



EXPLORING THE MOBILITY OF OLDER ADULTS IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS: A PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

The issue of ageing is a global concern, and as urban areas develop, the proportion of citizens aged 60 and over increases. The percentage of Malaysians aged 65 and older increased from 6.5% in 2018 to 6.7% in 2019. In a decade, Malaysia is anticipated to attain the status of an ageing nation, with at least 15 percent of the population being 60 or older. By 2056, Malaysia will be a "super-aged society," as 20% of its population will be over the age of 65. In accordance with the 11th Malaysian Plan (2016–2020), Malaysia has launched the Smart City Initiative to prioritise the welfare of its 'rakyat' people. In addition, the government has unveiled the Intelligent Transport System Blueprint (2017–2022) to modernise the existing transport system. The global trend of an ageing population influences numerous aspects and facilities, including healthcare, financial services, urban planning, transportation, and religious centres. To improve the quality of life for the elderly, their residential environment must be modified. In terms of healthcare services and physical accessibility, elderly mobility presents difficulties. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors that enable elderly people with smart mobility to access public spaces and transport facilities. To achieve these goals, the research design employs a qualitative approach. This study contributes to the development of smart cities and transport planning, which can support the sustainable mobility of the elderly in Malaysia, a nation confronting the challenges of an ageing population. In addition, the study will address the requirements of the elderly by incorporating the ageing population into national development plans and reevaluating existing planning alongside physical development zones. These initiatives are consistent with the National Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to improve the quality of life for the elderly population.

Keywords: *Ageing; Mobility; Transport*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Promoting supportive environments for the elderly, which encompass transportation and public spaces, is crucial. A key aspect of fostering sustainable mobility lies in comprehending the travel patterns of older individuals and their access to public areas and transportation options. With this in mind, the objective of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to elderly smart mobility in accessing public spaces and transportation facilities in urban areas.
2. The belief is that by optimizing urban space, it is possible to establish cities that are healthier, more convenient, and more enjoyable for both the general population and the elderly. In light of this, it would have been more pertinent for this research to encompass a wider spectrum of elderly individuals residing in both urban and suburban areas.
3. The findings of this research will be of great significance to policymakers and relevant industries because they directly address the challenges posed by an ageing society within national development plans.

Research Objectives

Malaysia is experiencing a rapid increase in its ageing population. By 2030, it is projected that Malaysia will attain the status of an ageing nation, with at least 15% of the population being 60 years old or older (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). As driving skills tend

to diminish with age, careful planning becomes crucial to ensuring road safety, along with initiatives to encourage the utilisation of public transportation (Billot et al., 2020). The government should be prepared to adapt to these demographic changes and address the issues arising from population ageing. Therefore, urban development and planning play a vital role in supporting the mobility of older adults. The older people require supportive environments that encompass transportation options and access to public spaces. Gaining an understanding of the travel habits of the elderly, their access to public areas, and their use of transportation is essential for promoting sustainable mobility. Hence, this study aims to investigate the contributing factors that enable smart mobility for older individuals in accessing public areas and transportation facilities within urban settings.

Methodology

To accomplish the research objectives, the current study will employ a qualitative research design. This design will enable a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of active behaviour among the elderly, particularly concerning their mobility-related activities and expectations. The study will involve interviews with a specific group of older adults who meet the following criteria: 1) relatively healthy, 2) physically independent, and 3) residing in the community. Purposive sampling will be used to select respondents based on specific criteria. Once the data collection is complete, qualitative data analysis software will be utilised to analyse the collected data. The process will involve extracting themes from the transcriptions of the interviews with the informants. The themes will be cross-referenced among all the informants, and the most prevalent theme or outcome will be identified. However, it should be noted that the researcher will be responsible for interpreting the findings based on the identified theme. The current research has received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty.

Results

The present study is still in progress. The focus of the present research is to examine the factors that impact the elderly's ability to access public spaces and transportation facilities in urban areas, with a specific emphasis on smart mobility. Through a qualitative approach, this study aims to enhance comprehension regarding the factors associated with smart mobility among the elderly population, particularly in urban settings. The insights derived from this study will be advantageous to relevant stakeholders and contribute to the existing knowledge base. Furthermore, it is encouraged that future studies explore additional variables that could influence elderly mobility in different geographical areas.

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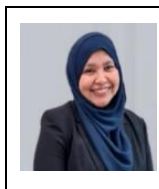
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