

Fostering a learning society through sustainable Muslim retirement villages: Empowering the rights of the elderly

Mashitah Abdul Mutalib¹, Nurul Ain Hazram², Nur Al-Farhain Kamaruzzaman³,
Nur Aina Abdulah⁴

Faculty of Syariah and Law, University Sains Islam Malaysia

*mashitahmutalib@usim.edu.my¹, ainhazram@usim.edu.my², farhain@usim.edu.my³,
nuraina.abdulah@usim.edu.my⁴,*

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of rapid aging global population is happening in many countries including Malaysia. Thus, the country should be giving more priorities towards the agenda of empowering the rights of the elderly. This paper examines the development of sustainable Muslim retirement villages as a mechanism in building a learning society while empowering the rights of the elderly. The main objective is to explore how these institutions able to provide a medium for the elderly to have lifelong learning, social engagement and quality ageing life. This alternative lifestyle trend would allow for their rights to be empowered. This paper is a doctrinal research paper analysing laws and policies surrounding elderly in Malaysia specifically on lifelong learning activities. Semi-structured interview with the administrator of the retirement village is also conducted to gain insights on real situation of day-to-day operations of institutions. The findings indicate that sustainable Muslim retirement villages do not just enhance the residents' quality of life but also able to encourage building of learning society amongst the elderly. The study concludes that these institutions can serve as a model for integrating the rights of the elderly into broader societal frameworks, thereby contributing to sustainable development. These findings shall assist the policymakers and industry players in establishing proper legal and working framework in the effort to foster more participation of elderly in learning society.

Keywords: Elderly, Muslim retirement village, laws, policies

INTRODUCTION

As the population of elderly is growing worldwide, more countries are planning to accommodate the needs of these senior citizens. The population over 65 is growing at a faster rate than the population under 65, according to World Population Prospects 2022 (United Nations, 2024a). Accordingly, it is anticipated that the proportion of people 65 and older worldwide will increase from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050. According to projections, the global population of individuals 65 years of age or older is expected to surpass that of children under the age of five by

2050 and nearly equal that of children under the age of twelve.

This demographic shift shall cause many significant impacts especially towards the elderly themselves. One of the challenges are to maintain the standard of learning amongst senior citizens by building learning society. Through learning they will not be left behind especially in the rapid grow of technologies nowadays. This paper focuses on the building of learning society amongst senior citizens through the integration of learning Islamic teachings and practices into retirement living institutions.

Taking Malaysian experience as a basis, this country would be significant for this topic due to its diverse population and existing policies on elderly. Malaysia, which is officially an aging nation, and the number of senior citizens is escalating (Ong et al., 2024). According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020), individuals aged 60 and above increased from 11.3% in 2023 to 11.6 % percent of the population in 2024 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). From 34.1 million of the current Malaysian population, 3.9 million are those aged 60 years and above. Thus, currently there are many efforts, projects, and even policies under scrutiny. This is an urgency to develop sustainable retirement solutions in the light of having learning society in the country.

One of the relevant concepts is the concept of sustainable retirement village. The government is currently active in the efforts to find the suitable concept of retirement village for the country. Practically, for Muslims communities, though not be named as retirement village per se, there are already institutions around the country which was set up to cater the needs of Muslim senior citizens which are known as Pondok Warga Emas in Malay language which can be translated into Golden Citizen Cottage or Muslim Retirement Village (MRV). These MRVs are set up mostly by associations or Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) for those independent healthy elderly residents. They are staying in the small units of homes, or cottages with basic care and needs. Moreover, the main attraction or reason for them to decide to stay in MRVs is due to the learning opportunity factor where here they will learn on Islamic teachings intensively for their spiritual fulfilment. Such environment can help promote the rights of elderly while ensuring them to remain active ageing in the community of the same age.

This concept is indeed aligned with the aspiration of the government. This was explicitly mentioned by the Prime Minister of Malaysia during Presentation on the Twelfth Malaysia Plan

Proposal 2012-2025 when he highlighted that the focus of the country would be to explore the potential of retirement village which are inclusive in preparing Malaysia for ageing country in near future (Prime Minister's Office, 2023).

Objectives and Significance of the Research

The aim of this paper is to examine how sustainable MRVs can contribute to establishing a learning society at the elderly level and thus empowering their rights. The laws and policies relating to elderly therefore are examined with a focus on lifelong learning initiatives. The experience of the existing MRVs is then discussed to see how these policies are implemented in real. Through these objectives, it is the aim of the research to provide a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable MRVs in Malaysia may be exemplified for other Muslim-majority countries which have yet explored this concept in enriching their elderly communities. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policymakers, as well as industrial players on the benefits of integrating lifelong learning and cultural values into retiring communities. The policymakers may identify the strengths and weaknesses, best practices, issues and conundrums in adapting successful models to fit the local context. This approach can help creating a better model which will sustain for the benefit not just the elderly communities but the country.

The development of sustainable MRVs is seen as one of the practical methods in addressing challenges faced by senior citizens. There are exposed to various impediments such as the feeling of loneliness which may lead to depression, health issues, financial problems and so on. Their rights to have an active ageing also would be more promoted by having a specific institution tailored to their needs. When their challenges have been overcome by having proper living environment in, they will be ready to pursue their learning experiences which suit them at their age. Eventually, this may accommodate them to achieve the graceful ageing.

By fostering a learning society and empowering the rights of the elderly, these communities can serve as a model for other countries who have yet embark on this kind of projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aging Population and Sustainable Development

The traditional family structure from having to spend older times at own home or children's home is changing modestly through times due to different factors such as lifestyle, education background, financial abilities and so on. This leads to raising need for institutions which provide institutional care and community-based support systems. This is alike to the concept of MRVs which provide for support system and at the same time the opportunity for learning.

This establishment of these institutions apart from catering the healthcare and economic issues, address the social challenges of aging such as social isolation which may bring negative impact to the well-being of older people. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted that amongst the major public health issues which may cause other higher risks of health conditions are social isolation and loneliness (WHO, 2023). Cognitive decline, depression and cardiovascular diseases are amongst the health issues which may cause from these social challenges.

Apart from the issue of managing social and health issues, the establishment of these institutions is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework in facing global challenges. The relevant SDGs to this issue on older population is on the well-being and rights of older adult as underlined under Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). This goal is to ensure healthy living and well-being for all walks of life regardless of the age. Besides that, Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) is also relevant in reducing the gap of age-based inequalities. Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

which is explicitly relevant to retirement villages focuses on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for all population including aging population. The need for age-friendly cities which may accommodate the older generation need in terms of their mobility, accessibility and social participation shall be promoted in achieving this Goal.

Malaysia, like many other countries, is actively working towards achieving these goals. The Twelfth Malaysia Plan(2012-2025) emphasized the importance of creating a conducive environment for an aging society, including establishment or retirement villages (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia Official Website, 2023). These initiatives reflect Malaysia's commitment to integrating the needs of its aging population into its broader development agenda.

Learning Society Concept and Role of Sustainable Development

The concept of learning society recognised that it is essential to have continuous learning not just for personal but also societal development. Learning should be fostered at all levels and integrated into everyday life. This may be in the form of formal, non-formal, informal sessions (Rahimah et al., 2017). The prime aim is for everyone to have access to learning regardless of age, background or circumstances. For the old population, learning can provide various benefits to their cognitive abilities, social interaction and sense of purpose (Rachel Wu et al., 2021). Moreover, education and continuous learning may be the basis in materialising many of the SDGs, in multiple area such as health, economy, and social justice.

Focusing on aging population, through having continuous learning or also called lifelong learning, this effort may mitigate the challenges associated with ageing. Older population who fills up their time with learning experienced better health outcomes, greater social connectedness, and

improved quality of life (Hilary H. L. Yee, 2022).

Taking Malaysia as an example, lifelong learning is one of the important agenda promoted for its aging population. This was clearly spelt under the National Policy for Older Persons 2011 and the subsequent action plans. There is a need to provide lifelong learning opportunities for older adults. This will promote active and healthy ageing which is in line in creating a learning society that suits the sustainable development.

In the context of Muslim communities, sustainable retirement villages can play a crucial role in building a learning society and empowering the rights of the elderly. By integrating lifelong learning into the fabric of these communities, we can ensure that older adults remain active, engaged, and valued members of society.

Muslim Retirement Villages: Concept and Examples

MRVs are residential communities which are specially designed for the elderly. These institutions are designed to meet the needs of the older population specifically the Muslims who are keener to find religious knowledge and practices when they have reached their golden age. These villages provide an avenue for the older persons to continue learning especially Islamic teachings. This will ensure that residents can live fulfilling lives in accordance with Islamic principles while promoting active ageing. The added values gained from this type of retirement lifestyle apart from Islamic classes and learning sessions are the activities and opportunities to live with those of similar age in a community.

A notable example of a Muslim retirement village is Pondok Yayasan Al-Jenderami (PYAJ) in Selangor, Malaysia. This institution integrated traditional Islamic sessions with modern care facilities for independent healthy residents. Residents engage in daily religious activities, including prayers, Quranic recitation, zikr, and religious classes, fostering a spiritually enriching

environment. PYAJ also provides minimum healthcare services, recreational activities, and opportunities for social interaction, promoting a holistic approach to elderly care (Al-Jenderami, 2024).

Another example is Darul Insyirah in Bangi, Selangor. Darul Insyirah focuses on creating a nurturing environment for elderly Muslims, emphasizing religious education and community involvement. Darul Insyirah have two types of facilities where there are platforms for those who are independent and need minimum continuum of care called Darul Insyirah Aisyah while Darul Insyirah Khadijah is for those needing special care and close monitoring in managing themselves physically and mentally. Darul Insyirah offers various programs, such as Islamic lectures, health and wellness activities, and social gatherings, ensuring that residents remain active and engaged in both their faith and community (Darul Insyirah, 2023).

Another example is Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud (MIM) which have 2 branches in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan and Segamat, Johor. This institution caters almost 140 residents in both branches coming from all over the country mainly to learn more about Islam. With the tagline of 'living a purposeful life' MIM tries to alleviate the status of MRV into modern-like institutions coupled with nature-like environment in preparing conducive platforms for the elderly (Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, 2024).

There are other retirement villages in Malaysia which do not build solely for the Muslims. There are Green Acres in Ipoh, Eden on the Park in Kuching, Sarawak and The Millennia in Seremban.

Integration of Islamic Values and Practices

A key feature of Muslim retirement villages is the integration of Islamic values and practices into daily life. That is the one of the main attractions why older people decide to reside in this kind of institutions. This integration ensures that

residents can continue to observe their religious obligations and maintain their spiritual well-being. Core Islamic values, such as respect for elders, community support, and continuous learning, are central to these institution's operations.

The facilities are designed to fulfil the essential needs of the senior citizens. Musollah or prayer facilities and religious education classes are essential components of these institutions. The elderly should have access to community facilities that meet their physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs (classes and community spaces), as well as their spiritual needs (food and dining facilities) (Majid et al., 2013). A crucial feature of retirement communities should be guest or accommodations when their children come to pay a visit. The children should be able to stay in separate houses or guest facilities or visit them. To respect Islamic guidelines regarding the care of the elderly, this provision is imperative.

For example, at PYAJ, there are designated prayer rooms, regular religious study classes, small clinic, spa, fostering a spiritually enriching environment (Al-Jenderami, 2024). The attractive architecture of the modern type of MRV as can be found at Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud Nilai is also an added point for the residents to have a more serene and peaceful environment. This kind of modern cottages built for the residents give a new breath to the typical institutions on religious education to be more modern and conducive. On top of that, the serene and tranquil atmosphere enhance more values for the elderly to age gracefully. Most of the MRVs are in the outskirts of towns and some of them have natural background environments such as small streams, small farms for gardening and so on.

Additionally, social activities are often organized around Islamic festivals and events, promoting a sense of community and shared values. Thus, these residents are not isolated from the community outside their institutions. For instance, Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud Nilai which is located near

to Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia always welcome students and communities to do programmes with the residents. Thus, the programmes would range from community services activities to knowledge transfer programmes opening wide opportunities for exchange of knowledge between the communities and the residents.

Rights of the Elderly

Laws and Policies

Elderly rights are enshrined in numerous international and national legal instruments (Abdul Mutalib et.al 2023). Looking at the international level, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons 1991 featured the key components of rights of older people. These include independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment, and dignity. All these shall protect the rights and well-being of older adults.

The goal of adult education and lifelong learning is to give people the skills they need to exercise and realize their rights and take charge of their own lives. It encourages adults to grow personally and professionally and to become more involved in building learning communities and sustainable environments. This makes it an essential tool for lowering poverty, enhancing wellbeing and health, and fostering a society that is learning and sustainable.

As for Malaysia, as mentioned above, the country's policy on older persons lies primarily on the National Policy for Older Persons 2011 and the Action Plan for Older Persons (2011-2020). It emphasises the importance of adequate care, promoting active aging and financial security for the older generation. This illustrates Malaysia's commitment to empower the rights and well-being of elderly in this country.

Looking into the Islamic perspectives, care and support for the elderly is highly emphasised in Islam. The respect for the older generation for their wisdom, experience and services should always be uphold by the younger generations.

Islam accentuates the obligation of caring of parents and elders and respect he, The Quran states that “And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment” (Quran 17:23).

Nevertheless, although traditionally, family members are expected to look after their parents and elderly relatives, with the changing social dynamics, the establishment of institutions like MRVs help to enrich the elderly by not just staying at homes without having various meaningful activities. MRVs however, suits the elderly who are still independent and healthy whom searching for lifelong learning experiences to fill up their days meaningfully.

MRVs can be said as a valuable model to support the elderly to age gracefully. These institutions provide fulfilling avenues for the elderly not just to be active in their ageing years but also fulfil the spiritual needs that they need especially at their golden age. The development of such communities and institutions offers ways on how to allow older adults to build learning communities amongst themselves.

The fundamental legal and policy framework which promotes lifelong learning and active ageing, combined with religious elements, provide a robust and strong basis for the development of MRVs. This effort can foster a learning society amongst older adults and at the same time empower their rights under the law. All this shall contribute to sustainable development and enhance their quality of life.

Methods

This research employs qualitative study through doctrinal research as the main methodology. This involves examination and analysis of the body of the legal instruments mainly the policies and regulations particularly those related to elderly in Malaysia. This method is vital in understanding deeply the legal context which uphold the rights of elderly and at the same time protecting their interests

and welfare. Primarily, the legal documents are the National Policy for Older Persons (2011) and the Action Plan for Older Persons (2011-2020). The analysis gives more emphasis on the objectives, strategies and outcomes of these policies.

This paper however does not cover some elderly related legislation or statutes such as Care Centres Act 1993 (Act 506). Although on the surface the statute may be deemed relevant to MRVs, however the focus of the Act is on the senior citizens who need care and dependent on the services provided. This is not the case for residents in MRVs as there are independent and healthy and do not necessarily need full caring services. They only need very minimum health monitoring due to their age factor instead of comprehensive care services. In addition, the research also examines the lifelong learning policies which encourage continuous education especially amongst senior citizens.

Besides that, document analysis is also conducted analysing relevant legal materials from article journals, proceedings, reports from government agencies and NGOs and others. The document analysis is needed as the secondary sources in exploring more on the implementation and commentaries of the legislation.

Complementing the doctrinal research and document analysis, semi-structured interviews are conducted with the administrator of MIM, Malaysia. This interview provides first-hand information in collecting data on the practical experience of managing MRVs, the challenges and opportunities for the future for this type of institutions. The data from the interview are triangulated with the findings from the doctrinal research and document analysis.

These methods approaches are conducted with the aim to achieve robust analysis in developing evidence-based recommendations to improve the well-being of the elderly as well as their rights and interests.

FINDINGS

The findings are set out in two primary sections which are firstly the analysis of the laws and policies on elderly in Malaysia particularly those related closely to MRVs and lifelong learning. Secondly, the findings are categorised under the insights from the interviews and document analysis on the practical experience of MRVs in Malaysia, highlighting the importance of integrating Islamic values and teachings into active ageing avenues. This is to enhance and assist the country in building learning society amongst elderly through sustainable mediums.

Analysis of Laws and Policies on the Elderly in Malaysia

From the analysis of National Policy for Older Persons (2011) and the Action Plan for Older Persons (2011-2020), it is to be noted that comprehensive approach has been moulded to cater the needs of the older persons. These policies focus on the importance of elderly to receive adequate care, active ageing, and financial security. This policy therefore founded the supportive mediums and environment that promotes towards active ageing in the country. As a result, these vulnerable segments of the country's population may not be considered as burden for the country but rather assets for the country's development.

Nevertheless, the problem lies on the implementation part. There are challenges need to be overcome. There are inconsistencies of the implementation of the policies across different places and institutions (Muhamad, 2001). indicate that the support systems are not comprehensive covering the rural areas while some urban areas may have more opportunities due to better facilities and services, which lead to disparities in the quality.

Meanwhile, on lifelong learning, this is one critical component in ensuring that elderly may age gracefully. The Lifelong Learning for Older Malaysians (LILOMA) program for instance not

just provides learning sessions but at the same time encourage active ageing amongst the senior citizens (Lifelong Learning for Older Malaysians, 2020). The programme consists of numerous activities from trainings, community education, informal learning sessions in ensuring that elderly are intellectually and socially engaged.

It is interesting to note that, successful initiatives often involve collaboration between government agencies, NGOs and community groups. For example, there are community-based programs which offer language classes, technology literacy courses, and health awareness session in improving elderly quality of life (Abdul Mutalib et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the barriers are there. There are lack of awareness on the part of the senior citizens themselves on the available opportunities prepared for them. Though it is not denied that there are other constraints in terms of financial, transportation and facilities. In addition, it is not yet a culture nurtured in the society for senior citizens to keep engaging in learning activities.

Muslim Retirement Village Experiences: Attractive Elements

It has been mentioned above that the rate of participation by older adults in learning and education still need to be improved. Nonetheless, for Muslims, the situation would be quite different as the religious motivation will drive them to get involve in learning activities. However, they would incline towards Islamic teachings and practices. As mentioned by the administrator of MIM they received a lot of application from these senior citizens, and they are willing to be in the waiting list to have the opportunity to reside the MRV. The 36 units of small units they have in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan branch and almost 70 units in Segamat, Johor cannot accommodate the demands they receive from those interested to stay and learn in the institutions.

Apart from the learning motivation, the administrator highlighted the importance of creating a supportive and engaging environment for residents. They residents would feel their time are occupied when they are proper schedule of lessons for them from Tahseen Al-Quran, to Aqidah, Fiqh, Tafseer, Hadith and so on.

By opting to reside in MRVs their schedule is tailored to religious observance agenda for example daily prayers, Quranic recitation, and religious classes. These are the central of their routine. Their daily schedule therefore is scheduled for them to be occupied with spiritual activities which will fulfil their need to be closer to Allah (Al-Jenderami, 2024). This makes them feel persistence and live a purposeful life in their golden years.

Additionally, one of the key strategies identified in attracting more participation of elderly is the integration of health and wellness programs into daily activities. These programs include physical exercises, mental health support, and social activities that promote interaction among residents. According to Yoshihara et al. (2023), opportunities to be active in retirement villages play a crucial role in promoting physical activity among residents. This is particularly important in the context of Muslim retirement villages, where empowering the rights of the elderly is a key consideration. These programs not only improve the physical health of residents but also contribute to their overall happiness and sense of community.

Besides that, it is important to provide recreational activities. The residents need friends of the same age to have chit chatting sessions while doing leisure activities together. They should have recreational and community amenities (Majid et al., 2013). The activities that retirees participate in should be balanced to meet their physical needs for leisure and rest.

Activities may range from having small feast together to gardening or light exercise. For example, for MRVs the management ensures

Islamic events such as Eid, Israk Mikraj, Ramadhan are always well celebrated in MRVs. Even the management organised birthday events to appreciate the residents. This approach helps create an inclusive environment where residents feel respected and valued.

Additionally, the institution incorporates community service and volunteer activities as part of its programming, encouraging residents to actively participate in social and religious events. This approach not only enhances the residents' social connections but also reinforces their sense of purpose and community involvement (Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, 2024).

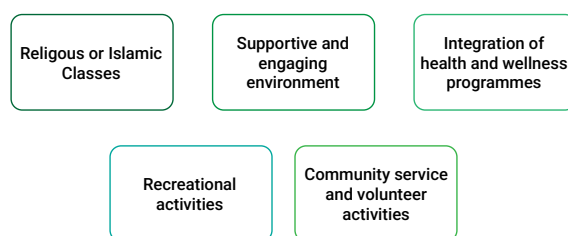


Figure 1 Attractive elements of Muslim Retirement Village

Challenges and Opportunities

There are several legal and regulatory challenges faced by administrators of retirement villages. One significant challenge is the lack of standardized regulations for retirement villages, which can lead to inconsistencies in the quality of care provided. There is a need for clearer guidelines and stronger regulatory oversight to ensure that all facilities adhere to high standards of care (Abdul Mutalib et al., 2023).

Additionally, the other challenges related to funding and financial sustainability. Many retirement villages rely on a combination of private funding, government subsidies, and charitable donations to operate. However, securing sufficient funding to maintain high-quality services can be challenging, particularly for smaller or non-profit facilities (GreenAcres Retirement Village, 2024).

Ample support from various levels of agencies including the government in terms of funding, human resources are needed to encourage the enhancement of senior citizen rights (Waryatun et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, despite the challenges faced by the institution, in expanding the function of retirement village as a medium for building learning society, lifelong learning opportunities for the elderly in retirement villages should be enhanced not just limited to classes prepared day-to-day by the administrators. One key opportunity is the expansion of partnerships between retirement villages and local educational institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). By collaborating with universities, community colleges, learning institutions, retirement villages can offer a wider range of courses and programs tailored to the interests and needs of elderly residents. These kinds of courses may attract not just residents who stayed in retirement villages but also those senior citizens who are their own home but seeking knowledge for lifelong learning.

The community thus should play their role in preserving the welfare of the elderly. The foundation of support may originate from communities, which create settings in which senior citizens are treated with respect, included, and valued (Abdul Halim et al., 2024). This entails not just providing care for family members but also larger social structures that place an emphasis on the welfare of senior citizens.

The use of technology may be benefited wholly in this era where everything is easily accessible. Digital learning platform, virtual classes, online courses specifically designed for elderly should be polished to cater those who have mobility limitations. Classes conducted may also be conducted hybrid through many digital platforms and even social media live medium to raise participation from elderly from various places.

DISCUSSION

It appears that the retirement village industry in Malaysia represents multifaceted nature. There are strengths to be modelled by other countries but there are also rooms for improvement.

From the analysis on law and policies, it is illustrated that the legal foundation is there to support older adults especially in encouraging the building of learning society through the connotation of lifelong learning. This demonstrates a commitment in local legal frameworks and internationally in enhancing the rights of elderly. However, the inconsistency in terms of implementation would be a problem. Increasing participation would allow more numbers of older adults to experience learning at this age which later would give birth to learning society for older generations. The disparities in the quality of services particularly between urban and rural areas should be tackled wisely.

Other barriers such as financial constraints, transport and logistics issues should also be resolved (Fuentes, 2021). One of the ways is by opting to technology by having more online classes and discussions on online platforms. Catching up with the evolution of technology shall assist the senior citizens to experience lifelong learning sessions (Hong, 2024). It appears that, the e-learning platforms should be designed to be more elderly friendly and family stimulation will positively help them to have a quality learning experience (Bai, 2018).

Moreover, the access to these kinds of programmes may be enhanced by improving access to lifelong learning sessions through community partnerships. Not just limited to government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and educational institutions in the effort to promote active ageing in the society may also play their role. Social support activities which may allow them to make friends, socialise, volunteer in charity programmes may help to

prevent loneliness (Abdullah, 2024). Therefore, more community members would be able to join when they are aware of the existing opportunities offered for them.

Nonetheless, there is a hope for a better legal foundation for elderly in Malaysia, since currently the government of Malaysia through the Women, Family, and Community Development Ministry has started the feasibility study to introduce a law for elderly (Bernama, 2024). This law aims to provide more protection and enhance the welfare of the senior citizens.

RECOMMENDATION

In the effort to foster learning society though MRV industry, the industry, several key strategies may be considered:

1. Integration of Health, Wellness, and Religious Programs

In terms of MRVs as a medium of building learning society which is more structured, there is a need to integrate health and wellness programs, alongside religious activities. This is needed in creating comprehensive and supportive environments for the residents. The existing activities particularly the religious activities and lessons are commendable. There should be ways on how to provide these activities to as many older adults as possible especially those who are interested to gain Islamic knowledge. Nevertheless, apart from religious activities, health and wellness programmes should also be included. This is important to ensure that the senior citizens experience healthy ageing not just physically but also mentally. Activities such as brisk walking, gardening, simple exercise should also be in the list of their routines. Medical check-ups and health awareness programmes may also be initiated.

2. Addressing Resource Limitations

As there are limited resources such as numbers of units for more senior citizens to have this priceless chance to have a purposeful life, challenges faced by MRVs in terms of funding, regulatory support need to be tackled by the authorities to maintain the quality of services

by the institutions. It should be noted that these institutions are clearly assisting the country to achieve the SDGs as well as the country's aspiration in building learned older generations. Thus, assistance in various ways need to be channelled to support this industry.

3. Expanding Access to Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning can be a powerful mechanism to foster a learning society. Thus, the access to educational opportunities should be expanded through collaborative efforts between educational institutions, community organisations and retirement villages. These institutions need support to enhance the effectiveness of the programmes and activities offered there to meet the diverse needs of elderly residents. Universities for instance may collaborate to organise inter-generational programmes which may assist the elderly and at the same time provide exposure for the students. This will provide more knowledge exchange and collaboration (Ward et al., 2024).

In addition, educational programmes may also be moulded to include learning on digital literacy, hobbies, language classes, health care and arts in ensuring that they will age gracefully (Puri, 2021). However, these educational programmes must be structured to suit the residents' needs (Flynn & DeVoss, 1986).

4. Incorporating Elderly Rights into Sustainable Development Frameworks

Additionally, the rights of the elderly should be integrated into sustainable development framework to ensure that the senior citizens are not left behind economically and socially. Incorporating elderly agenda into sustainable development initiatives may allow older adults to have active ageing while contributing to broader societal goals. Aligning the policies on elderly with these goals, a country should be able to address the needs of senior citizens while contributing to global sustainability efforts. Thus, legal and regulatory frameworks should be enhanced to remove the current barriers which may hinder more participation of older adults into education or lifelong learning activities. Specific legislation to supplement the current policy is needed. Legal frameworks guarantee elderly people's access to healthcare, vital services, and safeguards against abuse and neglect by formalizing and defending their rights. By codifying these rights into legislation,

societies validate older people's right to care and assistance by recognizing their intrinsic dignity and value (Abdul Halim et al., 2024).

Through these recommendations, it is hoped that more inclusive and sustainable industry of MRVs may be created by the policymakers and industry stakeholders in enhancing the right and welfare of the elderly, ensuring that MRVs contribute effectively in fostering the learning society especially amongst the senior citizens.

CONCLUSION

The development of the concept of retirement village to cater the growing needs of the senior citizens shall be seen as a good avenue in building learning society. However, this concept needs to be sustainable to cater larger groups of older adults and will sustain for a long period of time. This idea is indeed in line. This idea is also in line with the SDGs in the effort to integrate the elderly rights with the goals.

However, in ensuring that this idea would be sustainable, there are challenges faced by current administrators and it is predictable that there will be more hurdles in the future when the number of MRVs grow significantly. Thus, a proper legal framework aligning the registration, monitoring, and evaluation of these institutions need to be worked on. This will allow for the rights of the elderly to be uphold while promoting active ageing amongst them. Additionally, this will also be a tool to facilitate those industry players who are interested to embark on this project. The support from the government and NGOs is also needed to ensure that this valuable medium for elderly shall sustain especially in terms of fundings and training of staff.

Limitations of the study

The study has limitations as it only focused on Malaysia and only one MRV has been examined by the study. Thus, future research may expand by examining more numbers of MRVs and may

include MRV which provide also assisted living units for those who need medical assistance apart from the independent living units.

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