

# Labour Participation Factors Among Ageing Population in Kota Kinabalu Sabah: Preliminary Insight

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i7/22201>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i7/22201

**Published Date:** 18 July 2024

## Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to present the reviews of the recent literature related to the labour participation of the ageing population. Taking into consideration of the human population worldwide is rapidly ageing and the socioeconomic climate is continuously shifting, a number of governments recognise the critical nature of the economic welfare of the elderly. In the context of Malaysia, the increasing trend of the ageing population will eventually render the country into an aged nation by 2030. Given this expanding demographic, it demonstrates an effective management in Malaysia's health-care system, however, additional consideration is necessary concerning the economic welfare of these elderly individuals. This paper anticipates exploring the labour participation of elderly individual with focus of Kota Kinabalu Sabah as an initiative to empower their economic welfare.

**Keywords:** Ageing Population, Labour Participation, Demographic, Socioeconomic, Health, Income

## Introduction

This paper presents the discussion on the labour participation of the ageing population. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defined an ageing society as one in which over 7% of the population is 65 or older. Malaysia is set to be on the path to establish more aged friendly cities. The population ageing is established as the changes in the age structure of the population that lead to a rise in the proportion of elderly individual. Elder shares are increasing globally because of declining fertility, increasing longevity, and the progression of large-sized cohorts to older ages (Bloom & Luca, 2016; Land & Lamb, 2016; R. Lee, 2016; Légaré, 2015). Accordingly, population ageing is a phenomenon that should not be overlooked due to the extensive social, economic, and cultural implications in which it presents to individuals, families, and society (Koris et al., 2019). Corresponding to Bass and Caro (2003), productive ageing promotes elderly individuals to preserve economic stability,

social connections, and a sense of rationale during their later years of life (in addition to K. Lee, 2018; Thanakwang & Isaramalai, 2013; Vozikaki et al., 2017). On the contrary, elderly individuals with limited financial support would then have restricted availability to food, shelter, health care, and social inclusion which would then affect their overall quality of life (World Health Organization, 2007b). In accordance with a recent study concluded by Aznan et al (2019), the rising unemployment of elderly individuals would result in financial strain seeing as these group would further continue to rely on others. For this reason, empowering elderly individual through safeguarding their economy with labour-force participation in addition to their engagement could further constitute one of the long-term social and financial solutions for Malaysia's ageing population. Thus, that of a nation should embrace demographic shifts as a prospect to thrive.

### **Ageing in Malaysia**

The ageing population is the current most pressing demographic challenge. Elder shares are expanding over the world due to decreased fertility and increased lifespan, as well as the growing population size of advanced age. Changes in employment, savings, consumption, economic growth, asset values, and the fiscal balance resulted as a result of this occurrence. The world today is experiencing a significant transformation that focuses on population age structure, with considerable societal and policy implications. This demographic transition might affect labour force participation and savings rates, raise health-care costs, and put a pressure on pension and health-care plans. Malaysia has experienced an acceleration in the intensity of demographic transition in recent years, attributed to a precipitous substantial reduction in fertility and a steady increase in life expectancy. Accordingly, 2030 is to be the transition point for Malaysia to avert into an ageing society, as indicate by the international convention as having 7 percent or more of the population aged 65 and above. Thus, Malaysia is expected to gradually be aged in a rapid pace in the long term.

Corresponding to the global scenario, Malaysia, as a developing country, is seeing an increase in the number of elderly people (Abdul Hamid, 2019; Adnan, 2017; Harun, 2017; Christina & Yuen, 2017; Nur et al., 2017; Abdul Rashid et al., 2016; Momtaz et al., 2016; Melissa, 2015; Mohd et al., 2015; Abdul Rashid, Azizah, & Rohana, 2014; Mohd, 2014; Yusof & Zulkifli, 2014; Jamaluddin & Foo, 2013; Zawawi, 2013; Abdul Hamid, 2012; Kong, 2012; Chan et al., 2010; Doris, Idris, & Abu Bakar, 2010; Masud et al., 2006; Poo & Doris, 2005; Mat & Md. Taha, 2000; Doris & Abu Bakar, 1999). In detail, the proportion of Malaysia's aging population has been depicted in Figure 1 from 2010 to 2040. Up until the year 2020, it was anticipated that the total number of older adults would grow to 3.3 million, making up around 11% of the overall population (Abdul Hamid, 2019).

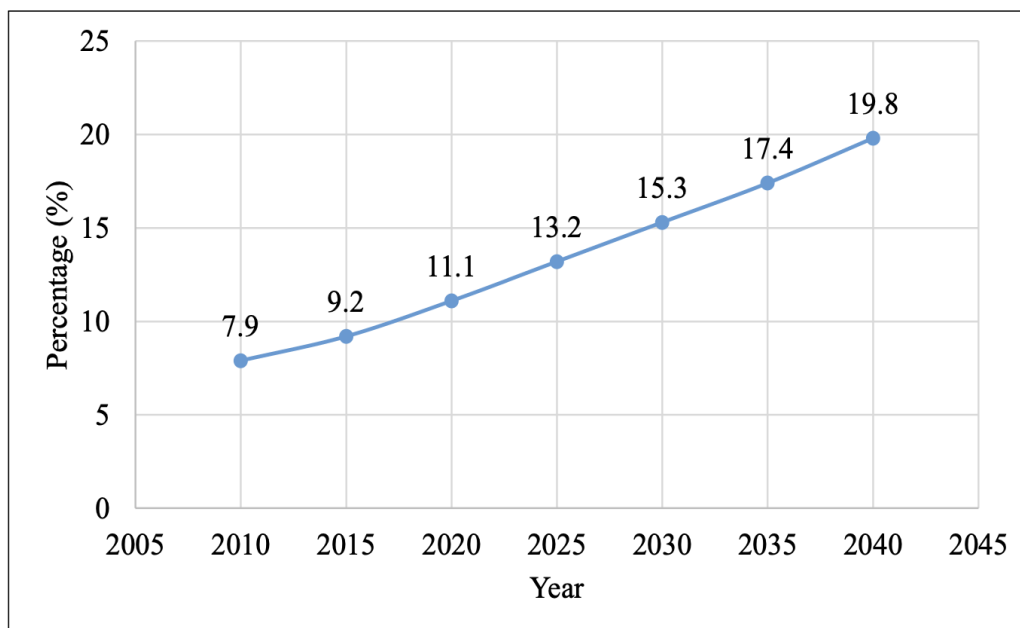


Figure 1: Percentage of Malaysian Ageing Population from 2010-2040 (Estimated)

Source: Abdul Hamid (2019)

Previously, Mat and Md. Taha (2000) presented their paper at the 21st Population Census Conference 2003 in Kyoto, Japan, and had emphasised the growing tendency of the proportion of elderly people in this nation from 1960 to 2010. Further intricacies of this growing tendency are shown in

Table 1.

Table 1

*The Past, Present and Future of the Ageing Population in Malaysia (1960-2010)*

Year	Number of Elderly Individuals ('000)	Percentage of Elderly Individuals from Total Malaysia Population (%)
1960	386.6	4.8
1970	546.1	5.2
1980	745.2	5.7
1991	1032.3	5.9
2000	1398.5	6.3
2010	2134.9	7.4

Source: Mat and Md Taha (2000)

*Note: In 2014, the number of elderly people has reached 2.653 million (National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia, 2016)*

In the year 1960, overall share of the proportion of elderly people was about 4.8 percent (386.6 thousand), as indicated in

Table 1. This number subsequently climbed to 6.3 percent (1.3985 million) in 2000 and 7.4 percent (2, 134.9 million) in 2010. The number of elderly Malaysians is likewise steadily growing over the following year. In accordance with the United Nations (2017b), the Malaysian ageing population in the year 2016 stood over 3.1624 million (10% of the total 31

624 million Malaysian population). This proportion is predicted to rise by 15% by the year 2030. As a result of this predicament, this country is expected to develop into an aged nation (United Nations, 2017b; United Nations, 2009). Granted, the percentage of elderly people is anticipated to climb to 17.4% and 19.8% in 2035 and 2040, respectively (Salleh, 2017). As illustrated in Figure 2.3, it depicts the rate of increase of the elder population more so than the pace of growth of the entire Malaysian population during a thirty-year period, beginning in 1991 and ending in 2020. To summarise, the growth rate percentage of the elderly may be larger than the growth rate percentage of the Malaysian population as a whole. Somewhat as practical matter, it could have been stated that the number of elderly people is continually increasing, whereas the overall population of Malaysia is feeble. In the case that if growth rate difference continues to widen, it is therefore inevitable that the number of elderly Malaysians will outnumber the total Malaysian population.

### ***Factors Affecting Elderly Individual Labour Participation***

A greater life expectancy among the elderly individuals presently indicates that more people are living to be older (United Nations, 2013; Evandrou et al., 2016). Under those circumstances, elderly individuals can anticipate having an extended expenditure phase, which could put them under economic burden to finance their old age and induce them to exceed their allocated income (Chan et al., 2010a). As has been apparent throughout many developing countries, elderly people's labour income continues to play a role in the primary modalities of old-age support (Vodopivec and Arunatilake, 2011); consequently, highlighting the elements that may spark or sustain labour participation among the elderly individuals becomes extremely significant (Giang and Le, 2015). While many researches in which they explored the factors of elderly people's labour participation had also endeavoured to examine the correlation around demographic factors and labour participation (Clark and Anker, 1990; Gwee and Fernandez, 2010; Adhikari et al., 2011; Giang and Le, 2015; Reddy, 2016), health and also its linkage to labour participation (Metz and Schultz, 2002a; van Gameren, 2008; Do et al., 2014), as well as socio-economic factors that motivate labour participation actions (Hill, 2002; Raymo et al., 2004; Giang and Le, 2015).

### **Demographic Factors**

Age is one of the demographic characteristics that may impact elderly individuals' labour participation decisions (Hill, 2002; Gwee and Fernandez, 2010). Malaysia's population has grown at a rapid rate as compared with the rest of Southeast Asia countries during the previous ten years, averaging of 1.53 percent per year. The growth rate is forecasted to linger positive for a reasonably long period of time until 2070 (UN, 2019) in which it will be followed with expected signal as to the beginning of Malaysia's population decline for the first point in its history. Given the comparatively substantial population growth to date, Malaysia has undergone considerable shifts in its demographic pattern. Malaysia's fast ageing has been fuelled by a sharp drop in fertility rates combined with a steady increase in life expectancy, particularly among women (KPWKM, 2015; Mahari et al., 2011; Noor et al., 2019). Considering the period of 1960 to 1964, Malaysia's total fertility rate taken as the average range of births a woman had through her lifetime was 6.4, however, between 2010 and 2015, the fertility rate fell to the restoration range of 2.1 (Noor et al., 2019). Comparable with the fertility rate issue, since the 1950s, life expectancy has risen over more by over two decades. Above all, the growth in female mortality rate has been exceptionally remarkable where it is currently

stood at 78 years old, four years older in comparison to men (Mahari et al., 2011; Nai Peng et al., 2020).

Throughout Malaysia, there are significant differences in ageing patterns—on a notable point, the stage of ageing differs by more than a decade between ethnic cohorts (Tey et al., 2016). As 2010, Malaysia's Chinese population had officially formed into an ageing population, with 7percent of the population aged 65 and older, except for the *Bumiputera* population, consisting of the Malays and several other indigenous groups of people, is only expected to avert its shift into an ageing society by the year 2023, considerably about 13 years later. These disparities imply a lower total fertility rate between the *Bumiputeras*, which fell to 2.8 in 2010 (Ravallion, 2020a, 2020b), as opposed to 1.8 amongst the Chinese of the same year (Elsawahli et al., 2016; Nai Peng et al., 2020).

Aside from the stage of ageing, the rate of ageing differs significantly between each state (Ravallion, 2020a, 2020b). Selangor, in particular, is younger and has a relatively large percentage of working-age adults in comparison to the rest of Malaysia. With that being the case, Selangor will only create the change into an ageing civilization by 2023, three years behind the rest of Malaysia. Nevertheless, Selangor's rate of ageing is expected to be so significant that the state would become an aged community in only 15 years (Masud et al., 2015). As a result, it is expected to shift into an aged state by 2038, six years prior to the rest of Malaysia. Selangor has the highest proportion of elderly individuals across Malaysia, followed by Johor, although Sabah and Sarawak are fast approaching behind. In particular, Selangor, Johor, as well as Perak—three comparatively prosperous states—have the most elderly individuals, with Sarawak or otherwise Sabah of East Malaysia coming in fourth and seventh, accordingly.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

In Malaysia, co-residence between elderly and young adults is still taken as prevalent; merely 19 percent of family residences having to contain at least one senior member with no reported younger family members in 2016. Otherwise, co-residing can therefore be desirable for the elderly individuals as these provides convenience to work cooperatively, minimizing the risk of slipping towards economic hardship. According to previous studies, joint living arrangements involving adult children decrease the probability of elderly family members labour participation (Pang et al., 2004; Connelly et al., 2014). Similarly, cross-sectional research in Thailand found that the elderly individuals who co-lived with their adult children were 31percent less likely to be employed (Adhikari et al., 2011). In the same way, co-residence further enables the conveniences of childcare or elderly care among families, whereas bigger families, which include the elderly individuals residing with younger family members, can enable expenses conservation per capita by pooling societal facilities including housing and utilities. Nevertheless, co-residence applies to a condition in which an elderly individual resides with at least one working-age adult between the ages of 15 and 64.

Consequently, a working-age adult heads around 56 percent of families containing elderly family members. On the other hand, there are 44 percent in comparison of households with elderly individuals headed by elderly adults otherwise, a fraction less than half of all families with elderly individuals (18.9 percent) had no non-elderly members. For another, about more or less equal share of families led by elderly individuals have senior family members and adults of working age although there are no dependents in the households. Apart from that, a substantially smaller proportion of households are headed by aged adults notably 5.8percent of all households with family member over the age of 65, of

which elderly family members, working-age children, and younger members live in three-generation households. That is to say, a working-age adult is in sole care of a vast proportion of three-generation households. Notably, around the age of 60, one's income commences to decrease considerably, though particularly, revenue through economic activities like those of paid labour and self-employment is essential.

### **Health Factors**

Existing studies had expressed that health factors are essential in evaluating an individual's labour productivity seeing as they exert considerable influence on elderly individual's capability and competence to execute involvement in labour (Banks et al., 2016; Coile et al., 2016; García-Gómez et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2021; Jürges et al., 2016; Nuez, 2010; Wise, 2018b, 2018a). It is, however, deemed as demanding to initiate a thorough analysis of the notion of health due to its broadness and complexity (Banks et al., 2016). Once more from the same literature, Banks (2016) indicate that previous studies have used a range of concepts and variables to define health considering that there is no universally accepted definition of health. Subjective health measurements, such as perceived or self-reported health status, were often utilised in published research papers on elderly individuals Giang et al (2019); Nguyen & Giang (2021), degenerative disease or ailment Giang & Le (2018); Hjærtström et al (2018), medical contentment Carter et al (2013) moreover issues with wellbeing Abdul Manaf et al (2016); Banerjee et al (2013) from the perspective of both physical and mental health (Bogue, 2003; Dobrzyn-Matusiak et al., 2014; Pharr et al., 2012). Functional difficulties were also addressed in the studies that explores elderly individual's capability to perform labour with regards to their overall wellbeing Gupta et al (2014); Hairi et al (2010), disability Cutler et al (2015); Stamm et al (2016) constraints, as well as difficulty executing tasks (Cutler et al., 2015; Hairi et al., 2010; Hoi et al., 2011).

An individual's medical predicament is an equally integral aspect which could encompass the decision to engage in labour among elderly individuals (Do et al., 2014). Several medical issues were presented to be linked to a decreased in contribution toward labour productivity and lesser consumption expenditure, which was also indicate that health likewise effects labour productivity (Schofield et al., 2008, 2013; Temple & Williams, 2018). Do et al (2014) observed that poor health impedes the intentions to engage in the labour market, and even more so for occupations mandating physical tasks, in addition to the reduced probability of re-entering the labour force after retirement. In addition, Adhikari et al (2011) found that the number of chronic diseases is itself a significant predictor of labour participation action between many elderly individuals.

### **Income Factors**

The constraints on accessing financial assistance following retirement would most certainly push elderly individuals to work (van Gameren, 2008). According to van Gameren (2008)'s findings, the number of employees that paid retirement benefits in Mexico were comparatively small in comparison to other nations, which could also reflect why the elderly individuals residing in that country remained in the labour force for substantially longer period. Similarly, Malaysia would be another nation having non-universal social security programmes, with Employees' Provident Funds (EPF) addition to government pensions offered only to employees throughout the formal and government sectors, respectively (Ong, 2002). In light of this, it is hardly unforeseen that most elderly Malaysians without social security are reliant on their own labour income during old age (Sulaiman and Masud, 2012;



Haron et al., 2013). Equally important, according to Sulaiman and Masud (2012), present career would be the leading determinant of income security for Malaysians aged 55-75 across Peninsular Malaysia. Whereas accessibility to occupational pensions, in contrast, particularly linked with early retirement amongst employees in the more industrialized countries (Phillipson and Smith, 2005). Along with that, financial limitation could have a substantial influence in elderly people's decisions to continue in the labour force in the United Kingdom (Phillipson and Smith, 2005).

Individuals experiencing economic hardship were more likely to participate in the labour market, as according to Adhikari et al (2011), who observed that elderly individuals with outstanding debt were approximately twice as likely as people who were not in debt to have entered the labour force. In this case, financial instability, such as a lack of or inadequate pension provision and debt, would raise the likelihood of elderly people to continue in the labour force, whereas financial security would induce employees to leave the labour force (Phillipson and Smith, 2005). Consequently, the requirement for financial stability during old age might then underlie reasons for individuals in poor nations to retain their jobs throughout old age United Nations (2013), amounting to a shortage of finances to fund their consumption throughout old age (van Gameren, 2008). Likewise, financial security might have been associated with the accessibility of additional income-generating opportunities. The presence of alternative sources of income can alter elderly people's labour participation (Ng and Sia, 2011).

### **Culture Factors**

Economists have hesitated to become particularly engaged with the subject of culture and its relevance to development of economics and its growth for a range of factors. Despite this, there is widespread unanimity that culture may have served as an influence in directing a population forward on a selective direction, however, a study by Egnal & Landes in 1999 has highlighted a topic of dissatisfaction towards as what could be interpreted as implicit criticism of a specified culture has stifled substantial public discussion. Under the circumstances, that may well perhaps radically be straightforward, along with the search for aspects that could influence the rate and pattern of economic development and growth, economic experts or otherwise government policymakers have primarily centralised extensive focus on empirical events, through factors in which it could well be assessed and adjusted through certain manner by policy shifts. In terms of economic inequalities, governments often do not play a role in some kind of cultural vacuum and as a result, measures intended at stimulating economic development must then be adapted to the existing culture in order to make progress (Glaeser et al., 2004, 2011; Greif, 1994; Ikenberry & Fukuyama, 1996; Minkov & Blagoev, 2009; Press, 2013; Tabellini, 2010).

Conversely, there is hardly any several cultures that remain equivalently conducive to the economic development and growth (Barro, 1991). In contrast to the economic differences, when it comes to economic progress, the world is anything but homogenous. According to the review of relevant literature, in particular Castellani (2019), cultures that emphasize individual duties whilst also ensuring the equitable opportunity for individuals are highly capable of promoting long-term economic development and growth. According to empirical findings, culture influences a wide range of economic interests. Social experiments conducted in labs, in particular, suggested that culture influences individuals' perspectives in regards of risk, choice, and selflessness (Benjamin et al., 2010). In that respect, wide and diverse research has also suggested that cultural impacts make a considerable difference on

risk aversion and time preferences (Rieger et al., 2015, 2020; Wang et al., 2016). Culture possesses considerable influence on a country's corporate governance structural system (Breuer & Salzmänn, 2011, 2012; Duong et al., 2016; Humphries & Whelan, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the inclination of Malaysian elderly individuals to participate in labour as a direct consequence of both the productive ageing culture and monetary orientations. Recognising that Malaysia is expected to transition into an aged nation by 2030, there is an urgent need to facilitate the increasing number of ageing population an expedient and constructive consideration. With regard to the elderly individuals who have been mentally and physically driven and capable, participating in labour has been shown to be one of the viable long-term alternatives.

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