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Book Review

AL-KAWAKIBI, Abdul Rahman. *The Nature of Tyranny and The Devastating Results of Oppression*. Foreword by Leon T. Goldsmith. Translated by Amer Chaikhouni. London: Hurst, 2021, 152 pp. Hardback.
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The Issue of the Elderly Homeless in Kuala Lumpur: Family Neglect and Its Contributing Factors

Zulkhairol Shukri*

Nik Norliati Fitri Md Nor**

Nurul Raffiza Norzehan***

Abstract: Issues concerning elderly neglect and depression among the elderly have been frequently discussed. These issues include leaving the elderly alone after their children migrate to the city, sending elderly parents to welfare centres, leaving elderly parents in hospitals and disposing of parents without mercy. Nevertheless, it is rare to read about senior citizens who choose to live as homeless due to being dumped by their family members, including their spouses, children or siblings, difficulty in getting a job and conflict with family members. This qualitative study involved ten elderly homeless in Kuala Lumpur (KL) city. They were subjected to in-depth interviews to determine the reasons they live as homeless in KL city. Although they had become homeless, deep in their hearts, they still expect their family members, especially their children, to take care of their welfare and wish to stay with the family until the end of their lives. This article is an initiative from the researchers to raise awareness about the healthcare of the elderly especially among their children to be more responsible and provide support to parents until the end of their lives.

Keywords: Elderly, Homeless, Kuala Lumpur, Children, Family support

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Abstrak: Isu pengabaian dan kemurungan dalam kalangan warga emas kerap dibincangkan. Isu ini termasuk meninggalkan warga emas tinggal seorang diri setelah anak-anak berhijrah ke bandar, menghantar ibu bapa tua ke rumah kebajikan, meninggalkan mereka di hospital dan membuang mereka tanpa belas kasihan. Namun, jarang terbaca mengenai warga emas yang memilih untuk menjadi gelandangan akibat dibuang oleh ahli keluarga. Kajian kualitatif yang dijalankan ini melibatkan sepuluh warga emas gelandangan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur. Temubual mendalam telah dilakukan bagi mengkaji punca mereka memilih untuk menjadi gelandangan di Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur. Walaupun hidup sebagai gelandangan, namun jauh di sudut hati mereka tetap mengharapkan ahli keluarga terutama anak-anak untuk menjaga dan ingin tinggal bersama keluarga hingga ke akhir hayat. Artikel ini adalah satu inisiatif daripada pengkaji untuk meningkatkan kesedaran tentang penjagaan kesihatan warga tua terutamanya dikalangan anak-anak supaya menjadi lebih bertanggungjawab dan memberikan sokongan terhadap ibu bapa sehingga ke akhir hayat mereka.

Kata kunci: warga emas, gelandangan, Kuala Lumpur, anak-anak, sokongan keluarga

Introduction

The issue of neglecting the elderly has recently gained attention from various sections of the society. In general, neglecting the elderly can be defined as the act of intentionally leaving the elderly, such as leaving the elderlies in hospitals, nursing homes, or public places. Such incidents are often linked to happenings whereby an individual feels overburdened or inadequately experienced to care for the elderly. The perpetrators, who neglect these elderlies, tend to justify their actions for numerous reasons. Nevertheless, the elderly are inevitably in a state of confusion and despair. Gauging the number of elderly neglected is very difficult because most neglect cases are not reported to the authorities. Besides, many of them are not only physically neglected but also mentally and emotionally. Although this issue has received the attention of many parties, demographic data for the homeless elderly community still does not exist officially in any government department or agency. Thus this study attempts to collect demographic data on a small scale and focusses on neglected seniors and explicitly discusses elderly who choose homeless life as a living arrangement.

Literature Review

Elderly neglect by the family, especially children, causes the elderly to distance themselves from their families. They choose homelessness as a path of peace or self-comfort to get out of the cocoon of grief. Nowadays, the homeless group, comprising senior citizens, increases annually. The increase indicates a severe problem in the community development context. Living as homeless against the backdrop of dirty places in alleys, under bridges, on sidewalks, and places suitable for shelter is very worrying. This group of senior citizens, on average, have a poor and minimal level of personal health. At the age of over 60, they have various health problems. Their health risks worsen in an unclean and unsafe environment.

Neglect also includes and leads to abuse. The issue of elderly neglect is not given serious attention compared to child abuse and child neglect cases. Most of the concerned cases emphasise the neglect and abuse of children and women. Such cases and trends must be given attention because of the concern and impact on society. Therefore, this study was undertaken to scientifically examine the problem of neglect experienced by elderly homeless people in KL city centre. This study emphasises two aspects by exploring in detail the factors contributing to the phenomenon of neglect among the homeless and providing awareness to all parties about the concern for the elderly. The awareness will help improve the life quality of the elderly and achieve harmony and well-being of society holistically.

Numerous previous studies examined the neglected elderly by focussing on the elderly living in elderly care institutions. Scopus is regarded as a reliable search engine that simplifies the literature review process by classifying categories and items for easy search, download, and selection of research articles. Scopus' exceptional coverage of emerging economies provides access to vital, high-quality research undertaken (particularly in health and social care) and published in developing nations which might be missing in other databases. The search was conducted by searching for specific terms, such as 'elder abuse', 'factor', 'cause', and 'welfare home'. Seniors over the age of 80 were reportedly more likely to be abused in welfare homes than those under 80. Pillemer et al. (2016) observed that older women have a higher tendency to be abused in welfare homes. In several other studies,

caregiver abuse, while providing treatment to the elderly with physical disabilities and cognitive impairments, tend to be a determinant factor of abuse and neglect of the elderly, particularly in Japan. This systematic review emphasised that the characteristics of the elderly and perpetrators lead to the abuse and neglect of the elderly in welfare homes.

Mohd Yunus (2021) found that most studies only focussed on the development of the elderly in the community. Nevertheless, studies on abuse in institutional settings, such as Nursery Homes (NH), are lacking. The lack of evidence is particularly evident in low and middle-income countries. Estimates from the National Centre on Elder Abuse revealed that 44% of long-term caregivers of the elderly form only 7% of perpetrators abusing the elderly. Compared to seniors living in communities, those living in institutions for seniors were found to be at a higher risk of being abused because they are more physically dependent on their caregivers, lack social support, and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Other factors linked to persecution occurring in NH are inadequate staff training, lack of research in the field of the elderly, uncondusive working conditions or environments, funding problems, and the absence of appropriate guidelines and screening tools. Moreover, weaknesses in law enforcement have become a common phenomenon in low and middle-income countries. Hence, a lack of monitoring and regulation exist concerning the abuse of the elderly.

Bidin and Mohd Yusoff (2015) discovered that some countries had created specific laws as a mechanism to address and prevent the neglect of the elderly. In Malaysia, elderly abuse is recognised as a form of domestic violence. The legislation dealing with matters related to domestic violence is the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (Act 521), which should be read in conjunction with the Penal Code. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) is the primary legislation that provides protection and civil rehabilitation to abuse victims. In contrast, the Penal Code deals with the punishment of the respective perpetrators. Although numerous previous studies explored the issue of elder abuse in Malaysia, only a small number have studied the legal protection offered by the DVA to elderly victims. This study aimed to discuss the affordability and adequacy of civil rehabilitation provided to abused seniors under the DVA and further analyses the adequacy and appropriateness of the Act for protecting elderly abuse victims.

Kethineni and Rajendran (2018), in their study in America, argued that ‘filial responsibility law’ is a law (duty of care) that requires adult children to take care of their parents, especially frail parents. Some states have extended this obligation to close relatives. This responsibility can be enforced through law or morally motivated as a part of religious and cultural teachings. Custodial duties are difficult to define, enforce, and interpret due to the cultural diversity in America. When such cases come to the attention of Twenty-Nine courts, no general laws are related to varying filial responsibilities in defining concepts and determining means of law enforcement. Since most elder abuse involves neglect rather than outright abuse, this situation poses a complex challenge for law enforcement in different states. This study reviewed state legislation and scholarly resources to evaluate the respective laws, court decisions, and current state enforcement issues related to elder neglect in America.

Rzeszut (2017) discussed elder abuse by focussing specifically on neglecting the elderly. Most states in the United States (US) do not recognise elderly neglect as a form of elder abuse in their laws. This study also proposed a legal model that can be used as an example in any country to ensure that elderly neglect is more frequently reported. Neglecting the elderly is an undesirable phenomenon, and those contributing to this problem should be held accountable for the crimes committed. This study emphasised the need for the caregivers of the elderly to adhere to guidelines and be responsible when performing duties and know-how to seek help to prevent elder abuse in the US. Family Courts in the US should gazette the neglect of the elderly as a serious crime and do not take this issue lightly as this ignorance will lead to severe repercussions. Neglect of the elderly should be included in elder abuse laws in every state and given serious thought when meting punishment for such offences.

Masut@Masod and Abdul Mutalib (2019) believed that senior citizens should have similar citizenship rights as others. They are entitled to have the same potential to live a healthy and satisfactory quality of life. Although Malaysia is evolving towards an ageing society, the protection of the elderly in private care centres must be improved. Existing laws (Care Centre Act 1993 and Penal Code) preserve and protect the rights and benefits of the elderly. However, no clear guidance is available on the protection of the elderly in Malaysia, especially those abused in private care centres that cater for the elderly. No specific

provision in Malaysian law addresses the problem of abuse and crime against the elderly in private care centres. This study examined whether Malaysian laws that protect the elderly from elder abuse in private care centres effectively address the issue. The methodology used in this study was the library study method that analysed texts and documents related to elder protection law and elder abuse. This study recommended that the government create a comprehensive sentencing framework to protect the elderly in private care centres and strengthen the preventive measures contained in the Care Centres Act 1993 and the existing laws.

The economic stability of an elderly individual determines the maximum well-being and lifestyle in old age. Hashim et al (2019) reported that older people with a high quality of stable life experience a low level of neglect. In contrast, culture, tradition, and religion play a crucial role in caring for the elderly and their emotional well-being. The study's implications strongly advocated the importance of the elderly's well-being in shaping a society's life quality. The study recommended that the government gazette a new policy on the elderly's welfare. Despite the neglect of the elderly, the care shown by family members or close relatives towards the elderly in a family setting is still practised by families in Asia. Although the traditional family has evolved into a nuclear family, some still practice tradition, culture, and religious education regarding the caring of the elderly. In addition, stakeholders and policymakers should ensure that greater attention is given to the elderly. In the case of money misappropriation, all forms of financial assistance must adhere to transparency policies and precise financial reporting guidelines. Concurrently, the elderly should contribute to the community if they are capable of doing so.

The community's skewed views about the elderly should be eliminated, and they should educate themselves about this issue. Clark (2019) conducted a study in India involving older women and found that neglected older women living in Bangalore felt that society's negative views about them influenced their daily lives. The bitter experiences of these older women were influenced and constrained by differences in social class (caste), gender, underdeveloped health systems, poor safety nets and other factors. Older women who do not live with their families get minimal support from outsiders. Therefore, the study emphasised the need for society to provide support and assistance to the elderly living without a family to ensure their dignity and life quality.

In addition to society's view of the elderly, young people's perspective on the neglect of the elderly is critical because the inculcation of good values in students is crucial in forming a caring society. Hasbullah et al. (2018) aimed to determine the attitude towards elder abuse among undergraduate law students in Malaysian public universities. Data were collected using a self-administered survey form consisting of background profiles and 12 scaled items on attitudes towards elder abuse. The descriptive analysis indicated that out of 513 respondents, 383 were female (74.7%), and 130 (25.3%) were male students. The minimum age of the respondents was 22 (SD = 1,834). A total of 323 respondents had participated in activities related to the elderly (63.0%), while 190 (37.0%) reported never participating in activities related to the elderly. Two-thirds of the respondents (63.9%) reported having a more positive attitude towards elder abuse, while one-third (36.1%) had a lesser positive attitude towards elder abuse. The findings indicated the need to raise awareness among the younger generation, especially among law students, on the issue of elder abuse as they are expected to be part of the planning structure that can protect the elderly from abuse.

Most of these neglected elderly have a history of poor health or are chronic disease patients. Yunus et al. (2018) studied the cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships between elder abuse and neglect (EAN) and chronic disease pain among the elderly population in rural Malaysia. The Cohort study was conducted for two years in Kuala Pilah, a district in Negeri Sembilan situated about 100 km from the capital, KL. The study involved the community-dwelling elderly aged 60 and over. A total of 1,927 respondents were evaluated at the early stage. Two years later, a re-evaluation involving 1,189 respondents was undertaken. The EAN was determined using a modified Conflict Tactics Scale, while chronic illness pain was assessed through self-reports using validation questions. The study found that the prevalence of chronic disease pain was at 20.4%.

The cross-sectional results showed eight variables significantly related to chronic disease pain, namely age, education, income, comorbidities, personal health, depression, walking speed, and EAN. The abused elderly experienced 1.52 times more chronic disease pain (odds ratio = 1.52 times, 95% confidence interval (CI) = 1.03–2.27), although the longitudinal analysis showed no relationship between EAN and risk of chronic disease pain (ratio risk = 1.14, 95 % CI = 0.81–1.60). A lack

of consistent correlation was observed when comparing the analyses with complete cases that have implied data. The findings suggested that although EAN does not cause chronic disease pain, individuals with physical limitations have a higher tendency to be abused and neglected.

Therefore, the self-empowerment of the elderly is crucial when addressing the issue of neglecting the elderly in Malaysia. Achmad (2017) had intended to examine the empowerment of the elderly as the government and society's preparation when facing a population's changing demographic structure caused by an increase in life expectancy. The qualitative study had investigated the empowerment of the elderly, which is the ultimate goal of the national health agenda. An increase in the elderly population inevitably poses various challenges, prompting the government to address them constantly.

The number of seniors with poor physical health and productivity is greater than infants and children. Physical limitations and the possibility of suffering from 'degenerative' diseases cause the elderly to have special needs that must be catered to by the younger generation. Therefore, the initial empowerment of the elderly should occur within the family unit. Neglect of the elderly is one of the factors that require urgent attention to ensure that the well-being of the elderly is always a priority. Instead of portraying inappropriate behaviour towards these elderly, perhaps the families of the elderly should leave the elderly in care centres to ensure their health conditions are not neglected.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study conducted interviews with respondents who were homeless elderly to obtain relevant and detailed information regarding factors that could explain the phenomena and trends concerning the neglect of the elderly. The interview method was utilised to obtain more detailed information. This study involved ten homeless elderly living in KL. The study delved into their feelings and the factors that drove them into becoming homeless. The researchers chose locations frequented by the homeless, such as sidewalks, building alleys, under bridges, and Kuala Lumpur Homeless Transit Centre in Jalan Pahang, KL. The selection of samples involved ten respondents, comprising homeless senior citizens representing the existing elderly homeless population.

The items in the questionnaire were related to the respondent's demographic information, such as name, age, marital status, origin,

education level, and level of health, which could give a picture of the respondent's background. Information regarding the respondent's children, such as the number of children, married children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, was examined to determine the elderly's relationship with the family members (still in contact or outright ignored).

Next, the questions on homelessness were narrative in nature. When this interview was conducted, the respondents mostly spoke about their past and why they migrated to KL city, which eventually made them homeless. The interview also discussed employment opportunities and assistance from government bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which helped assess the community's sensitivity to the homeless elderly. All the questions posed to the respondents were specific to their personal lives. The study's findings describe the answers to the study's objectives and questions concerning the neglect of the family of the homeless elderly in KL.

In order to answer the research questions, the researchers used thematic methods to achieve the objectives and address the research questions. The thematic analysis produces a theme for the interviews conducted and obtains the research findings. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is the specific theme in a phenomenon implemented either deductively or inductively. Data is identified and coded from raw data such as transcripts, biographies, photographs, and videos in thematics. The use of methods and themes depends on the research conducted.

Result and Discussions

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Respondent (R)	Sex	Age (years)	Ethnicity	Marital status	Education level	State of origin
R1	M	62	Malay	Divorced	UPSR	Kelantan (Tumpat)
R2	M	66	Indian	Married	No education	Johor (Muar)

R3	M	65	Malay	Divorced	PMR/SRP	Kuala Lumpur (Gombak)
R4	M	60	Indian	Married	PMR/SRP	Perak (Chemor)
R5	M	61	Malay	Divorced	PMR/SRP	Perak (Taiping)
R6	F	60	Malay	Widowed	UPSR	Kedah (Sg. Petani)
R7	M	66	Chinese	Divorced	Standard 5 5	Penang (Butterworth)
R8	M	63	Chinese	Divorced	No education	Perak (Ipoh)
R9	M	63	Malay	Divorced	Standard 3	Kedah (Baling)
R10	M	62	Indian	Divorced	UPSR	Selangor (Dengkil)

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

As shown in Table 1, most respondents were men, with only one woman. All the respondents were aged 60 years and above. The oldest respondent was 66 years old, while the youngest was 60. Eight respondents were widowed, and only two respondents were still married. Three respondents had a Penilaian Menengah Rendah/Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (PMR/SRP) level education, three others had Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) education, one had Grade Five, one had Grade Three education, and two respondents had not received any education. Most respondents came from the northern states, such as Kedah, Perak, and Penang, while three came from the south, namely Johor, KL, and Selangor, and only one came from the east coast namely Kelantan.

Respondents' occupation

Table 2. Respondents' occupation

Respondent (R)	Type of occupation
R1	Selling used items, boxes and beverage cans (RM300-RM400)
R2	Worked as a temple cleaner (RM300)

R3	Selling tissues and snacks (RM1000)
R4	Beggar (RM600-RM650)
R5	Parking attendant (RM500-RM850)
R6	Beggar (RM200-RM450)
R7	Parking attendant (RM600-RM900)
R8	Unemployed
R9	Selling newspapers (RM700)
R10	Beggar and selling tissues (RM400)

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

According to the research findings in Table 2, most of these respondents worked part-time to support their lives as homeless. Their income did not exceed RM1000, and the average income was RM628, excluding one respondent who had no source of income. The unemployed respondent lived on assistance provided by the community and the welfare centre (NGO). One respondent, R3, stated that he is only homeless part-time and owns a residence in Jalan Ayer Panas, KL. Based on the interview, R3 stated that:

“Somehow, in five years, I became a homeless person, not because I don’t have a house. I have a house in Jalan Ayer Panas. Only that I prefer to live like this, enough time to go home [sic]. During the day with my homeless friends, and if there are any extra sustenance, I share it with them.”

He chose a homeless life just to fill his free time, and the income he receives is shared with his homeless friends. Besides, he also receives financial assistance from his son. All the respondents received assistance from various NGOs that provided food, clothing, mattresses, regular medical treatments, and other forms of assistance. According to R2, who is working as a temple cleaner:

“I work near the temple as a ‘cleaner.’ I clean the temple area, and I get paid only RM300. It is not enough to support the family in this KL city, so I also asked for BSH’s help. I worked but had to be homeless from 9 am to around 9 pm as well. After that, I just got a room to rent, so me[sic], my wife, and son[sic], we stayed there. Not much help just depends on my salary and BSH alone to live.”

Among all the respondents, only two stated that they received subsistence assistance (BSH) from the government, while the rest received assistance from NGOs.

Information about the family and children

Table 3. Family information/ number of children

Respondent (R)	Family information
R1	Divorced, childless, but still has siblings
R2	Has a wife, children and still has a biological family
R3	Has children and grandchildren
R4	Has a wife, children, and grandchildren
R5	Divorced and has children
R6	Husband deceased and has children
R7	Divorced and has children
R8	Divorced and childless
R9	Divorced and has children
R10	Divorced and has children

Source: Field research findings (2020-2021)

Table 3 discusses information about the respondent's family members. All of them lived as 'foreigners' (homeless) in KL and away from their families, except for two respondents living as homeless families. The first respondent, R1, is divorced and has no children but still has a family in his village. His siblings do not know his life as a homeless, and he has never returned to the village after coming to KL. In contrast, R2 lives as a homeless part-time in a rented room with his wife and son. He becomes 'temporary' homeless from 9 am to 9 pm and has never returned to his village after coming to KL.

On the other hand, R3 is a widower whose wife died, and he has three children who visit him weekly, indicating that he has a good relationship with his children and family members. The fourth respondent, R4, is still married and has two children and two grandchildren living in Perak. Nevertheless, his children and wife refused to care for him because he is HIV positive. The fifth respondent, R5, is divorced and has experienced being neglected by his family, although he has three children and grandchildren.

Subsequently, R6 is a widow with two children, but she became homeless because her children do not care about her condition. The seventh respondent, R7, is divorced with one child. He once returned to his family in Penang, but his ex-wife and child did not welcome him. Thus, he returned to KL and has lived as a homeless ever since. Next, R8 is divorced with no children and fled to KL. He feels more comfortable with his living condition as a homeless, and his whereabouts are unknown to his ex-wife and family.

The ninth respondent, R9, is divorced and has four children but is homeless due to his personality problems (hot temperament) and violent behaviour (physical abuse of his wife and children). Nevertheless, his present lifestyle as a homeless is unknown to his family, and he feels like returning to the comfort of his family. The last respondent, R10, is divorced and has two children who estranged him because the authorities had arrested him. Although his ex-wife and children do not know about his current homeless lifestyle, his relatives know about it but choose to ignore him without caring about his condition.

Factors that Influence the Respondents to become Homeless

Theme 1: Difficulty in getting a job

Based on interviews with all the respondents, two respondents were homeless because they lacked the proper qualification to hold a good job in KL. The first respondent, R1, migrated to KL after divorcing his wife 14 years ago and became homeless after failing to secure a job due to a lack of education. He felt that:

“I have been a homeless man since I divorced my wife. At that time, I was 48. After the divorce, I came to KL. At first, I came to KL to look for a job, but it was difficult to get a job because I didn’t go to high school, only up to sixth grade. Now it feels like 14 years have passed since, and it has become more and more difficult for a homeless man like me to get a job. Since coming to KL, I have never returned to my village, so the relatives there do not know my current condition.”

Family members are unaware that R1 is homeless as he never returned to his hometown after leaving it. Naturally, the respondents want a better life than their current living conditions. On the other hand, R8 fled to KL due to the extreme stress of life caused by a failed business venture

and debts owed to a loan shark. During the interview, Respondent 8 stated that:

“I did run away to KL, and I have lived like this for 12 years. I feel comfortable living like this. I used to owe money to several ah long for ‘business’ ventures, but I can’t afford to pay them because my ‘business’ is not profitable. Almost every day, I quarrel [sic] with my wife because of the money until we finally divorced [sic]. I live as a homeless person, but I feel happy now that there is no ah long to chase me.”

The respondent’s family members do not know about his life as a homeless, and he feels happier with his life now because there is no burden to shoulder, and it is too late to change his life to a better one. Several respondents faced difficulties securing a job because of their life history, namely former prisoners and having a history of diseases, such as AIDS. This situation makes it difficult for them to obtain a job and forces them to become homeless.

‘I am HIV-positive, difficult for me to look for a job suitable for me. So are my children because of my disease, my children do not want near me, my children say if I follow them home, I will give disease to all of them.’ (Respondent 7)

“My children are scared of me, they say my HIV disease can get to them, so they throw me, want to meet grandchildren also they do not allow.’ (Respondent 4)

Half of the elderly homeless are at an advanced age but heartbreakingly have to work to support themselves. Unfortunately, the majority of them do not have equal employment opportunities, and the salary is minimal, which is below RM1000. Hence, the government is urged to provide workforce opportunities for the elderly that provides optimal payment by adopting a ‘Universal Design Framework’, which offers financial stability to the elderly homeless (The Star, 2020). Che Amani et al (2021) argued that financial neglect is the abuse of finances owned by senior citizens or exploiting the senior citizens’ property or savings, such as cheating in the ownership of property or financial assets. Financial and material neglect is the abuse or fraud of property committed against the elderly. These guardians or heirs fail to provide primary care or needs such as security, emotional and physical treatment, including financial and material neglect (World Health Organization, 2018).

In the study's findings obtained during the interviews conducted, most respondents experienced neglect in terms of financial and material. Financial and material neglect experienced by the average respondents stated that neither their child nor family gave money for subsistence or buying necessities. In addition, they also never supplied nutritious food to the respondents. The respondents stated that their monthly expenses solely depended on assistance from the Social Welfare Department and NGOs. Almost all the interviewed respondents experienced financial and material neglect where the children did not carry out their responsibilities in matters of the welfare of their parents. Most of the children did not give money for the respondents' expenses, while the respondent only expected financial assistance from Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) to cover their daily lives.

Reay and Browne (2002) explained that interventions to address the problem of neglect in the family are very few. Approximately 63% of women and 53% of men aged 75 and over have a disability and need help from immediate family members to meet their needs. Financial neglect also occurs at a rate of 4% to 10% involving seniors from 65 years to above.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Conflict with family members

Most respondents became homeless due to intentional or unintentional family conflicts. Malaysia is witnessing a state of fragile family institutions because each family member is busy with their own lives and affairs, and many possess some degree of irresponsible behaviour. The living conditions of the homeless in this study strongly suggest that the respondent's family institution is unstable and fragile. According to R2, he migrated to KL because he felt slighted by relatives in his village who had cheated him in distributing the family estate. The respondent lived homeless for 12 years and lives with his family but thinks that the current situation is comfortable enough for him.

“I have a family in the village, but I would never believe them. I was cheated by my own biological family because of the family's inherited property. They were willing to cheat me just because of property, so my family and I came to KL. Even though the events are long past, I still feel with their nature. I don't want to go back to Muar because I feel have [sic] had enough with life now.”

In contrast, R3 has a family, and they know about his homeless life and even visit him during the weekends. Homeless life is voluntary because the respondents are free to have friends and are able to help other homeless people. The respondent sells tissues and snacks while being homeless to fill his free time and feels comfortable with his life as a part-time homeless person. He did not mention experiencing any conflict with his family but hoped that the community would always help the homeless. He emphasised by saying:

“I hope very much that our society helps the homeless; especially, for them to support socially, and the elderly homeless with disabilities. Many of my peers need help.”

This study found that the respondents' families were another reason the homeless elderly neglected their responsibilities to their families at a young age. The respondents' families may find it difficult to forget past events, especially being ignored or neglected by these respondents (MyHEALTH, 2017). Respondents' past actions of failing to fulfil their responsibilities as parents to spouses and family, such as engaging in criminal activities, marriage and divorce, and drug addiction, has forced children, spouses, and other family members to harbour feelings of frustration, hatred, and resentment.

For example, R4 has a family, but they do not care about him being homeless. He was evicted from his home after contracting HIV through drug use and has been homeless for the last nine years. He is still addicted to drugs and is unable to deal with his addiction while relying on good Samaritans for assistance. He feels that a homeless life is harrowing but has to accept it.

“I have family in Chemor, but they don't know about me at all. I was kicked out of the house. Being able to be a homeless person limits my physical movement, and I can't move like before. When a child with a wife doesn't care about me because I am HIV positive, I feel very miserable and live miserably. I think this has become my destiny. Even now, I beg and ask for the kindness of passing pedestrians, sometimes even get help from NGOs. They provided food, clothing, and syringes. When asked to R4 whether the youths are still addicted to drugs, he replied, ‘yes, I am still using it. I always go far in the alleys in KL to take drugs. The family doesn't care about me, but I hope the community always helps our group.’”

On the other hand, Respondent 5 migrated to KL after being expelled by his family because he was arrested and had served a sentence for drug abuse. He worked as a security guard for two years but was laid off due to poor health and eventually became homeless as he could not support himself. He is still addicted to drugs and sometimes works as a part-time parking attendant and hopes his family will accept him back into the family. He mentioned that:

“I came to KL because my family did not accept me after I was released from prison. Remember coming to KL can get a job, but my condition does not allow me to work for a long time. Two [sic] years also, I worked as a security guard. I can’t afford to find a job, especially with my current health condition. I can’t even afford to take care of myself. My wife with my children really doesn’t care about my condition. I work part-time to take care of the parking lot now. Sometimes I work sometimes not if the work can be paid in RM500-RM800. I want to return to the bosom of my family and live with them. What I hope is that the public should be caring and give good placement opportunities to those of us who are homeless.

The only women respondent, Respondent 6, migrated to KL with her husband (who has since been sentenced to hang for offences committed under the Penal Code) and was arrested by authorities for engaging in drug trafficking and offering sex services around the Chow Kit and Puduraya areas. After serving a four-year prison sentence, she finally became homeless and is still a drug addict. Her children do not care about her condition. Hence, she wants to spend the rest of her life homeless and does not want to disturb her children.

“I chose to be a homeless person. In the beginning, I came to KL with my husband involved in drug crime activities. Then we were arrested, my husband was hanged. I went to prison for being a prostitute while distributing drugs in the KL area. Auntie doesn’t want to disturb the children’s lives, even if they don’t care about auntie. I hope that help for the homeless will always be provided.”

In addition, another respondent, Respondent 7, was involved in drug pushing and selling activities from a young age. After being arrested by the authorities and serving a 15-year prison sentence, he now works as a parking attendant in Jalan Pudu. His wife and children do not want

to accept him into their family again, so he chose to be a homeless person living in his work hut and bathing in public toilets. One study in Malaysia found that neglect of the elderly causes severe depression in them, eventually leading to suicide, mental illness, and low life quality (Ahmed et al., 2016). According to the interview, Respondent 7 once contemplated suicide because he felt life as a homeless person did not have a bright future.

“I’ve been living like this for 17 years. The family did not want to accept me because I was once arrested by the authorities for drug crimes. After getting out of prison, I worked as a parking attendant. I once returned to my hometown, but my wife had remarried, the children no longer wanted to see me. They don’t want me in their lives anymore. Now that I’m old, I don’t feel like living happily in the future. I once tried to commit suicide because of the stress in this life. I have a place to sleep at my workplace, and when I want to take a shower, I use public toilets, but living like this is really hard.”

The ninth respondent, Respondent 9, migrated to KL because he failed as a husband and father due to his hot temperament and violent behaviour towards his children and wife. Although he worked as a newspaper vendor, he lived as a homeless person because he could not afford a place to live. His family did not know about his current life, and he feels sorry for his previous attitude. He sincerely hopes that his family can accept him in their lives.

“I am a hot-tempered person, often beating my wife and children until my wife divorced me. After divorcing, I came to KL and worked as a newspaper vendor in Chow Kit, but my income was only RM700, it was not enough to cover the cost of living in a city like KL, so I had to live off the streets to become a homeless person. My family in the village did not know about my living conditions here. I am upset with my own hot-tempered nature and violent behaviour. I want to return to my family and have a better life with my children and grandchildren.”

On the other hand, Respondent 10 had lived as a homeless for 16 years. He was dumped by his family after being arrested for drug trafficking offences and had served ten years in prison for the offence. His family members do not know his life as a homeless person, but his siblings are aware of his condition and do not care. He did not get any suitable job

because of his prisoner status. Hence, he begs while selling tissues to make a living. According to him:

“I’ve been a homeless person for 16 years. I was once arrested by the police for being involved in drug crimes and have served a prison sentence of 10 years. After serving my sentence, I came to KL to work, but with the status of a former prisoner, many did not want to give me a job, so I had to beg while selling tissues on the street. Indeed, the children of the family and my ex-wife did not know my condition, but my siblings knew I was in trouble and homeless and living as a homeless person, but they did not come to help me. I also want to live like a normal person with a family, and I really hope to be able to meet my children again and meet my grandchildren and spend my old age with them.”

Both respondents felt very upset and regretted their past actions and would love to spend the rest of their lives with their children and grandchildren. Neglecting these homeless elderly should be addressed as prudently as possible because if they do not receive family support, a rift will occur in the family institution. Therefore, the government should encourage volunteer campaigns from various parties to help these neglected and homeless elderly. Besides, the government should create a ‘filial responsibility law’, making it mandatory for adult children to care for their parents (Kethineni & Rajendran, 2018).

Theme 3: Health Status

The next factor that drives the occurrence of neglect among the elderly homeless is the level of health experienced by the elderly homeless. The precarious and critical health status of the homeless elderly makes it difficult for their children to care for them. Nowadays, the children of most homeless run away from their duties and responsibilities of managing the elderly homeless. In addition, the disease suffered by most of the respondents is severe, such as HIV. Hence, the children choose to leave the homeless elderly alone without supervision as a simple solution to avoid caring for them.

This situation causes neglect among the homeless elderly because their disease must be controlled with medication and observation, especially the homeless elderly who suffer from memory problems and mental disorders. The following are the statements given by the respondents:

“I am HIV positive, so my children do not want to stay close to me. They said I will spread the disease to them if I go home with them.” (Respondent 7)

“My children are afraid of me. They said my HIV can be transmitted to them. That’s why they dumped me. They also won’t allow me to see my grandchildren.” (Respondent 4)

Theme 4: The past story of the elderly that caused them to become homeless

The last factor is the past of the elderly that the children and families cannot forget. These homeless, older people made mistakes in the past, such as hitting and damaging the self-esteem of children and families. The family’s emotions are disturbed by things happening in their lives and carried away until now. At this stage, family members should undergo counselling sessions to restore their emotions. The following are the statements given by the respondents:

“I realised that when they were little, I ignored them a lot. I embarrassed my family with my drug addiction and drug trafficking problems. That’s why they threw me away. Until today, I hope my children can forgive me for all my mistakes.” (Respondent 5)

“I do not have children, but I still have a family. However, they are afraid if I go home because the Ah Longs might come to harass them again. It’s okay. Let me live by myself without burdening my family.” (Respondent 8)

Conclusion

Based on the interviews with respondents, factors that contributed to their homeless living were being disowned by their families due to their involvement in drugs, personality problems (temper fits leading to violence), general failure in life, indebtedness to loan sharks, and not being able secure job opportunities. Nevertheless, some choose life as homeless due to comparatively being comfortable and feeling satisfied with a homeless life. All respondents admitted to receiving assistance from the government (BSH) and NGOs and regular treatment from the health department, although they could not afford the cost of medical treatment.

Some worked part-time and received less than RM1000 a month, while others turned to begging and selling tissues on the streets. Feelings of remorse were displayed on their faces during the interviews. Unfortunately, some were into drugs, while others desperately wanted to spend the rest of their lives with their children, grandchildren, or families. Nevertheless, some next-of-kin did not want to accept their return, while most of the homeless felt that their return would disrupt the family life of their next-of-kin. Hence, they continued living as homeless.

Neglect of the homeless elderly by their immediate family is very worrying. The lack of support or outright failure of the family to provide support or help to their spouse or parents will result in these homeless people being denied the opportunity to live a quality-filled and prosperous life. Family structure is crucial because the children will follow the mould formed by the parents. Hence, exposing the children to responsibilities, including extending sincere love and appreciation, builds the spirit of belonging to the family, which can be instilled in children and other family members. Most respondents did not play the role of the family head because the children and family members are not interested and do not want to involve themselves emotionally with the homeless elderly. Undeniably, these elderlies have made errors in judgement in their past.

Nevertheless, children's are responsible for showing empathy and sacrificing their time and effort in caring for their parents. In addition, the community should be sensitive, be aware of the surrounding situation and increase their knowledge about this issue. Undoubtedly, in Malaysia, various parties, such as the government or NGOs, constantly strive to assist this group. Various parties, especially families, are collaboratively responsible for curbing the neglect of the elderly and trying their best to provide proper care for the elderly, especially the homeless.

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