

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**INTERDEPENDENCY AMONG  
MALAY OLDER PEOPLE  
IN THE INSTITUTIONS:  
AN INTERPRETATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysia will become an ageing country by the year 2025. The development of the country, economic circumstances, advancement in health facilities, coupled with declining birth rates and longer life expectancies have changed the social fabric of the Malaysian society. Many young people have moved from the rural areas to the urban areas to seek better lives, economic opportunities and higher standards of living. Thus many ageing parents find themselves living on their own in the villages, with lack of social support, financial resources and deteriorating health conditions. Ageing parents in the urban areas are also affected because their children are busy pursuing career and their own family welfare, leaving their aged parents to fend for themselves or sent to old folk's homes. It is evident that public and private elderly care institutions are rapidly growing in number in Malaysia because of this trend. This study identifies the positive and negative experiences of the aged Malays staying in care institutions via a two-stage analysis i.e. from a pilot study and from an in-depth semi-structured interview methodology. The former involved five elderlies from one public institution- Rumah Seri Kenangan (RSK) Cheras while the latter interviewed twenty elderlies from four RSKs namely RSK Cheras, RSK Cheng, RSK Taman Kemunin, and RSK Bedong. The pilot study proved useful because it helped in testing the questionnaires, familiarisation and assisted in the questionnaires development for the second stage. Data obtained from the interviews were analysed employing the six stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Results show that there are elements of interdependency among Malay older people and interdependency helps them to improve their productivity, offer life satisfaction and maintain their quality of life. In fact, they are needed to opt and practice interdependency to continue their occupational engagement in daily activities. This study highlights the importance of the occupational therapist, particularly those practising in the institution to consider every possible attribute of interdependence during their service. An occupational therapist may consider facilitating the process of interdependency among the older people in the institutions by promoting socialisation and enhancing the establishment of a meaningful relationship. Meanwhile, the policymakers could play an important role by encouraging family members to reconnect with their elderlies left to stay in care institutions.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

The population age cohort of the world is changing yearly. The older population group is growing at a dramatic rate making the balance between the young and the old generation shifting towards the aging world societies. In Malaysia, the total number of older people significantly increased over the years. “Older people” in the context of this study is as defined in para1.7.4. However, throughout this thesis this term is interchangeably used as the elderly, the aged and for Malaysians this group of people are often referred to as the “senior citizens”. Currently, issues related to older people are many like high mortality rate, decreased lifespan and prevalent chronic disease problems, which subsequently increased expenditure for health care (Sherina et al., 2006; Lee & Khair, 2007; Zaiton et al., 2009; Momtaz et al., 2010; Teo et al., 2011). Other issues faced by older people include loss of functional independence and inability to engage with areas of occupation such as Activities of Daily Living (ADL), Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL), rest and sleep, leisure activities, and social participation (Dahlan et. al., 2010). These issues may lead to high dependency amongst older people and eventually, the family and caregivers have no choice but to get them admitted into care institutions (Luppa et al., 2010). According to Selvaratnam and Tin (2007), the total number of dependency ratio of elderly in Malaysia is expected to increase from 12.1 per cent (2010) to 16.5 per cent (2020). Dependency may lead to various complications and decrease in their quality of life, which require effective intervention from various multidisciplinary teams such as an occupational therapist, community nursing, doctor, and physiotherapists (Hickman et al., 2015). Geriatric rehabilitation team could offer services from such professionals to help older people address those issues.

The purposes of the multidisciplinary team in geriatric rehabilitation are to assist preserving in functional independence and improving the quality of life (Hickman et al., 2015). As an occupational therapist, the main role in geriatric rehabilitation is to assist the older people in recovering lost physical, psychological or social skills so that they may become more independent in daily activities (Law, 2002; Pergolotti et al.,