk in ageing care, more support from various stakeholders such as family, government and the community should be provided for the overall nation's social wellbeing. Malaysia is facing the challenge of the ageing population, and entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the ageing care industry will bring significant societal change. The findings of the study will add to the body of knowledge on entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the service industry. This study is limited to ten women entrepreneurs in Malaysia, future studies may cover the whole Malaysia, and quantitative research techniques may be used.

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