SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MALAYSIAN ELDERLY: WHICH CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD BE INEXTRICABLY INTERTWINED WITH LATE-LIFE EMPLOYMENT?

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ABSTRACT

Since a few decades back, the uncontrolled growing heterogeneous population of Malaysian elderly drives this country to be recognised as an aged nation by the year 2030. This situation is, therefore, pressures the government to concentrate entirely on the well-being dimensions of the elderly including on economic dimension that promotes them to be productive through employment. The involvement of the elderly in employment can be a good remark for high social inclusivity practice by the government. Hence, this paper highlighted on late-life employment particularly the socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly workers. This paper believes the identification of the socio-demographic characteristics of working elderly is crucial in understanding the unique background so that better improvement regarding the late-life employment in Malaysia can be implemented. This paper presents the qualitative research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors involving 12 working elderly in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The respondents were selected and interviewed using both purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The findings of this study prove the elderly involved in late-life employment are heterogeneous by possessing various socio-demographic characteristics including: (i) age group, (ii) gender, (iii) race, (iv) education level, (v) marital status, (vi) living arrangement, and (vii) occupation level. While the elderly involved in late-life employment comes from various socio-demographic characteristics, therefore, the availability of job opportunity as the survival gateways (in terms of: financial, physical, mental, and emotional) for themselves and their family; should be open extensively. As proves by the significant findings of this study, the identification of socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly workers brings significant understanding as regards their unique background and additional improvement on the late-life employment equality in Malaysia. Equal job opportunity for all people at all working-age including the elderly through the revocability of ageism, sexism, racism, and good practice of social inclusion is truly necessary. Most importantly, the economic dimension of the elderly can be optimised and their good well-being can be preserved. This excellent practice is definitely will turn Malaysia into a lively age-friendly country by this coming ageing wave in 2030.

Keywords: elderly, socio-demographic characteristics, late-life employment

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia context, the elderly is refers to a person who is reaching the age of 60 years old and above (Devasahayam, 2014; National Policy for Older Person, 2011; Muneeza & Hashim, 2010). Generally, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) officially manages all the matters related to the elderly. Indeed, DSW is one of the government agencies that play an impartial role in conveying the significant national development agenda to Malaysian people. As being placed under the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development since 2004 until the present, DSW is now accountable to empower the community in need including on the growing elderly population in this country. In particular, the elderly population is started to grow since decades ago; as in early 1960. As shown in Table 1, the number of the elderly is amounted to 386.6 thousand in the year 1960 and reached 2,134.9 million in the year 2010.

Table 1
The Past, Present, and Future Trends of the Elderly in Malaysia for the Year 1960 until 2010

Year	Number of Elderly ('000)	Percentage of Elderly from Total Malaysia Population (per cent)
1960	386.6	4.8
1970	546.1	5.2
1980	745.2	5.7
1991	1,032.3	5.9
2000	1,398.5	6.3
2010	2,134.9	7.4

Source: Mat and Md. Taha (2000)

In 2014, Malaysian elderly population is continued to upsurge to 2.653 million (National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia, 2016) and rise to 3.1624 million in 2016 (United Nations, 2017). The amount of 3.1624 million of the elderly population is equivalent to 10 per cent of the overall 31,624 million of the Malaysian population. By the year 2030, the percentage of the elderly population is also expected to arise by filling up to 15 per cent of total Malaysian population and yet, transform this country as an aged nation (United Nations, 2017; United Nations, 2009). In the year 2035 and 2040, the percentage of the elderly is expected to rise up to 17.4% and 19.8% (Mohd Salleh, 2017).

THE HETEROGENEOUS MALAYSIAN ELDERLY: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
While the elderly globally is refers to those who are reaching a certain chronological age[1] as stipulated by certain particular country; however, the discussion about them should not limit to this chronological age scope only but apparently wider than that. For instance, the elderly should be known as people who come from various socio-demographic characteristics that make them unique from each other and special approaches are required in optimising their good well-being. Indeed, in gaining a thorough understanding of the elderly, Ramely, Ahmad, and Mohamed Harith (2018) stressed the understanding of the heterogeneity of the elderly is crucial. Ramely, Ahmad, and Mohamed Harith (2018) also argue that the understanding on the variations of the elderly is useful to develop necessary approaches or measures such as on: (i) employment, (ii) retirement, (iii) social, and (iv) health care to be suited with the needs, characteristics, and nature of the elderly. The elderly are not relatively homogeneous but rather heterogeneous. The assumption on one-size-fits-all approach should be revoked. In Malaysia, a proper attention has been given in classifying the elderly according to their socio-demographic characteristics, as shown in Table 2.

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[1] Notably, the official definitions of the elderly differ from one country to another. For instance, while some countries (to name a few: Malaysia, China, and India) refer the elderly as those who are reaching the age of 60, the other countries such as Singapore, United States of America, New Zealand, South Korea and Africa refer the elderly as those who are reaching the age of 65 and above.

Table 2
The Dispersion of the Elderly Based on Socio-Economic Profile

	Forecasted Population	
	Number	Percentage (per cent)
Ethnic		
Malay	1,566,784	61.0
Other Bumiputera	226,739	8.8
Chinese	523,690	20.4
Indian	241,529	9.4
Others	11,567	0.5
Religious		
Islam	1,684,276	65.5
Buddha	406,602	15.8
Hindus	185,755	7.2
Christian	226,480	8.8
Others	67,187	2.7
Marital status		
Never married	75,102	2.9
Married	1,731,607	67.4
Widow/ widower	716,323	27.9
Divorce	38,254	1.5
Separate	9,013	0.4
Education Level		
Not schooling	452,393	17.6
Primary	1,206,987	47.0
Secondary (Lower)	352,975	13.7
Secondary (Upper)	365,025	14.2
Pre-University	41,630	1.6
Tertiary	143,168	5.6
Others	8,121	0.3
Strata		
Urban	1,796,699	69.9
Rural	773,601	30.1
State		
Johore	309,701	12.0
Kedah	208,099	8.1
Kelantan	151,899	5.9
Melaka	89,300	3.5
Negeri Sembilan	110,400	4.3
Pahang	140,151	5.5
Pulau Pinang	185,200	7.2
Perak	318,448	12.4
Perlis	26,800	1.0
Selangor & Federal Territory of Putrajaya	391,399	15.2
Terengganu	89,100	3.5
Sabah & Federal Territory of Labuan	159,399	6.2
Sarawak	244,801	9.5
Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur	145,601	5.7
Age		
60-64	1,001,481	39.0
65-69	735,949	28.6
70-74	439,941	17.1
75 and above	392,929	15.3
Gender		
Male	1,170,063	45.5
Female	1,400,237	54.5

Source: National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia (2016)

A report on the Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey in 2014 prepared by the National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia (2016), as shown in Table 2, differentiates Malaysian elderly into eight (8) socio-demographic characteristics including: (i) ethnicity, (ii) religion, (iii) marital status, (iv) education level, (v) strata, (vi) state, (vii) age group, and (viii) gender. As mentioned earlier, the classification of the elderly into these socio-demographic characteristics is crucial in gaining a precise overview of them and hence, the appropriate mechanism can be developed or improved for their betterment. According to Table 2, more than half (61 per cent) of the elderly population is Malay. Similarly, more than half of them is Muslim (65.5 per cent) and married (67.1 per cent).

However, not many of them (5.6 per cent) are pursuing their studies to the tertiary levels. This situation is could be possible due to the unavailability of study loan and the less interest to pursue the study as compared to these days. Other than that, Table 2 also highlighted that 69.9 per cent of the elderly lives in urban areas and female elderly (1,400,237 million) nationwide are outnumbered the male (1,170,063 million) due to the high life expectancy female (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2015; Hamid, 2012). A few organisations and scholars supported on this (to name a few: World Health Organization, 2018; Abeykoon, 2017; Peng, 2017; Naraval, 2017; Irish Aid & HelpAge International, 2016; United Nations, 2016; Department of Statistics Malaysia; 2015; Mafauzy, 2000; Omar, 2000).

ECONOMIC DIMENSION AS ONE OF THE WELL-BEING DIMENSION OF THE ELDERLY

National Policy for Older Person (2011) enacted by Malaysia government eloquently highlights the importance of fulfilling the five well-being dimensions of the elderly. All these dimensions need to be accomplished simultaneously with all means; so that good well-being of the elderly can be fully secured and preserved. These dimensions are including: (i) economy dimension, (ii) environment dimension, (iii) health dimension, (iv) social dimension, and (v) spiritual dimension. However, as highlighted by National Policy for Older Person (2011); when the issue of late-life employment comes into concern, the economic dimension that promotes the culture of productive ageing should be scrutinised. Indeed, National Policy for Older Person (2011) defines productive ageing as the participation of elderly in society including through their involvement in paid activities. Clearly, while the elderly adapting the culture of productive ageing in their late-life particularly through employment, their well-being dimension of the economy can be secured.

THE AIM OF THIS PAPER

This paper aims to highlight the socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly workers. This paper believes the identification of these socio-demographic characteristics is crucial for understanding the unique background of the working elderly so that better improvement regarding the late-life employment in Malaysia can be implemented.

METHODOLOGY

The data was obtained from a qualitative research of the doctoral degree of one of the authors that have been conducted within six (6) months period from April 2017 to November 2017. The research involved twelve (12) working elderly in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. The semi-structured in-depth interview has been used as the main method for data collection. The respondents have selected through both purposive and snowball sampling techniques. An expert in labour economics has validated the research instruments. This study was received the ethical approval from Universiti Teknologi MARA Research Ethics Committee (REC) (Reference Number: REC/401/17).

FINDINGS

The qualitative research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors found out that the elderly respondents who are involved in late-life employment are heterogeneous by possessing various socio-demographic characteristics. As highlighted in Table 3, the socio-demographic characteristics of these elderly respondents are including: (i) age group, (ii) gender, (iii) race, (iv) education level, (v) marital status, (vi) living arrangement, and (vii) occupation level. Following subsections discuss further on these socio-demographic characteristics. However, in securing the anonymity of these respondents, the pseudonym "R" representing the word "respondent" and the "nth root" was used in addressing them.

Table 3
Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Elderly Respondents (N=12)

Elderly Respondents	Age	Gender	Race	Education Level	Marital Status	Living Arrangement (Stay with)	Occupation
R1	64	Male	Malay	Bachelor Degree	Married	Spouse	Security Guard
R2	63	Male	Malay	Form 3	Married	Children & grandchildren[2]	Security Guard
R3	66	Female	Indian	Year 5	Married	Spouse & children	Cleaner
R4	86	Female	Malay	Year 6	Single	Nephew & Niece	Shop Assistant
R5	66	Male	Malay	Year 6	Married	Spouse & children	Security Guard
R6	62	Male	Malay	Year 3	Single	With friends	Security Guard
R7	80	Female	Chinese	Year 4	Widow[3]	Alone	Shop Assistant
R8	65	Female	Chinese	Form 5	Single	With adopted child	Shop Assistant
R9	60	Male	Malay	Bachelor	Divorcé[4]	Parents, children, &	Medical Officer

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[2] Even though he is married, R2 is reported to lives with his children and grandchildren since his wife lives in Sabah.

[3] Widow is refers to a woman whom her husband was died.

				Degree		grandchildren	
R10	67	Male	Malay	Form 5	Married	Spouse & children	News Writer
R11	64	Male	Malay	Form 5	Married	Spouse & children	Taxi Driver
R12	62	Female	Malay	Doctorate	Widow	Son	Senior Lecturer

AGE GROUP

The elderly who are involved in late-life employment varies according to the first socio-demographic characteristic, which is the age group. Particularly, the age group of the elderly can be divided into three, which are: (i) young-old group, (ii) middle-old group, and (iii) old-old group (Little, 2017; Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2012). According to the Department of Statistic Malaysia (2012), the elderly who are belongs to the young-old group is refers to the elderly who are reaching the age of 60-74 years old while the elderly who are belongs to the middle-old group is refers to the elderly who are reaching the age of 75-84 years old. Meanwhile, elderly who are reaching the age of 84 years old and above are belongs to the old-old group.

Previously, Phua (2007) stressed the elderly who are belongs to the young-old group tends to be relatively healthier as compared to those who belong to the old-old group. However, the research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors prove that not only the elderly in the young-old group is relatively healthy but also the elderly in the middle-old group and old-old group. This situation is supported through the fervent involvement of the elderly from various age groups in employment (young-old group, middle-old group, and old-old group).

As eloquently highlighted in Table 4, ten working elderly involved in this study belong to young-old group (R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, R8, R9, R10, R11, and R12) meanwhile one elderly comes from the middle-old group (R7) and one from the old-old group (R4). Even though belongs to middle-old and old-old groups, both R7, 80 years old Chinese elderly, and R4, 86 years old Malay elderly are passionate to live actively and productively by voluntarily working in fulfilling their ample time at their old age; similarly with another ten young-old elderly. According to their physical appearance during the interview sessions, it can be argued that even though they are old; but they are still stagnantly healthy and gold.

Table 4
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Age Groups

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Age	64	63	66	86	66	62	80	65	60	67	64	62
Age Groups	y/o	y/o	y/o	o/o	y/o	y/o	m/o	y/o	y/o	y/o	y/o	y/o

Note: The pseudonym of y/o represents the word "young-old"; m/o represents the word "middle-old"; and o/o represents the word "old-old".

GENDER

The elderly who are involved in late-life employment varies according to the second socio-demographic characteristic, which is gender. As supported by Hussain, Anwar, and Huang (2016) as well as Davioglu and Kirdar (2010), gender has been found to be associated with labour force participation. Indeed, research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors also align with the idea of these scholars. The research findings found out the participation in employment among the male elderly is higher as compared to female elderly. As shown in Table 5, seven of twelve elderly respondents who are involved in late-life employment are male. These male elderly are R1, R2, R5, R6, R9, R10, and R11.

Table 5
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Gender

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Gender	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	M	M	M	F

Note: The pseudonym of M represents the word "male" and F represents the word "female".

Definitely, there are two rationales for the higher employment participation among elderly male. First is due to the gender-based work eligibility perception by the employers and the society. For instance, Doris, Idris, and Abu Bakar (2010) mentioned the perception of eligibility to work is higher among elderly males as compared to females. This situation reduces the chances for female elderly to be hired and therefore, lessen their number of involvement in late-life employment. Second is due to the norm of responsibility practised in supporting for the household expenses that lay to the shoulders of the husband (male). However, it can be concluded that the participation of late-life employment involves both genders (male and female).

RACES

The elderly who are involved in late-life employment also varies according to races. In Malaysia, Malay, Chinese, and Indian are among three major races composited the overall population in this country. The research findings of the doctoral degree of one of

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[4] Divorcé is refers to a man whom divorce with his wife while she is still alive.

the authors found the employment in late-life received the participation from the elderly from these three races. However, the late-life employment among Malay elderly is higher as compared to the elderly from another two ethnics, which are Chinese and Indian. For instance, out of twelve working elderly respondents, nine of them are Malay (R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R9, R10, R11, and R12) meanwhile two of them are Chinese (R7 and R8) and one of them is Indian (R3). Table 6 illustrates further on this.

Table 6
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Race

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Race	M	M	I	M	M	M	C	C	M	M	M	M

Note: The pseudonym of M represents the word "male" and F represents the word "female".

Particularly, the late-life of employment participation is higher among Malay followed by Chinese and Indian is reasonably due to one reason, which is the dispersion of the race itself. As shown earlier in Table 2, the population of the elderly is relatively higher among Malay, followed by Chinese and the least by Indian. Hence, the number of elderly participation in employment is constituted also by this dispersion. However, it can be concluded that the participation of late-life employment involves three races in Malaysia, which are Malay, Chinese, and Indian.

EDUCATION LEVEL
The elderly who involves in late life employment also vary based on their education level. As illustrated in Table 7, twelve working elderly interviewed are comes from the various academic background from high to low level of education. For instance, nine of them are received low education level meanwhile three of them are received high education level. The nine elderly who are receiving low academic education are R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, and R11 meanwhile three elderly who are receiving high academic education are R1, R9, and R12. Certainly, R1, a Malay-male elderly, has been awarded a bachelor degree from Universitas Gadjah Mada Indonesia and R9, a Malay-male elderly, was awarded Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) from University of Malaya Malaysia. On the other hand, R12, a Malay-female elderly, has been awarded Doctorate in Languages and Linguistics from University of Malaya (Malaysia). At the age of 62, R12 is now passionately contributed to her university as a professor, share her rich knowledge in writing, and spread the idea on the beauty of research to both of staff and students to strengthen the research culture in the country.

Table 7
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Education Level

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Education Level Classification	Bachelor Degree High	Form 3 Low	Year 5 Low	Year 6 Low	Year 6 Low	Year 3 Low	Year 4 Low	Form 5 Low	Bachelor Degree High	Form 5 Low	Form 5 Low	PhD High

MARITAL STATUS
The working elderly is also varies based on their marital status. Notable, there are four classifications of marital status, which are: (i) married, (ii) single, (iii) widow or widower[5], and (iv) divorcée or divorcé[6]. The research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors found the employment in late-life received the participation from the elderly from various marital statuses. For instance, six of these working elderly are married (R1, R2, R3, R5, R10, and R11) while another three of them are single (R4, R6, and R8). R4, a Malay-female elderly, is one of the elderly respondents who is never get married even though she is reaching the age of 86 this year. In other similar cases, R6, a Malay-male elderly, and R8, a Chinese-female elderly are also never married despite reaching the age of 66 and 65 years old. On the other hand, two of these working elderly respondents are a widow (R7 and R12) while another one elderly is divorcé (R9).

Table 8
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Marital Status

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Marital Status	M	M	M	S	M	S	W	S	D	M	M	W

Note: The pseudonym of M represents the word of "married"; S represents the word of "single"; W represents the word of "widow"; and D represents the word of "divorcé".

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[5] Widow is refers to a woman and widower is refers to a man whom spouse was died.

[6] Divorcée is refers to a woman and divorcé is refers to a man whom dissolved their marriage.

LIVING ARRANGEMENT

The elderly who are involved in late-life employment varies according to another socio-demographic characteristic, which is living arrangement. The research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors found the majority of the elderly who involved in late-life employment live with their families such as their spouse, child(ren), grandchild(ren), parents, nephew, and nieces (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R9, R10, R11, and R12). On the other hand, three of these twelve working elderly are not live with their family. For instance, R6 live with his friends meanwhile R7 live alone and R8 live with her adopted child.

Table 9
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Living Arrangement

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
Living Arrangement (Stay with)	Spouse	Children & grandchildren[7]	Spouse & children	Nephew & Niece	Spouse & children	With friends

Table 10
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Living Arrangement (cont.)

Elderly Respondents	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Living Arrangement (Stay with)	Alone	With adopted child	Parents, children, & grandchildren	Spouse & children	Spouse & children	Son

OCCUPATION LEVEL

The elderly who involves in late life employment varies based on their level of occupation. These are including: (i) professional and (ii) non-professional. For example, the research findings of the doctoral degree of one of the authors found three working elderly respondents are involved in professional occupation (R9, R10, and R12) meanwhile the rest of them are involved in non-professional occupation (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, and R11).

Table 11
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Occupation

Elderly Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
Occupation	Security Guard	Security Guard	Cleaner	Shop Assistant	Security Guard	Security Guard
Classification	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP

Note: The pseudonym of NP represents the word "non-professional" and P represents the word "professional".

Table 12
Socio-demographic Characteristic of the Elderly Respondents (N=12): Living Arrangement (cont.)

Elderly Respondents	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Living Arrangement (Stay with)	Shop Assistant	Shop Assistant	Medical Officer	News Writer	Taxi Driver	Senior Lecturer
Classification	NP	NP	P	P	NP	P

Note: The pseudonym of NP represents the word "non-professional" and P represents the word "professional".

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings show the late-life employment is inextricably intertwined by various characteristics of socio-demographic including: (i) age group (young-old group, middle-old group, and old-old group), (ii) gender (male and female), (iii) race (Malay, Chinese, and Indian), (iv) education level (high and low), (v) marital status (married, single, widow, and divorcé), (vi) living arrangement (with spouse, child(ren), grandchild(ren), parents, nephew, and nieces), and (vii) occupation level (professional and non-professional). Therefore, while study proves on the various socio-demographic characteristics of these working elderly, this situation portrays the necessity to open future job opportunity for the elderly regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. All these six socio-demographic characteristics should be inextricably intertwined with late-life employment.

For instance, while this study found out the elderly workers involved in this study come from different age groups (i.e. young-old group, middle-old group, and old-old group), therefore, the employment opportunity should be available for all elderly regardless of their age groups and free from ageism (age discrimination). However, their health levels (i.e. physical health and mental

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[7] Even though he is married, R2 is reported to lives with his children and grandchildren since his wife lives in Sabah.

health) are also important to be considered. Other than that, while this study found out the working elderly are come from all gender (male and female) and various races (Malay, Chinese, and Indian); hence, the future job hiring processes also should be free from sexism (gender discrimination) and racism (racial discrimination). Apart from that, the types of job offered to the elderly are also should be varied according to their education level (high and low) and occupation level (professional and non-professional). This is because regardless of their education and occupation levels, both are important as the human capital to the development of the local community and the country. Meanwhile, the future job opportunity also should be opened for the elderly from all marital status (married, single, widow, and divorcé) and living arrangement (with spouse, child(ren), grandchild(ren), parents, nephew, and nieces). This is due to the fact irrespective with marital status and living arrangement, the reasons of their employment as the survival gateways (in terms of: financial, physical, mental, and emotional) could be beneficial for themselves and their family.

This study contends the identification of the socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly workers bring significant understanding as regards their unique background and additional improvement on the late-life employment equality in Malaysia; via the revocation of ageism, sexism, racism among the elderly regardless of their education level, occupation level, marital status and living arrangement. These improvements are, therefore, can be a good remark for high social inclusivity practice by the government and yet, turn Malaysia into a lively age-friendly country as a way forward to be an aged nation status by 2030.

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