

Halal hospitality for senior citizens in Malaysia: An analytical study from an Islamic perspective

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Abstract: Malaysia, as reported by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, will be an ageing nation by 2035. Yet, the rapidly increasing population of the elderly in tandem with the decreasing fertility and morbidity rate cause imbalance in the society's structure. The elderly are often perceived negatively because of the stereotype, and it affects their physical and mental health. Employing qualitative methodology, this study tries to define the meaning of the elderly from the Islamic perspective and attempts to provide the halal key concepts as guidelines to improve hospitality. This will be undertaken after analysing the caretaking system in Malaysia using deductive and inductive methods. This research hypothesised that the current caretaking system is progressing, but more drastic initiatives are needed to achieve a wholesome objective for the elderly's well-being from the Islamic perspective.

Keywords: Senior citizens; current caretaking; Halal hospitality; population ageing; Islamic perspective

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Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) signifies the mark of 60 years and above to identify the elderly population (Proposed Working Definition, 2002). While in some developed countries, they consider those at 65 years old and above as older people (Older Persons, 2019). In Malaysia, the term senior citizen is also defined as those aged 60 and above as stated in the National Policy for Older Person prepared by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (Dasar Warga Emas Negara, 2017).

There is no denying the fact for every human who lives long, will reach a certain point of being weak and feeble, with all physical & mental attributes weakening. No matter how hard they try to discover methods to extend their lifetime, it is still inevitable. Allah stresses this fact of life cycle briefly in the al-Quran, saying:

"It is God who created you weak, then gives you strength, then weakness after strength, together with your grey hair: He creates what He will; He is the All Knowing, the All Powerful". (al-Quran 30:54)

Such predetermined cycle contributes to various patterns of social interaction with the senior citizens. As the world advances in technology and modernity, the man seems to disregard their preparation in handling this stage of life. While the Prophet peace be upon him (PBUH) has already emphasized the importance of giving attention to the elderly by saying:

"No young person who honours an elder due to his age, except that Allah appoints for him one who will honour him at that age". (al-Tirmidhi, Sunan, Hadithno: 2022)

Globally, the population of the elderly aged 60 and above is rapidly increasing (Ageing, n.d.). This phenomenon

causes many issues in family institutions, especially regarding their caretaking effort. This also affects the social circumstances as most systems and services provided by the government seem to be less friendly for senior citizens rather than the majority (Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas, 2018).

Two extensive studies on ageing population in Malaysia were conducted by analysing the demography of ageing. They inferred that multiple challenges need serious attention (Tengku Aizan, 2015; Tey, 2017). Another study also presented the challenges of the ageing population from the construction industry perspective (Abdul Rahim *et al.* 2018). These studies provided detailed information on the elderly caretaking. Nonetheless, no religious perspectives being highlighted considering the rising demand for Halal Industry in developing wholesome Islamic hospitality for senior citizens.

Thus, the paper focuses on defining the Quranic and Prophetic perspectives in proposing guidelines for the Halal hospitality in the effort of developing an improved caretaking system for the senior citizens in Malaysia, from the Islamic perspective.

Materials and Methods

Materials

In the light of the Islamic perspective, as the main concern of this study, the term senior citizen or elderly was highlighted using various expressions in the Arabic language. Thus, it is important to understand the basic definition of elderly as highlighted in the narrations on the issue of elderly folks or senior citizens whether directly or indirectly.

Definition of Senior Citizens from Islamic Perspective

The widely used Arabic term in the contemporary context for elderly or senior citizen, is *al-Musinnūn* (المسنون), apart from other terms such as *al-Shaykhūkhah* (الشيخوخة), *Kibār as-Sin* (كبار السن) and many more (Bensaid, 2014). Unfortunately, some of these terms are not available in any of the two main references in Islam, be it in the al-Quran or in the Hadith as a reference towards the elderly population.

Among the Arabic expressions that bring about the same meaning as elderly or senior citizens are *al-Shaykh*, *al-Kibar*, *al-'Ajuz* and *Arzhalu al-'Umr* (Raudlotul Firdaus et al. 2016). The details are as follow:

1. *al-Shaykh* (الشيخ)

It is derived from the Arabic root word ش - ي - خ that shares the same meaning as *al-Shaykhūkhah* (الشيخوخة). The basic meaning of the word refers to one whose age is old and grey hair starts appearing on his head (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, p. 93).

This term was said by the Prophet PBUH in various narrations, where an example of this is the *Hadith* where the Prophet PBUH said:

قَلْبُ الشَّيْخِ شَابٌّ عَلَى حُبِّ اثْنَتَيْنِ حُبِّ الْعَيْشِ وَالْمَالِ

The heart of an old person feels young for the love of two things: love for long life and wealth (Muslim, Hadith no: 1046).

While in the al-Quran, the term is repeated 3 times in its singular form, *Shaykh* (شَيْخٌ) and only once in its plural form, *Shuyūkh* (شُيُوخٌ). In one of those verses, He said:

She said, 'Alas for me! How am I to bear a child when I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would be a strange thing!' (al-Quran 11:72)

The word *Shaykh* (شَيْخٌ) in this verse refers to Ibrāhīm as expressed by his own wife, Sarah. Among the interpretation of the verse shows that Ibrāhīm reached the age of 100 or 120 years old at the time, while Sarah was around 99 years old (al-Tabarī, 2000). This shows the fact that they are both elderly and are described as such using the word *Shaykh* (شَيْخٌ).

While in sūrah Yūsuf, the same word is mentioned by his older brothers referring to their father Yāqūb who had reached an old age and lost his strength to deal with the trials he was experiencing at the point being:

They said, 'Mighty governor, he has an elderly father. Take one of us in his place. We can see that you are a very good man.' (al-Quran 12:78)

The same point being highlighted in the al-Quran when the two ladies explained to Mūsa why they did not join the group of people watering their animals while adding the fact that their father was in a state where he was no longer strong enough and was already too old to be doing the job. They described the state of their weak and old father as *Shaykh* (شَيْخٌ):

When he arrived at Madyan's waters, he found a group of men watering (their flocks), and beside them two women keeping their flocks back, so he said, 'What is the matter with you two?' They said, 'We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take their sheep away: our father is a very old man.' (al-Quran 28:23)

This last verse signifies the term *Shaykh* (شَيْخٌ) as the last stage of growth for every human being, where Allah SWT states:

It is He who created you from dust, then from a drop of fluid, then from a tiny, clinging form, then He brought you forth as infants, then He allowed you to reach maturity, then He let you grow old. (al-Quran 40:67)

2. *al-Kibar* (الكبر)

This word originated from the root letter ك - ب - ر which refers to a person or an animal gets old in terms of age (Ibn Manzūr, 1993). Ibn Faris highlighted that its meaning is the opposite of young (Ibn Fāris, 1979). There were quite a significant number of narrations where the Prophet PBUH said this word referred to the elderly, as such:

رَغِمَ أَنْفٌ ثُمَّ رَغِمَ أَنْفٌ ثُمَّ رَغِمَ أَنْفٌ. قِيلَ: مَنْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: مَنْ أَدْرَكَ أَبَوَيْهِ عِنْدَ الْكِبَرِ أَحَدَهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَمْ يَدْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ

Let him be humbled into dust; let him be humbled into dust. It was said: Allah's Messenger, who is he? He said: He who sees either of his parents during their old age or he sees both of them, but he does not enter Paradise (Muslim, Hadithno: 2551).

While in the al-Quran, there are 6 verses where the term *al-Kibar* (الكبر) is mentioned. All of them refer to the state of being elderly, with old age. As such, in surah al-Baqarah, Allah provided a parable on how futile for a disbeliever to present his deeds which have no value on the day of judgment, like how useless it is a weak elderly to rebuild his destroyed farm:

Would any of you like to have a garden of palm trees and vines, graced with flowing streams and all kinds of produce, which, when you are afflicted with old age and feeble offspring, is struck by a fiery whirlwind and burnt down? In this way God makes His messages clear to you, so that you may reflect on them. (al-Quran 2:266)

The same term was also used in both surah Āli 'Imrān and Maryam to describe the condition of Zakariyya being so old when Allah announced that he would be getting a child and he was surprised despite his weak appearance where normally it is impossible for such an elderly to be having any child:

He said, 'My Lord, how can I have a son when I am so old and my wife is barren?' (An angel) said, 'It will be so: God does whatever He will.' (al-Quran 3:40)

The same expression was repeated in Maryam highlighting the same point of surprise with a slight difference of arrangement where Zakariyya first mentioned the fact that his wife is barren, then said the fact that he is too old. Allah said:

He said, 'Lord, how can I have a son when my wife is barren, and I am old and frail?' (al-Quran 19:8)

Allah recorded the same mode of surprise posed by Ibrāhīm after being told that he would be getting a child, and specifically highlighting the word *al-Kibar* (الكبر) as he was too old to normally have a child:

He (Ibrāhīm) said, 'How can you give me such news when old age has come to me? What sort of news is this?' (al-Quran 15:54)

Prophet Ibrāhīm ended up being granted with two children who are Ismail and Ishaq. Ibrāhīm praised Allah for the great blessing while describing the fact that he received both of them when he was already at old age, he said:

Praise be to God, who has granted me Ishmael and Isaac in my old age: my Lord hears all requests! (al-Quran 14:39)

3. *al-'Ajūz (العجوز)*

This term is derived from the root letter ع – ج – ز which brings the basic meaning of weak and restricted strength (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, p. 280). However, the word *al-'Ajūz (العجوز)* specifically refers to elderly woman (Ibn Fāris, 1979). As such, this term was also mentioned by the Prophet PBUH in a number of occasions. A direct example is this narration below:

لَقِيَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ جِبْرِيْلَ فَقَالَ: يَا جِبْرِيْلُ إِنِّي بُعِثْتُ إِلَى أُمَّةٍ أُمِّيَّةٍ مِنْهُمْ الْعَجُوزُ وَالشَّيْخُ الْكَبِيرُ وَالْغُلَامُ وَالْجَارِيَةُ وَالرَّجُلُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَقْرَأْ كِتَابًا قَطُّ

The Prophet PBUH met Jibra'il and said: 'O Jibra'il! I have been sent to an illiterate nation among whom are the elderly woman, the old man, the boy and the girl, and the man who cannot read a book at all.' He said: 'O Muhammad! Indeed, the al-Quran was revealed in seven modes.' (Al-Tirmidhī, Sunan, Hadithno: 2944).

There are only two verses which use the specific term *al-'Ajūz (العجوز)* in the Al-Quran, where both refer to Sarah, the wife of Ibrahim, as she expressed her amazement upon receiving the news from the group of angels that she would bear a child at her old age, after being barren for a long time. Allah recorded her words, saying:

She said, 'Alas for me! How am I to bear a child when I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would be a strange thing!' (al-Quran 11:72)

While in another verse, the same word is being repeated:

His wife then entered with a loud cry, struck her face, and said, 'A barren old woman?' (al-Quran 51:29)

4. *Arzhalu al-'Umr (أرذل العمر)*

This unique phrase consists of two basic words. The first word is *Arzhalu (أرذل)*, derived from its root letters ر – ذ – ل which means being inferior or lowly (Ibn Manzūr, 1993). While the second word *al-'Umr (العمر)* is derived from ع – م – ر which means age. Thus, the phrase *Arzhalu al-'Umr (أرذل العمر)* gives the meaning of inferiority and low quality of age, that is being old, senile and weak (Ibn Fāris, 1979).

The Prophet PBUH used this term expressing the phase of old age that we need to ask Allah from being afflicted with it,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبُخْلِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْجُبْنِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ أَنْ تُرَدَّ إِلَيَّ أُرْدَلِ الْعُمْرِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الدُّنْيَا، وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

O Allah! I seek refuge with You from miserliness, and seek refuge with You from cowardice, and seek refuge with You from being brought back to (senile) geriatric old age, and seek refuge with You from the affliction of the world and from the punishment in the Hereafter (al-Tirmidhī, Sunan, Hadithno: 3568).

In the al-Quran, the same phrase can be found in two verses from two different surahs, referring to the stage of old age accompanied by the weak state of mind and memory. Allah says:

It is God who has created you and in time will cause you to die. Some of you will be reduced, in old age, to a most abject state, so that, after having knowledge, they will know nothing at all: God

is truly all knowing and all powerful. (al-Quran 16:70)

Allah repeated the same phrase, highlighting the issue of old age in another verse:

People, (remember) if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust, then a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh, both shaped and unshaped: We mean to make Our power clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants and then you grow and reach maturity. Some die young and some are left to live on to such an age that they forget all they once knew. You sometimes see the earth lifeless, yet when We send down water it stirs and swells and produces every kind of joyous growth. (al-Quran 22:5)

Both verses show how the development of every individual moves from one stage to another stage in life until they reach the old age where they are powerless, and they keep on forgetting things they have known since before.

Thus, it is clear from the previous analysis that there are a variety of expressions being used in the al-Quran and prophetic Hadith to signify the issue of old age, showing their distinct characteristics accordingly. For instance, the word *al-Shaykh* shows the feebleness of the physical condition, while the word *al-Kibar* focuses on the last phase of age. Next, the word *al-'Ajūz* reflects the deficiency of strength. The word *Arzalu al-'Umr* highlights low quality of intellect (at-Tabarī, 2000). Generally, an elderly is a person who is at his late age, being feeble, powerless and mentally weak.

Thus, it is clear from this brief analysis that there are a variety of expressions being used in the prophetic Hadith that mention the issue of old age, showing their distinct characteristics accordingly.

Methods

This qualitative research was conducted to define and explore the halal hospitality for senior citizens in Malaysia. Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. This type of research "refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things" and not to their "counts or measures".

Data were gathered inductively through library research utilising secondary data obtained from journals, books, seminar papers, internet resources and official news reports related to the field of study to discover the existing concepts and main features. After an analytical study, the researchers then deduced three important elements namely: (1) *al-Ihsān (الإحسان)*, (2) *al-Hikmah (الحكمة)*, and (3) *al-Tadarruj (التدرج)*, in order to improve the elderly hospitality.

Discussion

Challenges within Current Elderly Caretaking

Tracing back the history of the elderly caretaking system in Malaysia, the government has been exerting their earnest effort in dealing with the issue. In 1982, the country joined the 1st World Assembly on Ageing held in Vienna, Austria, which later geared the idea of producing the National Policy for the Elderly in 1995 (United Nations, 1982).

The initiative continued with the formation of the National Consultative and Advisory Council of Ageing (NACCE) in 1996. The National Policy of the Elderly was then reviewed and updated to a new National Policy of Older Persons and it was endorsed by the government in 2011 (Zaimi Abdul Rani, 2007).

Prof. Dr. Tengku Aizan, the founding Director for the Institute of Gerontology, UPM has produced a thorough study on 'Population Ageing in Malaysia' and she outlined 5 different domains of issues in addressing the problem of population ageing, namely: Health, Economics, Social, Psycho-spiritual and Environment (Tengku Aizan, 2015). The study also presented the progress of the existing caretaking effort in Malaysia and suggested initiatives to improve the system before reaching the aged nation status by 2035 (Abdul Rahim *et al.* 2018).

The rising concern on the elderly's well-being resulted from the study on statistical data on population ageing in Malaysia where the population of the aged persons has been drastically increasing and projected to double in number that might disrupt the social structure and affecting the lifestyle, functions and systems of the community as a whole.

This study proposes a division of the challenges faced within the current caretaking system of senior citizens from three different perspectives. The list of issues presented can be narrowed down involving the three different groups of social institution mainly: the family unit, the society and the government.

1. Family — Burden of caregiving & financial status

The traditional practice that has been the dominant norm in the Asian families' culture is to take care of the elderly which is an act of filial piety. The adult children will continue to look after their elderly parents causing an active intergenerational interaction within the extended family involving themselves, their children and the grandchildren.

As technology advances, cost of living increases and job opportunities flourish at distant urban cities, which lead to many adult children favouring migration to faraway cities to improve their life, where they must leave their parents behind (Tengku Aizan, 2015). This separation causes disintegration of the extended families creating multi nuclear families living far away from each other.

When one of the adult children takes in his elderly parents, he ends up facing hardship dealing with them. These adult children are often coined as the sandwich generation, being caught in the middle of handling two different generations who are their parents and young children where all of them are fully dependent and need careful attention. Meanwhile, they are struggling to make ends meet with their life especially in terms of financial.

Since 2004, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) as the key government agency that focuses on the protection for older persons, has initiated various social assistance schemes to support the elderly. Among these programmes are the Financial Assistance Scheme for Older Persons (Skim Bantuan Orang Tua, BOT) which is a federal-funded cash transfer programme for the elderly who have no sources of income and no family support to sustain their livelihood.

Besides that, they also founded the Bed-ridden Disabled or Chronically Ill Care Aid (Bantuan Penjagaan OKU Terlantar) to reduce the burden of full-time family caregivers who are taking care of the disabled or chronically ill elderly, who are bedridden. Since welfare assistance is not a norm, most of the older persons' incomes come from retirement schemes such as the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) which offers a saving vehicle for retired workers, or schemes from private pension industry such as the Private Retirement Scheme (PRS), 1Malaysia Retirement Savings Scheme (SP1M) and other saving instruments.

Nevertheless, some of these schemes were not used effectively due to having fewer participants, in addition to the low level of savings in those schemes. EPF as the most participated scheme is doubted in its adequacy as a retirement saving for two reasons: the increase of life expectancy and the minimum amount of savings. Additionally, statistic shows that most elderly parents finish up their savings from their EPF (Employees Provident Fund) within the first three years after retirement (Tey, 2017).

Thus, the jumbled situation causes distress in the nuclear family where they end up abusing their elderly parents unknowingly or making them feel extremely lonely because they are left alone most of the time at the house, which actively contributes to the deterioration of their health mentally and physically due to lack of attention and care.

These challenges faced by the adult children in the nuclear family cause many elderly to be neglected, to the extreme point where there are cases reported that the elderly parents are left unattended at the hospital for a long period of time because of the stress and burden for not being able to give adequate caregiving.

2. Society — Stereotyping Elderly as Taxing

General Ban Ki Moon, as quoted by Tengku Aizan (2015, p. 55), during the celebration of the International Year of Older Persons, 2013 gave a great message regarding the elderly,

Older persons make wide-ranging contributions to economic and social development. However, discrimination and social exclusion persist. We must overcome this bias to ensure a socially and economically active, secure and healthy ageing population. On this International Day of Older Persons, I call on countries and people to commit to removing barriers to older persons' full participation in society while protecting their rights and dignity.

As an effort to fulfil the objectives shared by the General, Malaysia begins several initiatives under the body of the National Consultative and Advisory Council of Ageing (NACCE) that has been developed to achieve certain objectives including development regarding community activities and social care.

Among those efforts are the expansion of senior citizen activity centres (PAWE) and the establishment of lifelong learning programmes based on the University of the Third Age (U3A) model, led by The Institute of Gerontology, UPM (Rahimah *et al.* 2017). In addition, the National Policy for the Elderly was adopted in 1995 and one of the strategies being highlighted in the policy is to promote self-reliance and independence among the elderly as a mean to achieve the aim of developing the elderly potential to stay productive and live independently (Zaimi Abdul Rani, 2007).

However, a challenging scene that is currently interrupting the effort to actualise the initiatives above, is the stereotypical behaviour of the people towards the elderly. When it comes with dealing with the elderly, they feel that it is troublesome to treat them very well and carefully handle their welfare, since they have always been synonymous with the state of being weak, feeble, emotionally unstable and fully dependent on others with ill-health condition.

The negative perception causes less interaction or avoidance from dealing with elderly people and it results in the difficulty for the elderly to be mixing around and interacting in the community. There are also cases where some practices and policies were regulated rooting from the stereotype of ill-treatment towards the elderly.

All the bad impressions cause another level of abuse towards the elderly that creates a culture of exclusion and prevent them from receiving their rights and freedom of interaction in various fields and activities, be it in educational events, employment, social programmes, *etc.* The World

Health Organization has defined that elder abuse as 'a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship when there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person' (WHO, n.d).

A study by the Institute of Gerontology on the 'Perception, Awareness and Risk Factors of Elder Abuse' 2006 was done to establish the prevalence rate of elder abuse in Malaysia. Unfortunately, the data on elderly abuse are insufficient and it shows how low the level of awareness and prioritisation among Malaysians concerning the elderly abuse.

With an active research study being conducted and the results being highlighted to rectify the mistreatment of the society towards the older persons, the elderly have the potential to be independent and are able to contribute to the society to their level best of ability if given the chance and space. They are also able to socialise with others if the environment is set in an elderly-friendly setting.

3. Government — Lack in specifying strict law and statutes for elderly

The government inevitably plays a critical role in maintaining a harmonious society that interacts well without discriminating any group of people, despite their weaknesses in terms of age, background, health, etc. Thus, government intervention is crucial in helping to control and raise awareness of elderly care when it comes to their well-being.

Any miscalculation or neglect with regard to the caregiving of the elderly will greatly harm the whole nation in various perspectives especially from the health and economic domains. While Malaysia expects to become an ageing nation in 2035, the effort to deal with the consequences has to be actively executed before it causes a downfall to the whole system in the country.

From the health perspective, NACCE has also initiated the effort to promote healthy ageing. The task was executed in 1996 by the Ministry of Health in creating health care services uniquely for senior citizens. The project reached 78% coverage to all primary health centres in 2009. The package of health care being offered combines health education, health assessment, treatment, counselling, visit to home, rehabilitation and social welfare (Tengku Aizan, 2015).

There were guidelines being provided as a framework on how to deliver the service: such as the Clinical Practice Guidelines on Management of Dementia that was set in 2003 and updated in 2009. The Elder Health Care Act is established to make sure that the initiative is being executed and updated, while the private sector contributes by developing special projects with regard to the caretaking of the elderly, such as building senior housings and dedicated rehabilitation hospitals for specific use by the senior citizens.

In public hospitals, there is a too limited number of geriatricians assigned at five geriatric units, which have only less than 150 beds altogether to accommodate over 1.4 million elderly people who need treatment (Tey, 2017) with only 10 public hospitals with geriatric wards at the moment (Tey, 2017). At the same time, the Ministry of Health provides post-basic geriatric care to over 22,015 medical workers. Extra provisions were suggested for a more elderly-friendly environment, especially in terms of the interior structure design and shortening their waiting time. Yet, the challenging part occurs when implementation is not taken seriously and carried out properly.

Prof. Dr. Siti Zahrah, from the Prevent Elder Abuse and Neglect Initiative (PEACE) which is a research group from University Malaya, found in their survey that at least one out of 10 elderly people is experiencing abuse in the urban area, while the figure is one in 20 in rural areas (Choo et al. n.d.). They suggested

that the most crucial action to be taken in order to deal with the issue of the elderly is to push for a specific law for them to protect their right (Indramalar, 2017).

Currently, there are statutes that may govern their welfare and rights, but it is generally implemented for everyone without special attention being given to defend the elderly status in the community from the danger of being neglected by their family or mistreated by the community. The purpose of executing a strict law is not meant to cause hardship, but it should cause more attention to be given on the awareness of their existence and recognise their role in society.

The government should also provide extra support especially for the family facing financial burdens by introducing a higher tax reduction for families taking care of their elderly and ease efforts for them to get financial relief in order to deal with their extra expenses. At the same time, they should promote positive habits in financial management to prepare them for their old age.

Currently, Malaysia does not have a universal social security and protection system in taking care of the welfare of the elderly. Thus, it is difficult for them to protect themselves from being taken advantage of especially in terms of financial. Therefore, they end up facing poverty and depend wholly on their adult children for their financial support.

Result

Implementations on Halal Hospitality in Elderly Caretaking

In order to offer a holistic approach to improve the caretaking system and fulfil the required standard that Islam highlights, this study suggests these four important concepts to be applied in every area especially within the three domains mentioned above, from the perspectives of family, society and government.

The three crucial key-concept to be instilled in all initiatives and services that the study would encourage to suggest are: (1) *al-Ihsān* (الإحسان) that focuses on quality performance and qualified personnel (2) *al-Hikmah* (الحكمة) which prioritises compatibility in services offered (3) *al-Tadarruj* (التدرج) as a gradual yet efficient process on the implementation of policies in elderly caretaking.

1. *al-Ihsān* – Quality

This concept shows how Islam highly emphasises on making sure that every deed and action is done in the most qualified manner with optimised quality. This is because the main concern of evaluation by Allah on the day of judgment is the quality of the effort, not the quantity. Ismail (2011) as mentioned by Achmad Sani (2016, p. 7679), revealed that "*Ihsān* behaviour is the optimization of work and action, and carries out duties in accordance with good performance and high quality".

The Prophet PBUH once reminded the best way of understanding the concept of *Ihsānis* by relating it to a situation where one will make sure to uphold a task with utmost quality since he realises that he is being watched and observed. The Prophet mentioned this during the unique event where Gabriel came to the Prophet and asked questions. Umar ra mentioned,

Then he further asked, "What is Ihsān (perfection)?" The Prophet PBUH replied, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you." (al-Bukhari, Hadithno: 50).

While in the al-Quran, Allah says:

(It is Allah) who created death and life to test you (people) and reveal which of you does best--He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. (al-Quran 67:2)

The verse above indicates that the purpose of life and death being created is as a stage to assess the believers whom amongst them are of the best quality of deeds, rather than highlighting the issue of a large number of deeds (Ibn Kathir, 1999).

This is also true in the effort to increase the quality of the caretaking of the elderly, which is crucial at every level, be it from the family, society and government perspectives. A family who observes a well-arranged routine in taking care of the elderly would help to increase their well-being be it psychologically since they will not feel lonely and emotionally abused. In terms of health, they are well taken care of, thus decreasing the need to spend much money on medication and even spending too much time to take care and regularly accompany them for health assessment.

Good financial management will also help the nuclear family to manage their expenses well as enough savings is prepared and wastage is prevented from spending on unnecessary expenses. This will lead to a quality way of life which prevents the elderly from being stranded and left unattended, as they might be considered to be a burden being fully dependent on their adult children, while they are financially broke. Rather, if a quality wealth management is applied, they will now be a source of happiness for the whole family because of them being well taken care of.

The same goes to the society level, with high courtesy and deep respect towards the elderly will help improve and provide a healthy interaction amongst the subject of the community. This involves a good quality of neighbourliness in a restricted neighbourhood area, where welfare and security awareness are highly encouraged and practised by every individual involved. Thus, this will promote active ageing among the elderly as they can contribute to the community without being discriminated.

From the government's point of view, as research continues being conducted, the data gathered by qualified professionals will increase the understanding of the real scenario, thus increasing the quality of the ideas on the efforts that need to be implemented for improving the services available. For example, from the aspects of healthcare, the government can always reflect on the changes in the data collection and set a high-quality standard in the healthcare services that ease the process of caretaking the elderly.

Allah encourages this practice of *Ihsān* in many verses, one of them saying:

God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you, so that you may take heed. (al-Quran 16:90)

Allah highlights that as He has perfected His treatment for the believers, thus the believers should also perfect their effort to fulfil their responsibilities in fulfilling the rights of Allah and the rights amongst themselves, which include the rights of elderly people. He says:

Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for God does not love those who do this. (al-Quran 28:77)

2.al-Hikmah — Wisdom

Another important key-concept to be applied for improved halal hospitality towards the senior citizens is *al-hikmah* or the practice of wisdom. Allah has always described himself in so many verses, as the possessor of ultimate wisdom that is *al-Hakim* (الحكيم). This is due to the fact that He has been administering the best and most appropriate system and management that is suitable for the entire worlds and even suitable for each single created being. Allah says:

God made this a message of hope to reassure your hearts: help comes only from God, He is mighty and wise. (al-Quran 8:10)

Al-hikmah or wisdom is often represented by a set of actions implemented using a suitable method, performed at the appropriate situation (al-Mustafa, 2017). Thus, this concept brings a broad paradigm on how to look at the compatibility of each case with regard to dealing and handling the senior citizens.

As different family has different conditions, different community has different surroundings, and different level of governmental agencies has different focuses and policies. These show how important it is to have a detailed method in dealing with repeated cases such as the matter of chronic illnesses shared by many elderly, and unique situations which might be faced by only a small number of them.

The personnel involved in dealing with the elderly should be chosen from those having a high level of alertness to the unique condition of the elderly. For them to be trained with an important method or basic geriatric treatment would really help build a more effective interaction. Thus, more elderly would be able to safely be active mixing around and attending to any services available for them.

Allah highlights the issue of *al-hikmah* when it comes to matter of interaction and inviting to goodness, where He says:

(Prophet), call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is rightly guided. (al-Quran 16:125)

It is important to highlight that to reach the perfect compatibility in any system has never been an easy task. It is relatively difficult, but such is a normal procedure where continuous trial and error in perfecting the method or the service is practised until a set of the standard operating procedure is regulated for anyone who will be dealing directly with any elderly to offer their services in the later time. This part on continuous improvement will later be explained in the next key concept.

3.al-Tadarruj — Gradation

The effectiveness of implementing the first and the second key concepts would unlikely be able to realise, at all levels, in a short period of time. That is why, time is an important element that needs to be entertained and well considered in planning for a wholesome effort that involves a nation.

That is the very reason why we have been exposed and trained to the fact that the best result is attained through procedures of going through stage by stage process, without being too rushing in getting a quick result, since most of the time the quality of outcomes from a rushed effort will be low and unfulfilling.

A clear example is shown from the process of the revelation that came down to the Prophet PBUH in a gradual manner. It triggered the disbelievers to pose an argument of why it had not been similar to the previous scriptures that were sent

once in just a package. Allah answered the question in the al-Quran, saying:

The disbelievers also say, 'Why was the al-Quran not sent down to him all at once?' We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart(Prophet); We gave it to you in gradual revelation.(al-Quran 25:32)

He explained that the gradual process helped the message to be effective in training the Prophet's durability and sustainability in the long run of spreading the message, thus easily developing a stage by stage method of implementation, especially when it comes to specific rulings such as the issue of prohibition of wine as narrated below:

When the prohibition of wine (*Khamr*) was yet to be revealed, 'Umar said: O Allah, give us a clear ruling on wine. So, the Verse in al-Baqarah was revealed: "They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin...". 'Umar was called and then it was recited to him.

Then 'Umar said: O Allah, give us a clear ruling on wine. So, the Verse in An-Nisā' was revealed: "O you who believe! Approach not *as-Salāh* (the prayer) when you are in a drunken state". And when the *Iqamah* for prayer was said, the caller of the Prophet PBUH would cry out: "O you who believe! Approach not *as-Salāh* (the prayer) when you are in a drunken state." 'Umar was called and this was recited to him.

Then he said: "O Allah, give us a clear ruling on wine." Then the Verse in Surat Al-Mā'idah was revealed and 'Umar was called, and it was recited to him. When he reached the words: "So, will you not then abstain?" 'Umar said: We have abstained, we have abstained (al-Nasā'i, Hadithno: 5540).

The three stages of prohibition begin with merely comparing the harm and the benefits. It is continued by requesting them not to go to pray in the state of being drunk, which later reaches the final stage of complete prohibition, where Allah revealed in the al-Quran saying:

Will you not give them up? You who believe, intoxicants and gambling, idolatrous practices, and (divining with) arrows are repugnant acts — Satan's doing— shun them so that you may prosper. With intoxicants and gambling, Satan seeks only to incite enmity and hatred among you, and to stop you remembering God and prayer. (al-Quran 5:90–91)

A clear proof on how the gradual process had a great impact on the believers at the time is significantly shown from the serious response as recorded in the narration as related by Anas b. Mālik, where he said:

I was serving drink to Abu 'Ubaida b. Jarrāh, Abu Talha and Ubayy b. Ka'b prepared from unripe dates and fresh dates when a visitor came, and he said: Verily liquor has been prohibited. Thereupon, Abu Talha said: Anas, stand up and break this pitcher. I stood up and (took hold) of a pointed stone and struck the pitcher with its lower part until it broke into pieces. (Muslim, Hadithno: 4889)

al-'Uthaimīn (2002) explained that the gradual process of legislation is needed before reaching the stage of perfection, the way it was shown in the revelation of verses on the prohibition of wine where people begin to be alert and aware of the issue until they are accustomed to the final instruction. Otherwise, it might be difficult for them to submit to a sudden instruction if Allah revealed only a single verse on total prohibition. Therefore, Allah gradually entertained their need and trained their level of obedience through different stages.

This is also true in the sense for the preparation of the

country before reaching the status of an ageing nation. Ever since the 1st World Assembly on Ageing, held in Vienna, Austria in 1992, countless efforts and initiatives have been done and performed, where the results and achievements are so significant that they have helped and assisted many among the elderly.

Later, policies and statutes were outlined for the government and private agencies to heed as a guideline for them to perform any projects that will greatly benefit the increasing number of senior citizens. These policies were then revised and updated from time to time in response to changes and updated research data from every agency involved.

Any desperate and hasty measures might cause greater damage later on since forced effort is usually disliked and causes distress among those involved, and worse it might result in dangerous stereotype towards the elderly where people might end up having the perception that they are the reason for this confusion.

Conclusion

The main objective of the initiatives from both the government and non-government authorities in providing finances, social and health care to the elderly is to promote active and healthy ageing. These initiatives include the National Policy for the Elderly, BOT, Bed-ridden Disabled or Chronically Ill Care Aid, EPF, PRS, SPIM, PAWE, geriatric ward and many more. As the ageing population increases, this can be considered as an opportunity for the development of the country by utilising their experience and knowledge. Otherwise, mistreating and demeaning their status will only cause more complications and problems as they will end up becoming the subject of neglect and abuse.

This research is important due to the fact of the rapid changes that are happening in the country which influence the caretaking system from multiple perspectives. Immediate and serious measures need to be executed to prevent greater harm inflicting the elderly specifically and the whole nation generally.

Therefore, the study suggested the three key-concept for Halal hospitality, which are *al-Ihsān*, *al-Hikmah* and *al-Tadarruj* to be incorporated in all policies, programmes and initiatives that are currently ongoing and which are yet to be implemented. It is hoped that a continuous research and evaluation will be conducted further to equip the government and agencies involved with more updated and relevant data.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

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