
AN OVERVIEW OF THE ELDERLY HOUSING ATTRIBUTES IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Housing is a basic human need. It is believed that human must have a home before they can think about anything else. Furthermore, housing can be a major indicator of well-being for persons of all ages from all backgrounds including the elderly. However, homes sometimes can be a death trap especially for the elderly. They tend to trip, slip and fall in their home as they are becoming frail and fragile as time goes by. Furthermore, the elderly tends to feel isolated from the community and lead them to loneliness. As the world is ageing, Asia countries are also ageing but even faster. Malaysia is predicted to become an aging nation by the year of 2035. Moreover, as the nation growing older, less elderly live with their children thus placing them in an independent living. Besides, the death of the spouse could also put the elderly in the same situation. This paper discussed how countries such as Japan, United Kingdom and New Zealand cater the active elderly to age in place. Malaysia with respect to that, it also has its own existing preferred attributes for the elderly to age in place. Hence, the content analysis was used to compare and contrast the elderly housing attributes in the 4 countries mentioned. The finding reveals that Malaysia could benefit from those countries to improve on the existing preferred housing attributes for the elderly.

Keywords: *elderly, housing attributes, developed countries*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world's population is ageing rapidly. Issahaku and Neysmith (2013) has estimated that a quarter of the world population in developed country will be aged 65 years and above by the year of 2050. An "ageing population" according to Robotham (2011) refers to an increase in the average age of a country's inhabitants, primarily driven by increased longevity and reduced fertility rates.

In the view of United Kingdom, the number of elderly will be rapidly increased up to 23 million in the year of 2029 (Penrose, 2010). Furthermore, Ball and Nanda (2013) expected that there will be an extra of 140,000 older households in United Kingdom for the next 20 years. According to a comprehensive study conducted by Juni (2015), Japan is known as country that consisted of most ageing population.

This is due to the rapid growth in the ageing population (Muramatsu and Nakiyama, 2011). At the same time, Ainoziza *et al.* (2015) emphasize that Malaysia is expected to become an ageing nation in 2030. The number of elderly people will be equal to the number of young people in year 2050 to 2055 (Hamid and Aizan, 2015).

One of the challenges about the ageing population based on Wilby and Chambless (2012), could be the older people are reluctant to move out from their house despite the fact that they face with functional limits. Through a study conducted by Ball and Nanda (2013) revealed that the elderly who reluctant to move out from their house are normally facing with health issues, loss of mobility as well as with isolation. Therefore, Lipman *et al.* (2012) suggested that home modifications to help the elderly to age in place will be highly in demand as this

population grows. Moreover, Tyson (2011) findings showed that ageing population needs better public facilities, services and social support. Facilities and services must be easy to use, safe and convenient. Social support like emotional and financial assistance must be easily accessible. Besides, Weeks *et al.* (2010) highlighted additional issues which includes the need for services to be provided within the home and concerns about safety in the neighborhood.

2.0 ELDERLY HOUSING ATTRIBUTES

2.1 Elderly Housing Attributes in Japan

According to Pan and Fukuhada (2016), apartments with convenient facilities are preferable for the elderly. There will be a ramp that allow wheelchair movement. Space in front of the bedroom open, to make the elderly feel more comfortable. Moreover, the apartment must be adjacent to the public transport such as train station and bus station. In the same time, Japan encourage an independent living among the elderly through many aspects. One of the aspect is social interaction by creating an inviting space such a long veranda to encourage interactions with neighbours (Muramatsu and Akiyama, 2011).

2.2 Elderly Housing Attributes in United Kingdom

According to a research conducted by Darton *et al.* (2012) extra care housing can be recognized by several characteristics: it is primarily for older people; the accommodation is almost always self-contained; care can be delivered flexibly, usually by staff based on the premises; support staff are available on the premises for 24 hours a day; domestic care is available; communal facilities and services are available; meals are usually available and charged for when taken; it aims to be a home for life; and it offers security of tenure. At the same time, Blood (2013) agreed that extra care housing is a housing model that encourages the elderly to do as much as they can for themselves, accessing support and care if and when they need it, and

safe in the knowledge that they can call for help if they encounter problems. In UK, according to Issahaku and Neysmith (2013) accessible and universal designs require more square footage within buildings and homes (i.e. larger bathroom stalls or residential bathrooms to allow wheelchair access and/or a caregiver) are suitable for the elderly to age in place.

2.3 Elderly Housing Attributes in New Zealand

In New Zealand, Davey *et al.* (2004) highlighted that social space for the elderly is important. One of the example is living centre whereby the elderly could observe the nature as well as other people walking. Furthermore, what elderly wants for independence living is access to and familiarity with social networks, transport and health services, and a wide variety of amenities. Moreover, physical adaptation in the house such as installing ramps, handrails and special features in the bathroom is favourable to the elderly in New Zealand. Moreover, New Zealand at the same mentioned that the warmth of the community is very important for the elderly to reside as well as a good connection to the public transport (Wiles *et al.*, 2011).

2.4 Elderly Housing Attributes in Malaysia

With the respect of burgeoning ageing population in Malaysia, there are about eleven shelter home for old people as quoted by Sim and Hamid (2010). Besides, according to Lim *et al.* (2013) Malaysia formal institutional cares or homes are only consisting of nine Residential Care Home for the Elderly (RCHE), two Nursing Care Home for the elderly (NCHE) and 22 Day Care Centre (DCC). However, Hillcoat-Nalletam *et al.* (2010) highlighted that the care homes are preferably allocated to the poor or destitute person. The care homes for the elderly in Malaysia are still not prepared to be an alternative place for the elderly to age in place.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result shows that there are similarities in the elderly housing attributes for Japan, United

Kingdom and New Zealand whereby these countries enable independent living. These three countries have special attributes that preferred by the elderly group. Accessibility to the public transport was seen as favourable option for the three countries. Followed by the physical adaptations to the house as to support independent living for the elderly. However, Malaysia at the moment only offer care centre for the elderly even though there is a research showing that the elderly never considers to relocate (Ainoriza *et al.*, 2015).

4.0 CONCLUSION

The burgeoning number of the elderly population is expected to create a new market of housing to cater the elderly needs, lifestyle services and facilities mobile home care, especially for those who may not have children or relatives around to look after them. These findings are hope to provide a provision of housing for elderly that can be utilized by the developer. In the same time, it can strengthen up the existing policy by the government.

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