ELDERLY EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN MALAYSIA: LEGAL AND SHARIAH PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Prioritising the elderly should be a national priority before Malaysia turns into an old country, which is anticipated to happen in the year 2030. Reimagining what quality aging will entail in the future is required to provide older people in Malaysia the best possibilities for a quality life. One way to ensure that the elderly will age graciously is through education or learning. However, there are various barriers and challenges which limit the development of elderly education and lifelong learning in Malaysia. This study, therefore, focuses to explore prominent issues regarding elderly education and lifelong learning. This would include analysing the existing laws and policies related to the elderly. Apart from that, the Shariah perspectives on this area are also discussed to illustrate the importance of learning for elderly. This study is a qualitative legal study employing doctrinal approach and document analysis. The findings illustrate that, although there are existing legal instruments and syariah authorities on the significance of elderly education and learning at a later stage, a policy reform is needed especially in terms of the strategies and implementation of the polices. The policy should be reformed, the challenges should be addressed, coordination and collaboration should be enhanced. The policies need to be more inclusive involving higher numbers of senior citizens in Malaysia. Additionally, a mechanism is required to educate the elderly about the importance of learning at a later stage as reflected in the national policies and shariah principles. This paper shall assist the policy makers in enhancing the policy on older people particularly on the aspect or elderly education and life learning in Malaysia. The challenges faced by Malaysia specifically in ensuring the inclusiveness of the programmes involving senior citizens in Malaysia shall be lessons for other countries in strengthening their policies for older people.

Keywords: Ageing, Elderly, Lifelong Learning, Policy, Maqasid Shari'ah

Introduction

Older persons or elderly or senior citizens are referred to as those aged 60 years and above as defined under the United Nations World Assembly of Aging 1982 in Vienna. This is the definition adopted by Malaysia as stated under the National Policy on Older Persons 2011 (NPOP).

It is estimated by the Malaysian Department of Statistics that population aged 60 years and above in Malaysia is around 3.6 million which is 11.1 per cent from the total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). The increasing trend can be seen in the age structure; from 3.3 million in 2020, to 3.5 million in 2021, and in 2022 the number raised to 3.6 million. Furthermore, the percentage of the population aged 65 and above increased from 7.0 percent to 7.3 percent from 2021 to 2022. By the year 2030, Malaysia may become an old country (Ab Hamid et al., 2023). Currently, Malaysia may be known as an aging population when 7 percent of the population are older people (Foo Chung et al., 2020). When a country reached 14 percent of older people then it will be an aged country and it is super-aged when it exceeds 20 percent. Global demographic "megatrend" classification applies to this phenomenon, which is a worldwide occurrence. In fact, the increase pattern in Malaysia is perceived as quicker than in other developed countries (Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita Keluarga Masyarakat, 2011). As a result, there is not much time for the nation's preparation in paving toward an aging society (Foo Chung et al., 2020).

In Malaysia, older people face several issues and problems in terms of health system, financial, and facilities (Abdul Kadir et al., 2022 & Foo Chung et al., 2020). Financial abuse is also a challenge for the elderly (Che Amani et al., 2021). Furthermore, Khan and Tahir (2014) identified social aspects that affected the elderly's quality of life, including residential conditions, and community issues. The needs of the aged are supported by a few organizations, including private care facilities, nonprofit welfare groups, the Activity Centre for Older Persons (PAWE), and others. Despite the fact that there is aid from the government for senior citizens on programs and initiatives to ensure quality well-being of senior citizens, it is asserted that the numbers of senior citizens engaging in the programmes and projects are still low (Rahimah et al., 2017). Thus, there are high numbers of senior citizens who did not involve in activities which may assist them to age gracefully. These activities would include education and learning sessions or also known as learning in later life.

Learning for senior citizens can be conducted formally, or in non-formal and informal settings (Ibrahim, Zakaria, Hamid, & Chai, 2017). Formal education usually can be found in formal education institutions with a systematic and well-structured learning programme. Meanwhile, non-formal learning is commonly conducted in the workplace and in the form of training for jobs. The involvement of the elderly in educational settings are not inclusive to cover various segments of elderly. For instance, the involvement of the senior citizens in the clubs or associations focuses on those in towns and cities while for Muslims elderly they are inclined towards Quranic classes or religious based classes. Meanwhile, the University of Third Age (U3A) in Malaysia which have proper classes and activities are unfamiliar to those who undergone less formal learning activities. Thus, the lifelong learning strategy are not comprehensive involving majority groups of senior citizens or later life learners.

This paper therefore aims to explore how education and learning amongst elderly are given focus by analysing how this segment is be given attention in the international legal instrument. This paper then examines whether Malaysian policy has been focusing on this matter since the introduction of NPOP. The Shariah basis is then discussed to illustrate that education and lifelong learning amongst senior citizens are not just been uphold through legal instrument and policies but also under Shariah perspectives. This study focuses on highlighting the legal and Shariah basis of elderly education that should be given higher attention by society. Elderly education should not just be the focus of those who are already reached 60 years of age, but also on those who are in the stage of pre-retirement. This is important to provide proper planning for a quality aging life in the future.

Literature Review

This increasing percentage of senior citizens will bring significant impact to policymakers not just on economic, political, and social issues but also in the field of education. In a study analysing the effective opportunities for education of senior citizens, there are three main findings highlighted (Deborah & Bryan, 2008). The findings highlighted the importance of learning experience that is effective for them, the role of the instructor as the key element and the topics or subject matters which should be interesting and engaging for the elderly.

There are existing opportunities and mediums available for senior citizens in Malaysia to participate in learning session and activities. Amongst the activities lead by several agencies such as Institute of Gerontology, Community Colleges, Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA), Division of Community Development (KEMAS), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Open University Malaysia (OUM) and Wawasan Open University are summarised below:

Table 1: Learning programmes for senior citizens in Malaysia

No.	Programme	Lead agency
1.	Computer literacy activities	Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) under INFRA and KEMAS
2.	"Lifelong Learning Initiative for the Elderly" programme	Institute of Gerontology, Universiti Putra Malaysia
3.	English language classes, basic computer skills classes, Mandarin language classes, and health classes.	Community Education Development Bureau, MCA
5.	"Capitalising Information Technology for Greater Equity and Access among Poor and Rural Communities."	The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and OUM
6.	MyLLL, Hop-on-the-LLL Train, LLL for Everyone, LLL Savings Fund, LLL Tax Incentives, and My LLL Grants	Ministry of Higher Learning and related ministries and agencies
7.	University of the Third Age Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (U3A)	Universiti Putra Malaysia's Institute of Gerontology

On top of that, there is a specific medium initiated by the government led by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) which aim to encourage proactive and active ageing amongst elderly known as PAWE. The involvement of elderly in PAWE is one of the ways to prevent the senior citizens from feeling isolated and experiencing empty nest syndrome (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2021). Nevertheless, there are still rooms for improvement as it was reported in a study conducted in PAWE in Pahang that there are some encounters such as lack of fluency in Quran recitation, poor writing skills, vision and hearing impairments which may hinder them from learning effectively (Mokhtar et al., 2022).

Although there are available opportunities for older persons in the country presently, the concept of learning at a later stage is yet a familiar concept for the older generation in Malaysia as the number of elderlies involved is still limited (Rosmah et al., 2010). Previous studies illustrated that most senior citizens are comfortable with leisure life with 77.4 percent for napping; 45 percent for relaxing and 40.9 percent for housework (Sharifah Norazizan & Aizan, 2007). According to a study involving 268 senior citizens aged 60 and older, most of their daily activities included talking, unwinding, reading, watching television, with recreational and intellectual activities being the least popular among the elderly (H Minhat & R Amin, 2012).

Amongst the challenges in increasing participation of the elderly in learning are the lack of awareness and information, and funding shortage. Health problem and still having to take care of the family members, may also be the reason for the low involvement of elderly in activities that may contribute to active ageing amongst elderly (Yin–Fah, Paim, Masud, & Hamid, 2010). Health problem may become the main reason for hindering elderly to learn as they are experiencing physical and cognitive limitation (Ng, Chua, & Md. Nawi, 2017). The stigma of 4DS, death, diseases, disability, and decline, which are

often associated with elderly have always been the hurdle deterring elderly from getting involved in learning activities (Ibrahim, Zakaria, Hamid, & Chai, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for a solution in tackling these issues. Apart from creating more opportunities and activities in supporting the idea of active and productive ageing, removing the barriers, and finding the remedies for obstacles faced by the elderly should also be given attention.

Furthermore, there are some challenges of older adult learning on the issues of access and opportunities. Older persons in rural areas may not have similar opportunities compared to those in urban areas. It is a basic right and fundamental that no one should be denied and discriminated on any factor and should be given equal opportunities (Supaat et al., 2021). Besides that, the barrier to technology and digital skills may also restrict the opportunities for older persons to indulge in learning sessions. The other limitation is the responsibility of the older persons to take care of other family members hence disallowing them to pursue any learning opportunities (Merriam & Kee, 2014). In addition, as certain organisations provide education in their institutions requiring the elderly to stay in their place, some of the older persons may reluctant toward this idea as has been illustrated in a study where majority of the respondents preferred to stay in their own homes (Ismail et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the significant numbers of elderly can be seen in informal learning programmes. In a survey involving 1794 senior citizens, quarter of them involved in non-formal learning activities (Muhammad, 2001). This shows that they are willing to undergo learning activities but some of them incline towards informal settings. Furthermore, it was noted that the main motivation of learning is the religious besides of increasing knowledge, skill, socialisation and to spend their leisure time. In a survey done examining the social participation among Malay older persons revealed that, one of the main aspects that encourage for social participation is the high demand of religiosity (Aziz, Ahmad, & Zainuddin, 2019).

The elderly should be given additional opportunity to learn informally, such as through religion classes, because learning is not limited to formal schooling for the elderly (Rahimah et al., 2017). As learning is also consistent with Islamic principles, it is recommended that in the module on adult learning, the two key features which are fulfilling spiritual needs and secondly love, and encouragement must be present (Abdul Razak et al., 2017). These modules cover both types of adult education which are adult basic education and continuing education.

The dearth of research in this area on the elderly should be a catalyst for more research to be conducted. According to the prediction by economist, as compared to Japan, Singapore and South Korea, Malaysia would be facing hardest time in term of economic matters which certainly will affect the elderly (Chung & Mansur, 2018). Thus, updated research is essential to trail the ageing population trends. Benchmarking from other countries such as Japan and Singapore would be helpful as they have succeeded in launching some fruitful initiatives on elderly agenda (Aziz & Ahmad, 2019).

Methodology

This paper aims to study elderly education and lifelong learning in Malaysia using a qualitative study employing a doctrinal approach and document analysis. Document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves assessing printed and digital materials to draw out important findings. Through this method, documents serve as a source of data of the research (Bowen, 2009). Numerous sources, including books, papers, journals, and other secondary sources pertinent to the study's subject were used to gather the data. This includes sources on elderly education and lifelong learning activities and opportunities collected from newspaper and official websites. Through document analysis, this paper analysed documents related to the concept of education and lifelong learning, the agencies involved in implementing the concept, the challenges, and barriers to the development of the concept. In evaluating the legal perspective, doctrinal research is employed. Legal doctrinal studies address the issues in legal practice by systematizing, commenting on, assessing, and debating what occurs in the legal system (Taekema, 2018). This paper analysed the national and international instruments on elderly education and lifelong learning looking at the strength, weaknesses, implementation, and improvements

opportunities for policy reform. The Shariah perspectives were also studied by collecting data through hadith treatises and qur'anic exegesis.

Discussion

International legal instruments on education of older people

Education is always associated with children, teenagers, and younger generations. However, adults and particularly older persons also enjoy this right under international human rights law. This is a universal right enjoyed by everyone regardless of age. Education should be perceived as a lifelong process and does not stop until a certain age.

Adult education may consist of adult basic learning which comprises basic education such as literacy skills, numeracy skills, basic religious knowledge, and so on. The other type of education is continuing education consisting of lessons from various fields of knowledge and skills such as vocational skills and personal developments.

Education for older persons moreover has benefits in terms of economic, social, political, and cultural as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which targets adult education as one of the agendas. Nevertheless, adult education is most likely to benefit those who did not receive primary or secondary education. Non-formal education is reported as the most underfunded level of education where only a few nations spent the recommended 3 percent of the national education budget on education for adults (UNESCO, 2017).

For non-formal education, there are market providers such as companies, community organisations, websites such as Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs), and so on. Thus, there is a need for a country to establish a legal and regulatory framework to encourage more participation in adult education, especially from those with limited funds (Formosa, 2010).

The principle of elderly education is found in policies from international organizations like the United Nations, World Health Organization, and European Union (Merriam & Kee, 2014).The right to education is one of many rights protected by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) specifically under General Comment 6: The Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Older Persons (1995) (Fredvang & Biggs, 2012). In this instance, it is suggested that senior citizens should have access to both official education programs like U3A and informal sessions. Additionally, chances for knowledge and experience sharing ought to be given to them. Besides that, Principles 4 & 16 of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991) and Recommendations 44-51 of The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging (1982) are two additional related legal international instruments that speak to the right to education for older people (The Right to Education Initiative, 2022).

Accordingly, there are certain instruments that protect older people's human rights, but they are dispersed and there hasn't been a single, well-designed, all-encompassing instrument that binds the rights of the older people (Cox & Pardasani, 2017). It is difficult to preserve elderly people's rights holistically because there are no explicit laws defending them. It's possible that older people themselves are unaware of the rights and privileges available to them.

Malaysia's position

According to Article 5 until Article 13, The fundamental rights of Malaysian citizens are upheld by the Federal Constitution. As a result, these rights are also guaranteed for senior citizens (Mat Salleh et al., 2022). This research specifically addresses Article 12 on rights related to education. The Federal Constitution's Article 12 guarantees that everyone in Malaysia has the right to education.

Currently, several statutes indirectly affect older persons in Malaysia such as Minimum Retirement Age Act 2012, Domestic Violence Act 1994, Care Centre Act 1993, Pension Act 1980, Employees Provident Fund Act 1991 and Employees Social Security Act 1969. Nevertheless, according to Lim Wen Xin et al. (2014), Malaysia does not have any specific laws that regulate the affairs of the elderly. Thus, the rights and interests of the senior citizens in Malaysia are not properly protected under any focused legal framework specifically for elderly persons (Tahir, Mohd Yusoff, Thambapillay, & Abdul Rahman, 2022).

It is recommended for Malaysia to establish separate legislation pertaining to senior citizens (Nabees Khan et al., 2021). A new bill on senior citizens was planned to be tabled in 2022 was not materialised until presently (Daim, 2021). However, it was later reported that the Senior Citizen Bill is scheduled to be tabled for first reading in 2024 after a special team was appointed in March 2023 to draft the bill (Bernama, 2023).

There is suggestion made for the bill to be drafted to focus on the welfare of the senior citizens (Nik, 2021). Taking Singapore as an example where they have Maintenance of Parents Act (Mehta, 2006), children are obliged to cater their parents' expenses, food, and clothing. It is proposed that the needs of the elderly should not just be confined to basic requirements like clothing and food. The significance of lifelong learning and education should also be one of the items to be given attention in drafting a bill on senior citizens. This is to ensure that, senior citizens have more opportunities to enrich themselves with knowledge and trainings which may also prevent them from experiencing empty nest or depression. The classes and trainings undergone by them shall make them occupied and ageing actively.

In terms of governmental policies, the introduction of the Social Security Organization (SOCSO) marked the early evidence on the elderly agenda in Malaysia (Aziz & Ahmad, 2019). The evolution then went towards having elder folks' home and care centres. The introduction of Employee Provident Fund (EPF) also portrays the efforts done in protecting older persons' interest which was introduced in 1991. Later, National Policy for Older Person was introduced in 1995 and Action Plan for Older Person in 1998. The trend to give more emphasis on government expenditure on older persons only started after the year 2000 and in 2008 more focus are given towards strengthening the establishment of day care centres, old folk home and PAWE.

A special policy on health matters was then introduced and known as National Health Policy for Older Persons 2008. Meanwhile, for education and learning issues, the matter was started to be given attention with the introduction of lifelong learning programme in the Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010 as to promote active and productive ageing.

National Policy of Older Persons 2011 was then introduced, a revision of the 1995 version. This policy is based on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons 1991 (Mat Salleh et al., 2022) and the National Health Policy for Older Persons 2008. The development of the policy is described below:

Figure 1: The development of policy on older persons in Malaysia

The establishment of this policy has resulted to the birth of institutional care centres providing facilities to elderly such as Rumah Seri Kenangan, Rumah Sejahtera, 1Malaysia Family Care, Home Help Services, and others (Chung, 2020).

Besides that, amongst the objectives of the NPOP is to facilitate access to lifelong. The agenda of lifelong learning is also one of the strategies applauded in the NPOP. In the same vein, lifelong learning is also the third pillar in human capital development of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 which include a process to enable individuals to have lifelong learning at all levels of skills including post-retirement.

However, elderly lifelong learning has not received enough promotion (Zhang Kevin et al., 2022). Additionally, older adults are not fully cognizant of the meaning of lifelong learning or the significance of taking part in it; they are also unaware of how crucial lifelong learning is to improve their health and self-development. Thus, the policy should envisage not just several segments of elderly, but also majority of the elderly. This can be done through informal learning classes which need for more supports.

In addition, there is no specific funding for developing and pursuing their learning opportunities except for those who are undergoing formal education and research (Rahimah et al., 2017). On top of that, it is claimed that in flourishing the concept of active aging amongst the elderly, the focus has been on physical activity, paid work, and volunteerism and not lifelong learning elements. Besides that, the learning opportunities are not comprehensive for the elderly from various backgrounds. Many of the members of the U3A for instance are those who are English-speaking.

There are programmes and projects initiated by various lead agencies, but the inclusiveness of the programmes needs more attention. Muhamad and Kamis (2002) furthermore described that the implementation and plannings in materialising the policy was 'far short of expectation' as they stood as collection of existing programmes led by various governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies (NGOs). The lacking is on the coordination as well as collaboration which result to unclear direction for a holistic result (Rani, 2007). The numbers of senior citizens who participated in the said programmes should involve different segments of elderly community. Besides that, the projects and programmes should also be easily accessible by them and secondly fulfil their own interests.

It is claimed that Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea are facing quite similar ageing challenges and one of the focuses in overcoming the hurdles are by having policies reform supporting the older persons (Chung & Mansur, 2018). According to Malaysia's position, initiatives supporting opportunities for older people to learn are on the correct direction. The introduction of specific statute governing senior citizens may strengthen the rights and interests of senior citizens on many aspects of life including right to education and learning. The implementation of the laws and policies, however, require comprehensive plans. Our aging population must be informed about the significance and value of learning later in life (Rosmah et al., 2010). A system is required to help elderly people become more aware of the value of education and lifetime learning.

Elderly education and lifelong learning from the Shariah perspectives

Elderly education and lifelong learning have a strong root in Islamic history. Islam gives great attention to knowledge and always encourages its believers to seek knowledge. The proof is in the al-Quran itself, there are approximately 780 verses mentioning the importance of knowledge. The first verse of the Qur'an that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad was the command to read that reflects the importance of seeking knowledge as follows:

> Translation: Recite in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught man that which he knew not.
>
> (Surah Al-Alaq, 96:1-5)

Allah also glorifies the knowledgeable by raising their rank and position as mentioned in the Quran:

> Translation: Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

(Surah Al-Mujadalah, 58: 11)

In addition, Allah also reminds us to seek for assistance in doing something which are beyond our knowledge. We should ask the expert in that field who is more knowledgeable as stated:

> Translation: And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed (Our message). So, ask the people of the message if you do not know.

(Surah al-Nah, 116:43)

Similarly, the importance of seeking knowledge is narrated in many hadiths of Prophets' Muhammad. The Prophet (PBUH) continuously encourages his companions to seek knowledge, setting a significant example for them to follow. In disseminating the importance of seeking knowledge, The Prophet (PBUH) did not confine the duty to a specific age. This can be seen through a hadith reported by Anas Ibn Malik, The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said:

> Translation: Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.

(Hadith 224, Ibn Majah, 1999)

From this hadith, it is clearly seen that the hadith is general and applies to all Muslims despite their age. The duty of seeking knowledge until the last breath is also manifested in The Prophet's action and this has been recorded by Ibn Uyaynah. He mentioned that:

> Translation: The Prophet (PBUH) continued to increase in knowledge until Allah the Exalted took his soul".

(Ibn Kathir, 1999)

Following in the footsteps of their virtuous predecessors (al-salaf al-salih), the subsequent generation remained steadfast in their pursuit of knowledge for as long as they were able. There are active learners and teachers during their lifetime. This is reflected through the *athar* of the *sahabah* which not only stressed the importance of seeking knowledge but also highlighted this continuous obligation until the last breath. Among the *athar* of *sahabah* recorded in the book is:

> Translation: Nu'aim ibn Hammad reported: It was said to Ibn Al-Mubarak, *"For how long will you seek knowledge?"* Ibn Al-Mubarak, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "*Until death, if Allah wills. Perhaps the words that will benefit me have not yet been written*"

(Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1994)

Another *athar* is reported by Ibn Manadhir. He reported:

> Translation: I asked Abu Amr ibn Al-Ala, "For how long is it appropriate for a man to learn?" Abu Amr, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "It is appropriate for him to learn his entire life".

(Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 1994)

Maqasid al-Shari'ah is one of the broad fundamental goals for which Islamic law enacts legislation (Moch Cholid Wardi et al., 2023; Abdul Azeez & Ishola, 2018). The importance of elderly education and lifelong learning is also related to one of the main objectives in Shari'ah (*maqasid shari'ah*) which is the protection of '*aql* (mind). In Islam, '*aql* or intellect is paramount as it is where the *taklif* (responsibility) of a human being is located. Only sensible people are given the *taklif* in Shari'ah. Allah glorifies humankind above all other creatures with '*aql* and appointed as the caliphate on this earth as '*aql* is the crucial asset for a human being.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, 'aql is a tool to understand, a place to bear trust and responsibility, mastery over the things of this world and the hereafter (Al-Shafi'i, 1996). Meanwhile, Imam Al-Qurtubi (1998) asserted the importance of 'aql as it is the way humans can perceive Allah, understand His words, and justify the apostleship of His messengers.

To show the significance of 'aql in Islam, the Islamic scholars, particularly in Usul al-Fiqh, recognised 'aql as one of the *maqasid shari'ah* that must be preserved after the religion (*al-din*) and life (*al-nafs*). Imam Al-Shatibi (2004) expressed that the manner of preserving the 'aql is to protect it from anything that can damages it as mentioned in the Qur'an, and this is complemented by the *hadd* punishment (for alcohol drinkers) as a preventive measure.

Furthermore, 'aql also needs to be preserved and protected with knowledge (*'ilm)*. Education is food for the 'aql similarly as the body needs food. The 'aql will be trained to think, understand, calculate, and make comparisons and connections in the process of education. With knowledge, humans will not fall into ignorance and superstitions that can lead to associating Allah with others which are prohibited in Islam.

Therefore, it can be concluded that elderly education and lifelong learning is in line with *maqasid al-shariah* in protecting the 'aql. Their *'aql* needs to be constantly cultivated and nourished with knowledge. The importance of seeking knowledge in Islam is not just highlighted to younger generations but surpassing the elder generations until their last breath. This strong basis for learning at all stages of life in Islam should be the motivation for the elderly to continue seeking knowledge not just for their benefit but also for the nation.

Reflecting on these Shariah basis, more programmes and activities on elderly education and lifelong learning should be encouraged. More participation by Muslim elderly should be garnered to in ensuring that they will spend their elder time graciously. Currently, in Malaysia there are religious institutions known as 'Pondok Warga Emas' which foster religious education amongst the elderly. Majority of these 'Pondok Warga Emas' adopt traditional pondok system in terms of learning approach. For instance, one of the initial pioneers of "Pondok Warga Emas" in Malaysia is Kompleks Yayasan Al-Jenderami, situated in Dengkil, Selangor (Abd Majid et al., 2017). By accommodating the elderly who volunteer to stay there to learn more about Islam, they developed a retirement village-like model. Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, which has locations in Segamat, Johor, and Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, is another illustration of a Muslim retirement community in Malaysia (Masod@ Masut & Mutalib, 2019; Mutalib, 2022). Regarding the syllabus and module, most of these institutions offered Quranic classes, Islamic and Arabic classes encompassing *tauhid, fiqh, tasauf, nahu* and *sorof* (Mohd Hasli & Hamzah, 2023). Table 2 shows the list of examples of '*pondok warga emas'* in Malaysia:

Table 2: List of '*pondok warga emas*' in Malaysia (Ab Rahim & Mohd Nor, 2020; Abd Majid et al., 2017; Abdul Hadi & Burhanudin, 2020; Abu Bakar et al., 2016; Masut @ Masod & Abdul Mutalib, 2019; Mohd Hasli & Hamzah, 2023)

No.	Name of 'Pondok Warga Emas'	Location (Malaysia)
1.	Kompleks Yayasan Al-Jenderami	Dengkil, Selangor
2.	Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud	Segamat, Johor
3.	Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud Nilai	Nilai, Negeri Sembilan
4.	Madrasah Orang Pencen	Nilai, Negeri Sembilan
5.	Pondok Unais	Sungai Buah, Selangor
6.	Darul Insyirah	Bangi, Selangor
7.	Pondok Madrasah Ar-Rahmaniah Ad-Diniah	Lubuk Tapah, Kelantan
8.	Pondok Al-Huda, Wakaf Tapai	Marang, Terengganu
9.	Sekolah Pondok Bustanul Arifin	Kampung Labohan Dagang, Banting,
10.	Madrasah Al-Hidayah Al-Hukmiyah, Pondok Pida 3	Jitra Kedah

Conclusion

Looking at the legal and shariah perspectives of elderly education and lifelong learning in Malaysia, it appears that there are international and local instruments supporting these agenda. On top of that, these legal instruments are in line with syariah perspectives encouraging elderly to gain knowledge and involve in education-based activities. Nevertheless, a policy reform is proposed as the existing legal instruments are scattered and not comprehensive. The challenges and barriers hindering more participation of elderly in education and lifelong learning activities need to be addressed. Thus, in reforming the policy, the challenges of lack of awareness, shortage of funding, health problem, responsibility to take care of family members, issues of access and opportunities, barrier to technology and digital skills, inclusiveness of the programmes offered are amongst the encounters that need to be addressed holistically. The concern should not just focus on increasing the numbers of programmes and activities. There is a need for a comprehensive plan of actions on the coordination and collaboration from the government, related agencies, and NGOs. For instance, elderly institutions such as PAWE and care centres need to be given more supports as to provide more learning benefits for them. Besides that, the institutions run by NGOs, religious institutions such as Muslim retirement village or better known as *'Pondok Pengajian Warga Emas'* also need recognition by the government to provide them with support and assistances. As they assist the government in making sure that more older adults have access to learning classes and activities, they require greater direction and assistance. Thus, the policy should envisage not just several groups of elderly living in institutions but should encompass various segments of elderly. The introduction of a new bill concerning older people in Malaysia is hoped to be able to address the issue of incomprehensiveness of the existing legal instrument in upholding the rights of the older people in Malaysia. The bill apart from focusing on the welfare of the elderly, should also emphasis on the opportunity on education and lifelong learning for elderly in ensuring graceful aging amongst elderly.

Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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