

## IMPROVING MUSLIM ELDERLY NEEDS AND WELL-BEING IN MALAYSIA: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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**Abstract:** *Due to a demographic shift in Malaysia marked by a significant increase in the population of older people, the welfare of the elderly is becoming more important, particularly in the Muslim community. This narrative review thoroughly examines the obstacles and possibilities for enhancing the well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia. The evaluation examines cultural factors, healthcare services, social and community support, economic empowerment, technological advancements, and government programmes. We start by analysing Islamic principles and cultural nuances that influence senior care, then explore the distinct role of family and community in assisting Muslim elderly folks. The healthcare services landscape is examined, focusing on accessibility, affordability, and the incorporation of Islamic beliefs into healthcare procedures. The study examines social and community support systems, highlighting the significance of social relationships and programmes in addressing social isolation and loneliness in older individuals. An analysis is conducted on the economic difficulties encountered by older Muslims, examining current initiatives and programmes aimed at improving financial stability and autonomy. The article reveals the current state of technology, including recent breakthroughs, the use of technology by older Muslims, and suggestions for incorporating technology to improve their well-being. The evaluation concludes with a thorough examination of existing government programmes and policies, assessing their efficacy, and suggesting ideas for enhancing policies and introducing new initiatives. In conclusion, the narrative review summarises important findings and gives a call to action to enhance the well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia. The review emphasises the significance*

*of customised interventions based on cultural and religious factors and promotes cooperative initiatives among policymakers, healthcare experts, and community leaders. The text outlines future research and implementation directions, highlighting the importance of further exploring cultural nuances, evaluating policy efficacy, and developing specific methods to improve the well-being of the ageing Muslim population in Malaysia.*

**Keywords:** *Muslim, elderly needs, well-being, Malaysia*

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## **Introduction**

Malaysia is experiencing a significant demographic shift with its rapidly aging population. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) projects that by 2030, individuals aged 60 and older will constitute 20% of the total population, marking a notable increase from prior years (DOSM, 2021). This demographic change presents complex challenges and opportunities, impacting various aspects of society including healthcare systems, family structures, and social support systems (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2021).

Within this broader demographic shift, the elderly Muslim population in Malaysia warrants special attention. Islam, which is deeply woven into the fabric of Malaysian society, influences the aging process through its unique cultural and religious aspects (Mahvish et al., 2023). Islamic teachings emphasize respect, care, and support for the elderly, which translates into specific needs and expectations within the Muslim community (Bensaid & Grine, 2014). Therefore, understanding the intersection of Islam and aging is crucial for healthcare providers and policymakers to effectively address the needs of this growing demographic.

## **Objective**

This review has a dual purpose. The primary objective is to assess the present condition of senior Muslims in Malaysia in terms of their well-being, through an examination of scholarly papers, reports, and research. This in-depth comprehension will emphasise the difficulties and possibilities encountered by this particular group. Furthermore, the evaluation aims to pinpoint deficiencies and obstacles within the current support systems specifically designed for elderly individuals who practise the Islamic faith. The review seeks to enhance the quality of life for older Muslims by carefully analysing their unique needs and developing effective policies and activities that prioritise cultural and religious sensitivity.

## **Methodology**

This narrative review synthesizes findings from a variety of sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and studies conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The review process involved a systematic search of electronic databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, using keywords like “elderly Muslims in Malaysia,” “Islamic principles and elderly care,” “healthcare accessibility for elderly,” and “economic empowerment of elderly Muslims.” Articles were selected based on their relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to understanding the well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia. The findings were categorized into themes such as cultural considerations, healthcare services, social support, economic empowerment, technological innovations, and government policies.

## Literature Review

### **Cultural Considerations in Elderly Care**

Islamic beliefs provide a profound ethical framework for the treatment of the elderly, emphasizing compassion, respect, and family responsibilities (Abdullah, 2016; Bensaid & Grine, 2014). The Quran emphasizes the importance of showing love and respect towards parents and elders, with Surah Al-Isra (17:23) highlighting the need to show kindness to parents. This verse sets a model for family care and support (Al-Quran, 17:23). Hadith literature further reinforces these concepts, with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlighting the esteemed position of the elderly in society, as mentioned in Sahih al-Bukhari, 5988. These teachings encourage Muslims to provide physical, emotional, and financial support to elderly family members, ensuring their dignity and well-being in old age.

Malaysia's diverse cultural heritage significantly impacts the lives of elderly Muslims. The societal value placed on "filial piety" underscores the responsibility of children to care for their elderly parents (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2022). Cultural rituals, such as collective prayers and traditional holidays, enhance the well-being of elderly individuals by fostering a sense of connection and purpose within the community (Tierney et al., 2022). Understanding these cultural intricacies is essential for customizing support systems that respect and align with cultural values.

Family structures in Malaysia traditionally serve as the primary source of support for the elderly. Research by Taufik et al. (2021) highlights the crucial role of the family unit in ensuring the well-being of aging Muslims. Elderly family members often receive substantial emotional, material, and financial support from extended families (Ayoob, 2020). Furthermore, community bonds, strengthened through shared religious practices and neighborhood ties, contribute to a broader support network for the elderly (Ismail, 2021). Exploring these familial and communal dynamics is essential to identify effective practices and potential areas for improvement in supporting elderly Muslims.

### **Healthcare Services for the Muslim Elderly**

Access to healthcare services is crucial for maintaining the well-being of the elderly Muslim community in Malaysia (Shah et al., 2021). However, disparities in accessibility and affordability persist, particularly among marginalized populations. A study by Lim et al. (2023) highlights the inequalities in healthcare access for older Malaysians, influenced by factors such as geographic location and socioeconomic status. Affordability remains a significant issue, with out-of-pocket expenses posing financial challenges for aging adults and their families. Comprehensive policies are needed to expand healthcare infrastructure, improve healthcare financing mechanisms, and prioritize preventive care activities for the elderly population (Lu & Cheng, 2023).

Incorporating Islamic values into healthcare practices can significantly enhance the quality of care for elderly Muslim patients. Islamic bioethics, derived from the Quran and Hadith, provide guidance for ethical decision-making in healthcare (Mahmood et al., 2023). The concept of "Maslahah" (public interest) emphasizes the importance of prioritizing patient welfare (Mat Salleh et al., 2022; T.M. & Ismail Hasanuddin, 2023; Al-Quran, 2:185). Additionally, the concept of "Shifa" encompasses holistic well-being, including physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. Healthcare providers can implement these principles by creating a culturally sensitive

and spiritually supportive environment, respecting patients' religious beliefs, and engaging in collaborative decision-making with patients and their families (Attum et al., 2023).

Despite efforts to improve healthcare services, specific challenges remain within the current system. These include fragmented healthcare systems, inadequate specialized geriatric care, and a shortage of healthcare professionals trained in aged care (He & Tang, 2021). Moreover, healthcare providers often lack sufficient cultural competency to understand the unique needs of elderly Muslim individuals (Attum et al., 2023). To address these challenges, various solutions are proposed, such as enhancing geriatric training for healthcare professionals, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration in elderly care, and implementing cultural competence training programs. Additionally, leveraging technology and telemedicine can improve healthcare access, particularly in remote areas.

### **Social and Community Support**

Social connections are vital for the holistic well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia (Sa'ari et al., 2023). Numerous studies underscore the positive impact of strong social ties on the mental and emotional well-being of older adults (Kim et al., 2021). Islam advocates for strong family bonds and active community participation, recognizing the interconnectedness of social relationships with spiritual and mental health (Al-Quran, 13:25). This section highlights the significant role of social connections in the cultural context of promoting purpose, companionship, and emotional support among elderly Muslims (Taufik et al., 2021).

The Muslim community in Malaysia has established longstanding communal support networks to enhance the well-being of the elderly (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2022). Religious congregations, neighborhood groups, and community centers often serve as central hubs for social interactions and support (Siette et al., 2021). Research by Amir et al. (2021) examines the significance of religious groups in fostering communal cohesion and providing physical support to the elderly. Strengthening informal networks within communities and extended families can bolster a robust community support system (Abdi et al., 2019). This section explores the current structures, assesses their strengths, and identifies areas for improvement to meet the evolving needs of an aging Muslim population (Jumadi et al., 2019).

Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues among the elderly, negatively impacting their mental health and overall well-being (Asante & Tuffour, 2022). Cultural and religious practices can play a protective role against isolation for elderly Muslims in Malaysia (Abdul Mutalib et al., 2023). This section examines initiatives and programs aimed at addressing social isolation, highlighting the potential contributions of community organizations, technology-based solutions, and intergenerational programs (Phang et al., 2023). Research by Krzeczowska et al. (2021) suggests that intergenerational activities, such as mentorship programs linking youth and the elderly, can help mitigate social isolation.

### **Economic Empowerment and Financial Security**

Economic challenges are prevalent among the elderly in Malaysia, particularly within the Muslim community (Shahar et al., 2019). Factors such as limited pension benefits, inflation, and rising healthcare costs contribute to financial strain (Azlinda et al., 2020). This section explores the specific economic challenges faced by elderly Muslims, analyzing how these challenges intersect with cultural and religious factors (Shahar et al., 2019). Understanding the complex economic landscape is crucial for developing targeted interventions to alleviate financial difficulties among the elderly Muslim population.

Several initiatives and programs have been implemented to enhance financial security and independence for the elderly in Malaysia. Research by Sulistyowati et al. (2020) highlights government programs, such as the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and Social Security Organization (SOCSO), designed to provide financial assistance and retirement savings (EPF, 2023). This section examines the effectiveness of these programs and identifies areas for improvement to ensure better economic outcomes for elderly Muslims. Additionally, the potential of waqf (endowment) and zakat (almsgiving) systems in providing financial support to the elderly is explored (Ammar et al., 2023).

Enhancing financial literacy and promoting economic empowerment among elderly Muslims are critical steps towards improving their financial well-being. Programs that offer financial education, entrepreneurship opportunities, and skills training can help elderly individuals achieve greater financial independence (Azlinda et al., 2020). Research by Ali et al. (2021) suggests that financial literacy programs tailored to the specific needs of elderly Muslims can significantly impact their financial decision-making. This section explores successful case studies and best practices in promoting economic empowerment and financial literacy among the elderly population.

### **Technological Innovations and Their Role in Elderly Care**

Technological innovations have the potential to revolutionize elderly care in Malaysia, enhancing the quality of life for elderly Muslims (Jumadi et al., 2019). This section examines the adoption of technology in elderly care, including telemedicine, remote monitoring systems, and assistive devices (Phang et al., 2023). Research by Chai et al. (2022) highlights the benefits of telemedicine in improving healthcare access, especially for elderly individuals in remote areas. The integration of technology can address challenges related to mobility, healthcare access, and social connectivity.

Digital literacy is essential for elderly Muslims to effectively utilize technological advancements in healthcare and social support (Sa'ari et al., 2023). However, many elderly individuals face barriers to digital literacy, such as lack of access to technology, limited technological skills, and cultural resistance (Khalid et al., 2020). This section explores strategies to enhance digital literacy among elderly Muslims, including training programs, community workshops, and intergenerational initiatives (Amir et al., 2021). Research by Siette et al. (2021) suggests that community-based digital literacy programs can significantly improve the technological proficiency of elderly individuals.

Assistive technologies, including smart home devices, wearable health monitors, and mobility aids, can greatly enhance the independence and safety of elderly Muslims (Chai et al., 2022). This section examines the latest innovations in assistive technologies and their potential impact on elderly care. Research by Jumadi et al. (2019) highlights successful case studies of assistive technology adoption in Malaysia. The potential benefits and challenges associated with implementing assistive technologies are discussed, along with recommendations for future advancements.

### **Government Policies and Support Systems**

The Malaysian government has implemented various policies and programs to support elderly care (Lu & Cheng, 2023). This section provides an overview of these policies, including the National Policy for Older Persons and the Action Plan for Older Persons (UNFPA, 2022). The effectiveness of these policies in addressing the needs of elderly Muslims is assessed, with a

focus on healthcare access, social support, and economic security. Research by Sulistyowati et al. (2020) highlights the strengths and limitations of existing policies, identifying areas for improvement.

Despite the implementation of supportive policies, significant challenges and gaps remain in addressing the needs of elderly Muslims (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2022). This section examines the barriers to effective policy implementation, such as insufficient funding, fragmented services, and lack of cultural sensitivity. Research by Attum et al. (2023) suggests that policies often fail to adequately consider the unique cultural and religious needs of elderly Muslims. Identifying these challenges is crucial for developing more inclusive and effective policies.

Enhancing policies to better support elderly Muslims requires a multi-faceted approach (Abdul Mutalib et al., 2023). This section provides recommendations for policy enhancements, including increasing funding for elderly care programs, improving coordination between government agencies, and incorporating cultural and religious considerations into policy frameworks (T.M. & Ismail Hasanuddin, 2023). Research by Mahmood et al. (2023) suggests that community involvement and public-private partnerships can play a significant role in enhancing policy effectiveness. The potential benefits of these recommendations for the well-being of elderly Muslims are discussed.

## Discussion

The literature analysis presented provides valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges and potential solutions for improving the well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia. By examining key topics such as healthcare accessibility, social support systems, economic security, technological innovations, government policies, and the integration of Islamic values with modern care, it becomes evident that addressing the diverse needs of this demographic requires a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach.

| Topic                           | Authors   | Findings  | Implications  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Healthcare Accessibility</b> | Mat Salleh et al. (2022), MOH (2022), Bensaid & Grine (2014)        | Healthcare accessibility is critical for elderly Muslims, with issues such as distance to healthcare facilities and lack of geriatric specialists identified as major challenges. | Improvements in healthcare infrastructure and increased training of geriatric specialists are essential to meet the growing needs of elderly Muslims. |
| <b>Social Support Systems</b>   | Abdul Mutalib et al. (2023), Ismail (2021), Md Nor & Ghazali (2022) | Social support from family, community, and religious organizations plays a crucial role in the well-being of elderly Muslims.   | Strengthening community bonds and increasing support from religious organizations can significantly enhance the social well-being of elderly Muslims. |
| <b>Economic Security</b>        | Azlinda et al. (2020), Ali et al. (2021), EPF                       | Economic challenges include inadequate  | Enhancing financial literacy programs and leveraging Islamic financial  |

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|--|--|--|---|
|  | (2023), Ammar et al. (2023)                                      | retirement savings and limited financial literacy among elderly Muslims. Waqf and zakat systems can provide financial support.   | instruments like waqf and zakat can improve economic security for elderly Muslims.  |
| <b>Technological Innovations</b>                   | Jumadi et al. (2019), Chai et al. (2022), Phang et al. (2023)    | Technology, such as telemedicine and assistive devices, can greatly improve the quality of life for elderly Muslims by addressing healthcare access and mobility issues.       | Promoting the adoption of technology in elderly care and improving digital literacy among elderly Muslims are essential for leveraging these innovations effectively. |
| <b>Digital Literacy</b>                            | Khalid et al. (2020), Sa'ari et al. (2023), Amir et al. (2021)   | Barriers to digital literacy include lack of access to technology and limited technological skills. Community-based digital literacy programs are effective.                   | Implementing community-based digital literacy programs can significantly enhance the ability of elderly Muslims to utilize technological advancements in healthcare.  |
| <b>Government Policies and Support Systems</b>     | Lu & Cheng (2023), Sulistyowati et al. (2020), UNFPA (2022)      | Existing policies like the National Policy for Older Persons aim to support elderly care, but challenges such as insufficient funding and lack of cultural sensitivity remain. | Enhancing funding, improving policy coordination, and incorporating cultural and religious considerations into policies can better support elderly Muslims.           |
| <b>Integrating Islamic Values with Modern Care</b> | Mahmood et al. (2023), Mat Salleh et al. (2022), Abdullah (2016) | Integrating Islamic values into care practices can enhance the well-being of elderly Muslims. Successful case studies highlight the benefits of this integration.              | Developing care practices that incorporate Islamic values can provide more culturally sensitive and effective support for elderly Muslims.                            |

**Addressing Intersectional Challenges** Lim et al. (2023), Sa'ari et al. (2023) Elderly Muslims Adopting a holistic face intersectional approach that considers the diverse needs of elderly Muslims is crucial for addressing intersectional challenges related to gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location, which impact their well-being.

Access to healthcare services remains a significant challenge for elderly Muslims, with issues such as geographic distance and lack of specialized geriatric care impacting their well-being (Lim et al., 2023). Strengthening healthcare infrastructure and increasing training for geriatric specialists are essential steps to address these challenges (He & Tang, 2021). Moreover, leveraging social support systems from family, community, and religious organizations can provide crucial emotional and financial assistance to elderly Muslims, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life (Taufik et al., 2021).

Economic challenges, including inadequate retirement savings and limited financial literacy, pose significant barriers to the well-being of elderly Muslims (Shahar et al., 2019). Introducing financial literacy programs and leveraging Islamic financial instruments like waqf and zakat can help alleviate these challenges and promote economic security among elderly Muslims (Sulistiyowati et al., 2023). Additionally, technological innovations, such as telemedicine and assistive devices, hold great promise in improving healthcare access and mobility for elderly Muslims (Fasoli et al., 2023). However, barriers to digital literacy must be addressed through community-based programs to ensure that elderly Muslims can effectively utilize these technological advancements (Abu Seman et al., 2020).

Existing government policies, such as the National Policy for Older Persons, aim to support elderly care in Malaysia. However, challenges such as insufficient funding and lack of cultural sensitivity remain (Chung et al., 2020). Enhancing funding, improving policy coordination, and incorporating cultural and religious considerations into policies are crucial steps to better support elderly Muslims (Loke et al., 2020). Furthermore, integrating Islamic values into care practices can provide more culturally sensitive and effective support for elderly Muslims (Mahmood et al., 2023). By aligning care practices with Islamic principles of compassion, respect, and family responsibilities, healthcare providers can enhance the well-being of elderly Muslims and foster a more inclusive healthcare system.

In conclusion, addressing the diverse needs of elderly Muslims in Malaysia requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, healthcare providers, community leaders, and society at large. By adopting a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach that integrates Islamic values with modern care practices, we can enhance the well-being of elderly Muslims and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for aging populations in Malaysia.

### Future Research Directions

This review highlights the need for further research to address gaps in understanding the well-being of elderly Muslims in Malaysia (Md Nor & Ghazali, 2021). Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of interventions, explore the experiences



of diverse subgroups within the elderly Muslim population, and develop culturally sensitive measurement tools (Ismail, 2021). Additionally, research on the effectiveness of policy implementations and technological innovations in elderly care is recommended.

## Conclusion

This review underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs of elderly Muslims in Malaysia. Integrating Islamic values with modern care practices, enhancing healthcare accessibility, promoting social support, ensuring economic empowerment, and leveraging technological innovations are crucial steps towards improving the well-being of this growing demographic. By addressing the identified challenges and gaps, and implementing culturally sensitive policies and initiatives, Malaysia can create a supportive environment that enhances the quality of life for elderly Muslims.

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