

SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY AT DARUL HANAN NURSING HOME, PENANG, MALAYSIA

Norizan Abdul Ghani^{*}, Nurizah Noordin, Nurdina Iman Zulkifli,
Berhanuddin Abdullah and Farah Syazrah Mohd Ghazalli

Abstract: Senior citizens are special people aged 60 years and above. The age factor has affected their emotional, physical and intellectual as well as prepared them to face the afterlife. This study aims to investigate social support for the elderly at the Darul Hanan Nursing Home and to identify the forms as well as the effects of social support given to the elders. This study used a qualitative method with semi-structured interview technique and ensured the participants were relaxed and willing to cooperate. Interviews were also conducted with the management of the home. Data were also obtained through observation, following the programmes with the seniors. Dependency theory was used in this study. The findings show that the social support received by the elderly are emotional, physical, financial and spiritual support. The effect of support has been to improve the welfare and happiness of the elderly in the home. This study suggests that more government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and other parties provide moral, emotional and physical support to the senior citizens.

INTRODUCTION

The Mental Health Information and Determinants for The European Level (MINDFUL) define social support as ‘a reliable presence of an individual who can be caring and show respect for others as a person.’ Appreciation, respect and love are very important in one’s life. Social support is usually categorised into four types, namely; emotion, instrumental, information and praises (Karen Glanz, Barbara K. Rimer & K. Viswanath, 2008). Albrecht and Adelman (1987) defines social support as verbal and non-verbal communication between the recipients – the giver and the receiver of information which can reduce the sense of uncertainty about the environment, themselves, other people, or for those who are in a relationship, for instance, it helps enhance the perception of personal control in one’s life.

Maslow’s Theory (1970) describes the behavior of individuals, where they are most likely to make self-judgments based on the notion of people’s perception and treatment towards themselves. Positive response and treatment given to them will positively affect them making them more confident and less anxious when facing the public. In addition to the dependence on the Western theory, the Quran also calls us to do good to other beings. Allah (SWT) said:

^{*} *Address for Communication (Corresponding Author):* Norizan Abdul Ghani, Associate Professor in Community Development, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu, Malaysia. *E-mail:* norizabd@unisza.edu.my

“.....and do good as Allah has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allah likes not the *Mufsidin* (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupt).”

(Al-Qasas: verse 77)

In order to obtain happiness, human beings must all love and respect each other. Allah SWT in the holy Quran express the following, which means:

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents, whether one or both of them reach old age, say not to them any word of contempt, nor rebuke them, but address them in honorable terms- And make yourself submissively kind to them with mercy, and say ‘O my Lord, have mercy on them, as they raised me up when I was little.’”

(Al-Isra’: verse 23-24)

The elders or senior citizens are those aged 60 years and above. At this age, people assume that they should stay at home not contribute towards the development of self and society. In Malaysia, the parents are often called by various titles such as seniors or veterans. Typically, the elderly can be identified by looking at their physical features as there is a change in the reduction of the sense of smell and taste, reduced ability to hear and see, tooth loss, and reduced resistance to physical activity (Ministry of Health, 2009). This situation is the nature of life and cannot be resisted by anyone. The problem of aging among the population is undeniable.

Aging among the population occurs when the percentage of the elderly population aged 60 years and above reaches 15% of the total population. Malaysia, as a developing country will be experiencing aging among its population soon. Malaysia’s speed towards reaching aging country status is found to be more rapid than in most developed countries. This is because the second demographic transition experienced occurred in the context of the vast development of medical technology. It is believed that the senior citizens in Malaysia will double from 7% to 14% within 28 years as opposed to Sweden which took around 112 years for the same change (National Ageing Plan, 2011). Therefore, Malaysia should not delay addressing issues related to the aging population.

There are several factors contributing to the increasing number of senior citizens. Among the many factors, according to Salma and Fauziah (1998), one of them is the term improvement factor. With good health care, life expectancy of the world population will increase. The increase in the number of elderly will require extra care and better health facilities. For the ASEAN countries, the average life expectancy is 60 years for men and 74 years for women.

The second factor is that the proportion of elderly people is increasing due to the decline in fertility rates that contribute to the reduction of overall population growth (Surina Nayan, 2006). With the current modernisation and globalisation era, most

couples agree to reduce the number of responsibilities and household members as well as practice pregnancy planning for birth control which indirectly contributes to the country's declining birth rate. The decrease of birth rate in Malaysia is closely related to the attitudes and behavior of the community in connection with the practice of family planning (Syed Abdul Razak Sayed Mahadi & Mustafa Omar, 2005).

This phenomenon will continue to increase over fertility and birth rates, in addition to the increase of life expectancy of the population. Based on this situation, Malaysia must be ready to meet any requirements associated with this group of senior citizens so that their rights and welfare are not neglected. The elderly are also part of society. They also need to survive and meet the needs of their lives just like other individuals (Khairul Azhar Idris, 2012).

The Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders, Penang is an NGO body under the auspices of the Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAINPP) registered with the Penang Registrar of Societies with the name of 'Badan Kebajikan Rumah Warga Emas Darul Hanan Pulau Pinang. The complex was built using funding from the Bukhary Foundation (Yayasan Bukhary) on an eight acres land belong to the Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAINPP) for the placement and care of Muslim elders, both male and female. It can accommodate a maximum of 200 senior citizens and became fully operational on 1st of February 2010. The establishment of the home aims to provide the best possible care and protection to senior citizens, as encouraged in the Islamic teachings. In addition, these homes are also working to create a center of education and reference on all matters relating to the care of the elderly besides playing a major role in creating a loving and caring society towards the elders.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The scenario of neglecting the elders has become a trend nowadays, where the elderly are abandoned and their needs are neglected. There are various recommendations and suggestions to improve the welfare of senior citizens in this country. The government and NGOs have been working hand in hand with each other in order to support this group. The elderly, typically require extra support, treatment and care to live life (Khairul Azhar Idris, 2012). Due to this problem, The Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders, took the initiative to encourage outsiders, particularly the local community, to contribute in terms of materials or through other means. Most of the elders are neglected besides being abandoned by their close family members and relatives. There are also cases of them being beaten by their step children and abandoned by their own children. Most of the neglect cases occur because they are not well aware of themselves being abused, are too embarrassed to file a police report or too scared of the abuser (they might be harmed and further abused). Neglect also occurs in situations where the elders are not provided with their basic needs such as food, clothing, physical care, as well as medical and financial support; be it intentionally or unintentionally.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:

- (a) Identify reasons by respondents to choose Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders, Penang as their residence.
- (b) Identify the forms of social support given to respondents.
- (c) Determine the effects of social support given to respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The elderly, in general, can be defined by reaching a certain age limit (Doris Padmini Selvaratnam et al., 2010). Citizens of a country aged 60 years and above can be considered as the elderly. However, most developed countries use the age of 65 years and above as its limit. Policy makers in Malaysia, on the other hand, have officially used the definition provided by the United Nations (UN) as an indicator for the aging population. The UN defines those aged 60 years and above as senior citizens, or also known as the elderly. In 2000, there were 1.4 million (6.5%) elderly and this number increased to 1.7 million (7.2%) in 2005. In 2020, it is estimated that 2.2 million (9.5%) of the country's population will be categorised as senior citizens. The phenomenon of the aging population in many developing countries has increased drastically in recent years. A similar phenomenon will be experienced by the Philippines, Brunei, Myanmar and Cambodia. This phenomenon also increases the demand of caring services for the elderly and brings extra burdens to the family members, particularly older children, the community and the local government (Khadijah Alavi & Rahim M. Said (2010). The senior citizens and usually face problems in terms of their physical deterioration (Wook Endut & Fariza Ahmad, 2009). In addition to that, the elders will also face aging phenomenon and situations. According to Tengku Aizan Tengku Abdul Hamid (2015), aging is a multidimensional concept that can be defined from a variety of different perspectives. From the perspective of human development, aging is seen as a lifelong process from conception, birth and death. From a societal perspective, aging is seen as an aggregate statistic on the population's births and deaths, in a society that reflects their health conditions as well as the success of the country's socio-economic development. With the phenomenon of aging and the increase number of elders, the pressure on demand for nursing homes and homes for the elderly and comfortable residences has increased. According to Shalini Sanmargaraja (2012), the increase in the elderly population in Malaysia has resulted in the existence of demand for the provision of special facilities for the elderly in the major cities, including in the housing estates so that the elders are able to live like a normal person. Nowadays, people are increasingly materialistic which causes them to neglect their responsibilities towards their parents by sending them to nursing homes for the elderly. It is acceptable for certain groups of people in the

community to send their parents to nursing homes but children shall play a major role in making their parents happy by continuously paying a visit to offer support, be it emotional or physical.

Today, there exists a scenario, which is commonly accepted by the local community where workaholic children send their parents to nursing homes due to career factors. The practice of loving and tender has also decreased causing children to care less for their ageing parents thus neglecting them. These factors make the elderly becomes a victim of circumstance although they require extra social support from their children such as attention, communication, spending time together and doing activities like everyone else (Shalini Sanmargaraja & Seow Ta Wee, 2013).

Families in particular play a significant role in providing social support to the elderly. This type of social support is divided into two types, namely; non-physical support such as recreation, communication and a shoulder to cry on, and physical support such as accommodation and food. These social supports usually come from family members. Apart from family members, the local community also plays a significant role in extending their assistance and support towards the elderly at the nursing homes. Social support from various parties will produce a healthy community in general and a better society as a whole because the elders' needs and the children's responsibilities to serve their aging parents are achieved (Khadijah Alavi et al., 2011). A healthy community will result in a productive country as well as productive individuals who are physically, psychologically and mentally fit. It is through this situation that the community will remain in harmony, calm, at peace and will be able to move towards betterment (Amran Hassan et al., (2012). However, if children neglect their parents, the community and society will be imbalance as the elders' rights and needs are neglected, thus affecting them in negative ways, such as loneliness and abandonment. According to Siti Marziah Zakaria, Khadijah Alavi and Nasrudin Subhi (2013), senior citizens or the elders have a higher risk of suffering loneliness due to losses and changes in life. Lack of social support, physical disabilities and chronic diseases can also bring loneliness to these senior citizens. The elderly who live far away from their families or those who are sent to nursing homes are more fragile and vulnerable to loneliness. Thus, social support from children and the community as a whole are very crucial and needed in order to avoid loneliness and depression among the elderly.

The elderly are in dire need of attention from their children. This is because, as they get older, they require more love, care and attention from their surroundings (family and friends) in order to achieve an acceptable quality of life during the aging process (Noraini Che' Sharif et.al, 2015). Family support especially from older children who take care of their aging parents (the elderly) as well as the government's support is significant in stimulating a better provision of care for the elderly in the community (Khadijah Alavi, 2008). Tengku Aizan Hamid (2012)

supported these findings through his own research study stating that individuals with the most and highest contribution in providing major social support to the elderly are their children and spouses, followed by their daughters, grandchildren, relatives, siblings, neighbours and the surrounding communities.

In Malaysia, the family plays a major role in supporting and caring for aging parents especially when the elders are sick and disabled. This proves that the family is a primary social support which can help improve the lives of this aging group. The elders sent to nursing homes on the other hand, need social support from the surrounding community to achieve an improved good quality of life (Khadijah Alavi, et al., 2011).

Social support can be defined as the diversity of helping behavior, be it in terms of material in nature, love and advice given through social interaction. Help and support to families, for instance, can help reduce the stress that the family members felt. Emotional and physical social supports on the other hand are very helpful in improving one's well-being. Social support is an important aspect needed in any relationship or communication. Normally, it brings positive impact to its practitioner – they will be more positive and reduce negative emotions such as jealousy and envy towards others (Normadiniatul Shida Mohd Haidin, 2002).

Emotions are human's strong feelings and have various types which include feelings of love, joy, hate, excitement or mood swings (disturbance in mood). Emotions are a feature of the human psyche that exhibit strong-feelings emanating from one's psychological (mental) and emotional state which happens instinctively depending on the circumstances and situations. Every human being must learn to cope with stress, crisis, challenges, and discomforts such as poverty, illness, divorce and so on. It is a common way of life as human beings express different emotions in response to the events and circumstances they are experiencing. Apart from emotional supports in providing social support to someone, physical social support is also important in contributing to a person's well-being (Rohana Yusof, 1996, Khamsiah Ismail, 2010).

Physical activity usually involves touch. A human being cannot avoid themselves from communicating with other people and it involves transactions, everyday communication. Physical activity is any movement of the joints of the body that requires a lot of energy compared with relaxation activities. Walking, exercising and gardening are some examples of physical activities. Physical activity is good for the health of one's body. While doing activities that require energy, one does not necessarily force his body to perform heavy labour and being burdened, but light activity such as watering plants can also be considered as physical activity. Sometimes physical support requires the surrounding community to help make things easier (National Institutes of Health, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative methodology and the research design was a case study. Data were obtained through interviews and observations. The population for this study was a group of approximately 56 senior citizens – residents or occupants of the Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the in Penang, Malaysia. Out of 56 elderly participants, only 30 were interviewed the study.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED

<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Status/Career</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Care Status</i>	<i>R</i>
1	Male	Officer	37	Unrelated	R1
2	Male	Officer	28	Unrelated	R2
3	Female	Officer	35	Unrelated	R3
4	Female	Officer	36	Unrelated	R4
5	Male	Occupant	67	Paid	R5
6	Male	Occupant	61	Unpaid	R6
7	Male	Occupant	68	Unpaid	R7
8	Male	Occupant	68	Paid	R8
9	Male	Occupant	71	Unpaid	R9
10	Male	Occupant	63	Unpaid	R10
11	Male	Occupant	69	Paid	R11
12	Male	Occupant	72	Unpaid	R12
13	Male	Occupant	64	Paid	R13
14	Male	Occupant	91	Unpaid	R14
15	Female	Occupant	65	Unpaid	R15
16	Female	Occupant	76	Unpaid	R16
17	Female	Occupant	64	Unpaid	R17
18	Female	Occupant	75	Unpaid	R18
19	Female	Occupant	76	Unpaid	R19
20	Female	Occupant	75	Unpaid	R20
21	Female	Occupant	73	Unpaid	R21
22	Female	Occupant	73	Unpaid	R22
23	Female	Occupant	85	Paid	R23
24	Female	Occupant	72	Unpaid	R24

<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Status/Career</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Care Status</i>	<i>R</i>
25	Female	Occupant	68	Unpaid	R25
26	Female	Occupant	71	Unpaid	R26
27	Female	Occupant	70	Unpaid	R27
28	Female	Occupant	73	Unpaid	R28
29	Female	Occupant	64	Unpaid	R29
30	Female	Occupant	70	Unpaid	R30
31	Female	Occupant	69	Unpaid	R31
32	Female	Occupant	79	Paid	R32
33	Female	Occupant	80	Unpaid	R33
34	Female	Occupant	77	Paid	R34

Table 1 shows the number of respondents with socio-demographic background such as gender, status/career, age and care status of the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Discussions on the findings will be made according to the following headings:

- 6.1. Choosing Darul Hanan as a Nursing Home for the Residents
- 6.2. Forms of Social Support Provided to Residents
- 6.3. The Effects of Social Support Provided to Residents

Choosing Darul Hanan as Residence

The findings showed that 27% of the respondents who choose to live in Darul Hanan have no heir to take care of them. This percentage represents the biggest factor why respondents chose the home as their residence. The second factor is being incapable to care for themselves; with a score of 24%. This is the respondents themselves or their families who cannot afford to provide support in terms of material, physical or other basic needs. The next factor is security where they believe that choosing Darul Hanan as a home they feel safer and secure.

A total of 21% of the respondents agreed that their safety plays an important role because they need help and assistance from others to do their daily activities. 16% of the respondents, on the other hand, chose to live at Darul Hanan was because they were homeless. Since the respondents came from all walks of life, they are struggling with various placements when they age. 10% of them chose the home because it is easier for them to do their religious obligations. This is because there are many facilities and courses provided for them at Darul Hanan – a comfortable prayer hall besides religious classes conducted to provide them the privilege

to practice their religion and beliefs thus improving their worship towards the Almighty. About 2% of the respondents, however, stated that they choose to live at the home because they had no other place to go after being neglected by their children and family members.

(i) Elderly Who Have No Heir

Most elders chose to make Darul Hanan the place they call home because they have no heir and lived alone their whole life. This is because most of them are unmarried due to taking care of their sick family members when they were young besides not being able to meet someone they could call a spouse. Besides that, there are also some who are married with no children. R21 and R31 when interviewed stated that:

“...there was once a guy came to propose to me....but my brother did not give the permission...he was worried that I would be taken advantage of... especially with me – being imperfect and too kind...it would be easier to be cheated on...”
(R21, Female)

“When I was younger I didn’t get married...took care of my mother and brother...they were unwell...my father was away because mom got married to a Pakistani...my father went back to his country...up till now I have never met my father...I took care of my mother and brother until their last breath...”
(R31, Female)

Through these conversations, it clearly shows that there is a desire to get married for the elderly but due to family demands and responsibilities, they decided on what’s best for the family and forget about their own needs. For respondent R21, she expressed her desire to get married. A man came and proposed her but her brother did not agree and was worried that the man was only playing with his sister’s feelings because she is physically imperfect having a deformed lip with a vertical slit. He was concerned and worried that the man is not sincere of making her as his wife. In addition to that, the respondent also admitted that she was someone who was too kind to other people and could easily fall for promises which would eventually affect his brother’s decision to find her a spouse worrying that she would be heartbroken. Now, she no longer has an heir or anyone to take care of her, thus she chose to live at Darul Hanan. Besides that, according to respondent R31, she put her family as her priority rather than getting married. According to her, her father, a Pakistani went back to his country and never came back; she took her father’s responsibilities to take care of her mother and brother who were sick and bedridden. She thought, marriage can only make things harder because she would have to follow her husband’s decisions and no one would be able to take care of her mother or brother, let alone provide the basic necessities and support they needed. Thus, she decided not to get married and took care of them until their last breath.

Besides being unmarried and having no heir, there were other residents who were married but had no children. R26 and R30 stated that:

“I got married once...I was the second wife...we have no child...I don't even know where my husband is...maybe he's with his first wife...”

(R26, Female)

“...I got married to Pak Long...but we have no children...no *rezeki*...I took care of Pak Long until he passed away...”

(R30, Female)

There are also some respondents who were married but with no children. Upon reaching old age, they have no other choice but to stay at Darul Hanan. When they age, and their relatives have passed away, they lose their social support and have to leave their homes and live at Darul Hanan for a better life. Respondent R26, for example, said that when she was married, she was a fulltime housewife, and had no children throughout her marriage. She was a second wife to her husband and often gave way to the first wife in terms of love and necessities from her husband. According to her, she does not know what went wrong since her husband never came back home, and was not concerned about her well-being. She is among the oldest residents at Darul Hanan and she also said that life has been so lonely and difficult for her ever since her husband abandoned her, and her case was referred to the Social Welfare Department. They decided to send her to Darul Hanan because they offer social support for her well-being as she aged.

Similarly, R30 who also did not have any children or heirs also has to spend her senior years at Darul Hanan. She chose to stay at the home because she had no one to take care of her because she lived alone and had no financial resources to live her life.

(ii) Elders or Heirs Who Are Living Difficult Lives

Apart from the case of not having heirs, there are also cases where respondents themselves or their heirs are living difficult lives which makes it hard to survive and support the elders or even provide financial support and basic needs because they could not afford it. This situation may occur due to a lack of attention from the authorities which allows them to receive aid and donations. It might be also due to being overlooked by these parties. Life constraints and hardships made most of the respondents not being able to live life like many others thus making Darul Hanan Nursing Home as their home. When interviewed, R7 and R20 agreed and admitted that they struggled to live life when they lived alone. They said:

“...When I lived alone...I had no money...I lived a difficult life...who would want to hire me in this condition...being old...I have no strength left...it's easier to live here...I can eat well, I can sleep well...everything is provided...what more can I ask for?”

(R7, Male)

“I’ve lived here for five years straight...I love it...sometimes, there will be school children who come here to visit us...cleanse us...even our own children, they do not come here...I got married twice...both my husband passed away...the first one died due to lung disease, the second was heart attack...I had money in my pocket before...but sooner and later, I ran out of money...I cannot work...too old...nobody wants an old woman to work with them...that’s why my previous landlord at Balik Pulau brought me here...they said I don’t have to pay any rent to live here...”

(R20, Female)

Based on the interviews held, the respondents or their heirs who cannot afford to care for them also play an important role in sending them to the nursing home. According to R7, he chose to stay and live at Darul Hanan because he could not afford to feed himself anymore and had no strength to provide him a place to stay and food to eat. The age factor is also one of the reasons why he could not afford to find a job to support himself. He could no longer work like he used to when he was younger, to meet his daily needs. Therefore, he chose to stay at the nursing home due to the aging factor and because Darul Hanan provides not only food, but also clothes to wear, a comfortable home and placements for elders like him.

Respondent R20 on the other hand stated that she had no heir and had been working her whole life to support herself. She got married twice and both her husbands passed away due to chronic diseases. Since her husband’s deaths, she had gone through a tough life, and chose to live at Darul Hanan because she could no longer pay her rent and provide the basic necessities she needed.

(iii) Guaranteed Security

Another factor why the elders choose Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders as a place to live is because of its guaranteed security from external threats and its secured environment inside.

The administration officers of the Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders set a visiting time limit for the residents of the nursing home. This is to make sure that the elders are always in good condition and are secured from outside threats. Private visitors, particularly family members are only allowed to visit on weekdays in order to prevent any unwanted incidents such as elders walking out from the nursing home with their heirs or with strangers as well as to keep them safe from external threats. In order to make sure that the elders are safe and sound, security guards are hired and are instructed to record every single visitor that come in and out of Darul Hanan and report to the staff on duty if there are families who come in for a visit. Close Circuit Television (CCTVs) were also placed inside and outside of the nursing home in order to monitor visitors or any activities or movements done by the elders to prevent any unwanted incidents such as accidental fall and so on.

In order to help facilitate elders in walking and for safety purposes, in terms of infrastructure, there are panels for the elders to hang on to along the route where they walk either in the bathroom, prayer hall or the canteen. These panels make things easier for the elders to move around the nursing home because they need it to stand up and walk. R13 and R31 stated that:

“...It is easier to stay here...nobody bothers you...you can do whatever you want...and there are people looking after you...day and night...there’s nothing to worry about...” (R13, Male)

“The reason why I stay here is because...I have a child...every weekend they will come and bring me home...but they do not want me to stay home alone...I often forget things...I easily forget...danger is almost everywhere...I forgot I boiled some water on the stove and forgot to turn it off...that is why they sent me here...at least someone is taking care of me...” (R32, Female)

Safety is crucial for the elderly because they need all the attention they can get to avoid injuries because they are more sensitive and the after effects are worst than the younger generations because their bones can easily break and their antibodies and metabolism are low.

(iv) No Place to Stay

There are also some respondents who choose Darul Hanan Nursing Home as a place to live because they had no other place to go to. Respondents R6 and R25 said that:

“I was poor...no money...people could not hire me because I have this skin disease...people were scared of me...I washed dishes for a living before...but it wasn’t long...I was the eldest son...I quit my job because I had to take care of my sick mother...when she passed away I didn’t know where to go...I went to my sister’s house...but it wasn’t long before they kicked me out because they said I made their life harder...I have so many siblings but none are helpful...I was the one who raised them up...sent them to school...fed them...when someone fought with them, I was the one who would go and ask the bullies why they did it...but when they grow up...none of them came to help me...I came here because someone cares about me...they sent me here and they said this place can take good care of me...feed me...clothe me...that’s why I’m here...” (R6, Male)

“Amma has no home... I stayed with my brother before this but it didn’t feel good...they didn’t even like me...that’s why I am here...I don’t have to burden anyone anymore...” (R25, Female)

(v) Easier to Perform Religious Obligations

Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders in Penang is a complex built for the elderly, specifically for those who are Muslim. This nursing home provides various facilities and infrastructure to provide a comfortable place for its residents to worship their God, the Almighty. They built a prayer hall, a place to take ablution and chairs for those who are unable to stand for long. The home also offers scheduled religious educational classes that are fun and relaxing by inviting outside preachers. Various religious classes were also held for its residents. The home also provides recitation classes, religious classes, Quran classes and dhuha talks as well as holding congregational prayers with its residents. The classes are run by experienced trainers who were specially invited from outside to teach at Darul Hanan. Therefore, it is not surprising to see so many elders choose to stay at this home because most of the residents are not only comfortable with the treatment they get here, but also they have all the time they need to worship the Almighty and they are able to do so comfortably. As they age, these elders work so hard to get closer to God and improve their devotion to the Almighty.

This statement is further supported through interviews held with the respondents. Based on the data collected from the interviews, R5 and R15 agreed that the facilities provided for them at the nursing home are one of the main reasons why they choose to stay. They said;

“Pak Long has been here for a year...this Ramadhan, marks a year...Pak Long has a house...siblings...but until when should I burden them...my younger brother told me about this place...before this...I can only finish the whole Quran once...throughout Ramadhan...but since the day I came here, I can read the whole Quran three times during Ramadhan...because I don't have to worry about anything...food, cloths, everything is taken care of...they even provide Quran classes here...” (R5, Male)

“I'm still new here...but I love it here...the surrounding is so calm...it's easier for me to recite the Quran...there are people (ustaz) I can refer to when I'm not sure of my recitations, every week there are educational classes...the least there are recitation classes...I am old...if I don't make it a habit...sooner or later, I'd probably forgot how to recite the Quran...” (R15, Female)

Thus, it is clear that the ease factor in performing religious beliefs and obligations is one of the important reasons why the elders choose Darul Hanan Penang as their residence. As they age, they want to reduce the amount of energy in doing daily activities because they have difficulties in worshipping the Almighty. It will be difficult because performing the daily prayers is obligatory to all Muslims. If there are no praying facilities such as the prayer hall, it would make life difficult

for the elders because they would not be able to mingle, let alone perform their obligations since they require extra support, guidance and teaching in religion and spirituality.

(vi) Neglected by Family Members

Through the interviews conducted, it was also found that a number of respondents chose Darul Hanan Nursing Home due to neglect. It was found that these respondents were abandoned by their own family. Their basic needs such as food, clothes, and health were totally ignored and neglected. Respondent R17 known as 'Tok' shared his story stating;

"I've been here for six months...I'm married...with five children...I once lived in a terrace housing area...I'm both short and long sighted...I can't even walk straight...amputated my legs due to diabetes...my son left me unattended for three days...I cannot do anything...I didn't eat...I didn't change my clothes for three days....after three days, a neighbor came for a visit...I didn't know where to stay...so my neighbour sent me here... but Alhamdulillah, everyone I met here is nice..." (R17, Female)

Forms of Social Support Provided to Residents

The findings show that emotional support scored the highest form of social support given with a percentage of 38%. A majority of respondents agreed that emotional support is one of the social supports provided by the staff at Darul Hanan, as they age, are in need of emotional support to live life. The second form of social support given to the elders at the home is physical support with a percentage of 27%. An emotional support came in third with a percentage of 21% and lastly, with a percentage of 14% is spiritual support.

(i) Emotional Support

Emotional support can be defined as the inner and outer support which is invincible in general but could give positive impact to the people who are experiencing it. In the Darul Hanan Nursing Home in Penang, there are many elders who came from all walks of life who had experienced many of life's difficulties and hardships. In some cases, they are unable to express their feelings because most of them have been through different problems, and they have different wants and needs. Most of the elders preferred their voices being heard than solving their problems which they believed cannot be solved. Based on the interviews conducted, respondents R8 and R30 agreed that they would appreciate it if the community show some support to them through communication, mingle among them and listen to them.

“...sometimes when people come here to talk and chat with us...it is fun... we can share stories...despite being left alone with no one to talk to...”

(R8, Male)

“Mak Long...when Mak Long first came here...I was shy to start a conversation...but sooner and later, I got used to it...it was fun...because there are people who actually listen to you and your stories...here...I don't know who to talk to...the staff have chores to do...they are busy with their responsibilities...the other elders themselves don't have the strength to listen to our stories...”

(R30, Female)

Based on the interviews held, it is fair to conclude that the elders are in need of someone who could listen to them. R8, when interviewed stated that he would appreciate it if people who come in for visits, talk to him and asks about his wellbeing. It was also found that most elders feel less lonely when they have someone to talk to especially when they are able to express themselves. It might seem trivial to some people, but it means a lot to the elders. R30 admitted that she really likes it when people listen to her stories. She will be excited when new people come in for a visit because she has been living in the same environment with the other elders.

(ii) Physical Support

Physical support refers to the visible and pleasant acts or behavior. Most visitors who organised programmes at Darul Hanan Nursing Home have tried their best to give physical support to the elders. Physical support, in this context, refers to touch such as shaking hands, giving light massages to the elders and feeding them food. These simple activities such as shaking hands would be able to eliminate hatred and suspicion towards others. Touch has its own aura where it helps balance the positive and negative charges in a human body. Similar to the movements Muslims make during their congregational prayers where they stand shoulder to shoulder, so close to one another – not only that it strengthens the bonds of brotherhood, but it also helps eliminate the sense of anxiety as well as balances the negative and positive charges in one's body. When they finish their prayers, they will be energetic. Based on the interviews conducted, it is clear that the respondents are happy with the physical support they receive during these programmes. R10 and R25 stated that:

“...I really enjoyed myself when they come for a visit...we can play around...we can talk to each other...many people come...so far, I am beyond satisfied.”

(R10, Male)

“I really loves it when people come here...they bring us food to eat...we can eat...we can play...sing songs together...they assist me...feed me... it is so fun...”

(R25, Female)

People who come for visits usually hold programmes that involve the elders. They often do activities and always mingle with the elders. Various activities such as spring cleaning locally known as *gotong-royong*, joyful feast, get-together with the elderly and many others has brightened their lives ever since. The elders really enjoyed the fun and delightful programmes organised at Darul Hanan. R25 when interviewed said that she really likes when people come and feed her food, give her drinks, assist her while she is in her wheelchair from the canteen to the outside, breathing some fresh air because it strengthens the bonds between them. This physical support might seem trivial to others but it means a lot to the elders because it makes them happy.

(iii) Financial and Spiritual Support

Besides emotional and physical support, as mentioned above, there is another social support provided to the elders at Darul Hanan Nursing Home. With a percentage of 21%, it was found that elders at the nursing home are also given support in terms of financial and spiritual needs.

Effects of Social Support Provided to Residents

There are various benefits gained from the visits and programmes held in Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders. This includes emotional and physical impact on the residents or occupants.

(i) Emotional Effects

Based on the interviews conducted at Darul Hanan Nursing Home, it was found that all of the respondents admitted that they are happy with the presence of outside communities and the implementation of the programmes as well as the activities held. This statement was supported by R3 and R7 saying that;

“...most of the programmes held focus on the elders here...we welcome anyone as long as it’s not disturbing to the elders...the elders sometimes are bored with their daily routine, thus we accept the outsiders’ requests to organise programmes here...at least twice or thrice a week to cheer us up...”
(R3, Male).

“...I love it when they come...they come and ask about me...at least it can make us happy...it soothes me...at least when I miss my children, they are here with me...I don’t feel lonely...so, I’ll be the happiest on that day...”
(R27, Female)

R3, one of the officers at Penang’s Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders, said that it is good to hold programmes at the nursing home because it helps cheer the elders up, who are sometimes bored with their daily routine. By organising

programmes, the elders will be able to spend time wisely and be happy at the same time. These weekly activities and programmes held will calm them and strengthen their bonds with the visitors as well as among them. R27, on the other hand, stated that her longing to meet her children was lessened when she receives tender love and attention from outside visitors. Outside visitors and activities organised help cheer residents up throughout the day, and they felt less lonely with the people around them.

(ii) Physical Effects

Based on the interviews conducted, it was found that visits made by the outsiders, mainly the local communities, as well as the programmes held, bring about positive changes to the elders. Respondents R4 and R22 said:

“...through the implementation of these programmes...we can see that the elders are healthier and stronger than their usual selves...we can see smiles throughout the programmes held...sometimes they do physiotherapy with the elders...it does affect them...” (R4, Male)

“...It is good to have people around you, coming...we can play games...do some activities...those who don't have enough strength to walk...they will be assisted while they are in their wheelchairs...they feed us food...we can talk to each other...our lives are much better that way...” (R22, Female)

R4, who is an officer at the Penang's Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders, said that the presence of visitors who held programmes at the nursing home do affect the elders' well-being. According to him, most of the elders can be seen smiling all day long and are physically stronger when there are people around them. There are some organisers who come and offer physiotherapy to the residents. The physiotherapy exercises help improve the elders' physical health. Light physiotherapy exercises were taught to them so that they could practice during their free and leisure time.

R22, added that she welcomes new visitors and new programmes because it can cheer her up. She said when there are visitors, she feels very happy and feels less lonely with their presence. The visitors can be seen assisting those who use wheelchairs to move around the nursing home. Some can be seen feeding the elders and making them happy. The elders who are bedridden or seriously ill are also seen going for a walk around the nursing home with the visitors. Besides that, she admits that she has someone who she can talk to when people come for a visit. Communications play an important role in improving their well-being because they can express their in-depth feelings and at the same time reduce the emotional burden they are feeling. This will then create a healthy environment for the elders to live life at the nursing home.

It is clear that the visits made to the nursing home and the programmes held give physical impact to the elders in facing their daily lives.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Social support is very helpful in improving the elders' well-being at the Penang's Darul Hanan Nursing Home for the Elders. Social support given to the elders helped cheer them up and brought positive impacts to the health of these elders, particularly through the activities held at the nursing home. Activities organised for the elders are not costly and there is no need to rent an expensive and luxurious place to begin with. Asking about their well-being, sharing a smile, and making them laugh are enough to cheer them up. The impacts of social support towards the elders are huge, especially when it comes to their well-being.

This study suggests that all parties such as the government agencies, private sector agencies and NGOs should continuously hold joint venture programmes for the elders especially those at the Darul Hanan Nursing Home. The administration officers of the home should also do massive publicity about the nursing home in order to encourage outside visitors to come and organise programmes with the elders.

Families, on the other hand, should play their role and take the responsibility of caring for their aging parents (elders). The elders should be taken care of, not neglected nor abandoned by their own children and family members. This is because, nowadays there are many cases where aging parents were found to be neglected and abandoned by their own bloodline. The sad part is, in fact, there are also some who think that caring for their aging parents is a burden. The elder parents were left at home alone while their children are too busy pursuing their careers in their own materialistic and individualistic world.

Besides that, there are some children who treat their aging parents like maids. The elders were forced to do household chores and take care of their grandchildren. Lack of awareness on the welfare of the elders is worrying thus all parties need to continuously run awareness campaigns on the responsibility of children towards their aging parents.

The media should also move in tandem to let others know about this issue. Placing large banners on each corner of the main roads and shopping centers, for instance, can help people focus and raise awareness well aware of the elders' rights around them. Muslims in particular, should also be reminded that it is obligatory for them to show their utmost kindness, respect and obedience to their parents. The position of parents, and the mutual obligations and responsibilities of children towards their parents have been addressed in Islam in depth. The sermons that are given to all men and women during Friday congregational prayers, for example, should mention about the parent-child code of behavior – reminding children about their responsibilities to parents. A verse from the Quran states that:

“...and We enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in two years was his weaning. Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents; to Me is thy final goal.”

(Quran 31:14)

Acts pertaining to the parent-child behaviour should also be enforced in order to decrease the number of neglected and abandoned elders (aging parents). Those who were found to ignore or neglect their aging parents should be severely punished to teach them a lesson.

NGOs, on the other hand, should also expand and extend their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to elders' nursing homes. This study found that, through thorough observation which took four months, there were only two CSR programmes held at the Penang's Darul Hanan Nursing Home. We believe that CSR should not only focuses on providing funds such as materialistic donations and contributions, but should also focus on the other aspects of donations such as time, ideas, strength and many others to make sure that the quality of life and well-being of these elders is improved.

References

- Amran Hassan, Fatimah Yusoff & Khadijah Alavi.(2012). Keluarga Sihat Melahirkan Komuniti Sejahtera: Satu Ulasan. *Malaysian Journal of Society And Space*. 5, 51-63.
- Dasar Warga Emas Negara
- Dasar Warga Tua Kebangsaan
- Khadijah Alavi & Rahim M. Sail. (2010). Peranan Wanita Melayu Dalam Proses Penjagaan Ibu Bapa Tua: Dilema dan Cabaran Dalam Era Globalisasi. *Jurnal Kajian Malaysia*. 28, 71-105.
- Khadijah Alavi, Rahim M. Sail, Khairuddin Idris, Asrulkhadi Abu Samah & Chan, Christine. (2011). Keperluan Sokongan Emosional Dalam Kalangan Anak Dewasa yang Menjaga Warga Tua. *Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan*. 6, 102-114.
- Khadijah Alavi. (2008). “Pengalaman Menjaga Ibu Bapa Tua Dalam Kalangan Anak Dewasa Melayu Berpendapatan Rendah di Kuala Lumpur”. Unpublished Thesis, Universiti Putra Malaysia Senate, Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Mizan Adiliah Ahmad Ibrahim, Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali & Hanit Osman. (2012). Kaunseling Dalam Islam. Nilai: Penerbit Universiti Islam Malaysia.
- National Institutes of Health. (2015, Oktober). What Is Physical Activity, <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/phys>.
- Nor Raudah Siren. (2015). Psikologi dan Penerimaan Warga Emas di Kompleks Warga Emas al-Jenderami. *Jurnal Usuluddin*, 73-93.
- Noraini Che Sharif, Khadijah Alavi, Subramaniam P., & Zainah Ahmad Zamani. (2015). Pengalaman Faktor Pengabaian Warga Emas Dalam Komuniti. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. 10, 118-134.
- Norajila Che Man. (2011). “Tanggungjawab Sosial Korporat: Analisis Perbandingan di Bank Muamalat Malaysia Berhad dan Affin Bank Berhad”. Unpublished Thesis, Department of Syariah dan Economics, Universiti Malaya).

- Normala Riza. (2012). Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kemurungan Dalam Kalangan Warga Tua di Pusat Terpilih. in 3rd Conference In Advancing Social Work Series Improving Practice Competencies Through Education And Mentoring, 17-18 Julai 2012, Kuching Hilton Hotel, Sarawak.
- Sanmargaraja, Shalini and Ta Wee, Seow (2013) Pandangan Warga Tua di Rumah Warga Tua: Kajian Kes di Bandaraya Ipoh dan Johor Bahru. in Persidangan Kebangsaan Geografi dan Alam Sekitar Kali Ke 4 , 5-6 Mac 2013, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak.
- Sanmargaraja, Shalini. (2012). "Penyediaan Fasiliti di Rumah Warga Tua: Kajian Kes di Bandaraya Ipoh dan Johor Bahru". Unpublished Thesis, Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussien Onn.
- Siti Marziah Zakaria, Khadijah Alavi & Nasrudin Subhi.(2013). Risikio Kesunyian Dalam Kalangan Warga Tua di Rumah Seri Kenangan. *Journal of Psychology & Humanities Development*.1, 49-56.
- Surina Nayan. (2006). Keprihantinan yang Luntur Terhadap Warga Emas. *Jurnal Intelek*. 4, 95-105.
- Tengku Aizan Hamid. (2012). Meeting The Needs of Older Malaysians: Expansion, Diversification & Multi-Sector Collaboration. International Conference of Population Ageing: Issues And Challenges, 11 July 2012.
- Tengku Aizan Tengku Abdul Hamid. (2015). Population Ageing in Malaysia a Mosaic of Issues, Challenges and Prospects. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Wook Endut & Fariza Ahmad. (2009). Prospek Permintaan Terhadap Perkhidmatan dan Penjagaan Warga Emas. *Persidangan Kebangsaan Ekonomi Malaysia*, 1, Proceeding, 337-353.