

## Muslim Elderly Care based on *Maqasid Shariah*: A Case Study of Pahang State, Malaysia

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### Abstract

There has been an increased number of elder abuse cases in recent years due to ageing populations in many countries. As emerging evidence indicates, the prevalence of abuse and neglect of older people in our country reflects the heirs' and descendants' failure to apply the Islamic principle of *maqasid shariah* (Objective of Shariah) in caring for Muslim elderly people, which is strongly supported by Islam. From this point of departure, the purpose of this study is to examine the care for elderly Muslim citizens based on the established principle of *maqasid shariah*, as well as the support and charity issues associated with the Muslim elderly, with special consideration given to the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) Pahang Darul Makmur. A qualitative case study design was used in the current study involving officers or administrators of the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) in a district of Pahang state using a semi-structured interview instrument. The sample was purposely selected from seven districts in Pahang, the *Bera*, *Cameron Highland*, *Jengka*, *Maran*, *Muadzam*, *Raub*, and *Temerloh* districts. An analysis of the interview findings was conducted using content analysis. As a result of this study, PAWE is recognized as an important institution for elderly care activities and fulfilling leisure time following the principle of *maqasid shariah*. The responsibility of supporting parents, especially the elderly, lies with their children. The assistance provided by other institutions and bodies, such as the Department of Community Welfare (JKM), serves only as additional support in achieving the goals of the Senior Citizens Policy (DWEN).

**Keywords:** Muslim Elderly Care, Maqasid Shariah, Case Study, Pahang

## Introduction

As revealed by Allah SWT through prophets, Islam is not simply a religion of faith and worship, but one that offers guidance on how to live a life that reflects human instincts and lifespan (Bensaid & Grine, 2014). Quran, hadith, and Islamic Shariah give comprehensive instructions concerning the framework of behavior or attitudes toward elder care (Abdullah, 2016) based on the overarching principles to ensure the development of successful Muslim ageing based on Islamic principles that are consistent with Islamic law (Zin et al., 2008; Noor et al., 2022). Over the next three decades, Malaysia's population will age to become an ageing country, with a high percentage of seniors in the country. Senior citizens are defined by the World Health Organization (2013) as those over 65 years old, while Malaysia defines them as those over 60 years old (Jaafar et al., 2021). Worldwide, there is a major debate about the growing elderly population and the growing number of cases of abuse and neglect. Through its Assembly Resolution 46/91 on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1991, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has taken these matters seriously and given them appropriate attention (Salleh et al., 2022).

According to the Senior Citizens Policy (DWEN), ensuring the welfare and well-being of the elderly is a top priority for ensuring the development of healthy and protected seniors. There is an increasing problem of elderly abuse and neglect due to a lack of social support, increasing living costs, high medical costs, and irresponsible attitude of the heirs (Noor et al., 2022). In reality, eldercare is very complex because it encompasses a wide range of services such as daily living, life assistance, health care, disease treatment, nursing, financial assistance, and psychological counseling. The elderly needs full attention as they are prone to emotional volatility, crying, egos, and many other issues (Wee & Sanmargaraja, 2014). Seniors who reside in welfare homes and those who live at home with their children seem to experience more loneliness. A sense of loneliness is related to feeling unappreciated, and unnecessary, the lack of social contact, and the internal psychological retreat of the individual (Hassan et al., 2013). Loneliness is the top mental health issue faced by seniors (Zakaria et al., 2013). Numerous issues relating to the elderly are prevalent today, including issues of neglect by family members, the need for daycare facilities, loneliness, and social isolation. As Malaysia is expected to have a growing number of senior citizens by 2030, these serious issues require immediate attention and need to be addressed.

A key takeaway from Islam is *maqasid shariah*, an overarching framework that can help provide security for elderly people and ensure their well-being. Studies by Ab Rahman et. al (2019) propose a model of elderly citizen management based on *maqasid shariah* that ensures seniors' well-being is ensured through spiritual sustainability, basic and health needs, lifelong education, family and community, economic well-being, and income (Noor et al., 2022). In essence, *maqasid shariah* plays a crucial role in Muslim life for enjoyment in this world and the next. All parties must prioritize the benefit (*maslahah*) of Muslim citizens, especially senior citizens, which is the primary goal of the *maqasid* itself. To ensure that elderly care is always protected, the concept of *maqasid shariah* should be applied. In Malaysia, it seems prudent to emphasize the application of *maqasid shariah* to elderly care as studies have shown that it is one of the most suitable approaches for elder care. It is strongly believed that implementing this principle among caregivers would help to safeguard the interests of individuals, families, communities, and countries, which implies blessings in this world and the hereafter should always be our top priority. In addition to that, Muslims

would be brought up to understand the importance of nursing care for the elderly and they would be made aware of the importance of providing for their needs. It should be considered that it is not merely the responsibility of the child to the parents, but also strongly emphasized and asserted by *Syara'* for the benefit of both the child and the community (Ab Rahman et al., 2022).

- Taking this into account, this study aims to examine elderly care based on the *maqasid shariah* principle and the support and charity issues among senior citizens from the standpoint of the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) Pahang State.

### Literature Review

Islam is a religion that encompasses all aspects of human existence. In addition to underpinning the main faith and moral principles of society, Islam also brings a fair and just Islamic ruling system. Shariah is a way of life that provides guidance, teaching, and ruling to human behavior and its relationship to each other throughout life, both individually and socially (HARAHAP, 2020). *Maqasid Shariah*, on the other hand, is a concept closely related to Islamic law's objectives. The concept of this well-known principle has been upheld and promoted by three (3) key figures, namely Imam al-Ghazali (w.505H/111M), Imam al-Shatibi (w.790H/1388M), and al-Shaykh Muhammad al-T\*hir ibn 'èshur (1394H/1973M) (Jabbar, 2011). Imam al-Ghazali presented this knowledge from his teacher, the prominent scholar of Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (w.478 H/1085M) who divided the *maqasid shariah* into five categories. Later on, Imam al-Ghazali rearranged and classified it into three main objectives namely *shariah daruriyyat*, *hajiyyat*, and *tahsiniyyat*. Further, this has been thoroughly discussed by Imam al-Shaṭībī in his book, *Kitab al-Muwafaqat* which contains the relationship between *maqasid shariah* with *Usul fiqh*. It was finally systematically structured which eventually became a field of its own by Muhammad al-Shaykh al-Tahir ibn 'èshur. In addition to that, *maqasid shariah* also refers to wisdom (hikmah), the reason and the goal for the revelation of such a ruling in Islamic legal principles (Ashur & Al-Tahir, 2001), whose primary function is to promote and uphold public interest (maslahah) and prevent harm (mafsadah) (Ghazali, 2018). According to Wahbah Zujayli, *maqasid shariah's* spirit can be attributed to its underlying value and aim, namely *maslahah* (Mutakin, 2017), which lies within its underlying value.

*Maslahat* has been categorized into three (3) forms; *daruriyat*, *hajiyyat*, and *tahsiniyyat* (Toriquddin, 2014) which does not only provide interest to a person but beyond that, it brings benefits to family, community, and country. Each of these levels provides different levels of importance based on human needs. *Daruriyat* is the highest level of need that can cause death and the greatest damage if not met. *Hajiyyat* is the second stage to provide space and fulfil human rights, while *tahsiniyyat* is the third stage in the form of additional requirements (Al-Syatibi, 2003) which is not harmful if not fulfilled but it beautifies and refines it, for example, a beautiful decoration in a mosque or a place to bring a calmer and more focused feel to prayer. As outlined in *Maqasid Shariyyah*, the needs of senior citizens should be protected via the protection of religion, intellect, life, lineage, and property (Toriquddin, 2013). Worship is essential to religious preservation. The maintenance of our health is a necessity for the protection of our life. Through lifelong learning, the mind can be maintained, and inheritance can be preserved through marriage. Through *nafaqah* (financial support) and service provision, property preservation could be maintained (Husain, 2019). In the context of Islam, all these theoretical elements are perfectly aligned with the needs of elderly people that must be protected and maintained to enhance their quality of life.

Older citizens should be allowed to contribute their knowledge, skills, and experiences to society and the country. Aside from this, elderly citizens should also be able to serve the community and provide services voluntarily, or in the appropriate position based on their interests and abilities, as well as establish associations and participate in the associations to meet the *maqasid shariah* requirement for mental health protection (Salleh et al., 2022). For optimal levels of physical, psychological, and emotional well-being, access to health care is also essential, as are social services, legal and treatment institutions, so that autonomy, protection, and care can be enhanced to fulfill the *maqasid shariah* in protecting life (Salleh et al., 2022).

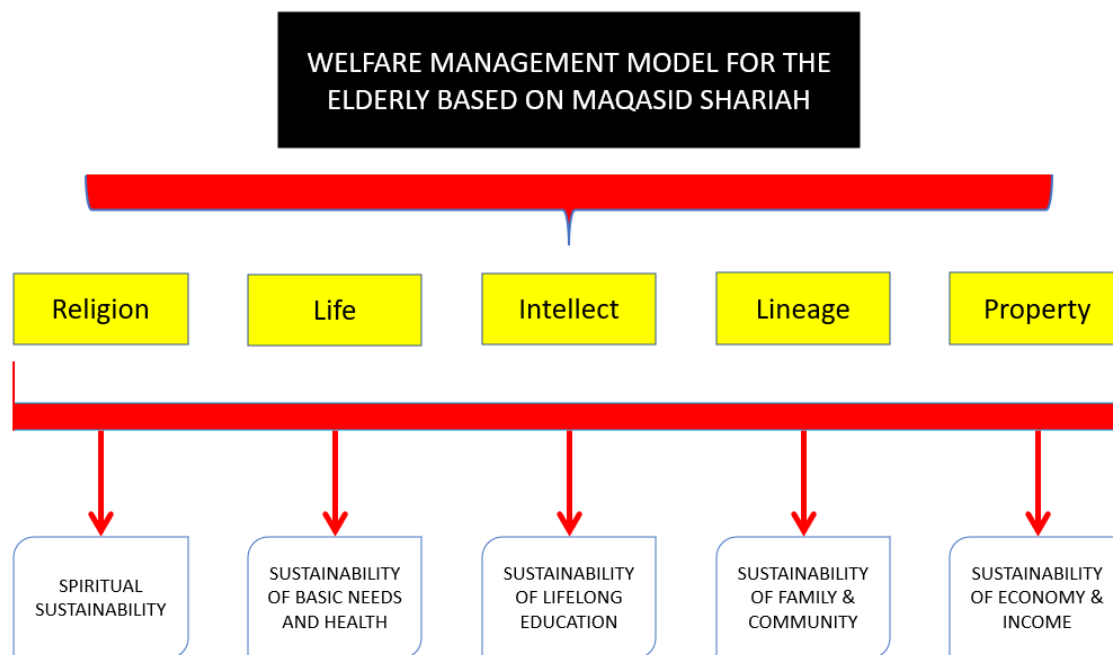


Figure 1: Welfare Management Model for the Elderly based on *Maqasid Syariah* (Ab Rahman et al., 2019)

### Methodology

As part of the qualitative study, officers/administrators of Senior Citizens Activity Centers (PAWE) in the Pahang area were interviewed using a semi-structured interview instrument to examine the Muslim elderly care based on *Maqasid Shariyyah* and the support and welfare issues that Muslim elderly face from that perspective. Specifically, seven PAW officers/administrators from seven districts in Pahang were selected using a purposive sampling method: Bera, Cameron Highland, Jengka, Maran, Muadzam, Raub, and Temerloh. Findings from the interview were analyzed using content analysis.

Table 1

*Interview Questions*

| Questions |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>Q1</b> | • To what extent are religious aspects of senior care considered when implementing senior care arrangements and measures?       |
| <b>Q2</b> | • What arrangements are made for providing senior care and what measures are taken to handle health issues confronting seniors? |
| <b>Q3</b> | • Is there a method or approach to overcome the security issues that seniors face in terms of senior care arrangements?         |
| <b>Q4</b> | • What measures are implemented in terms of education to overcome senior problems?  |
| <b>Q5</b> | • What measures and arrangements are implemented to overcome property-related problems among seniors?                           |

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     | FEEDBACKS   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>Q1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular worship care, the attitude of children who lack attention related to senior worship and should be improved from time to time (P1)</li> <li>• Organized due to the factors of having performed the pilgrimage, the attitude of the children depends on the upbringing by the parents and needs continuous exposure through programs and religious lectures (P3)</li> <li>• Worship care is assisted by caring children and a dedicated worship space is needed by seniors for their comfort (P4)</li> <li>• Identify the basis of religious knowledge of each senior citizen for improvement according to needs (P5)</li> <li>• The attitude of seniors and the role of children are very important in their parenting affairs (P6)</li> <li>• The organization of lectures and recitation of Yasin, assisted by children, and dedicated worship spaces should be fully utilized with various religious activities such as yasin reading, weekly tahlil, and lectures (P7)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Q2</b> | • Children are concerned about their parents' health (P1, P5)   |

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- Health care is more concentrated at home with the help of children, medicines are eaten around the clock and always take care of self-health from time to time (P3)
  - PAWE provides beds and restrooms for seniors who are sick while in PAWE, children care very much about their parents and PAWE performs weekly pilgrimages for seniors who live alone (P4)
  - Good level of health of seniors and PAWE provide health exposure through programs and lectures (P5, P7)
  - Children are responsible for their parent's health care & the involvement of government agencies & NGOs can improve the health of seniors (P6)
- 
- Q3**
- Are not encouraged to live alone, are encouraged to always communicate with their children and neighbors, and are solely responsible for the safety of their parents (P3)
  - PAWE always gives reminders related to personal, family, and personal safety. PAWE is responsible for the safety of senior citizens and provides Oku space (P4, P7)
  - Seniors very clearly understand the respective personal safety factors, the PAWE is responsible for the safety of seniors while on the PAWE premises and there is a safety program such as fire prevention and the periodic use of proper and safe medicines (P5)
  - Digital security needs to be given special emphasis by senior citizens, all related parties to senior citizens need to be responsible for senior security in line with the Senior Citizens Policy (DWEN) and senior citizens themselves need to be sensitive to issues and planning arranged by senior stakeholders (P6)
- 
- Q4**
- Lifelong education is very important for seniors to control their emotions and mentality through religious and leisure programs organized by PAWE (P2)
  - It is necessary to fill free time and silence through leisure programs (P3)
  - Need to go through various activities in PAWE such as leisure, cooperation, gardening, and fishing (P4)
  - Open space for seniors to continue to sow service, share and remain active through the variety of activities that are of interest to them (P5)
  - Very important that can be achieved through religious activities driven by PAWE and religious institutions such as mosques (P6)
  - Held a lecture on emotional management and mental health (P7)
- 
- Q5**
- Rely on each other's families and require early preparation when young by saving to ensure life in old age (P3)
  - Should be organized lectures related to property and *faraid* management awareness (P4, P7)
  - Give more disclosure related to property management such as grants, wills, and so on (P5)
  - Controlled and stable. The government needs to help seniors in a targeted manner so that assistance can be provided to improve their level of life (P6)
- 

Q= Question, P=Participant

### Maqasid Shariyyah-based Muslim Senior Citizen Care

"The PAWE always gives insight and discusses with senior citizens" (P1)

"PAWE holds various activities and programs covering spiritual and physical aspects" (P4, P7)

"PAWE plays a role in ensuring that seniors remain active and productive, do not feel excluded, and are still needed for the benefit of society" (P5)

"The PAWE focuses solely on religious activities" (P6)

Using the feedback from the above PAWE officers/administrators (P1, P4, P7), it has been determined that PAWE is responsible for ensuring that senior citizens under their care remain mentally, emotionally, and physically active and productive through the organization of various activities favored by senior citizens in PAWE. The existence of PAWE as an external support system is also essential to the community to ensure that their parents have a safe place to do their activities. According to this view, it is parallel to the principles of *maqasid shariah*, which aims to protect religion, dignity, life, intellectual (mind), and property.

### Issues of Support and Welfare for Senior Muslim Citizens

"The PAWE always gives insight and discusses with senior citizens" (P1)

"Children do make the turn-off watch or pilgrimage. It's just that whatever it is, it turns to the little kids' education first. If he is educated well and given an emphasis on religious aspects, pray all of it, I see it is good" (P2)

"There are children who take advantage of parental income sources, take farm produce and get caught up in drug addiction. They desperately need support from the outside" (P4)

"The party distributing assistance to seniors needs to act urgently to safeguard their welfare through mobilizers such as Home Help Services" (P5)

"A significant issue towards seniors is from the transport point of view. The hustle and bustle of children working outdoors make their parents' affairs quite limited. The movement of seniors to markets or shops and hospitals or clinics is disrupted in addition to the increasing cost of taxis" (P6)

"Children need to care and monitor their parents and take care of their welfare" (Q7)

Considering the feedback from the PAWE officers/administrators above, it has been concluded that children are responsible for supporting and caring for seniors, especially parents. Similarly, Islamic law requires children to perform good deeds for their parents at all stages of their lives, not only during their lives but also after their deaths. As additional support, external assistance, such as the Department of Community Welfare (JKM), is needed to manage seniors. Despite the demands of their careers and daily activities, children cannot ignore the responsibility of caring for their parents. The day-to-day affairs of parents should be well organized, including food and beverage needs, treatment, and education throughout their lives, especially religious activities to ensure that their children will be spiritually and

physically stable, safe and healthy in their old age. Rapid, efficient, and effective distribution of assistance to seniors must also be in place, especially among seniors belonging to low-income families (B40), ensuring that the government and senior stakeholders in our country are always attentive to their well-being.

### **Conclusion**

As a part of *maqasid shariah* care for senior citizens, heirs or children are fully responsible for ensuring the five (5) principles of *maqasid shariah dharuriyyat*, which include worship and religious programs, health, safety, lifelong education, and good property management. A suitable and safe place for senior citizens to participate in activities and spend their free time is provided by the Senior Citizens Activity Center (PAWE) under the Department of Community Welfare (JKM). The senior management needs to be properly organized, involving food and drink, treatment and education throughout life, and especially religious activities to ensure that senior citizens are stable in both spiritual and physical aspects. Therefore, the community should support the Malaysian government in empowering PAWE and adding provisions for upgrading existing facilities to make them safer, more dynamic, and more in tune with the changing needs of senior citizens. Above all, it is strongly believed that according to the teachings of Islam, heirs and family members who receive external assistance can improve the standard of living for seniors.

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