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SOCIALLY PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG RURAL ELDERLY IN PERAK, MALAYSIA



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NUR SYAKIRAH BINTI HAMZAH

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2020



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DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A MASTER DEGREE IN
ECONOMICS
(RESEARCH MODE)

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2020



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bismillahirrahmanirahim and Assalamualaikum w.b.t

Alhamdulillah. Thanks to Allah Almighty for giving me strength and determination in completing this research to meet the requirements of graduation for the Master of Economics MT143. I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the highest appreciation and convey my thanks to all my family members, especially my parents, Haji Hamzah Ismail and Hajah Sabariah Yusop.

Appreciations were deeply accorded to my research supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Ramlee Ismail, who has provided me with much assistance, advice, insights and guidance throughout this writing. Also, a word of thanks to my colleagues, particularly Umi Abidah Noor Osman, Mohamad Rohieszan Ramdan and Rozilah Hamdan and Nafisah Hassan. Their dedications in helping, motivating and encouraging me throughout the completion of this thesis are greatly cherished. To all my special friends, Nadhirah Mohd Noh and Khaliesah Kamarulzaman, who backing my decision in pursuing the Master's degree, I am deeply grateful for their support. All your prayers and moral encouragement empower me with strength to finish my studies.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and endless thank you to everyone who are involved in aiding me. All the advice and cheer I have received will serve as guidance and lessons in the future. May Allah s.w.t reward all good amenities and bless all those who have extended help and cooperation to me.

Thank you.

Nur Syakirah Hamzah





ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is study the relationship between socially productive activities and subjective wellbeing among rural elderly in Perak, Malaysia. Quantitative approach and survey method were used in this research. The questionnaire was distributed by simple random sampling to 480 people age 50 to 80 years old located in Muallim, Perak Tengah and Hulu Perak. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean, standard deviation, t-test and Pearson correlation. Findings show that respondents agreed that their level of wellbeing is high ($M=3.14$, $SD=0.41$). Nevertheless, there is no difference in the wellbeing of the elderly based on their employment status. The findings also show that there is moderate positive relationship between volunteering activities and subjective wellbeing $r(480)=0.52(p>0.05)$. In conclusion, the study found that elderly experiences high level of wellbeing when they participate in voluntary activities. In implication, elderly should increase their involvement in optional activities as it has positive impact on maintaining their subjective wellbeing.





AKTIVITI PRODUKTIF SOSIAL DAN KESEJAHTERAAN SUBJEKTIF DALAM KALANGAN WARGA EMAS DI LUAR BANDAR PERAK, MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk meneliti hubungan antara aktiviti produktif sosial dan kesejahteraan subjektif dalam kalangan warga tua di luar bandar di Perak, Malaysia. Pendekatan kuantitatif dengan kaedah tinjauan digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini. Soal selidik diedar dengan menggunakan persampelan rawak mudah kepada 480 orang berumur 50 hingga 80 tahun yang terletak di Muallim, Perak Tengah dan Hulu Perak. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan inferensi seperti min, sisihan piawai, ujian-t dan korelasi Pearson. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa responden bersetuju bahawa tahap kesejahteraan mereka tinggi ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.41$). Walaubagaimanapun, tidak ada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kesejahteraan warga tua berdasarkan status pekerjaan mereka. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan sederhana dan positif antara aktiviti sukarela dan kesejahteraan subjektif $r(480) = 0.52$ ($p > 0.05$). Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian mendapati bahawa warga tua mengalami kesejahteraan yang tinggi ketika mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti sukarela. Secara implikasinya, warga tua harus meningkatkan penglibatan mereka dalam aktiviti sukarela kerana ia memberi kesan positif dengan kesejahteraan subjektif mereka.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

df	Degree of Freedom
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ES	Employment Status
LS	Life Satisfaction
SPA	Socially Productive Activity
SPSS	Statistical Package Social Science
SRH	Self-Rated Health
SWB	Subjective Well-being
TN50	<i>Transformasi Negara 2050</i>
VL	Voluntarism





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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study



An emerging ageing population is a reality that cannot be disclaimed. Although birth rates are decreasing, people are living longer (Goklany, 2007). This has caused the world's older population to grow at a remarkable rate. According to Johnson, & Acabchuk (2018) the advancement in the medical field is a significant contributor to the longevity of human lives. Due to increases in welfare, improvements in healthcare, decreasing numbers in childbirth and the advent of antibiotic as well as improved hygiene upkeep to this phenomenon. It is expected that the number of people aged 60 and above shall double, rising from 7.2 billion in 2015 to 20 billion in 2050 (United Nations, 2017). Thus, lead to an aged population. This information suggests that the elderly will soon become a significant population of society. These





trends signal a change in various aspects such as global economic growth, saving and investment, consumption, workforce and many more.

It is a reality that Malaysia's ageing population is expanding. The United Nations categorises any country with 10% of its population above the age of 60 as an ageing nation. Malaysia is expected to experience the population ageing in 2035 when the percentage of the population aged 65 years and exceeding 14.4 per cent. To explain these occurrences, sociologist has come out with graphs illustrating the population pyramid. This graph helps many researchers in various fields to identify and forecast future incidences.

A population pyramid also known as the age-sex pyramid, is a graphical illustration that shows the distribution of various age groups in a population of a country or region of the world, which forms the shape of a pyramid when the population is growing. Y-axis shows the age of the people, whereas X-axis indicates the number of people. The structure is divided evenly in the middle by gender categories. The male and female populations are broken down into 5-year age groups with the youngest age groups at the bottom and the oldest at the top. Left side indicates female, and right side suggests a male. There are three types of population pyramids which are expansive, stationary, and constrictive.

Expansive population pyramids portray populations that have a more significant percentage of people in the younger age groups. Population with this shape usually have high fertility rates and lower life expectancies. Numerous third world countries have expansive population pyramids such as Somalia and Nigeria. Another



type of this pyramid is stationary population pyramids. It is those that display a somewhat equal proportion of the population in each age group. There is no decrease or increase in population, and it is stable. For the current period, Japan and Austria have a stationary population pyramid. The last type of pyramid is constrictive population pyramids. They are so called because they are constricted at the bottom as the percentage of younger people is lower. Constrictive population pyramids show declining birth rates since each succeeding age group is getting smaller and smaller. According to a 2015 report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Malaysia falls into this category and shall continue so by the year 2035.

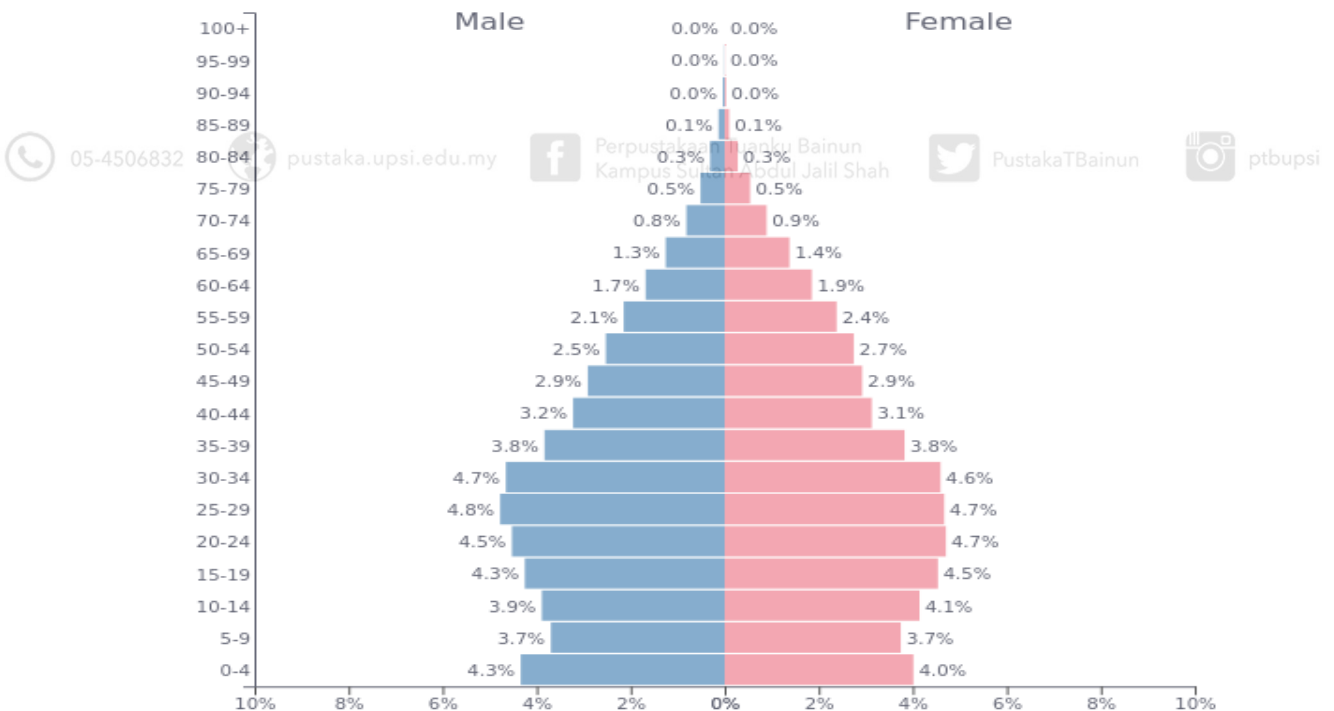


Figure 1.1. Malaysia Population Pyramid Years 2017

Figure 1.1 shows the Malaysian population pyramids for the year 2017. According to DOSM, the total population for 2017 is 31,164,177. Based on Figure 1.1, the male



population continues to exceed the female population, with the sex ratio for the period 2016-2017 recorded at 107 men per 100 women. Additionally, the percentage of the population aged 0-14 years in 2017 decreased to 24.1 per cent from 24.5 per cent in 2016 while the portion of the population aged 15-64 years increased from 69.5 per cent in 2016 to 69.7 per cent in the year 2017. In the previous year, the total number of live births recorded in 2015 was only 521,136 with a decrease of 1.4% compared to 2014, which is 528,612. The crude birth rate declined from 17.2 to 16.7 per 1000 population (Ramli, 2016).

The age structure of a population affects a nation's key socioeconomic issues. Countries with a high percentage of young people under age 15 need to invest more in schools, whereas countries with older population need to invest more in the health sector. The age structure can also be used to help predict potential political issues. For example, the rapid growth of the older adult population wanting to stay in employment can lead to a revision of retirement age (Fahrudin, Yusuf, Malek, & Sulaiman, 2016). These structures additionally propose the future work market to resemble the age structure which shows an increasing number of the ageing population, and a decreasing number of people aged 44 and below.



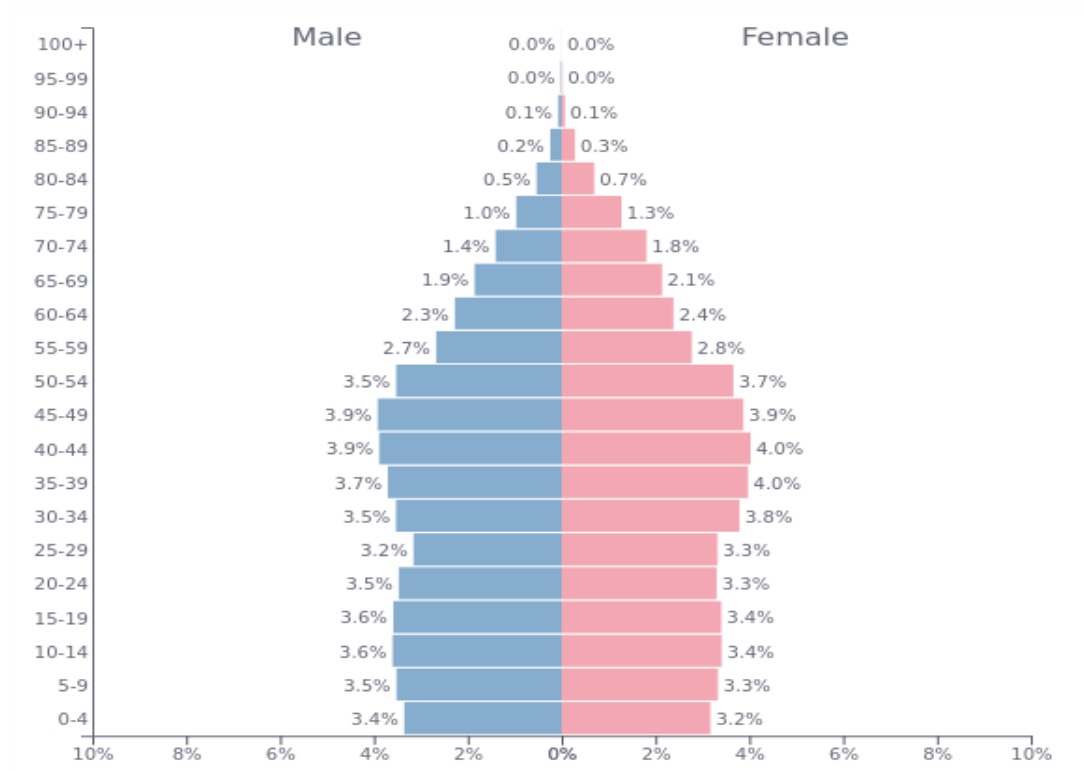


Figure 1.2. Malaysia Population Pyramid Years 2035



Figure 1.2 illustrates the age and sex structure of the Malaysian population in the year 2035. Based on the figure, in the year 2035, the number of Malaysians age 60 and above are estimated to reach 16.1 per cent from the total population. Although the life expectancy on the generation of baby boomers is lengthened, nevertheless, the total fertility rated the other way round. This offers insights about economic development, as well as political and social stability. The shape of the population pyramid gradually evolves based on fertility, mortality and international migration trends. The increase in the number of senior citizens in Malaysia will have a significant impact on the country in general.



Revising on this, Figures 1.1 and 1.2 of the Malaysian Population Pyramid, the year 2017 showed a thin triangle dome structure, whereas the year 2035 shows a more rounded dome structure. Comparing both, we can notice a vivid change in the Malaysian age pyramid. This indicates that the birth rate in the year 2035 is lower than the year 2017, and the ageing population continues to expand in a timely manner.

Table 1.1

Malaysia Ageing Population

Country	Population Aged 60 Or Over (Thousand)			Percentage Aged 60 Or Over (%)		
	2015	2030	2050	2015	2030	2050
Malaysia	2785	5196	9593	9.2	14.4	23.6

Sources: World Population Ageing Report, 2015

Table 1.1 shows Malaysia ageing population for both males and females aged 60 and above. As presented in 2015, 9.2 per cent of the total population is comprised of older adults. It is estimated that in 2030, the percentage will grow to 14.4 per cent. In addition, as forecasted by many researchers, in 2050, Malaysia's ageing population will dominate the market by setting the highest numbers of the population by 23.6 per cent. That percentage is equivalent to almost 9,593,000 living elderly.

Hamid (2015) highlighted that there are several characteristics that scholars use to identify older adults. These characteristics help the researcher to converge and focus on the selected population. By using the characteristics from the World Health Organization (WHO) on the ageing population such as median age, labour force participation of person age 65 years and above, as well as total dependency ratio which is calculated by the total number of persons age 0-18 and 65 over per 100

persons age 20-64. Other characteristics include the potential support ratio that is calculated by the total number of persons aged 20-64 person over the total number of a person aged 65 or over.

Table 1.2

Characteristics of the ageing adult in Malaysia

Characteristic/Year	2015	2030
Median Age	28.5	34.5
Labour force participation of persons aged 65 years or over (percentage)	Male- 31.7 Female-10.3	NIL
Total dependency ratio (persons aged 0-19 and aged 65 or over per 100 persons aged 20-64)	65.3	62.6
Potential support ratio (persons aged 20-64 person over aged 65 or over)	10.3	6.3

Sources: World Health Organisation (WHO, 2015)

Based on Table 1.2, for period of 2015 and 2030, the proportion of people working at age (19-64) to the ratio of the number of persons below the age of 19 years is 65.3 whereas the ratio of the number of persons aged 65 years and over to the number of working-age population (20-64 years) is 62.6. This significant decrease in the dependency ration has become a concern for the ageing population to continue working on post-retirement age. Based on this table, this research shall define an ageing population as people age 50 and above. It is considered that these people are entering the retirement phase, and their physical strength is diminishing. Nevertheless, they still can think upright so that they can always have the opportunity to plan for their later life (Gilleard, Hyde, & Higgs, 2007).



It became a concern when parties had to cope with the increasing number of elderly in Malaysia. At present, in order to maintain the elderly welfare and wellbeing, elderly care centres had been established by the government. It was reported by the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia that until June 2016 the number of inmates registered in the care centre is 8025. These numbers show an increment of up to 7.8% from the previous year. Residing in the care centre is just an alternative manifestation of prison (Sooryanarayana, 2016). It is because they feel like they live alone even though they had other inmates (Linton, Gubhaju & Chan, 2018). Moreover, they are treated equally. This means their satisfaction is measured by their personal hygiene and their daily activities had been set up by the caregiver. Most of the interactive activities, such as meeting new people, cannot be done outside the care centre.



The elderly seldom go out and gather with their family members, and this situation may lead to depression or the feeling of loneliness (Zakaria, Alavi, & Subhi, 2013). Even though majority of the elderly are still residing in their own home or their children's house, it does not mean that they are happy. The statistic shows the abuse and neglect of the elderly in the criminal context in the family have increased yearly (Yusoff & Zabdi, 2009). In 2016, 898 cases of domestic violence had been recorded by the department of social welfare. This shows an increment of 7.4% from the previously registered number.

Most of the recent research shows that interactive activities among the elderly can act as a catalyst to increase their level of happiness as well as the health of the physical body (Zhang, 2018). Evidence shows that when they are happy, they will





feel younger and more energetic. Many forms of physical activities involving social interaction is suitable for this particular population such as Tai-chi, Yoga and sports such as golf and cycling has been popularising over the years. It is the researchers' responsibility to bring these steps to the next level by identifying which type of physical activities can lead to the optimum level of well-being that are suitable across race, gender as well as beliefs.

However, efforts to prolong productivity and encourage individuals to remain active in producing results are not an easy task (WHO, 2015). This is because of the physical and mental health of individuals varies over a variety of factors. Among them are involved in social activities, family structures, personal beliefs or religions and many more (Turner, 2018). Hence, there is a need to study the involvement of senior citizens in productive activities in order to generate healthy and happy older adults.

1.2 Problem Statement

Recent studies have found that the well-being of the elderly is ominously different among people in developed countries, mainly in Scotland, Finland and most of the European countries (Stropnik, 2018). However, the well-being of senior citizens in developing and less-developed countries is said to be low, and it is not surprising that the studies on senior citizens have been the focus of most researchers at this time (Barrientos et al., 2018). Although consumers in the emerging countries are





becoming more conscious about maintaining the level of well-being, nevertheless, the knowledge and awareness on how to engage in such activities are still low.

The level of well-being of ageing adults in Malaysia is unclear. The issue now arises to find ways to consider the elderly as asset by seeing them as sources of innovation (Juma, 2013). To make sure that the asset is worth the investment; their well-being needs to be taken care of (Lawrence, 2012). When the elderly are healthy, their dependency towards the youngster will decrease. They tend to be more independent and require minimum supervision from the caretaker or the younger people.

To realise these occurrences, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) published the Malaysian Well-being Index starting from the year 2013 to study this matter. One of the components, namely, social participation, is also measured. In the Malaysian Well-Being Index 2013, social engagement is the sense of generality that was essential towards improving human well-being. It is the ability to be involved and contribute to a bigger society which inculcates the sense of freedom of life (Bakar, Osman, Bachok, & Ibrahim, 2016).

Five of the components, namely, transport, communication, education, income and distribution, and working life, represent economic well-being. The remaining nine indicators, namely, housing, leisure, governance, public safety, social participation, culture, health, environment, and family, represent social well-being. Nevertheless, the data gathered is lacking in specific data exclusively for the elderly.





The Malaysian Well-being Index 2016 shows increasing involvement in socially productive activities. It possibly indicated that the ageing population is continuously in favour to be active in physical activities. These include participation in employment or voluntary work. The government have been revising the policies to meet the demand for this new population. The Malaysian government had adapted social events such as National Senior Citizens Day by declaring October 1st of each year from 1992 as National Seniors Day. In 2012, *Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia* lengthened the retirement age by 60 years old. This stride is taken to meet the demand for the transition of the population.

Even though many researchers from different fields are interested in this new population, there is still a gap that needs to be filled. Existing research is still lacking on the effect of well-being in terms of life satisfaction and health of the ageing population in Malaysia. This particular research is concerned with the level of subjective well-being which is life satisfaction, and level of self-rated health, on how that variable measure changes with socially productive activities categorised as paid work and voluntarism activities. Indeed, if the elderly population is capable of lengthening their lifespan by being healthy and happy, then many parties can benefit from this by harvesting their diverse expertise and skills in the longer term. It is important to continue contributing ideas and new insight into these particular studies because the elderly have their unique requirements.





1.3 Research Objectives

In general, this study was conducted to clarify the importance and responsibility of senior citizens in maintaining their well-being in the aspect of life satisfaction and physical health. Thus, the research objective needs to develop to help researchers to understand the aims and purpose of why this research needs to be conducted. It simplifies the understanding of the readers and serves as a guideline on how to answer the research questions. The purpose of this paper is to discover the relationship between productive activities and well-being. It also identifies some of the elements that may influence collaboration between socially productive activities and subjective well-being. In particular, this study aims to:

- i. To measure the level of subjective well-being among the rural elderly in Perak.
- ii. To determine the mean difference of employment status towards life satisfaction among the rural elderly in Perak.
- iii. To determine the mean difference of employment status towards self-rated health among the rural elderly in Perak.
- iv. To measure the relationship between voluntarism with life satisfaction among the rural elderly in Perak.
- v. To measure the relationship between voluntarism activities with self-rated health among the rural elderly in Perak.
- vi. To determine the difference in means between working elderly and non-working elderly towards life satisfaction and self-rated health.





1.4 Research Questions

In line with the stated objectives, this study will endeavour to find the answer to the main question of this study namely, what is the level of well-being among the rural elderly in Perak. This study is conducted in response to the study on the elderly respondents starting from age 50 to 75 and over. A research question is the fundamental core of a research paper, study, or review of the literature. It focuses on the study, determines the methodology, and guides all stages of enquiry, analysis, and reporting. Thus, six research questions are developed to explain the reality of the problem statement. As a result, it addresses the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of well-being among the rural elderly in Perak?
- ii. What is the mean difference between employment status and life satisfaction among the rural elderly in Perak?
- iii. What is the mean difference between the self-rated health's of the respondents with employment status among the rural elderly in Perak?
- iv. Is there any relationship between voluntarism and life satisfaction among the rural elderly in Perak?
- v. Is there any relationship between voluntarism and maximum self-rated health among the rural elderly in Perak?
- vi. What are the differences in means between working elderly and non-working elderly towards life satisfaction and self-rated health?





1.5 Theoretical Framework

Major economic theories on Human Capital Theory were adapted to produce the conceptual research framework. Fundamentally, Human Capital Theory argued that with the ever-increasing human age, the higher is the life experience of them. This makes them more productive in giving output. The human capital theory sees human beings as an economic unit that can benefit themselves, thus providing greater impact when it becomes a population. This conceptual framework is also produced with the readings of government documents, which is the Well-Being Index 2016.

The Malaysian Well-Being Index has been useful to measure the well-being of Malaysians since 2000. This index has been improved every year to ensure that all the data collected are accurate and precise. Other sources, such as previous literature, also help in the development of this conceptual framework. A further explanation of the theoretical framework in this study is discussed in Chapter 2.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the way ideas are systemised to achieve the purpose of the research project. It serves as a source of guidance to researchers in examining the elements involved in the study. Also, it aims to visually give the reader an overview of the relationships between keywords enclosed in the diagram. This conceptual framework has been developed through the study of a significant theory of human



capital theory combined with the Malaysian government document namely, the Malaysian Well-Being Index 2016.

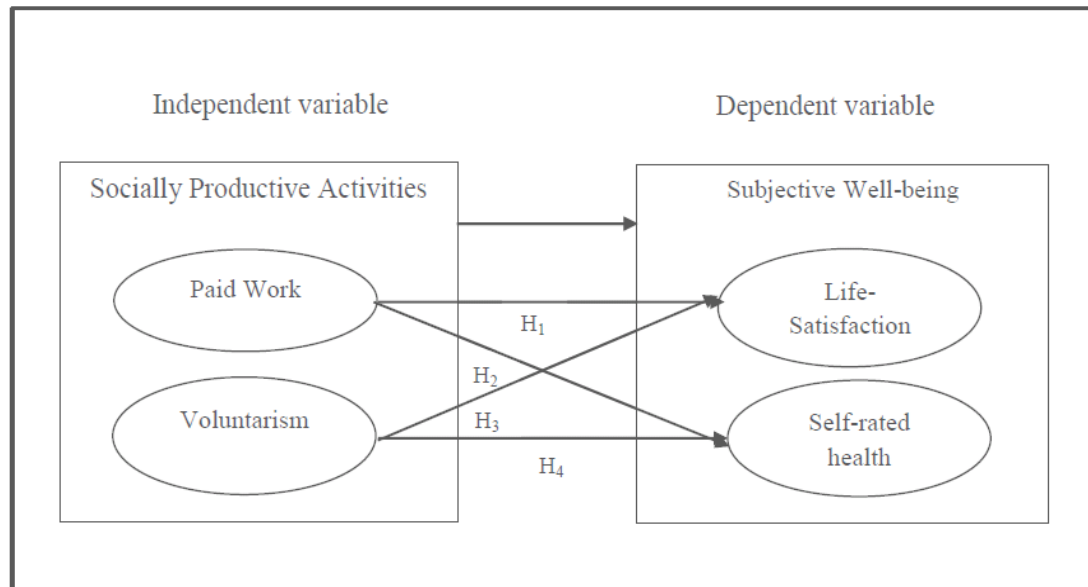


Figure 1.3. Conceptual Framework

Based on Figure 1.3, a conceptual framework is established to clarify the concept and propose a relationship between an independent variable and dependent variable. It demonstrates how the elements of socially productive activities may be related to factors in subjective well-being. Independent variable is measured by socially productive activities which consist of paid work and voluntarism. The dependent variable of the subjective well-being with life satisfaction and self-rated health are the elements to be affected. All the variables are adapted from the Malaysian Well-Being Index 2014 to answer the research objectives and research questions that have been developed earlier in this chapter.



1.7 Definition of Terms

This study involves some essential terms. Therefore, to facilitate an understanding of this study, the terms are described as follows.

i. Ageing Population

An ageing population refers to a phenomenon in which the median age of the people in this region or country increases when compared to the total population. In this research, the ageing population selected age ranges from 50 to 75+ years old.

ii. Socially Productive Activities (SPA)

Socially productive activities refer to both paid work and voluntarism. These activities create a beneficial result, and the outcome may come in the form of monetary or non-monetary benefits such as emotional and health benefits.

iii. Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

In this research, subjective well-being refers to oneself in wanting to be satisfied with life and health. It involves the personal evaluation of their cognitive judgement which is influenced by their surroundings.





iv. **Voluntarism**

It is a principle of relying on voluntary action that benefits the non-monetary result. The activities involved both formal and informal voluntary work done by the respondent.

v. **Paid Work**

Paid work is a monetary compensation or remuneration by the employer to the employee in return for the job done. Payments can be easily counted as a fixed amount for each completed task such as wage or work-in-pay, or on hourly or daily rates, or based on the quantity of work done.



Life satisfaction is defined as happiness that arises from meeting needs and expectations and is a foundation or means to enjoy. It is also an overall valuation of the emotional state and outlooks of one's life at a particular point in time, ranging from destructive to constructive.

vii. **Self-rated health**

Self-rated health refers to an evaluation made by the respondent to show their state of health. No medical diagnostic is done, and the assessment is solely on the perception of oneself on the level of healthiness. It is a survey questionnaire in which participants assess different dimensions on their own.





1.8 Significance of Study

The study of socially productive activities among the elderly is significant in order to seek updated views on elderly life satisfaction and self-rated health. It shall open up the researcher's eyes and mind towards the complications of understanding this population. It also generates a realisation that there is more to explore on the elderly well-being ensuring they have a balanced and meaningful later life.

This study is also significant to measure several parts of the variables in the Malaysian Well-Being Index among the rural Perak elderly in Malaysia by using different techniques of analysis. Other than that, there has been a growing emphasis in the field of economics of ageing population to examine issues related to diversity across racial and ethnic groups (Ramirez, 2018). To fully understand the contributions of older adults and to appreciate the subject of gerontology, in general, there must be a commitment to creating a multidisciplinary overview for all to understand the ageing process across diverse groups of individuals such as taking into account race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender. Nevertheless, it is beyond the framework of this research.

Studies on socially productive activities and subjective well-being among the elderly have positive implications that will give importance, benefits and contributions to various parties, especially to the Ministry of Human Resource and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In addition, the findings of this study provide information to the departments to further promote the importance of maintaining prosperity through productive social activities.





This study was conducted to help the researchers to gain more in-depth knowledge and new information about the issue in hand, which is the relationship between socially productive activities with subjective well-being among the ageing population. In addition, the findings contribute to academicians and researchers a new idea of socially productive activities, which are fundamental constructs in influencing the selection of social-productive activities. Apart from that, these findings will also add to existing literature on the role of productive social activities to encourage senior citizens to maintain their well-being either in terms of satisfaction of life or personal health.

This research is conducted on the realisation that this new coming population will dominate the market in near decades. Hence, it has become the concern of policymakers as well as the consideration of the private sector that they are responsible for taking care of the well-being of this population to survive in this ageing world. Also, it will help the nation to emphasise on particular activities when planning for future policy.

Table 1.3

Summary of Significant of Study

Summary of Significance of the Study	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek for the current views on elderly life satisfaction and self-rated health. • To create a realisation that there is more to explore on elderly wellbeing. • To measure several parts of variables in the Malaysian Well-Being Index 2014 by using different techniques of analysis. • Implications for the ministry. 	





1.9 Limitation of the Study

In the process of conducting this research, several limitations affected the outcome of this research. A major limitation of this work is that it is only based on three districts in Perak, which are Muallim, Perak Tengah and Hulu Perak. Despite the researcher's best efforts, the result only provides limited information about the well-being interface and may lack generalisability. Any generalisation of the results is limited by the characteristics of this study, in particular, by the sample used.

Furthermore, this study focuses on the strict theoretical framework that had been developed earlier. Human Capital Theory and the Malaysian Well-Being Index have been used in this research. Thus, it only tests the role of four variables, namely paid work, voluntarism, life satisfaction and self-rated health. All four of these variables are the components of the system to provide solutions to the issues presented. Therefore, other factors that can have an impact such as financial, education and income status are not included. Thus, lead to limitations of the intended study.

The unwillingness of respondents to answer the question completely, limiting the researcher to obtain optimum data, thus making the result less reliable. Time constraints are another major factor of this research as the respondent needs longer time to answer the questionnaires given. Financial constraint is another component that limits the researcher to gather more data thus leading to the next factor. The availability of secondary data has also become a limitation because the researcher has





limited access to the statistical data. This will limit the researcher's knowledge towards the scope of the study.

1.10 Scope of the study

This research was conducted in order to determine whether socially productive activities have a relationship towards well-being among the ageing population. Three rural districts in Perak have been selected to collect data for the study which consist of Mualim, Perak Tengah and Hulu Perak districts. This study takes a total of four months to collect distributed questionnaires. Simple random sampling techniques were used during the distribution of the survey forms. Afterwards, the answered questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science software (SPSS).

There are two main variables that are used in this research which socially productive activities consisting of are paid work and voluntarism, and well-being, which consist of life satisfaction and self-rated health. A total of 480 questionnaires have been used in this research and were distributed to respondents in the respective research location. Also, the polls were distributed mainly during business hours between 8am-8pm. In the next chapter, there will be a more in-depth discussion on previous studies that are related to the development of a framework as well as a detail explanation of the underpinning theories and research hypothesis.





1.11 Conclusion

This chapter brings together the issues related to the topic under investigation and explains the basic idea of the study. This chapter starts with an introduction to explain the directions to be taken which focuses on the wellbeing of senior citizens in rural Perak. Also, this study is aimed at identifying factors that relate to subjective wellbeing. The urgency of this research makes this study feasible to be implemented in this current period. The continuation of this chapter will be discussed in Chapter 2, which offers a discussion of the existing literature.

