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Religious Activities for Muslim Elderly at the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in Pahang, Malaysia

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Abstract

Religious activity is one of the pursuits favoured by the Muslim elderly at Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in their attempts to expand knowledge and comprehension related to the fundamentals of religion as well as to strengthen Islamic character within; these are essential to produce elderly who are healthy, with integrity, secured and dignified, consistent with the requirements in Islam. Hence, this study is dedicated to analyzing religious activities and challenges faced by Muslim elderly at the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in Pahang. The qualitative study design by means of a case study using a semi-structured interview instrument involving officers/administrators of the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) was conducted all over Pahang to examine the religious activities and issues faced by Muslim elderly at other PAWE branches. 7 PAWE officers/administrators from 7 different districts in Pahang, namely Bera, Cameron Highland, Jengka, Maran, Muadzam, Raub and Temerloh districts were selected for purposive sampling. ATLAS ti9 software-assisted content analysis was utilized to assess the interview findings. The study's outcome revealed that the religious activities organized by PAWE are favoured by Muslim elderly participants, videlicet (i) Recitation classes (iqra', al-Qur'an & tajwid), (ii) Talks/ Daily tazkirah/weekly/monthly/, (iii) Lessons for religious studies (fardhu ain & tasawuf) and marhaban classes. Nevertheless, there are slight concerns over these elderly's abilities in partaking the religious activities about problems related to their vision and hearing, poor recitation of the Qur'an as well as transportation, especially those living in rural areas. The organization of iqra' recitation classes and transportation arrangement by PAWE are highly effective in enhancing the number of elderly's involvement in religious activities administered by PAWE in Pahang.

Hence, further research is proposed on model development or a new holistic, comprehensive, and consistent religious module that can be developed by PAWE management with support from the Senior Citizens Division (BWE), under Social Welfare Department (JKM) at the state and federal levels, to be utilized by all PAWEs in our country.

Keywords: Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE), Muslim Senior Citizen Nursing Care, Pahang

Introduction

Studies associated with the elderly can be deemed as challenging notably in endeavours to boost their living standards from the aspects of health, well-being, and entertainment (Halim et al., 2021; Ngah & Lian, 2017) with financial stability, great health, support, and social relationships as well as safe housing (Ali, 2017). The exceptionally high living and medical costs has ensued in restricted commitment in caring for this elderly, not to mention women's participation in the labor market has also posed problems in parental care (Salleh et al., 2022; Anas et al., 2020; Nichols, 2017; Nawi et al., 2016; Abdullah et al., 2015). These, consequently, placed pressure on families henceforth the reliance on formal and informal support to handle the care of parents primarily ailing elderly (Alavi et al., 2015).

In Malaysia, formal assistance that involved the elderly is entrusted to Senior Citizens Division (BWE), under Social Welfare Department (JKM) which has the role of providing care and protection to the elderly in welfare institutions, strengthening cooperation and sharing of responsibilities between government agencies and Welfare Voluntary Organizations (PSK) together with prioritizing equal opportunities to access various resources in lined with the principles emphasized in the National Senior Citizens Policy (www.jkm.gov.my). Apart from that, there are three services provided by JKM to the elderly, namely financial assistance, Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) and Senior Citizens Care Unit programme (UPWE) in accordance with the National Senior Citizens Policy (DWEN) and National Senior Citizens Action Plan (PTWEN) which aspire to empower individuals, families and communities by providing efficient and effective senior citizen-friendly services, developing an environment that aids them to live well (www.kpwkm.gov.my). A study carried out by Ibrahim et al (2016) has discovered that the level of well-being among the elderly at PAWE was considerably high which proves the effectiveness of PAWE in assisting them to live a more prosperous life. This is supported by Johani et al. (2018) who claimed that the elderly's standard of living has increased in conformity with the existence of PAWE. However, it was found that previous studies did not touch in depth on religious activities; thus, future studies related to them organized by PAWE are proposed.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze religious activities and issues encountered by Muslim elderly at the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in Pahang.

Literature Review

Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) is one of the services provided by Senior Citizens Division (BWE) under Social Welfare Department (JKM) Malaysia to empower and safeguard the welfare of our elderly. It serves as a place to perform daily affairs that contributes to the elderly's well-being in a community (Ibrahim et al., 2014) especially for those with able-bodied and can manage themselves. To ensure the elderly can be independent and communicate with one another as well as those in their local community, numerous activities and programmes have been offered at the center such as religious programmes, recreation, therapy and rehabilitation, health screenings, talks on health and training, along with other

appropriate courses (Ismail et al., 2017). For this reason, it is critical for the role of PAWE to be further strengthened to support the elderly who choose to live independently and ensure their well-being.

Table 1: Objectives and Concepts of PAWE in Malaysia

The Objectives of PAWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To guide implementing organizations in the management and operation of PAWE • To increase the community's knowledge and awareness of programmes under PAWE • To ensure the management of PAWE meets service quality standards to benefit the elderly
The Concepts of PAWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to facilitate the elderly in carrying out activities, particularly those who live by themselves during the absence of working family members. • A platform to conduct activities that may enable the elderly to learn to be independent, interact with each other and perform tasks together with their local community, gain knowledge and skills leading to voluntary contribution to society. • The implementation of this programme is entrusted to voluntary charitable organizations that play a vital role in meeting the needs of elderly in Malaysia. • The local community is encouraged to be actively involved or make any contribution so that the programmes at PAWE can reflect the full involvement of all parties in ensuring the elderly's welfare and well-being.

Source: Ibrahim et al (2016)

Religious activity is one of the main sources of emotional support for the elderly that they favour consistent with their increasing age (Mahyuddin et al., 2018). For Muslim elderly, their natural return to Allah SWT is a move considered to be aligned with positive trajectories; mortality awareness is heightened in their increasingly limited abilities and competencies, realization that death and worldly realities are short-lived. Thus, spiritual practice becomes their primary goal to enable them to live the remaining life in obedience to Allah SWT. A study carried out by Tamat and Vellymalay (2019) found that the opportunities of studying religion and its rituals, productive pursuits, great friendship prospects, as well as security and health assurance are the edge gained by the elderly in care centers or activities managed by the Social Welfare Department (JKM). The elderly was deemed to be calmer, able to engage in a variety of productive activities and valued the various facilities provided to meet their needs from time to time. This is upheld by Baharuddin and Ismail (2013) who asserted that spiritual intelligence is the highest intelligence in an individual. Those who possess the intelligence will consistently be contented and composed even in the face of innumerable challenges and tribulations of life.

Methodology

The qualitative study design emphasizes on a case study via semi-structured interview instrument on officers/administrators of Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) around Pahang to investigate the religious activities and issues faced by Muslim elderly in that respective PAWE. Purposive sampling involved 7 PAWE officers/administrators from 7

different districts in Pahang, namely Bera, Cameron Highland, Jengka, Maran, Muadzam, Raub and Temerloh districts. ATLAS ti9 software-assisted content analysis was utilized to assess the interview findings.

Table 1: Interview Questions

Questions	
Q1	What are the daily activities available at PAWE?
Q2	What are the daily activities favoured by the elderly at PAWE?
Q3	What types of religious activities are conducted at PAWE?
Q4	To what extent do these religious activities impact the elderly's emotional, attitude, spiritual and mental changes?
Q5	Can you share your experiences in managing various activities as the administrator in PAWE?
Q6	What are the problems faced by this elderly during the activities at PAWE?
Q7	Can you explain the problems of these elderly from a religious aspect during the activities at PAWE?
Q8	What are your hopes and contributions pertaining the issue of care and welfare of the elderly at PAWE?

Source: Research interview

Table 2: PAWE Data Coding in the Study

PAWE	Codes
PAWE Bera	P1
PAWE Cameron Highland	P2
PAWE Jengka	P3
PAWE Maran	P4
PAWE Muadzam	P5
PAWE Raub	P6
PAWE Temerloh	P7

Source: Study sampling

Results and Discussions

Table 3: Interview Feedback

Items	Feedback
Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation, knitting and aerobics workout classes (P1) • Walking, religious and relaxation programmes with the elderly (P2) • Talks, Qur'anic recitation classes, talks, aerobic exercise sessions, sports-related physical activities, and blood donation (P3) • Religious classes such as iqra recitation, fardu ain and marhaban, congkak activities, colouring, checkers board game, jawi writing and essay competitions (P4) • Programmes that covered 5 dimensions like positive aging, active aging, healthy aging, productive aging, and supportive aging (P5) • Active Aging Programme features Taichi, as the majority of PAWE Raub members are Chinese. As consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslim PAWE members participated in online Al-Quran tadarus programme. (P6) • Yasin recitation ceremony and weekly committee meeting, celebration of certain occasions such as asyura day, Independence Day, birthday and tahlil (P7)
Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation and aerobics workout classes (P1) • Relaxation programmes with PAWE members (P2) • Relaxing aerobics workout and talks (P3) • Educational programmes that include dinner, religious classes, and potluck (P4) • Religious-based positive aging programmes (P5) • Most of the preferred daily activities are those that are leisure in nature, in a form of light exercise with PAWE members (P6) • Cooking, aerobics workout and dodol stirring activities (P7)
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation class (P1) • Recitation class, tadarus & Qur'an Hour (P2) • Talks and Qur'anic classes to improve tajwid (P3) • Religious classes, recitation of iqra and fardu ain and marhaban (P4) • Tasawuf, tadarus, tazkirah, tadabbur and tajwid classes (P5) • Although PAWE organized activities based on the Qur'an for muslims, there are no religious programmes for non-muslims (P6) • Religious and health talks monthly (P7)
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add knowledge pertaining to religion (P1) • Give positive impacts and attract the elderly's interest (P2) • By sharing religious reminders and meeting friends (P3) • By making them become fascinated in religious activities, during question-and-answer sessions, to take notes and reviewing their recitation of the Qur'an (P4) • PAWE members who were active appeared more cheerful, positive, and approachable (P5) • With Qur'an tadarus-related activities, it is possible to forge meaningful relationship between PAWE members and utilize the time available to deepen

	<p>the Qur'anic knowledge as well as enabling them to use their time productively (P6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fun (P7)
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time spent with the cheerful elderly performing their favourite activities was entertaining (P1)• Gained a few new experiences after dealing with tricky elderly who probed me both mentally and emotionally (P2)• The programmes organized at PAWE were active and successful, thanks to the assistance given by retired elderly (P3)• There were no issues, only feeling of contentment with the elderly's presence at PAWE (P4)• The elderly at PAWE tend to choose spiritual activities that are considered popular (P5)• To handle PAWE at PAWE Committee district is crucial in shaping the management of PAWE especially the programmes that need to be planned. The committee's failure will reflect the unsuccessful objectives in the establishment of PAWE at the district level. (P6)• Had fun in handling those elderly in wheelchairs and crutches with the available disabled facilities (P7)
Q6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No problem (P1, P2)• Family matters such as dependent on their children (P3)• Misconceptions about PAWE that it only provides activities for the elderly instead of caring for them (P4)• The elderly requires guidance and assistance such as filling in forms due to vision and hearing problems (P5)• The main challenge during a planned activity is transportation (P6)• Issues related to COVID-19 pandemic and no transportation means to get to PAWE (P7)
Q7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of writing skills (P1)• No problem (P2, P5, P6, P7)• Not proficient in reciting the Qur'an (P3, P4)
Q8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the children to always be in touch with their parents, so that they do not feel lonely, and their well-being is taken care of (P1)• Sports and religious programmes were well organized to achieve the targeted goals (P3)• It is hoped that the response to PAWE activities will increase, especially religious activities (P4)• It is hoped that PAWE will be better known for its function in implementing activities related to the elderly and receive positive response from time to time (P5)• It is hoped that the Senior Citizens Act can be enacted as soon as possible to ensure that the lives of elderly are protected. (P6)• To increase the number of programmes available, generate the economy and expect cooperation and response from the local community (P7)

Q= Question, P=Participant

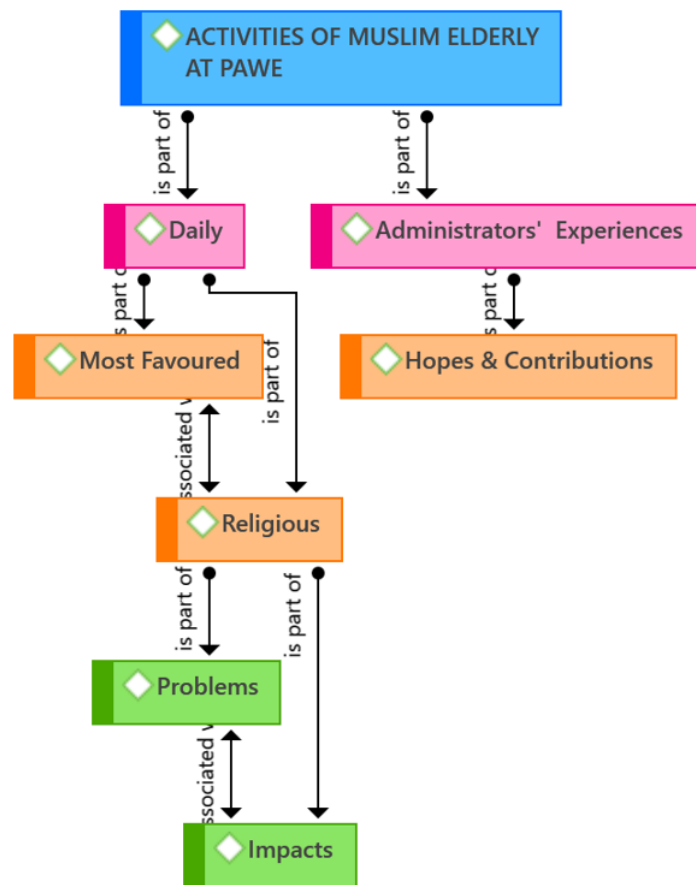


Figure 1: Networking of Activities for Muslim Senior Citizens at PAWE

Religious Activities for Muslim Elderly at PAWE, Pahang

"Reciting the Qur'an is the most popular religious activity since it generates sentiments of fun and cheerfulness among the elderly in PAWE" (P1)

"Amongst the religious activities carried out are recitation classes, tadarus and Qur'an Hour" (P2)

"I fancy his way of giving talks. Had fun with his style. There are also Qur'an recitation classes for those who intend to improve their recitation and tajwid" (P3)

"He holds religious classes, recitation of iqra and fardu ain every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 40 participants, from 8.30 AM to 12 PM. Also included is a marhaban class for 20 partakers" (P4)

"Tasawuf, tadarus, tazkirah and tadabbur tajwid class" (P5)

"Although there is no religious programme prepared by PAWE for non-Muslims, the centre managed Qur'an-related activities for muslims" (P6)

“Religious talks are held every month” (P7)

Based on the feedback from PAWE’s officers/administrators above (P1-P7), it has been deduced that the most common religious activities that are administered at PAWE is recitation (comprising of tadarus al-Qur’an, Qur’an Hour & Iqra’), classes for religious studies such as fardhu ain and tasawuf, talks/ tazkirah on a daily/weekly/monthly basis and marhaban classes. Furthermore, the impacts of these religious activities arranged by PAWE on the elderly are favourable, in a sense that they have caused them to be more cheerful, positive, approachable, and fun. In addition, the activities even helped to increase their existing knowledge related to tajwid as well as strengthening relationships among the elderly in PAWE. Therefore, it is concluded that the religious activities conducted at PAWE are in accordance with the wishes of the elderly and have always received encouraging response every now and then.

Challenges Encountered by Muslim Elderly at PAWE, Pahang

“Lack of writing skills” (P1)

“I realized that there is a great deal of elderly who are not proficient in Qur’anic recitation. Hence, the start of Qur’anic classes” (P3)

“Since it has been brought to the attention of PAWE that there are elderly women incapable of reciting the Qur’an, they have then introduced Iqra recitation classes” (P4)

“Blurred vision and hearing loss” (P5)

“The main issue in the course of a planned activity is in terms of specific transportation factor for those elderly who are staying in rural areas” (P6)

Based on the feedback from PAWE’s officers/administrators above, it was revealed that there are a few obstacles at PAWE involving religious activities for example, poor level of Qur’anic recitation skills, lack of writing skills, problems related to the elderly’s vision and hearing, as well as matters related to transportation, especially for the elderly in rural areas. Despite this, PAWE has taken proactive steps by organizing Iqra’ classes in an effort to improve the level of Qur’anic recitation from the basics so that the elderly at PAWE is able to recite the Qur’an well and fluently in the future. On top of that, PAWE also strives to provide transportation to the elderly who need it, particularly those staying in rural areas, to successfully attend the religious programmes and achieve the set objectives. Therefore, it is concluded that PAWE has done their utmost best to diligently find effective solutions to overcome the problems faced by this elderly, so they can be resolved in the best way.

Conclusion

Religious activities managed by the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in Pahang are viewed to have met the needs and demands of the elderly who participated in the activities there. Nonetheless, there are some minor challenges faced by the elderly such as poor level of Qur’an recitation skills and that pertaining to transportation for those living in rural areas which have been successfully solved by the PAWE effectively and efficiently. Other drawbacks like lack of writing skills, poor vision and hearing can be subdued with additional programmes

to enhance abilities and arouse their interest to record the religious knowledge learned so that it can be reviewed later.

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