
SOCIOEMOTIONAL DRIVERS PROMOTING SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF MALAYSIAN OLDER PERSONS IN URBAN AREAS

Amalina Aziz

Administrative Science & Policy Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
40450, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
Tel: +6018-9419101
Email: amalynziz91@gmail.com

Yarina Ahmad¹²

Centre for Strategic Planning and Information¹
Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies²
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
40450, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
Tel: +603-55211820
Email: yarina@salam.uitm.edu.my

Azizan Zainuddin

Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Selangor
40450, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
Tel: +6013-3535510
Email: azizan_zainuddin@salam.uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the socioemotional drivers which promote social engagement and participation of Malaysian older persons. Many countries are heading towards aged-nation status. Malaysia is expected to reach such status by 2030 with the ageing population making up 15% of the total population. One way to prepare the country for the aged-nation status is to promote active ageing through social participation. A qualitative research approach by using semi-structured interview was applied in the study. A total of 41 older persons participated in this study, representing three urbanised states including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang. The findings discovered that there are four socioemotional drivers that promote social participation of older persons in social activities including (1) time; (2) meaning of life; (3) responsibility; and (4) hobby. Older persons gained freedom from responsibility after retirement of work and their children become grown-ups. This is a golden opportunity for them to catch up with their hobbies and friends at activity centre, to join lifelong learning activities, to attend religious activities and others. Hence, that explains why many developed countries have taken aggressive efforts to implement social activities. Looking at how eager other countries are becoming in promoting active ageing, Malaysia thus should also follow suit and accelerate their efforts in implementing more social activities while also improving existing programmes.

Keywords: Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, Older Persons, Socioemotional Drivers

INTRODUCTION

Many countries have experienced the fast transition of ageing population, which almost dominates a quarter of the total population. These countries include Malaysia that is expected to arrive at aged-country status by 2030. All countries now realise that other than physical aspects, social engagement is another powerful tool to keep their silver population active and healthy. As older persons are expected to live a longer life, it is hence crucial to implement a number of programmes to maintain their active roles in the community. This is because; ageing population is capable to contribute back to their family, society and country. This thus calls for inseparable efforts from various parties to enhance existing social activities, such as lifelong learning activities, religious activities, community-related activities and others. Many developed countries like Japan and the United States have implemented a number of programmes such as volunteer programmes held by senior clubs, which have witnessed a growing participation of older persons in social activities. This is important, to ensure older persons continue living in an active and healthy lifestyle through social participation. This is also emphasised in the prominent theory of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory by Laura L Cartensen (1995), who claimed social interaction to be key for the survival of older persons. Therefore, this paper aims to explore socioemotional drivers that promote social engagement among Malaysian older persons¹.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY MALAYSIAN OLDER PERSONS

Due to the advancement of technology, Malaysia has witnessed a dramatic change in life expectancy and mortality rate which have been declining since early 1981 eras. The longevity of Malaysian elderly has proven the great effort of the government to improve the development of health provision in our country. However, such extension of life expectancy does not indicate that older people are living a healthier life. This issue is actually inevitable considering that as people grow old, they are easily exposed to numerous chronic illnesses (Haron et al., 2010); financial constraints (Haron et al., 2013; Hatta & Ali, 2013) and social exclusion (Momtaz et al., 2012; Yaacob et al., 2009), to name a few. As highlighted by the President of Goldenage Welfare Association (Usiamas) who organised PAWE, Malaysian elders are suggested to come out from their comfort zone in order to stay engaged with the society² (The Star Online, 2016). Active ageing will not only bring the elderly to a healthier lifestyle but also prevent them from being victims of social exclusion and detrimental health issues. Active engagement in social activities is very crucial, as Malaysia is becoming an aged nation and that this does not only inquire about the preparation of the country to face the status, but also the ways to promote active ageing.

BEST PRACTICES BY OTHER COUNTRIES UPON IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

Many countries such as Japan and the United States have taken a number of initiatives to promote active ageing. For example, in America, there is one popular club among American elders called Senior Corps that offers a number of volunteer programmes including Foster Grandparent Program (which tutors and mentors students by visiting classroom), Senior Companion Program (that provides home care services to frail elders), RSVP program (volunteers with organizations such as American Red Cross) to help the community (AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, 2018). Among the success stories of this programme is the story of an American male elder who lost his job and his motivation for life due to depression. After requesting to join the programme, he got accepted and was subsequently appointed to help children as a mentor. He expressed how his action of making the children happy is a good feeling (AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, 2018). This programme has not only changed his life, but also given him a purpose to live happily without regret.

Another initiative, which has been initiated by countries such as Taiwan, is lifelong learning activities. To elaborate, after the Taiwanese government introduced the "Toward Aged Society White Paper on Senior Education Policy" in 2006, a number of activity learning centers was built to promote active ageing (Lee, 2015). The implementation of this policy has encouraged the participation of Taiwanese older persons in lifelong learning activities after retirement. Besides, Taiwanese people believe that ageing participation in learning represents the symbol of happiness of the elderly of the nation. This can best be explained by the assertion about their belief for Confucius' quote "never too late to learn and have a joyful learning, forget ageing" (Lee, 2015). Similar message is advocated in a famous quote from Albert Einstein; "once you stop learning, you will start dying". Thus, the participation of older persons in social activities is crucial to maintain both their physical and psychological well-being.

SOCIOEMOTIONAL DRIVERS AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL SELECTIVITY THEORY

The theory of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) was introduced by Laura L. Cartensen in 1995, highlighting social interaction to be key for the survival of older persons. There are four (4) socioemotional drivers adopted from the theory of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, including time, meaning of life, responsibility and hobby. Time is considered as an important factor among older persons, as they perceive their time to be limited, hence posing an urgency to use time wisely. After retirement, older persons are indicated to detach away from their roles in their career, social network and others. However, older persons are

¹ This paper is part of the doctoral work on exploring socioemotional drivers and religion beliefs in promoting social engagement and participation among Malaysian older persons.

argued to be able to replace such losses by maintaining an active role in the community (Cartensen et al., 1999; Cartensen, 1995). To do this, they become selective in choosing their prioritised activities deemed to be meaningful to be done during their free time. Hence, older persons prefer to join different types of social activities such as lifelong learning activities, religious activities and others. As older persons are also pointed out to want to be useful for their society and family, they are thus shown to put efforts and money into volunteer activities and social works. Some older persons on the other hand participate in learning activities to catch up with their hobby. Thus, all these four socioemotional drivers are important to promote the social participation and engagement of Malaysian older persons.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach by using semi-structured interview was applied in the study. A total of 41 older persons participated in this study, representing three urbanised states including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang. These 3 states mentioned were selected due to them (1) being urbanised states; (2) having the highest population of older persons; and (3) having the locations at which most activity centers are participated by older persons. The selection criteria of the respondents require them to be 60 years old and above, and participate in social activities including lifelong learning, religious, and community-related activities.

FINDINGS

As presented in Table 1.1, a total of 41 respondents took part in this study- 21 of them were male and the rest 20 respondents were female elders. In term of age group, the proportion of male and female of the age groups of 60-69 years old and 70-79 years old was similar. Female respondents were slightly predominant in the age range of 80 years and above (1 respondent). The majority of them held the status of widowed (8 respondents), while the rest were single (2 respondents). The respondents were represented by three main races namely Malay (6), Chinese (22), and Indian (13). In term of religion, four main religions were identified in this study including Islam (6), Buddhist (18), Hinduism (11) and Christians (6).

Table 1.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Number of respondents	
	Male	Female
State		
Penang	11	6
Selangor	8	11
Kuala Lumpur	2	3
Age group		
60-69 years old	15	15
70-79 years old	5	5
80 years and above	0	1
Marital status		
Single	0	2
Married	20	8
Divorced	0	1
Widowed	1	8
Working Status		
Retired/not working	17	20
Semi-retired		
Full-time	3	0
Part-time	1	0
Number of children		
None	1	0
Only 1 to 2 child	7	8
3 to 5 children	12	9
Above 5 children	0	2
Race		
Malay	0	6
Chinese	13	9
Indian	8	5
Religion		
Islam	0	6
Buddhist	10	8
Hinduism	7	4
Christians	4	2
Education background		
Never went to school	0	2

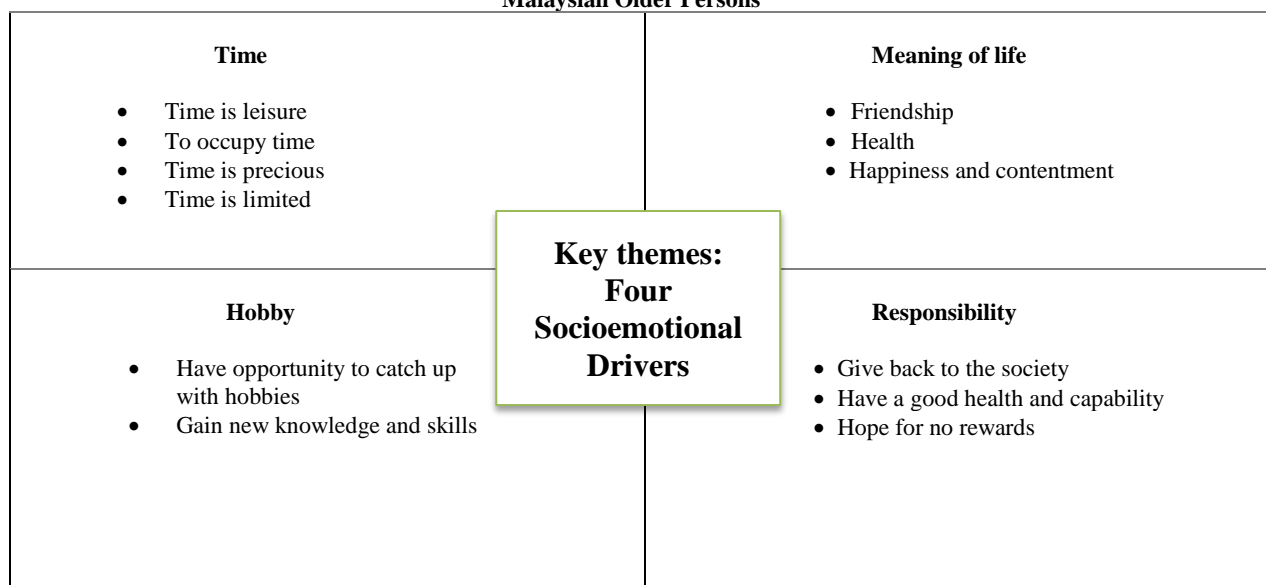
High School/SRP/PMR	3	3
SPM	7	7
STPM/Diploma/Degree/Master/PhD	5	3

In term of education background, all male and female (14 respondents) elders completed the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM). They were thereby considered to have a good education level. 2 female respondents of the study however had no opportunity to go to school due to family hardships. In contrast, male respondents were found to be slightly advantageous as 5 of them with higher education background, received PhD, bachelor’s degree, Diploma and *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* (STPM). The higher attainment of higher education among male respondents was associated with their working experience. Meanwhile, in term of working experience, those respondents with poor education background mostly had low-income jobs with no prior pension or savings scheme. The study discovered that 4 male respondents were working as part-timers to get extra income and were very passionate about their job.

Socioemotional Drivers Promoting Social Engagement and Participation of Malaysian Older Persons

Based on Figure 1.1, there are four socioemotional drivers including time, responsibility, meaning of life and hobby. Findings for each key theme are summarised in the figure.

Figure 1.0 Findings Pertaining To the Four Socioemotional Drivers Which Promote the Social Engagement of Malaysian Older Persons



Time

Time is an important factor that influences older persons’ participation in social activities during their golden years. Based on the findings, there are four key themes discovered in the study including (1) time is leisure; (2) to occupy time; (3) time is precious and lastly; (4) time is limited. The findings revealed that Time is viewed as leisure by a majority of 15 respondents from the total of 41 older persons. These respondents preferred to spend their time leisurely and relax with family and friends by talking to one another, as well as eating and doing leisure activities together, such as exercise, shopping and others. All these respondents gained freedom after their children become grown-ups. Feedbacks from the respondents are presented below:

“Well at this stage in my life, I try to keep active mentally. But I take it easy. Because I think, I have done my part for my family. So at least my own time, I spent it leisurely [...]” (P28-M-C, aged 75 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“I come here every day (laughter). This home (refer to activity center). This activity center is my second home. Sometimes, I come here and brought some groceries that I bought from supermarket. I cook here and eat together with friends” (S4-M-C, aged 72 years old).

“Well. I am 65 years old. I was used to be 60 before (paused). It’s more free time (after retirement). At least pass my time here at Church” (P39-M-I, aged 65 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Apart from that, time is also viewed to be occupied and this was highlighted by 9 respondents, who preferred to occupy their free time by joining a number of activities. This was either to learn something useful or to catch up with hobbies, after retirement. Responses from three of the respondents are shown below:

“I was just retired on August this year. My friends recommend me to join University of third age to keep myself busy, at least to learn something. I can improve my knowledge and spend my time use full filly. I do not spend time just doing watching TV and I am doing nothing” (S10-M-C, aged 66 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“I am taking a lot of courses. On one time, I took about 15 courses (laughter) it is quite free. I have managers with me, so I can leave business to all my managers” [...] (S11-F-C, aged 61 year old, italicized emphasized added).

“[...] keep my self-occupied. [...] Since we all retired. But still I go because I want to keep my time occupied. [...]” (S18-M-I, aged 63 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Next, time as highlighted by two respondents is also viewed to be precious. They were noted to fill their precious time to contribute to the society. This was through teaching moral values to young generation. With passion and expertise, both respondents spent most of their time to support children’s education. Feedbacks from both respondents are presented as follows:

“Yes. Time is precious. I really use my time wisely. We will guide students you know. They will have a future and they are going to further study in law school. I volunteer to our children” (P34-M-I, aged 64 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Oh Yes. Time is precious. *Because we cannot take back the half an hour we lost earlier*” (P26-F-C, aged 63 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Last but not least, the study also discovered that time is viewed to be limited by five respondents, since they believed that they were running out of time. Feedbacks from four of the respondents are presented below:

“It is for supply of old age to enter into hereafter life. What would happen if we don’t know how to answer the question asked by angel Munkar and Nakir in the grave? I’m scared because this is hereafter” (S17-F-M, aged 77 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“This is for our supply. Bonda (refer to herself) feel that we are likely not enough of our supply to meet God. When I am not here, I feel like not complete and not enough (supply for hereafter)” (S14-F-M, aged 68 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“I wanted to go to religious place to learn because *I think my knowledge about religion was not enough*” (S15-F-M, aged 67 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Yes religion is important for me. I already old. There is nothing that I can do in this world. I need to balance both world and hereafter, because death is getting near. We never know when we going to die. Thanks to Allah, if we know our mistakes, we will do our best. God is watching us. I was ignorant before during the young age.” (S16-F-M, aged 70 years old, italicized emphasized added).

These respondents argued that their supply of good deed was still insufficient and hence to compensate for that, they dedicated their time by reading The Holy Al-Qur’an, attending religious talks, learning and understanding religious matters.

Meaning of life

Meaning of life is also another driver that contributes to the social engagement and participation of the respondents. There are three main emerging themes of (1) friendship; (2) health and lastly; (3) happiness and contentment, in the study. Friendship was found as the main theme in the driver meaning of life, as it was highlighted by 16 out of 41 respondents. Friendship in the study comprises three categories of same age friends (7 respondents), true friends like family (6 respondents) and new friends (3 respondents). Based on the findings, same age friends offer a number of benefits to the respondents including encouragement, moral support and reassurance to the respondents, emanated from familiarity in age and life experience. For example, S18-M-I claimed that he can talk about many things with same age friends, as they all in ‘the same boat’. Feedbacks from the respondents are presented below:

“Retired people can talk many old things. So that I take the opportunities to come to attend this kind of course” (S18-M-I, aged 63 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Sometimes I catch up with friends [...] *You know for our age, we need to mix around, and we know more friends.* We learn a lot about nature, sometimes about news and politics, how to take care of our health, family life. You know” (P33-F-C, aged 69 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Here *I have many friends.* We can share stories. Then, we exercise and here I chat with friends to spend my time” (S4-M-C, aged 72 years old, italicized emphasized added).

6 respondents on contrary valued their friendship as they considered their friends as true friends or even treated them like family. A story of a female respondent (S9-F-C), who came to nearby activity centre so she could meet, talk and eat with her friends, illustrates this particular theme. Since she was living alone and that all her children were working in Singapore, she treated her friends like her own family and did not miss any chance to meet them at the center. Some feedbacks from the respondents are as follows:

“Feel like a family. We are eating together [...] I am happy to come here. I can talk with friends [...] My heart can be happy” (S9-F-C, aged 60 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Sometimes, when we returned home, *I think about my friends.* I want to go back, miss them. Thank God giving us this time. We never know about our future [...]” (S14-F-M, 68 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“I would say the, if you meet with all those practicing Buddhist. *I would say they are true friends.* Not like autumn list. So handful of them is good enough” (P26-F-C, aged 63 years old, italicized emphasized added).

On the other hand, 3 respondents emphasised that meeting people through the positive atmosphere has helped them to keep their mental state healthy. According to these respondents, mixing up with new friends helped them to improve their health condition and interaction with people. Feedbacks from the three respondents demonstrating this theme are presented below:

“It keeps you occupied. Mix around with friends. You don’t be ruckus. And then you come to people think that you are quirk. You know. Especially me, I live alone. I am single. I realized that if I don’t come out and join people. I developed funny characters. People is hard to mix with me [...] you develop Idiosyncrasies. So, you come out and this will be reduced. I think my attitude has changed [...] That’s why I make an effort to come out and learn something” (S12-F-C, aged 71 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Is not joining religious activities at church making you get closer to the church and get closer to the god, but become closer with group of friends. Meet more people. You get into the society” (P39-M-I, aged 65 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“You said, actually to me I rarely talk with people. I, actually did operation heart bypass, after that I have a depression. I see a counsellor. And then the counsellor said you cannot stay alone. You have to talk to others. Then you get better” (P27-M-C, aged 68 years old, italicized emphasized added).

The second theme in the meaning of life is happiness and contentment. Based on the findings of the study, 4 respondents felt content with life due to freedom after retirement. These respondents highlighted that they were able to dissociate from their responsibilities to children, as most of them already reached adulthood with career and family. The feedback from one of the respondents is as follows:

“Yeah actually it is how you can say the satisfaction containment. You contented with what you are. What you have and don’t compare with other people” (S2-M-C, aged 64 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Based on the interview conducted, the respondents were observed to no longer be restricted with commitments, that they can freely do any desired activities such as spending time at home, doing exercises to take care of health and visiting temples. For example, one male respondent, S2-M-C, felt content and recognized the full worth of everything he had in life. He also added that his life was incomparable to the life of everyone else. Feedbacks of some of the respondents are presented below:

“Do good and be good. And then that’s happiness. You’re no automatically being happy. That’s not good enough. My happiness in helping others” (P29-F-C, aged 78 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“I am happy to come here. I can talk with friends [...] My heart can be happy” (S9-F-C, aged 60 years old, italicized emphasized added).

In total, there were 6 respondents, who pursued their own happiness through several ways including helping people, meeting and talking with friends, and balancing spiritual health. Three respondents were found to associate their happiness with friendship, as findings indicate same age friends to bring 'colors' into their life. For example, a male respondent, S4-M-C, felt happy to have got to be with his friends and pass most of his time at the center. Enjoyment with friends made him forget his time. This is explained by his feedback

"I am happy. I have time so I come here when I am free. One day will end fast so I am happy" (S4-M-C, aged 72 years old).

Last but not least, the respondents found practicing a healthy lifestyle to be important to maintain both of physical and mental well-being. They began their days by doing light exercises and taking a light walk at park before getting into their daily activities. In short, staying healthy and active in life have become two main concerns of the respondents as they got older. Feedbacks from two of the respondents are as the following:

"I do not have problem with my health. Except a little pressure here and there. You know. Pain in the chest. Other than that, it's okay. Because I keep myself fits. So, no problem. I don't sit down in the house and nothing. If you are stay at home and do nothing. You die first (laughter)" (S3-M-C, aged 65 years old, italicized emphasized added).

"You have to make yourself mentally and physically active. Up to the level of what you capable with [...]" (S3-M-C, aged 65 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Responsibility

Findings revealed that out of 41 respondents, 13 wished to give back to the society due to a number of circumstances including sense of humanity as well as to help poor and needy people and to contribute their knowledge and expertise as a committee member. These respondents did not see their age, financial status and background as obstacles to giving back to the society. Feedbacks from the respondents are presented below:

"I also like to do this work (refer to gardening). I like. I don't know. I feel I need to contribute something. This is when you reach certain age, you want to contribute back to the society or something. So, I also work to achieve this objective [...] Actually my children are still young. So, when I stay at home, I don't have nothing to do. I don't have business. So, I don't have anything to do than doing this job as gardener to contribute back. Since you really have this what they called you willingly to go back to themselves." (S1-M-C, aged 60 years old, italicized emphasized added).

"The main reason is I want to serve. [...] Yes. I want to serve to the society. Because I feel that certain time that you are ready. You should be a bit free because my children [...] So I can divide my time to social work. So one I think one of the best social work best to do to religious activity" (S3-M-C, aged 65 years old, italicized emphasized added).

"As a human, we must to contribute to the society" (K20-M-I, aged 62 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Apart from that, the respondents found having a good health and capability to also encourage their participation in volunteer activities. Based on the findings, out of 41 respondents, 3 respondents vouched these factors to be contributing to their participation in volunteer activities and other social works. According to the respondents, as long they are in a good health, they want to contribute to the utmost. Feedbacks from two of the respondents are presented in excerpts below:

"[...] Well. As long as God had given a good health. We have to paid, contribute and for religion and for our society" (P34-M-I, aged 64 years old, italicized emphasized added).

"But in the grace of God, I'm doing a good works for the church. For the people. So God gave me a good health. I am very active. I am an iron lady (laughter)" (P40-F-I, aged 60 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Following the participation in volunteer and social works, 5 respondents were noted not to hope for any rewards in return, as their intention was only to help to reduce to people's burden, and not because of any rewards. They clarified that this could at least spread happiness to others. The following feedbacks from the respondents demonstrate this theme.

“We don’t try to get anything. If you do good. You not get hope at any reward. Just be happy in doing good. That’s all. You don’t ask for anything [...] My happiness in helping others. That’s all” (P29-F-C, aged 78 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“No I do the volunteer job. I don’t need money. The reward must give whatever good deeds, don’t work for money. Do for God [...]” (P40-F-I, aged 60 years old, italicized emphasized added).

“Actually we don’t work for benefit, we are mean we always (pause) God is given us so much. So its proper to give something back to God. And then, if God give us bonus, okay thanks God (laughter)” (P32-M-C, aged 73 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Hobby

The first theme in hobby is to have the opportunity to do hobby at their age. 4 respondents revealed that they had no chance to catch up with their hobby before retirement. The feedbacks below exemplify this theme:

“You see. When we are young, a lot of things we cannot do. There’s no kind, So, now we are of age already, quite free already. So, I started learning swimming at U3A (refer to University of Third Age). I learn computer also from U3A. I learn how to start WhatsApp. All from U3A” (S11-F-C, aged 61 year old, italicized emphasized added).

“[...] At the same time, I learn some skills like photographer. I have camera but don’t know how to you use it [...] Yea. Like photography. How to collect. How to take a good photography. There is a skill” (S18-M-I, aged 63 years old, italicized emphasized added).

Two emerging sub-themes of this particular key theme in this study include (1) never got to catch up on hobby at young age and (2) found no time to catch up on hobby due to other commitments (such as previous working life before retirement and family responsibility). Following their retirement, these respondents took initiatives to acquire and upgrade their knowledge about their hobby.

DISCUSSIONS

In the study, there are four socioemotional drivers including time, meaning of life, responsibility and hobbies, which promotes social engagement and participation among Malaysian older persons. These four socioemotional drivers are essential to encourage the continuous participation of older persons in their desired social activity. First and foremost, time is important factor that promote social participation among older persons. The pioneer theory of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) by Carstensen et al. (1999), argued time to be considered limited as elders previously perceived time at their age to be running out. However, this perception has gradually changed as these people began to occupy their time with numerous activities, not only to maintain their spiritual aspects, but also to maintain their health, social network, finance and others. One recent study undertaken by Giasson et al. (2018) discovered that there is an urgency to use time wisely among elders due to the fact that time passes quickly. The phrase ‘use time wisely’ is consistent with the emerging theme of “time is precious”. One of the recent studies conducted by Barber et al. (2016) discovered that limited time improves elders’ ability of memory recall. This particular study was prompted by their interest in Notthoff et al.’s (2016) assertion about elders’ better receive of positive messages, information and images, than the negative. Use of positive messages upon promoting physical programmes was indicated to have resulted in high participation among elders. This can be arguably applied to the present study as respondents were only interested in the stated activities after knowing the benefits offered by their participation.

Besides, the engagement of older persons in various activities also keeps them busy. In fact, elders’ engagement as claimed by Judith et al. (2014) is an act of finding a purpose in life. Friendships is recognised as the main source of social support for elders to overcome the hassle of performing daily routines and deterioration of health condition (Rey et al., 2017). This is consistent with a recent study undertaken by Aw et al. (2017) in China, which revealed respondents to highlight that the need for friendship was to cure loneliness and emptiness. According to the respondents, being in their group of friends is meaningful, although the feeling differs from the feeling of being with family. Tobi et al. (2017) maintained this by asserting friendship to lead to the real meaning of happiness and life contentment among elders. Similarly, Findlay et al. (2017) unveiled that older persons feel content with the things they own and the personal activities they do. It is nonetheless worth to be mentioned that older persons have the tendency not to choose any stressful relationships or complex activities (Pinto & Neri, 2017).

Elders’ intention to give back to the society is also discovered to be one of the main purposes of older persons’ engagement, that offers pleasure and public appreciation (Huang, 2018; Shea, 2016). In a study conducted by Aw et al. (2017) in China, elders were uncovered to more likely to participate in volunteer activities to occupy their free time. They were also denoted to be interested to catch up on hobby after retirement. As they previously did not have the time and much experience doing their hobby, older persons often feel encouraged to take related classes to learn more about their hobby, right after retirement. Hobby as suggested by Um et

al. (2018) can be done alone or by joining workshops or clubs. According to the researchers, lifelong learning, stimulating hobby is crucial to avoid cognitive decline. Other than that, having a healthy and active lifestyle is indicated by many researchers to place a great effect on elders' well-being (Aw et al., 2017; Tobi et al., 2017). Health is also identified as the main indicator of social participation among older persons, as poor health may reduce the time allocated for social activities (Galenkamp & Deeg, 2016). Thus, these findings are useful for the government to consider all these four socioemotional drivers in order to understand the real preference and interest of older persons. This is important to help the government in designing more social activities programmes as well as improving the policy related to the older persons. The social engagement and participation of older persons are important for the government to promote active ageing, as part of preparation for aged-country status by 2030.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, many countries have implemented a number of programmes to promote active ageing, as they are predicted to become aged nations by 2030. This has urged Malaysia to accelerate their efforts in enhancing and developing more social programmes for older persons. Malaysia for one can also learn and adapt practices by countries like Japan and United States. The findings of the study discovered that there are four main socioemotional drivers which promote social engagement and participation of older persons, including time, meaning of life, responsibility and hobby. The findings of these drivers can be useful for related agencies upon designing social programmes for Malaysian older persons. The study nonetheless is only limited to respondents from three urbanised states of Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang and Selangor. Future studies thereby may consider the exploration of rural elders' preference.

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