CONFIDENCE LEVEL OF THE ELDERLY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This study aims at identifying the level of confidence in the elderly to share their expertise with students at the school. Data collection was conducted through a survey questionnaire distributed to 618 senior citizens around Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur. The findings showed that elderly people have the confidence to train students with their available skills. They also have confidence to accept the comments of the students and join the students for academic visits. The elderly, however, are less confident to speak in front of an audience. Results show that the confidence level of elderly is associated with their gender, ethnic and educational level. There is a need for developing a module to meet the needs of the elderly and contribute to the intergenerational program.

Keywords: Confidence Level, Elderly, Intergenerational Programs

Introduction

In Malaysia, the percentage of those aged over 65 is rising in a drastic way in recent years. The percentage of elderly in the total population of Malaysia has increased from 3.2% (1970) to 8.39% in 2010. Meanwhile, the number of adolescents (10-19) is rising, and will reach 20.16% in 2010 (Table 1)(Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2010). The rise in number of the aged and the young has led to problems in resource distribution and also to lack of communication and interaction between the generations.

Table 1
Number of Adolescents and Elderly Between 1991-2010

Generation	1991		2000		2010	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Adolescents (10-19)	3744,561	21.31	4694,064	21.44	5243,832	20.16
Elderly (60+)	1047,163	5.96	1411,501	6.45	2182,804	8.39

Source: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (2010)

Based on this situation, the aged who are still healthy, experienced and knowledgeable can still actively contribute to society. Hence, intergenerational programs can be regarded as activities for enhancing cooperation, interaction and sharing between two generations. This involves efforts at sharing skills, knowledge and experiences between two parties (Chorn Dunham & Casadonte, 2009; Powers, Gray, & Garver, 2013).

The government has taken several initiatives to substitute the National Policy for Older Persons 1995 with the National Policy for the Elderly on 5 January 2011 (Utusan, 2011). Formulation of the new National Policy for the Elderly is proof of the government commitment and preparation of the nation to face the present and future challenges of ageing to ensure that the aged can continue living actively and with dignity and can contribute to society and the nation. In line with that, The National Plan for the Elderly was created as a platform for multisectoral cooperation in efforts to enhance the delivery system for the needs and wellbeing of the aged. Nevertheless, until today, the number of intergen programs implemented in local communities is still lacking.

Literature Review

Research on Intergenerational Programs

Many studies on intergenerational programs have been done resulting in varied findings. Nevertheless, the related aspects have differed and the studies have their own focus. The main focus has been the attitude of students toward the aged and the ageing process (Bales, Eklund, & Siffin, 2000; Chorn Dunham & Casadonte, 2009; Dorfman et al., 2004; Lynott & Merola, 2007; Meshel & McGlynn, 2004; Schwalbach & Kiernan, 2002; Stubblefield, 2000). The second focus has been on the efforts to nurture good relationship between gen (Goff, 2004; Zucchero, 2011). The third focus was on implementation of intergenerational programs in terms of cost, challenges and benefits (Gigliotti et al., 2005; Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008; Herrmann, Sipsas-Herrmann, Stafford, & Herrmann, 2005; Marcia et al., 2004; Marx et al., 2005; Monard, 2001; Weinreich, 2003).

Similarly for studies on local intergenerational programs; observation has shown very few studies or research findings are available on intergenerational programs. The first focus of study has involved the facilities and infrastructure to be enjoyed by the elderly (Ahmad Syahrin, 2001; Lim, 2005; Sanmargaraja, 2012). The second focus involved studies on social and emotional support for the aged (Ma'rof, Zahid, Abdul, & Wan Ahmad, 2009; Rosnah & Habibie, 2002). The third focus was on wellbeing and quality of life of the aged in Malaysia (Eshah, Mohamed, & Rostam, 2012; Maria Justine, 2010; Sidiah Ak John Siop, 2008). The fourth focus was on studies on health of the aged (Cheng & Suzana Shahar, 2012; Lee, 2008; Subramaniam, 2009; Teh et al., 2015; Teh, Tey, & Ng, 2014) and the final focus was on knowledge and perception of students toward the aged (Husna, Robaiyah, & Tanti, 2009).

To date, very few studies have been carried out on the confidence level of the aged/elderly and its relationship with ethnicity, gender and education level in their efforts to contribute to intergenerational programs.

Research Questions

This study aimed at identifying the confidence level of the elderly in contribution to intergenerational programs and its relationship with ethnicity, gender and education level. This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of confidence in the elderly in their effort to contribute to intergenerational programs?

2. Is there a relationship between confidence level and gender in the elderly?

3. Is there a relationship between confidence level and ethnicity of the elderly?

4. Is there a relationship between confidence level and education level of the elderly?

Methodology

This section will discuss the data collection procedure, selection of sample, data processing and data analysis.

Sample selection and Location of Study

The sample selection for this study involved a total of 618 aged participants selected by random sampling from areas of Petaling Jaya and Lembah Pantai in Kuala Lumpur. The elderly were chosen at random from a list of registered voters. This study was carried out around Petaling Jaya and Lembah Pantai only; this was because there is lack of interaction between the young and the elderly in urban areas unlike in the rural areas (Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000; Khadijah Alavi, 2012). Besides that, the location was expected to generate accurate results in line with the objectives of the study.

Data Collection Procedure

This study used the instrument developed by the research panel of the Melor (Malaysian Elders Longitudinal Research) project. The questionnaire instrument was used through several questions given to the respondents. The questions were aimed at investigating the confidence level shown by the elderly in contributing to intergenerational programs.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical analisis. Chi square tests were used to investigate the relationship between the confidence level of the elderly and its relationship with ethnicity and education level of the elderly.

Research Findings

This section will answer the research question, namely, what is the confidence level found in the elderly?

Based on the constructs developed, to know the confidence level of the elderly, a survey was carried out on 618 elderly participants and the results were analyzed to obtain information on their level of confidence in the following aspects:

- Confidence in Public Speaking

- Confidence in Participating in a academic visit

- Confidence in Training Students

- Confidence in Accepting Comments and Feedback

Answers to these questions are seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Confidence Level Found in the Elderly

Confidence Level	Highly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Highly Agree		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
Public Speaking	73	11.8	171	27.7	80	12.9	153	24.8	141	22.8	618	100
Academic Visits	45	7.3	158	25.6	70	11.3	218	35.3	127	20.6	618	100
Training Students	50	8.1	155	25.1	76	12.3	195	31.6	142	22.8	618	100
Accepting Comments	11	1.8	50	8.4	58	9.4	314	52.8	184	30.9	618	100

Table 2 displays the confidence level in the elderly in their efforts to contribute to the intergenerational curriculum module. The findings show that only 47.6% of the elderly are confident in speaking in front of students. From the aspect of confidence in undertaking academic visits with students, 55.9% of the elderly expressed confidence in undertaking academic visits. Besides that, the findings also show that 54.4% of the elderly have confidence in training students while 80.7% of the elderly also have confidence in accepting comments and feedback from students.

(1) Investigating the difference between gender and confidence in the aged

Table 3

Difference Between Gender and Confidence in the Elderly

Confidence	M	F	Chi squared value χ^2	Df	*p*-value
Public Speaking	175/618	137/618	46.337	4	.000**
Academic Visits	176/618	187/618	4.217	4	.377
Training Students	174/618	182/618	6.621	4	.157
Accepting Comments	282/618	521/618	10.694	4	.030**

** p‹0.05

Result of the Chi Square test in Table 3 shows that a significant difference exists between gender and confidence in public speaking (χ^2 = 46.337, df = 4, p < .05). The research results also show that a significant difference exists between gender and the confidence to accept comments (χ^2 = 10.694, df = 4, p < .05). No difference was found between gender of the elderly and confidence in academic visits and confidence of the elderly in training students as in **Table 3.** This means that while planning intergenerational programs the confidence level and gender of the elderly must be taken into consideration.

(2) Investigating the differences between Education Level and Confidence Level of the Aged

Table 4

Difference Between Education Level and Confidence in the Elderly

Confidence	Primary & Secondary School	Tertiary Education	Chi squared value χ^2	df	*p*-value
Public Speaking	263/618	149/618	144.216	16	.000**
Academic Visits	219/618	146/618	81.208	16	.000**
Training Students	215/618	142/618	68.110	16	.000**
Accepting Comments	343/618	178/618	98.564	16	.030**

** p < 0.05

Results of the Chi Square tests displayed in Table 4 show that a significant difference exists between confidence level in public speaking and education level of the elderly (χ^2 =144.216,df = 16, p < .05). Similarly, there exists a significant difference in confidence level for academic visits and education level (χ^2 = 81.208,df =16, p < .05), in training students (χ^2 = 68.110, df =16, p < .05) and in accepting comments (χ^2 = 98.564. df =16. p < .05). This means that the education level of the elderly must be take into account when planning intergenerational programs.

(3) Investigating the difference between ethnicity and Confidence level in the elderly

Table 5

Difference Between Ethnicity and Confidence in the Elderly

Confidence	M/	C	I	Value of Chi Square χ^2	df	*p*-value
Public Speaking	107/ 618	69/ 618	135/ 618	39.736	12	.000 **
Academic Visits	129/ 618	88/ 618	147/ 618	38.200	12	.000 **
Training Students	130/ 618	75/ 618	150/ 618	38.162	12	.000 **
Accepting Comments	185/ 618	128/ 618	206/ 618	45.962	12	.000 **

$$** \, p < 0.05$$

Results of the chi square test are given in Table 5; they show that a significant difference exists between ethnicity and confidence level of the elderly in public speaking (χ^2 =39.746, df = 16, $p < .05$). Similarly with the significant difference between ethnicity and confidence in academic visits (χ^2 = 38.200, df =12, $p < .05$), training students (χ^2 = 38.162, df =12, $p < .05$) and confidence in accepting comments (χ^2 = 45.962. df =12. $p < .05$). This means that the ethnicity of the elderly must be considered in planning intergenerational activities.

Discussion

In the context of this study, the elderly are found to possess confidence in training students using their existing skills and expertise. The elderly also have confidence in accepting comments and feedback from students and also wish to participate in academic visits with students. On the other hand, the elderly are less confident when speaking in front of students. This finding aligns with those of Parisi et al. (2009) on the capability of the elderly to teach students to use existing skills and knowledge to fulfil social and academic needs of students. This also supports the theory of Erikson (1982) regarding the need for generativity that must be filled when the elderly still can contribute to society by disseminating knowledge and expertise to the younger generation (De Espanés, Villar, Urrutia, & Serrat, 2014; Sanders, O'Sullivan, DeBurra, & Fedner, 2013).

Findings of this study support those of the Category II knowledge Model developed by Gamliel, Reichental, and Ayal (2007). According to Gamliel et al. (2007), the aged can use their expertise, skills and experience in diverse fields to teach students, deliver cultural heritage and love to the students. This supports several studies (Generations United, 2013; Mendelson, 2014) concluding that the aged including grandparents play and important role in caring for, educating and loving the younger generation.

Nevertheless, confidence of the elderly in trying out intergenerational activities will be influenced by their roles, their perception of themselves and also their health status (Hutchison & Beynon, 2014). According to Novak (2006), the aged who are unaware of their role will encounter problems with confidence in making their contribution. So to with the aged who are unhealthy in terms of mental and physical health; they will doubt their self-confidence and they will face problems in adapting when involved in intergenerational programs. These elderly will see themselves as undeserving and will have a low sense of self (Hutchison & Beynon, 2014).

Conclusion

On the whole, this study was about the level of confidence among the elderly and its relationship with gender, ethnicity, and education level. Confidence of the elderly to involve in intergenerational programs was influenced by their gender, ethnicity, and education level. Hence, their role in intergenerational programs will be varied, encompassing non-engagement to active engagement as shown in Figure 1 (Beynon & Hutchison, 2013).
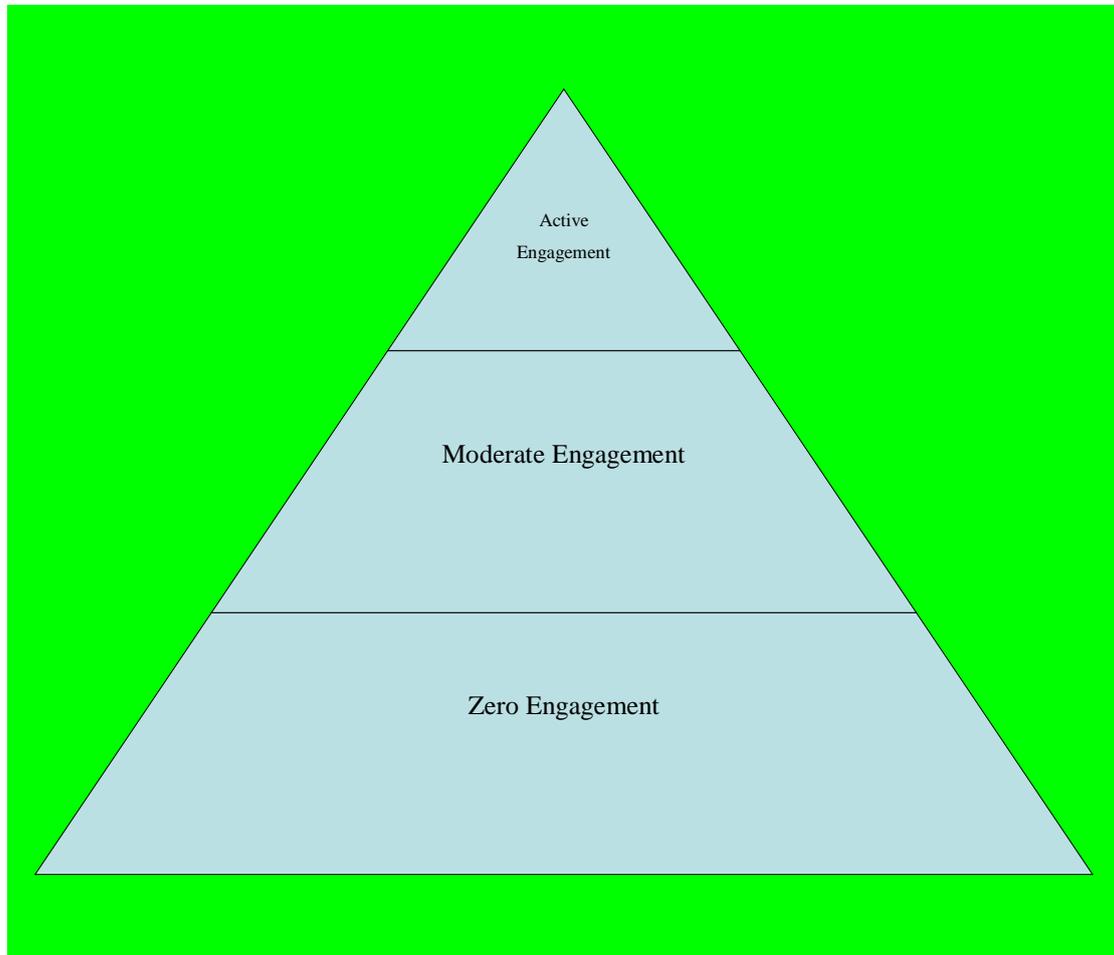

Figure 1. Adaptation of the Engagement model (Hutchison & Beynon, 2014)

In short, this study only investigated the confidence level of the elderly in their effort to contribute to intergenerational programs. Other issues such as the perception of the elderly toward students, finances, implementation of intergenerational program and similar must be considered before any program is implemented.

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