THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL AGEING AMONG ELDERLY IN *PUSAT AKTIVITI WARGA EMAS* MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Social support is crucial towards successful ageing for elderly. However, modernization and urbanization have reduced social support for elderly, thus hampering the effort to achieve successful ageing. This study is, therefore, aimed to explore the challenges of social support in the pursuit of successful ageing among elderly. This study adopts a qualitative case study approach with in-depth interviews. The thematic analysis technique is employed to present the finding of the study. This study includes 24 elderly who participated in *Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas* (PAWE), a senior activity center in Kuala Lumpur as well as supervisors and officers from government agencies involved with the social welfare of the elderly. The findings reveal that there are four challenges to social support for successful ageing: attitudes of friends and neighbours, restrictions imposed by children, social changes, and the burden and commitment of other work. This study recommends developing a caring society for the elderly, and to establish a comprehensive empowerment program for the elderly as well as research and development on the needs and emerging issues of the elderly to overcome the challenges of social support in the pursuit of successful ageing.

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Introduction

As Malaysia will become an ageing population in 2030, more support especially social support is needed to help the older adult to age well in old age. According to Teh et al. (2014), social support is important in assisting elderly to overcome loneliness and it provides psychological support, preventing stress and depression in elderly (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Apart from that, social support helps the older adult to pursue successful ageing in which it helps the older adult to avoid disease and risk of disease, maintain high mental and physical functioning, and to have active social engagement with life (Rowe & Khan, 1987). According to Rowe and Kahn (1997), social support has a substantive effect on successful ageing since it allows elderly to maintain a healthy and positive outcome (Rosso et al., 2013) and increased quality of life (Unsar et al., 2016).

Family as the informal support were among the primary source of social support for elderly while formal support represents by government agencies and community organization often complement the support provided by the family and friends (Alavi et al., 2011). For instance, in the absence of a family member, the older adult may get social support from the community center nearby. Social support is defined as both formal and informal support in the form of social activities and community events that benefit the mental, physical, and emotional health of elderly. It is the participation of elderly in a wide range of coproduction activities, such as physical, social, service, discussion, and interest-based activities (Yuan et al., 2018)

Nevertheless, the social support provided by both sources of support often being limited due to modernization and urbanization (Silverstein et al,.2020). As the world progresses toward modernity, more people are preoccupied with daily tasks, causing elderly to lose access to the support they require. As the birth rate declines, fewer children in the family are available to provide social support for elderly. The increase of women labor-force participation has resulted in their parents being left alone in their homes (Kemperman et al., 2019). Living alone has contributed to depression and loneliness in elderly, and it is a common problem for older people (Singh & Misra, 2009). According to the 2019 National Health and Morbidity Survey, nearly 500,000 Malaysians have depression symptoms (NHMS, 2019). In a city where everyone is preoccupied with their work and commitment, elderly are frequently overlooked by their adult children as well as society. This has undoubtedly resulted in elderly having a smaller social network. According to Hortulanus et al. (2006), people with small networks are more likely to experience social isolation, which limits the ability of elderly to pursue successful ageing.

Elderly are at risk of loneliness due to the challenges of social support. Goll et al. (2015) suggest that preliminary findings of social support challenges require further investigation. More research is needed to identify the challenges to social support, as they have hampered the attainment of successful ageing with the goals of encouraging solutions and promoting the well-being of elderly (Teh et al., 2014). Therefore, the study aims to explore the challenges of social support faced by elderly in their pursuit

of successful ageing. This study may benefit the policymakers as this study highlights the challenges of social support experienced by elderly. Aside from that, several recommendations are also made at the end of the study to address the issue. As a result, this study is useful in assisting policymakers in developing future policies for elderly.

Although the family is the primary source of support for elderly, Alavi et al. (2011) propose that the support system for elderly should be based on the concept of ageing in the community, which emphasizes collaboration between the child and adult, community, and government. The formal support is not intended to replace the informal support provided by children, relatives, and neighbours to elderly, but rather to supplement it (Funk, 2013). As such, the scope of this research focuses on social support received by an older adult from two major sources of support, namely formal and informal support.

This study was carried out in PAWE as it resembles the concept of successful ageing, which encourages elderly to avoid disease and the risk of disease, maintain high mental and physical functioning, and engage in active social engagement with life. This study is based on the lived experiences of 24 elderly over the age of 60 who live in Kuala Lumpur and are active participants in PAWE. The research explores how elderly in PAWE perceive, understand, and experience the concept of social support towards successful ageing from structural and functional support perspectives. There is less research on social support in developing countries than in Western countries (Moonesar et al., 2016). Furthermore, according to Mohamed (2008), there is little research on social support among the elderly in Malaysia. As a result, this study helps to close the knowledge gap and contribute to the body of knowledge.

Literature Review

Social support

In the structure of social support, there are two types of support available to elderly: informal support and formal support (Vaux, 1988). Informal support is defined as assistance provided by members of one's social network and community, such as family, friends, and neighbours. Whereas formal support is provided by professionals or trained employees who are typically paid for their work, such as personal care assistants who assist with bathing or cleaning elderly or with other facilities, such as nursing homes that care for the elderly. Generally, it refers to the assistance that is provided by the government or a specific agency or authority. Despite this, Rashedi et al. (2013) state that family remains the primary source of support because close relatives have stronger bonds and they are more committed than others, while formal support supplements informal support (Funk, 2013). The specific functions that members of the social network can perform, such as financial, emotional, social, and informational support, are referred to as functional support (Vaux, 1988).

Social support can be defined as interaction from members of a social network that gives elderly a higher level of enjoyment, improved self-esteem, keeps them alive, and makes them feel less alone (Goll et al., 2015). Children play an important role in providing social support to their older parents by communicating with them regularly via phone calls, messages, and emails, or even by visiting them (Roziah, 2000), whereas neighbours, friends, and co-workers are crucial in providing social support through recreational and leisure activities with elderly (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Aside from that, community support is essential in providing social support through physical and intergenerational activities, which promotes the social interaction of elderly with members of their social networks (Teh et al., 2014). Social support assists elderly in improving their psychological well-being, thereby preventing stress and depression (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Social support from children may improve the cognitive function of an older adult, while social support from friends may help an older adult overcome loneliness (Teh et al., 2014). However, several factors have contributed to elderly receiving insufficient social support. Sataric and Perisic (2018) discover that a lack of information and awareness has reduced social support for elderly by discouraging them from accessing services. Some elderly reported being excluded from specific neighbourhood events due to a lack of information about the programme or service. Aside from that, loss of interaction with friends and relatives, disability and illness, a lack of sufficient social opportunities, and a lack of a supportive society were among the challenges of social support for elderly (Goll et al., 2015). Furthermore, poor interaction among elderly is caused by the absence of family members who have moved away and the death of family members and friends.

Successful ageing

There is no universal definition of successful ageing (Pruchno et al., 2010), and the term is frequently debated by researchers in determining whether a subjective or objective measure should be used to define its meaning (Tan et al., 2010). Despite this, objective measures were widely cited and have received increased attention because of the successful ageing model developed by Rowe and Kahn (Pruchno et al., 2010). Therefore, this study employs an objective measure to determine the concept of successful ageing by utilising the successful ageing model developed by Rowe and Khan, which is more widely accepted in the literature than a subjective measure (Pruchno et al., 2010). According to the model developed by Rowe and Kahn (1997), successful ageing refers to the accomplishment of three components. They are (a) the avoidance of disease and risk of disease, (b) high mental and physical functioning, and (c) active engagement in life. In relation to social support, elderly with adequate social support are more likely to achieve successful ageing because they have a larger social network than those with limited social support. As a result, those with a smaller social network frequently experience loneliness and isolation due to a lack of social interaction, posing a challenge to the successful ageing process (Mellor et al., 2008).

Methodology

Research design

This study is based on qualitative research by adopting a case study as the research design. The goal of qualitative research is to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter of the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), which relates with this study as it aimed to dig deeper into the challenges of social support to pursue successful ageing among elderly. It entails the process of exploring the thoughts and feelings of the respondents for the researcher to interpret the meaning that the respondents associate with their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). A case study is an in-depth investigation of a person, a group of people, or a unit (Gustafsson, 2017). It has been widely employed in qualitative research (Kitay & Callus, 2018). This study used a case study to gain a better understanding of the challenges of social support experienced by elderly and to conduct an in-depth analysis of the phenomena based on their real-life experiences (Njie & Asimiran, 2014) by asking "how" and "why" questions about a current set of events on which the researchers have little or no control (Yin, 2003).

Data collection

In this study, the interview was used as a research tool for data collection because it allowed for an exchange of views and opinions from elderly about the study. Furthermore, the interview was a viable process that allowed the interviewer to share his or her thoughts and opinions (Abdulkareem, 2018). Interviews make it easier for elderly to respond because they would have difficulty with written forms due to ageing issues, as some of them not being able to see clearly (Gray, 2018). In accordance with the objectives of the study, which were to investigate the challenges of social support among elderly, interviews were conducted to examine the frequency of social support received by elderly, why it was difficult for elderly to obtain adequate social support to pursue successful ageing, and how improvements can be made to improve the social support of elderly. An in-depth interview was used as the data collection technique for this study because it was the most appropriate method for gathering in-depth information (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

The interview questions were developed based on a previous literature review on the topic of social support and successful ageing, both of which were relevant to the objectives of the study. The questions were all about "how" and "why" to stimulate process thinking and provide more information. Some of the questions that were asked to the elderly respondent were "Who usually provides you with social support?", "Do you have difficulties in getting social support?", "What do you do if you feel depressed?", "How social support may affect your avoidance of diseases?", "How social support helps you to maintain mental and physical functioning?", "How social support affects your social engagement?".

The data was collected from four PAWE agencies in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. PAWE serves as both an activity centre for elderly and a research site for this study. PAWE is a community centre where senior citizens can participate in daily activities. PAWE was chosen for this study because it resembled the concept of successful ageing, in which the establishment encouraged people to avoid diseases and disease risks, maintain high mental and physical functions, and engage in active social engagements, all of which are appropriate to be key components of the research objectives. This study focused on the PAWE, because many previous studies have concentrated on support in rural areas, and only a limited number of studies have investigated social support in the urban area. For instance, Mohamed (2008) in his study on social support in rural areas, suggested that future research should be conducted in urban areas. Besides that, according to a survey conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia (2016), the number of elderly living in urban areas is currently higher than in rural areas and is expected to be higher in the future.

As shown in Table 1, this study included 24 elderly respondents from four PAWE in Kuala Lumpur located at Cheras Baru, Seputeh, Batu, and Putrajaya. Six older adult respondents were chosen from each PAWE for interviews based on the criteria established by the researcher. After conducting 24 interviews, the researcher concluded that there was data saturation, with no new concepts emerging from subsequent interviews, like a recommendation made by Suen et al. (2014). As a result, a sample of 24 older adult respondents was deemed adequate for the qualitative analysis and scope of this study. The richness of the data collected in this study, as well as its depth and quality in providing clearer views of a specific situation, were deemed more important than numbers (Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011). Purposive sampling was used as the sampling technique in this study, and respondents were chosen based on the purpose of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Homogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique used to select respondents with similar traits or specific characteristics. The similarity of the respondents in terms of age, culture, and life experiences was highlighted in this study because the focus was to examine the challenges of social support toward successful ageing. In addition, to gain an understanding of the social support of elderly, this study included responses from three officers of the Social Support Division from the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia or *Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia* (JKMM) and four supervisors of PAWE from each centre as key informants. JKMM officers and PAWE supervisors are both involved in activities and services related to the social wellbeing and social welfare of elderly in PAWE.

Table 1: Sociodemographic background of respondents

Sociodemographic aspects		n	(%)
Gender	Male	5	20.8
	Female	19	79.2
Age	60 - 69	14	58.3
	70 - 79	10	41.7
Marital Status	Married	9	37.5
	Divorced	4	16.7
	Widowed	11	45.8
Number of People Per Household	1	2	8.3
	2	11	45.8
	3	7	29.2
	4	2	8.3
	5	2	8.3
Educational level	Primary	12	50
	Secondary	8	33.3
	Higher	4	16.7
Occupation before retirement	Housewife	5	20.8
	Business	2	8.3
	Unskilled worker	7	29.2
	Clerical	8	33.3
	Higher executives	2	8.3
Monthly income	100 -500	6	25
	501 -1000	7	29.1
	1001- 1500	4	16.7
	1501-2000	4	16.7
	More than 2000	3	12.5

Interviews at PAWE centres took place from August 2019 to August 2020. Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet room with the respondent. Depending on the preference of the respondent, two languages were used: Bahasa Malaysia and English. Every interview lasted for 30 to 40 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the researchers also note down other important additional information. That is done to ensure that the results of the analysis were not influenced by the bias or interest of the researchers (Renz et al., 2018). As a token of gratitude, elderly in PAWE who were interested in and voluntarily participated in this study were given food incentives such as flour, coffee powder, tea, and canned sardines.

Data analysis

In this study, data were thematically analysed through several stages of identifying data patterns based on the use of terms and important keywords related to social support and successful ageing for elderly. Thematic analysis is a technique for identifying and analysing data patterns (themes) using thematic codes (Abdulkareem et al., 2018). The analysis process began with the transcribing process, in which the researchers transcribed all the recorded audio verbatim into the written word. Name codes were used to keep respondents' information private and secure their true identities.

The researcher continued with the coding process after the transcription was completed and checked. Coding is the identification of subjects, issues, similarities, and differences based on participant narratives and interpreted by the researchers. The coding process allows the researchers to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Atlas. ti is qualitative research software that researchers have used for transcription and coding management. The codes were then combined to form a theme. The themes were constructed based on the interpretation by the researchers and represented as the qualitative findings of the study. As described in the thematic process, theming is the process of combining codes from one or more transcripts to present qualitative research findings in a coherent and meaningful manner (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Prior to the interview sessions, the researchers informed each respondent about the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits of the study, the right of older adult respondents to withdraw from the study at any time, and the confidentiality of respondent information. The respondent was given a consent form to read and sign before the interview began. The elderly were not forced to sign the form because their participation was entirely voluntary.

Result

Based on the responses of the interviews, the findings of this study were divided into four themes: the attitudes of friends and neighbours, restriction by the children, social changes, the burden, and commitment of other work. The findings are stated below:

The attitudes of friends and neighbours

Friends are one of the sources of social support for elderly. Elderly prefer to spend time with their friends for fun as they have the same interest and belong to the same age. However, misunderstanding, the behaviour of friends who break promises, often show off, lack of understanding of their situation and intolerance have caused the older adult to have a strained relationship with them. Respondent 3 said that she does not want to stick too close to her friend because they do not always keep their promise and plan. She feels she has given up to maintain a relationship with them because they did not appreciate her sincerity in friendship. She states that:

> *You cannot be friends with them for a long time. They often break their promise which makes me frustrated. Once I was ready to go out because I had a meeting with them, they cancelled the plan at the very last minute. It has happened three or four times before. It hurts my heart. Then I was determined that I will not go out with them again. (Respondent 3)*

PAWE is a medium for senior citizens to meet their friends and spend time together. Nonetheless, some elderly are less desirable to be friends with because of their stubborn and boastful attitudes. It creates a disharmonious situation in PAWE, making the network of friends smaller. In this regard, respondent 21 mentions that:

> *There is one woman here who likes to show off. She said that she was a millionaire. Millionaires do not have to come over here. They are trying to show off that they are rich. Most of us do not like her. She likes to make things complicated.*

Misunderstanding among friends usually happened due to poor communication between two-party. Respondent 22 quarrelled with other friends because they cannot be nice and tolerate her. She must admit that she has an ear problem due to the ageing process and she had to speak loudly which makes other friends uncomfortable and makes them stay away from her. Respondent 22 states that:

> *It was getting difficult here. It was the day my friend said I spoke loudly which make her feel uncomfortable. I'm Chinese, my ears are low, I have to speak louder so that people will understand. Please stay at home if you wanna be quiet. I had explained to them that I was*

struggling because of my ear but they just ignored me. They didn't understand my condition.

Respondent 16 finds that most of the misunderstandings happened because of a lack of tolerance among friends. They do not want to lose their argument, and they want to be always correct. This has created tension between them and break friendships between friends.

Like this moment, she is trying to fight with me. She was not satisfied with the turn of the interview. She was trying to get the interview before me. If I have a lot of time, it doesn't matter. I have a very short time in here but sometimes when it is needed like this, I enjoy all these interviews and questions. (Respondent 16)

Similarly, Respondent 22 also stated that she felt uncomfortable living at her house due to an issue with her neighbour. Her neighbour is petting a pair of dogs and making her feel irritated with the smell.

I feel so stressed because my neighbour has no common sense at all. The neighbour in the upper house has four puppies. Her puppy kept pooping until my room smelled so bad. I did complain to the management, but they did not take any action. (Respondent 22)

Restrictions by the children

Social support is important for elderly to reduce their loneliness. However, socialization is limited due to restrictions by the children. Respondent 3 expresses that her daughter did not like her friends to come over to visit her because it would be noisy. As a result, she had to limit her social activities at home. This was a bit challenging for her because she rarely gets out because of her commitment to babysitting. To some extent, the presence of friends could help to reduce boredom and have friends to chat with and express feelings.

I like it when my friends come to the house to talk to me. But when my daughter came home, I was worried. Well, because it's noisy. I prayed that it wasn't until 5 o'clock. One hour before my daughter came back, I wiped everything up and tidy. (Respondent 3)

One of the PAWE supervisors mentioned that most elderly were unable to attend and participate in PAWE activities because of the children who prevented them from doing so. This was because children thought PAWE was a place for senior citizens to chat, gossip, and waste their time. They did not understand the function of PAWE is to help reduce the feeling of loneliness among elderly. There were negative perceptions among children of the establishment of PAWE. They did not know it was an initiative

made by the government agency to help senior citizens to get adequate interaction with other people and not a gossip center.

> *Child support is important. Sometimes, because of their negative perception of PAWE, these children do not allow their parents to go to PAWE. Going to PAWE is better than hanging out for no purpose at all. There is a lot of knowledge and class offered by PAWE under the authority. We are here to do beneficial activities to generate minds and to be active and not gossip about others. I don't like that kind of thing myself. I always remind them not to gossip in PAWE. (Supervisor Batu)*

Social changes

Cultural and social changes are also felt by the PAWE respondents. Although PAWE is for the participation of the different races, most of the PAWE activities are now according to the respective races. This makes it difficult to form a close society regardless of race. For Respondent 2, she felt a change in the activities of PAWE as it was now more race-based and felt it was not good for a multi-racial society. She felt there was a difference between now and the past, which was not good for PAWE. She pointed out the program focused more on the activities of the respective races in PAWE, making it difficult to form close relationships between different races.

> *I used to be very close to friends even though we were from different races. But now the program here focuses more on the activities of their respective races in PAWE. How do we want to create unity between races? (Respondent 2)*

In addition, the Support Unit agreed that cultural change had taken place in the present society. The collective attitude that was displayed during social events like weddings was absent. These social gatherings allowed the neighbours to be bonded but it did not exist as people no longer knew those who resided in the same place. This caused a feeling of discomfort among neighbours as they could not visit each other's houses. Visiting neighbours in the city is not a common practice. The same goes for community-based programs that are gradually disappearing. For example, the preparations for a meeting or ceremony no longer include the community or residents on a wide scale but involved the immediate family members only. Neighbours are no longer a necessity for the social activities of the local community.

> *Look at the wedding feast, we used to call everyone in the village and neighbour to prepare a dish together in the past. Around the time, people were sharing stories and all. But now society is shifting. People use a caterer; they no longer exchange stories and all that stuff with neighbours. (Support Unit)*

Due to the age factor, most elderly were no longer able to regularly go out to socialise with their friends. However, visits by neighbours may, to some extent, provide social support to senior citizens. For those who had close and friendly relations with neighbours, it was easy for them to get social support. However, urban life did not practice the culture of visiting neighbours and had an impact on the older adult. The social network of elderly had been limited by this situation. For Respondent 9, it was quite difficult for him to visit the houses of neighbours to talk and say hello, as well as to spend her free time because that was not the culture of urban life. This situation made her feel bored and lonely at home because she had no friends to talk to. At the same, she was unable to go to PAWE regularly.

> *If I go out, I am just going to meet a friend or a neighbour on the roadside. I don't go to their home. I want to go, but I'm afraid if it bothers people to sleep or do housework. (Respondent 9)*

For Respondent 5, it is quite difficult for him to have a social relationship with his neighbours. According to him, his neighbours are of the same age. However, they rarely communicate with him and are more comfortable focusing on their affairs at home. This situation causes respondents to feel lonely due to limited association with their neighbours.

> *A neighbour who didn't want to hang out with us. It's the same age as us. They didn't want to say hello to us, though. They're doing their things. (Respondent 5)*

Respondent 9 further added, she was only able to recognize several residents who stayed on the same level. It was quite difficult for her to get to know all the residents who stayed in the entire block. She said there were 20 houses on one level, and that was her neighbourhood. This situation also implied that her social relations were limited to certain areas.

> *I don't know all the people living in one building. I don't remember and I can't recognize some of them. They have 17 levels altogether and 20 houses on each level. I can't know them. Only those who are familiar to me at the same house level. (Respondent 9)*

The burdens and commitment of other work

The burden and commitment to work often prevented elderly from socialising with their friends. They frequently have limited time to spend with friends because some of them must juggle from one job to another in their old age. One respondent stated that she rarely had time to participate in PAWE activities because she only had two days off per month to rest. She described it as follows:

> *I cannot join activities in PAWE regularly as I need to work. I only get two days off to rest in a month. (Respondent 2)*

Respondent 6 said that although his wife wants to be involved in PAWE activities, she often cannot participate in PAWE activities because of her commitment to taking care of their grandchildren. This allows their social activities to be disrupted and limited as they have to give priority to the needs of grandchildren and so on.

> *My wife wants to come to PAWE and join her activities. However, she is coming here late because she was tidying up the house, then bathing grandchildren. Only then she can come here and sometimes she does not have time to come here. (Respondent 6)*

For Respondent 8, her daughter had been involved in an accident a few months ago, and she had to manage her child first before going anywhere. This situation meant that she had limited time to participate in PAWE activities.

> *My child cannot take care of herself because she was involved in an accident a few months ago. I must take care of her before I go anywhere. (Respondent 8)*

While respondent 16, during the interview she looked restless and rushing because she needs to pick up her granddaughter from school. She was not able to wait until the activity in the morning session ends. She can only spend her time at PAWE for not more than 2 hours.

> *I have to go back at 11 because I need to go to my grandchildren's school to pick her. I look after grandchildren since he was born. Other children get angry sometimes because I have so many other things to do. I have to go here and there. It's tiring. But my granddaughter is not fit to sit with anyone else. (Respondent 16)*

Impact of the barrier of social support to successful aging

The challenges of social support have impacted the attainment of successful ageing as it indirectly has hindered the elderly from avoidance of disease and risk of disease, high mental and physical functioning, and active social engagement with life. In terms of avoidance of disease and risk of disease, limited social support has resulted in elderly becoming physically inactive, making it difficult for them to become more fit and avoid illness. One respondent stated that he does not feel energetic if he must stay at home all day. However, since his home is far from PAWE, he is currently unable to attend PAWE regularly. He mentions the following:

> *If I stay at home all day, I feel weak. But whenever I go to PAWE, I feel happier and more energised. (Respondent 20)*

In terms of high mental and physical functioning, limited social support has made them feel frustrated and thus deprived of their mental well-being. As respondent 4 mentioned, she often feels stressed confined staying at home because her daughter lives far away and is unable to visit her regularly, and her neighbour is also busy with their work, leaving her with few friends to socialise with.

> *Sitting in my house alone, I feel like I'm being jailed. I want to go out, but the kids are far away and my friend is preoccupied with their work (Respondent No. 4)*

Apart from that, limited social support has reduced the active social engagement of elderly and thus makes them feel social isolation and loneliness. Respondent 3 like other elderly liked to participate in PAWE activities. However, the restrictions imposed by her daughter which prevent her from regularly participating in PAWE, limiting her socialisation with friends. She said the following:

> *My daughter doesn't like me to go to PAWE every day. So I'm have limited time to spend with my friend there. (Respondent 3)*

As a result, elderly must receive adequate socialisation support. Limited social support has discouraged elderly from pursuing successful ageing by discouraging them from avoiding disease and risk of disease, having high mental and physical functioning, and engaging in active social engagement with life.

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal several barriers to social support. This study finds that the barriers to social support are the attitudes of friends and neighbours, social change, the burden and commitment of other types of work, and restrictions by the children. These social support challenges are hampering the ability of elderly to achieve successful ageing by reducing their travel, making them feel isolated, lonely, and eventually unproductive.

The poor attitudes of friends and neighbours make elderly appear to stop spending time with their friends and neighbours and therefore decrease social support for elderly. A bad attitude such as a broken promise, intolerance, a proud attitude, and stubbornness generate conflicts between the respondent and friends. Besides, these kinds of attitudes prompt the older adult respondents to quarrel with their friends. The greedy attitude of the neighbour makes the relationship between them worse. As a result, the relationship between the respondents and their friends as well as the neighbours is impaired by the bad attitude that reduced social support for elderly. This makes elderly have a smaller social network. Those who have a small network have low social and emotional support (Newall & Menec, 2013). Although the respondent had a large social network, they were reported to be unsatisfied with the social contact.

This is like the finding by (Steptoe, Shankar & Rafnsson, 2015), who revealed that satisfaction of social networks is not determined by the size of a social network. Elderly reported resisting any social contact with those who had different values and social identities than themselves (Goll et al., 2015). Therefore, sharing different values and mentality had reduced the social support for elderly. Older adult respondents reported they did not want to mingle around with friends and neighbours who were not according to their liking in terms of mentality and way of thinking. This agrees with the study conducted by Goll et al. (2015), that compatibility with moral value is a concern for elderly and is most likely to connect with others who have moral values that are compatible with them, whereas those who do not have compatible values are considered burdensome.

This study shows that social changes have prevented elderly from obtaining social support. There is no tradition of visiting neighbours in urban settings, which means that elderly had little contact with their neighbours. This is because urban residents are more likely to keep to themselves and not care about their surroundings. Besides, interaction with the neighbours is limited to a certain area, particularly in apartments and condominiums, as they are not able to know and recognize all occupants. Besides, the activities in PAWE have been stated to be segregated by ethnicity. The activities of different races are different from one race to another in PAWE, making it difficult to establish a close bond among the elderly of the different races. Social changes have caused the loss of support among neighbours in a community. Uncaring neighbours make the elderly, especially those who are in the lower socioeconomic rank not to be interested and feel frustrated to pursue social interaction with their other neighbours (Goll et al., 2015). However, according to Hawkley et al. (2008), elderly may feel lonely although they have a high degree of engagement and social relationships.

Apart from that, the finding of the study shows that some elderly committed to working in their old age, which made it difficult to socialise with friends. Respondents stated that they did not participate in PAWE because they had children with disabilities to care for and housework to do. Furthermore, some respondents stated that they needed to work in their old age to support themselves and thus had to earn extra money. This supports the findings of a previous study by Wong et al. (2008), which found that elderly continue to work and do not want to retire due to a lack of financial resources. It is necessary to sacrifice time spent with friends when other priorities must be met. As a result of old age commitments, elderly have received less social support. However, working after the age of 60, on the other hand, according to Teh et al., (2014), may alleviate loneliness among elderly by allowing them to interact with their peers.

The respondents also reported getting less social support due to restrictions from their children. As stated by the older adult respondents, their children were unhappy when they welcomed a friend to their homes, as they did not want the houses to be noisy. By inviting a friend to home, elderly had more time to spend with friends. The respondents mentioned that they were unable to participate in social activities such as

PAWE regularly because they had different responsibilities at home. Besides, the older adult respondents noted that some of their children did not want them to visit PAWE frequently as they had negative views of PAWE. They felt that PAWE was a place that encouraged elderly to waste time without any beneficial activities for them and led them to gossip about others. The findings of this study are confirmed by a previous study, where elderly have limited freedom when they stay with their children (Escourrou et al., 2017). However, spending too much time alone or idle results in feelings of isolation from others (O'Rourke et al., 2018)

It was discovered that a lack of social support made it difficult for them to become more fit and avoid disease because they do not feel energetic to stay at home all day, depriving them of their mental well-being. Due to a lack of social support, the active social engagement of elderly has decreased, causing them to feel social isolation and loneliness. The findings of the study are consistent with the National Institute on Aging (2019) which discovered that limited social support resulted in social isolation among elderly. Loneliness has been linked to morbidity and mortality in older people (Luo et al., 2012), making it difficult for them to avoid diseases and reduce their risk of disease.

Based on the findings, the researchers make some recommendations to help elderly to overcome the challenges in social support and to pursue successful ageing. Among the significant recommendation are:

a) The development of a caring society is needed for elderly through the campaign and social media.
b) More establishment of a comprehensive empowerment programme for elderly should be implemented by the government agencies related to the social welfare of elderly.
c) Research and development should be conducted on the needs and emerging issues of elderly to overcome the challenges of social support in the pursuit of successful ageing.

Conclusion

This study provides important insights and evidence into the challenges of social support for successful ageing experienced by elderly in Kuala Lumpur. Four challenges to social support are identified in this study. Among them are the attitude of friends and neighbours, social change, the burden, and commitment of other types of work, and restrictions imposed by the children. Moreover, social support from both formal and informal support is important in helping elderly age well. However, modernization, on the other hand, has resulted in social change, particularly in cities where everyone is preoccupied with their work. As a result, elderly are frequently neglected by their adult children as well as society, leaving them feeling depressed, isolated, and lonely. The challenges of social support have prevented elderly from pursuing successful ageing by limiting their ability to avoid disease and risk of disease, maintain high

mental and physical functioning, and engage in active social engagement with life. This study, therefore, suggests that policymakers should plan, review, and develop more empowerment programmes aimed at increasing social support for elderly. Furthermore, the government may be able to improve opportunities for elderly to receive more social support through technological advancement and internet access which will promote the socialisation of elderly. Social connection is essential for healthy ageing, allowing older people to live longer lives with less depression and better health. In line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), the government should establish a specific portal for elderly to promote social support for elderly and improve social connectivity among them. As a conclusion, the current study is beneficial as a preparation for overcoming the challenges of social support among elderly people in the future.

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