

Changing in Modern Malaysian Pattern of Life and its Implication to the Ageing Community

²Siti Aidila Bt. Sarzali, ¹Nangkula Utaberta, ¹Mohd Yazid Mohd Yunos, ¹Nor Atiah Ismail, ¹Sumarni Ismail

¹Lecturer, Architecture Department, Faculty of Design and Built Environment, University Putra Malaysia

²Student, Architecture Department, Faculty of Design and Built Environment, University Putra Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 October 2014

Received in revised form 26 December 2014

Accepted 17 January 2015

Available online 28 February 2015

Keywords:

Modern Malaysia, Pattern of Life, Ageing Community

ABSTRACT

Malaysia as the developing countries had made each of its city to be a magnet of working opportunity for people to move to the urban and make a living at the city. The lifestyle changes to conservative tradition to modern dynamic thinking. This phenomenon has led to the objectives of this paper writing which will focus more on the lifestyle of the Malaysia society and its implication to the ageing community. The content of these paper writing will start with an introduction, definitions of the keywords such as elderly, Malaysia society, urban and rural lifestyle, reviews on Malaysia society and the implication to the ageing community and last but not least summary for the paper writing. The methodology used in these paper writing is to compare the lifestyle in the past and modern Malaysia society and the impact to the ageing society. The aim for this writing is to make people understand and aware of the changes of the lifestyle and its impact to the ageing society.

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To Cite This Article: Siti Aidila Bt. Sarzali, Nangkula Utaberta, Mohd Yazid Mohd Yunos, Nor Atiah Ismail, Sumarni Ismail, Changing in Modern Malaysian Pattern of Life and its Implication to the Ageing Community. *Adv. Environ. Biol.*, 9(5), 473-479, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a beautiful and has a very unique essence which is its multi-racial ethnic. It has many different regions and each comes with different culture and traditions. Most of the administration and well developed infrastructure are located in the urban area such as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Putrajaya and other city centre. Unlike in rural area where the villages are and most of their economic values are agriculture and aquaculture. Due to modernisation and globalisation, most of the society favours to stay in the city, make a living in the city and a lifestyle of modern movement was created. This lifestyle somehow make an impact to the ageing community which is now are a growing number in Malaysia demographic. This writing will discuss on the issue of the changes of lifestyle in Malaysia society and its implication to the ageing society. The definitions, statistics and reviews will be made for the Malaysian society, its modern movement and the implication to our ageing society.

Definition of elderly:

There are various definitions of ageing and the famous three are from Linkage, Kazumoto and Rothstein. According to Linkage, in the context of the developed world, it seems inappropriately low to define the beginning of old age. However, this change is considered high in the developing countries as they still deal with lower life expectancy. For the developing countries, in general, they accept 55 years as an appropriate age to define a person as ageing person.

As for Imahori [5], he defines ageing as the 'regression of physiological function accompanied by the advancement of age'. Ageing can refer to a progress of cells, tissues, organs associated with increased age, but can also hint at positive aspects of growing old, such as becoming wiser and mature over life crisis and other matter. Rothstein [8], on the other hand, described ageing as the 'change from maturity to senescence' (age-related change). Senescence refers to the purely deteriorating aspects of ageing, the changes in cells, tissues, organs, and their respective functions that continue to occur after midlife.

Corresponding Author: Nangkula Utaberta, Lecturer, Architecture Department, Faculty of Design and Built Environment, Universiti Putra Malaysia
E-mail: nangkula_arch@yahoo.com

As to conclude the definition of ageing, we can say that ageing is more or less like the final phase of human development and can be seen as part of a continual process of change of every individual.



Fig. 1: Pak Man, 117 years old reciting the Holy Quran without wearing glasses watched by his wife at Kampung Denger, Jerneh, Terengganu. Source from <http://www.lamankongsi.com/2012/04/warga-emas-117-tahun-dedah-rahsia.html> (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

Reviews on malaysia society:



Fig. 2: Malaysia's biodiversity ethnic Source from <http://tsnra.wordpress.com/2011/09/05/2-the-people-of-malaysia> (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

Malaysia has a population of 25 million and is very popular for its multi-racial biodiversity ethnic. Almost 80% of the total population resides in Peninsular Malaysia. Malaysia has three main races in the country, which are the Malays, who are Muslims form the majority in the country, the other two main racial groups are the Chinese, who are mostly Buddhists and the Indians, who are mainly Hindus. Other groups that add to the population include natives from Sabah and Sarawak like the, Dusuns, Kadazans, Muruts, Ibans, Orang Ulu, Melanau, Bidayuhs, and Penans just to name a few. The different ethnic have their traditions and customs which gives Malaysia a colourful heritage. The important festivals of each race are a public holiday in the country and celebrated by all of races and religions. The lifestyle here in Malaysia is becoming more and more modern with the great exposure to the western culture due to the post-colonial effect.



Fig. 3: Malaysia Independence Day 31st August 1957 Source from http://www.arkib.gov.my/pengisytiharan_kemerdekaan_tanah_melayu (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

After independent day in 31st August 1957, the modernisation of Malaysia started to occur and is getting drastic when under the hand of former prime minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad. Globalisation is being introduced to the economic and making Malaysia one of the developing country. The globalisation somehow had made impact to the lifestyle of the society. Obviously at the city centre or urban area of each state, the

lifestyle becomes hectic, dense in a way that it contributes to the growing of Malaysia economy. Compare to Malaysia society pre independence day, they are more modest and laid back with the works are mostly self-substance focusing on agriculture.

The pre and post-Independence Day leaves a huge impact to Malaysian society economically, socially and mentally.

Life style and the implication to the ageing society:

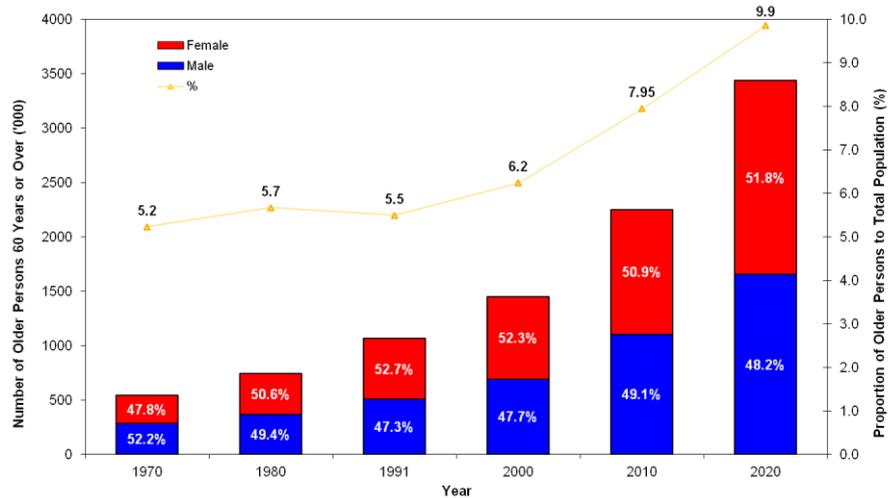


Fig. 4: Graph of Older Persons of 60 years and above in Malaysia Source from Chai Sen Tyng powerpoint slides 'Population Ageing In Malaysia' (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

With the globalisation, modernisation and a vision to make Malaysia as par as other developing countries, it somehow leaves the implication to a group of society which is the ageing society. As the demographic graph of Malaysia is increasing, so is the graph for ageing society. 'At present, the number of Malaysians aged 60 years and above is estimated to be 1.4 million and is projected to increase to 3.3 million in the year 2020. The percentage of the population that is 60 years and over has also increased over the years - 5.2% in 1970, 5.7% in 1990 and 6.3% in the year 2000. In the year 2020, this percentage is expected to be 9.8% of the population and it is expected to increase from 18.4 million to 33.3 million - an increase of 80%. The aged population however is expected to increase from 1.05 million in 1990 to 3.26 million over the same period, an increase of 210%.' [6].



Fig. 5: Kuala Lumpur bird eye view Source from <http://dranuarjb.blogspot.com/2010/08/082-urban-sprawl-analysis-for-kuala.html> 082 - Urban Sprawl Analysis for Kuala Lumpur Municipality (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

To make this implication to the ageing society seems more realistic to be understand, comparison will be done from the past Malaysia society and modern Malaysia society in term of economic, social, health and environment.

Started off with the economic lifestyle and its implication to the ageing society, just before modernisation hits Malaysia under the lead of Tun. Mahathir Mohamad, the society are more laid back and living up to their traditions. Be it the Malay, Chinese and Indian, there are very firm and strict with their traditions. Back then, the roles of the ageing community are very strong and important in the community. As for the Malay, the ageing member of the family such as the grandparents and the parents play a big role in choosing the children spouse.



Fig. 6: The tradition of merisik for Malay culture Source from <http://malayweddingcultures.blogspot.com/2012/09/adat-merisik.html> (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

There are things like an arrange marriage in the community back then. Two families will set a meeting and the male side of the family will ask for the female hands from her family without having the children to meet up, be friends and be a couple. Of course in Islam, there are no other better way to do it than to have this kind of marriage, without having to go through friendship and dating phase. Community back then are less exposed to technology and science, there are no Facebook, Twitter or even hand phone to communicate. They meet up and talk eye to eye unlike what happens in the modern society. Nowadays, it's normal for the individual at the age of 20 to have a partner and there are no more things such as an arrange marriage. Even in the rural area, this tradition had been forgotten, so is the role of the elders in this situation.



Fig. 7: Modern youngster hanging out at the restaurant Source : http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Asia/Malaysia/Wilayah_Persekutuan/Kuala_Lumpur-1282074/Nightlife-Kuala_Lumpur-TG-C-1.html (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

With the technology and gadgets that we own today, there is less communication that we made eye to eye with people around us. That includes the elders around us. Majority of them doesn't know how to use the technology such as hand phone, laptop and any gadget in the market. There are being left out in this newly social media phenomenon. Back then before modernisation, the role of an elderly is important in term of guidance, the youngsters are always asking for guidance and advice from the elderly. They believe in the fact that the elders are well experienced and knowledgeable in life experience. Unlike today where the youngsters are full of ego and they think that the elderly know less about life and any other things. Sometimes, some even dare to go against the traditions that the elders have been saved and cherish their whole life. As long as the traditions are not against the teaching of Islam, then I guess there is no harm in doing so. If only we as the youngster are being more sensitive the elder needs socially there won't be any problem such as stress and depression in their golden age.

Next are the issues on the changes of economic in Malaysia society and its implication to the ageing society. 'Malaysia's export-oriented economy has developed rapidly from one, based on agriculture to one that is supported by manufacturing, high tech industry and tourism. As a result of this modernization, living standards and behavioural patterns of the population are changing.' [11]

As we all know, most of the elderly will have their financial limit just after they retire from their job, be it as an employee or working on their own. Back then just before modernisation, the main resource for economy is through agriculture. Most of the community ate what they planted which we know save a lot in their household economy. But nowadays, as the houses are getting bigger, and taller, the lands somehow are getting smaller. And the people are lack of enthusiasm towards this agriculture or even to plant a few at their house for themselves. They would rather buy the vegetable, fishes, poultry or even buy readymade foods. This ageing

community, as we know have limited budget and some are no longer able to farm and to go fishing. It becomes a problem for them to find nutritious and affordable food to eat.



Fig. 8: An old lady in Kelantan selling all sort of vegetables Source from http://www.ustaznoramin.com/2010_04_01_archive.html (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

Next is the issue on the changes of lifestyle in Malaysia society and the implication towards the ageing society in health context. Ageing society can be described under the category of people with disabilities. This is due to the changes in their physical and psychological that is decreasing. Back then before modernisation, the medical technology is not as good as what we have nowadays. After going through several changes and modification, the medical technology are getting better and effective compare to when it was being built before. Besides that, the medical practitioners such as the doctors and nurses are more in numbers compare to back then. This has the implication to the elderly health since their bodies are undergoing the changes in physical and psychological. They need to undergo the checkups and operations if any of them have the chronic diseases. Modern medical technology helps in making sure that their health are at par to live normally and healthily.

Health Problems of the Elderly (MHQOLOM, 2005)

Disease	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hypertension	404	29.5	505	34.5	909	30.5
Heart problem	147	10.8	118	8.1	265	8.9
Diabetes	189	13.8	239	16.3	428	14.4
Kidney problem	30	2.2	31	2.1	61	2.0
Canser	5	0.4	6	0.4	11	0.4
Stroke	27	2.0	22	1.5	49	1.6
Gout	96	7.0	83	5.6	179	6.0

Fig. 9: Data of health problems of the elderly in Malaysia Source from Chai Sen Tyng powerpoint slides 'Population Ageing In Malaysia' (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

Last but not least are the issues on environment of Malaysia society and its implication to the ageing community. The issues will be discussed in rural and urban context before modernisation and after. The rural areas maintain its greenery, clean environment before and after modernisation. This is because there has been minor construction or development in the area. The clean environment is very helpful to the ageing community. They breathe clean air, views of trees and nature. Besides that, they are also surrounding by people who speak their language and can understand their need better because they are living in the same area and having the same needs. Living in the rural area also doesn't require much of financial needs; they can save their money and spend within their own budget. In rural or village, it is easy for them to commute as some might ride their bike and walk to the mosque, coffee shop at the side of the road and to their neighbour. The distance is just nice for them and it doesn't require long hours of driving or having to use public transport.



Fig. 10: A traditional house in Sitiawan, Perak Source from <http://markdiscovermalaysia.blogspot.com/2012/09/rural-malaysia-sitiawan-way-of-life.html> (Retrieved on 30 April 2014)

Compare to living in the modern urban environment with its hectic lifestyle, polluted air and barely a place for the ageing community to mingle around. It has an impact to their health physically and mentally. Besides that, modern society especially in the urban context is less sensitive toward the issues of community. This happens because most of them are busy chasing life at works and making a living that they tend to forget about the people in their golden age. Some parents who stay with their children in the urban are staying at home most of the time and they get bored. Then come depression and mental discomfort for them. If they wanted to go out to mingle or be in the community, they might need to walk, take a cab or drive if they can to the destination. Besides the bad traffic of urban infrastructure, another obstacle is that the crime that might happen. There are a large number of crime rates in the urban area due to the cost of living and the attitude of the people themselves.

Summary:

As a conclusion, Malaysia society is going toward an aging population demographic pattern. As we all know, aging is a process that we cannot say no too, it is a natural process and we aged every day without knowing it. The impact of this phenomenon can be divided into individually and as a whole community. According to DP Selvaratnam and PB Tin, for an individual, there is a loss of a paying job after retirement, loss of physical and mental fitness, and also the loss of social integration due to lack of mobility. For a nation, an aging population means a growing dependency ratio, a greater need of care, and more medical facilities for this age group. Perhaps with the sensitivity and empathy towards the ageing community we as an individual will be aware of this lifestyle changes and its implication to the ageing community. We as a community will be geared toward providing a better place and solution in order to sustain a comfortable livelihood for the aged in their later years.

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