

Living Arrangements of Older Persons in Malaysia: Living Alone in The Golden Years

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: In Malaysia, most older persons reside within their own homes, as institutionalisation of older persons is uncommon. This study aims to describe the characteristics of community dwelling older persons living alone. **METHODS:** A nationwide cross-sectional study using stratified cluster sampling was conducted from June to October 2018 among 3977 older persons aged ≥ 60 years. Face-to-face interview utilising a structured questionnaire via mobile devices was performed by trained interviewers. **RESULTS:** An estimated 6.3% of older persons were found living alone. This was significantly higher in rural (8.8%, 95%CI: 5.29, 7.47) compared to urban areas (5.4%, 95%CI: 4.16, 6.89), females (8.2%, 95%CI: 6.52, 10.17) compared to males (4.3%, 95%CI: 3.35, 5.59), and those not married (17.7%, 95%CI: 14.84, 20.91) compared to married (0.9%, 95%CI: 0.60, 1.43). It was highest in Bumiputra Sarawakians (9.9%, 95%CI: 6.39, 14.99), Bumiputra Sabahans (8.9%, 95%CI: 5.92, 13.22) and ethnic Chinese (7.1%, 95%CI: 4.50, 10.99) compared to Malays (5.9%, 95%CI: 4.63, 7.61). By type of house, longhouses (11.3%, 95%CI: 9.62, 13.31) followed by detached (bungalow/traditional) houses, (7.6%, 95%CI: 6.45, 9.01) were the most prevalent. **DISCUSSION:** Maintaining independence of older persons is important to allow them to age in place in their own homes, in line with active ageing. Living alone in longhouses may still provide a sense of community compared to those in detached houses. Measures to enhance community support would ensure older persons living alone are not marginalised, thus improving their overall well-being.

KEYWORDS: living arrangements, living alone, older persons, National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS), Malaysia

Living Conditions of Sugarcane Harvesting Migrants in The State of Maharashtra

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Migration provides subsistence to the workers and their families, but exposes them to vulnerable existence, in which living conditions is worst. The living condition of sugarcane migrants is very basic and small with just a temporary hut-tent like structure. Such surroundings result in unhealthy and morbidity conditions for them as they have minimal access to clean drinking water or hygienic conditions. Thus, an exploratory primary study is conducted in two districts of Maharashtra, India to capture the scenario of such vulnerable population. It is observed that around 32 percent sugarcane harvesters have pucca house at their native place but only 13 percent have when they migrate to destination. The main source of drinking water at villages is bore-well (54%) but at destination it is common tank (57%) and for reaching these sources 30 percent in village and 35 percent at destination have to walk. The main source of lighting at destination is hearth on which most migrants cook. When examined the hygiene conditions of living area at destination, around 77 percent reported of having fly problem near cooking area. 65 percent reported of open defecation and 89 percent of having bath in makeshift bathrooms. Around 69 percent reported feeling unsafe during toilet visit showing lack of security and safety. Thus, showing unhygienic condition and lack of basic sanitation in the living areas of migrants, affecting their health conditions as they are deprived of many basic facilities like access to health centre, electricity, potable water, housing reflect their substandard living conditions.

KEYWORDS: Vulnerable population, Migrants, living conditions