

# **Proceedings of the National Conference on Ageing 2022 (NCA 2022)**

*Sustainable Development in an Ageing Society*

**Held at The Everly Putrajaya**

**On 17-18 October 2022**

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# Senior Centres in Pahang: an Ethnographic Study

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### SUMMARY

Senior centres are a beneficial social tool to promote well-being and decrease social isolation. The Malaysian government financially supports centres for ageing participants to use. Centres provide social support, humanitarian projects, opportunities to share life stories, and education. Although there are many benefits, a study in Terengganu found that many older people are not familiar with the programs at the centre and among those who are aware only a small percentage attend. This study will assess the programming offered by local leadership through semi-formal interviews and use rapid assessment procedures to evaluate the perceptions of ageing people concerning community centres.

**Keywords:** Community development, Quality of life, Sustainability, Senior centres

### INTRODUCTION

One of the key features of successful ageing is retaining community connections and reducing social isolation (1). The senior centre is a beneficial tool to help prevent loneliness and loss of community. The Malaysian government recognizes the benefits of Senior Citizen Activity Centres and continues to fund these communities throughout Malaysia. In the Budget 2021, the government increased funds for each Senior Citizen Activity Centre from RM33,330 to R50,000 with a total expenditure of RM635 million a year (2). The stated objective of the centre project is to expand facilities for the well-being of the elderly, improve the quality of life for senior citizens, prepare a place for them to share their experience with others, cooperate with other community entities to help the elderly, and to unify other ethnicities and religions in the community (3). Despite these benefits, a study of 100 participants in Terengganu found that only 7% of the number surveyed used the community centre (4). Stated reasons by the researchers for potential low usage were lack of advertising from the Social Welfare Department (JKM) and the City Council. This correlates with the larger data that few ageing Malaysians use these services. A Department of Social Welfare document recorded that only 35,300 people country-wide were registered at the Senior Centre (5). With the amount of money spent by the Malaysian government on these centres, research should be done

to assess the current programs and leadership initiatives as well as the opinions of the public concerning the services offered.

### METHODOLOGY

Ethnographies are a proven methodological tool to assess government programs and examine public perceptions. In this multisite field study, researchers will meet with leadership to discuss operations, join in group functions through participant observation, and note the number of participants and unique features in field notes. Each location will be coded, and themes examined through ethnographic analysis. Leadership will undergo semi-formal interviews concerning programming and participation. Researchers will engage in conversation with the larger public in each area about opinions concerning the local senior centre. The reliability of the data will be triangulated through interviews, observation, analysis, and examining online documentation concerning the individual centres.

This multi-site study's chosen locations are centres throughout Pahang, Malaysia. The centres are in Kuala Lipis, Mentakab, Cameron Highlands, Bandar Tun Razak, Bera, Rompin, Jerantut, Maran, Kuantan, Bentong, Raub, and Pekan. The geographic size of Pahang, diversity of locations, and variety of people groups will provide an ideal sample for how senior centres operate throughout

the entirety of Malaysia.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this year-long research project, the team will highlight the different ways the centres are operating throughout Pahang and make future recommendations for research and the sustainable operation of these facilities. Upon completing this ethnography, Pahang residents will gain a clear picture of the current state of their senior citizen centres. On a national level, recommendations will be made for the continuing development of sustainable communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The AGELESS research programme was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Long Term Research Grant Scheme (LRGS/1/2019/UM/01/1/1).

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