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Interdependence in Malay Older People who live in The Institutions: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the benefit of interdependency in Malay older people who live in the institution. A qualitative approach has been used and in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted to three older people who lived in the institutions. The transcript obtained was analysed using the six stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). One superordinate theme was emerged from that interview; life satisfaction. The superordinate theme was represented by two master themes that were “Alhamdulillah” (Contentment) and “Redha” (Acceptance). These themes facilitate the sense of the quality of life among older people in the institution.

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1. Introduction

There are several issues affecting older people in Malaysia and the issues are mostly related to the (1) deterioration in health conditions (either physical and or mental health), (2) emotion problem (such as social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, depression and stress), and (3) financial difficulty and working in elderly stages. In addition, increasing in age is often associated with increased disability and risk of diseases (Lee and Khair, 2007; Momtaz et al., 2010). A number of sources point out that there are deteriorations in health status amongst the

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elderly people in Malaysia as a result of musculoskeletal problems (Lee and Khair, 2007), cardiovascular problems (Teo et al., 2011) and cognitive impairment (Sherina et al., 2006; Zaiton et al., 2009) which subsequently leads to deterioration in physical, mental and psychosocial functions. Functional deteriorations often caused elderly people to become dependent or interdependent to other people in order to successfully engage in daily activities.

Populations of older people were increasing rapidly throughout of the world. Malaysia is going to be an ageing country by the year of 2020 (Pala, 2010; United Nation, 2009). This trend has created a growing demand for care and will affects the healthcare services in terms of the use of health resources and increase in the government expenditure for health services. According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2012), total population in Malaysia has increased from 26,831,300 people on 2006 to 28,334,200 people on 2010. From this figure, total older people on 2010 are 2,251,300. Ministry of Health Malaysia stated that older people that 60 years and above was 5.7% (745,200). It has increased to 6.2% or 1.5 million in year 2000 and expected to reach 10% or 3.4 million by the year 2020. By the year 2035 Malaysia will become an ageing country where 15% of the total population are older people (United Nation, 2009).

Recently, the pattern of caring for elderly people is changing, aligned with the migration of the younger population to the urban area. Subsequently, many ageing parents who has deterioration in health conditions has to be send to elderly institutions, either public or private institutions. Harian Metro (2010) reported that on June 2010, there was 2,084 elderly residents in Malaysia are registered to institution which is supervised by government. This number represents an increase of 13.7% from the previous years.

Recent studies found that relocation to elderly institutions is an appalling experience that may affect their physical and psychological health (Dragest, 2004; Luo et al, 2012). Elderly feel that they are not given enough support and autonomy to make decision in life. Furthermore, the residents of institution may experience a sense of loss due to separate with their children, relatives, friends and neighbors. This can lead to feeling of loneliness and isolation (Dragest, 2004). Loneliness is a serious problem for older people in institution and Weeks (1994) reported that 40% of elderly population in United States dealing with this problem. The results study by Berg et al. (1981) have shown that loneliness have affect daily life of 24% of older women and 12% of elderly men in Sweden that live in institution. The symptom is a serious concern because some studies found loneliness with case of suicide physical illness and depression (Creecy et al., 1985).

Older people in institution who have not visited by their family members or relatives were found to be lonely as compared to an older people in community who stay with their family (Berg et al., 1981). They always hoped that their children, relatives, and friends would visit them. Unfortunately they are often neglected. Thus, their lives in institution will be less satisfaction in quality of life, quite, and empty (Feldman, 2003). This situation may lead to interdependency with other residents and staff in the institute (Holmas et al., 2013). The word interdependency is defined as a shared dependence or the action of being joined together with a common bond and an individual's offering and receiving love, admiration, and value (Beeber, 2008). To older adults, interdependence is the act of seeking support through the development of reciprocal relationship (Del Aguila et al., 2006).

Studies in Asian countries such as China, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong indicate that independence is less important to maintaining harmony (Lee, 2010) and interdependency between family members, friends, and children contribute to quality of life (Lee, 2010). Thus shows that there is culture conflict in occupational therapy practice as a result of cultural differences in relation to independency and interdependency. This may lead to an unsuccessful in implementing occupational therapy rehabilitation program for elderly people. Previous studies indicate that there are several benefits of interdependencies between residents. Its promote socialization and establishment of a meaningful relationship (Meeks and Looney, 2011). Meaningful relationships increase participation in activity, produces positive affect, provide feelings of being valued, intimacy and develop a sense of involvement and contentment (Shattell, 2004; Pearson and Fitzgerald, 2003; Stabell et al. 2004; Berglund and Kirkvold, 2007; Wilson and Davies, 2009) and assist in the process of thriving within the institution (Abbott et al. 2000; de Veer and Kerkstra, 2000; Kane, 2001; Berglund and Kirkevold, 2007; Dupuis-Blanchard et al. 2009; Wilson and Davies, 2009). Furthermore, interdependency between family members such as children, grandchildren as well as former friends contributes to quality of life among older people in Eastern countries (Tseng and Wang, 2001; Lee, 1997; Lee, 1999; Tu et al. 2006; Lau et al. 2008; Lau and Chi, 2008; Lee, 2010; Tse, 2010; Berg, 2011).

Furthermore, interdependency as a life-style approach increases productivity and life satisfaction amongst people with disability (Carnaby, 1998; Gooden-Ledbetter et al. 2007; White et al. 2010), help to decreased depression

amongst older people (Ko and Lewis, 2011), increases personal communication and closeness to other people (Kashy et al. 2004; Uskul et al. 2004) and facilitates quality of life among the older people in institution (Furness, 2007). Interdependency is also a concept that was applied by the older people in United Kingdom (Bowers, 2001; Audit Commission for local authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales, 2004).

Occupational therapy is one of the healthcare professions that help an individual to be maximally independent in daily living and their life (Law, 2002). In geriatric rehabilitation, occupational therapy will help older people to achieve optimal level of function within the environment where the client lives. The main core belief in occupational therapy is encouraging independency and this is shown through the theory, practice, and research in occupational therapy profession (Schmelz, 2000; Newson, 2010). However, independent is a Western ideology. People in Eastern country, such as Malaysia preferred to be interdependence and emphasis on “collectivism” as a culture and a way of life, which was stressed, in many Malay proverbs that were practice in daily life. For example:

“Bagai aur dengan tebing, Adat hidup tolong menolong, adat mati jenguk menjenguk”

(Like bamboo and riverbank, customs of the living is to pay a visit, customs to the death is to pay a respect)

– Malay Proverbs

Subsequently, many Occupational therapy interventions were neither successfully achieved nor implemented. Hence, the aim of this study is to understand the benefit of interdependency among Malay older people who lives in the institution. This study needs to focus on any benefits of interdependence that has significant for improvement in quality of life.

2. Methodology

A qualitative method were chosen and used for this study. Qualitative method has been designed to investigate the quality of relationship, activities, situations or materials (Fraenkel et al., 2009). It resembles that, the qualitative research deals with the perception, thought processes, feeling and emotions of participants and the exploration of concepts in-depth. In this qualitative study, an interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted. Besides, the way of understand people’s relationship to the world are necessarily interpretative, and will focus upon their attempts to make meaning out of their activities and to the things happening to them. This study has been conducted based on the semi-structured interview and selected by using a purposive homogenous sampling (Smith et al., 2009) in a small sample sizes (Fraenkel et al., 2009) at institution under Department of Social Welfare.

The eligible criteria for this study are:

- Malay Older people age sixty and above,
- Able to understand and speak fluently in either Malay or English,
- Scores above 22 in Malay Mini Mental State Examination (MMMSE) (Zarina & Zahiruddin, 2007) which signified no cognitive impairment.
- Scores below 7 in Malay Geriatric Depression Scale (MGDS) (Teh & Hasanah, 2004) which signified no depression.
- Scores 6 in Katz Index of Independence in Activities of Daily Living (Katz, et al., 1970) which indicates independency in activities of daily living.
- Older people who live in the institution more than six months.

Malay older people with chronic illness related to severe muscular skeletal, cardio respiratory, neurological, medical and mental conditions such as stroke, cardiac problem, and psychosis that cause dependency was excluded from the study. Semi-structured interview was conducted by using interview guide that consists of open-ended question. The structure of the questions was adapted from the Family Adaptability and Coherent Evaluation Scale (FACES-III) that used by Altieri, 2006. The flow of question was build based on triangular structure of questionnaire development for qualitative study as suggested by D’Amato (2008).

The data were closely analysed using six steps of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as outlined by Smith and Osborn (2008) and Smith et al., (2009). The six steps are: (1) Data immersion, that is involved reading and re-reading the data and listen to the audio recording, (2) Text analysis, it begins to identify specific ways by which the participant talks about, understands and think about an issue, (3) Theme development, (4) Making

connection between themes and writing final themes, (5) Analysis of data interview, and (6) Searching for similarity of themes across interviews (Noor Amiera & Akehsan, 2015). The quotes and themes developed were translated to English from Bahasa Malaysia using forward translation. A number of measures were taken to ensure trustworthiness of the themes, such as peer debriefing, member checking and using participants who have similar characteristics that will provide descriptive and interpretative validity. (Onweugbuzie & Leech, 2007).

This study has granted approval from the Department of Social Welfare and The Research Ethical Committee from University of Technology Mara (UiTM). Informed consent was obtained from all of the participants who agreed to participate in this study.

3. Findings

Five older people participated in this study. The analysis indicates that there is one superordinate theme that was emerged from the interview; life satisfaction. Two master themes; (1) “Alhamdulillah” (Contentment) and (2) “Redha” (Acceptance) represented the superordinate theme. The participants described the experience of interdependency by word “Alhamdulillah” and “Redha”. Both words are Malay words that mean contentment and acceptance. These themes facilitate the sense of the quality of life among older people in the institution. The findings shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes emerging from the interview transcripts

Superordinate theme	Master Themes	Subthemes
Life Satisfaction	“Alhamdulillah”	1. Love, belonging, and affection
	(Contentment)	2. Health, care, and safety
	“Redha”	1. Current living environment
	(Acceptance)	2. Current condition

3.1. Master Theme 1: “Alhamdulillah” (Contentment)

Alhamdulillah (Contentment) is a word, which is often expressed by participants during the interview. They said that they were very grateful for what they have achieved in this situation. This dependence shows that they were satisfied with what they have in their life.

Thus, through the analysis it is indicated that, participants thanked to God whereby in this older age they were still able to get health, love, and good care at the institution. Thus, there were two subthemes were considered (1) love, belonging, affection and (2) health, care, safety. However, analysis through these two subthemes indicated that the older people in the institution were interdependence on humans, which signified a sense of quality of life. Furthermore, interdependency can make their lives complete and make them satisfied with this provision. Therefore, their quality of life can be improved and this would serve as a pathway for a better and cheerful upcoming day to go through among Malay older people in the institution.

The participants describe how their daily life was meaningful as part of the aging process and stated the factor is love, belonging and affection. This experience was illustrated by a 72 years old Malay man. He said that affection given by the staff at the institution made him feel comfortable staying here:

“I am very grateful to be placed here. “Alhamdulillah”. All the people here have care about me. They are like my own children. They give their love to us here”

65 years old Malay female also pointed out about love given by the staffs and visitors who visit them here:

“It’s nice when someone comes to visit us here. Sometimes we were visited by relatives of others residents. There are also students, government agencies, and those who are kind. They always came to bring us a gifts, food, etc. Meanwhile, the staffs in the institution also were giving the best service. They were treated us like a family. Alhamdulillah”

In addition, there are also participants who provide their views on where they are lucky to be in an institution. They feel highly valued because the staffs were care about their health and feel safe here. It is shown that the interdependency makes their lives much appreciated by the presence of people around in the institution who understand them. That was stated by a 69 years old Malay man:

“My health was taken care here. “Alhamdulillah”. For your information, I’m suffering from various diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart problems. Every time my appointment with a specialist, they will take me to the doctor and the doctor also treat me well”

This was supported by an old Malay man aged 70 years old:

“They are always provide the best for us. They care about our health. Every day, we are given healthy food although sometimes the food is no taste. [Laughs]. The food is no taste just for elderly. [Laughter again]”

In addition, another 65 years old Malay female was also expressed regarding this situation. She also explained about their safety was maintained and secure in the institution.

“I love staying here. When at home, I will stay alone and have to do all households by myself. My safety at home has no guarantee. Here, I had a lot of friends and people who care about me even my safety is guaranteed”

3.2. Master Theme 2: “Redha” (Acceptance)

Elderly do often think about their future, which is spending and enjoying their life with the loved one. Live happily with family is always what they wanted and look for. However, not all elderly are destined to be with their family. These are one of the fates written and suffered by those living in the institution. In this study, based from the interview most of the participants accepted the fate they suffered. They express their feeling by saying “redha”. “Redha” is a Malay word means acceptance. Thus, this shows the interdependence to higher power.

Through data analysis shows that there are two subthemes in the master theme “Redha”: (1) current living environment and (2) current condition.

Through the subtheme current living environment, the participants have accepted live in the institution without presence of their children and relative. This situation makes them accept their fate as they are here. A 69 years old Malay female said:

“I was “Redha” (accept) the provision of God. Life is surrounded by friends here too a favor to me. They’re here to give a lot of memories and makes me happy”

Another Malay old female claimed that:

“The decision to stay here was not my decision. My lovely son sent me here and I am “redha” to be here.”

A 76 years old Malay man also noted this:

“Just stay here and no complain of anything. “Redha” only with the provision of God. It’s been my fate here [pause]. Human beings in this world, have their own fate. We, as Muslims, have to believe in the Qada and Qadar that provided by Allah for us”

Elderly in the institution also stated that they do accept their condition fate over here. Most of the participants have accepted their unstable condition and certain problem such as knee joint pain and dizziness which they experience often in their life. This can be illustrated by the following quote:

“This is my current condition, sometimes I have a good times without pain sometime I experience the flares up, such as headache then back pain when its cure by time I had another flares up I had knee pain. This is the routine of my pain life, but accept it with my open heart, as long as I can walk on my own without troubling others. I “redha” everything sincerely all this is test from almighty”

4. Discussion

Interdependence is related with quality of life and both of it has a connection towards life satisfaction. The quality of life based on the values on interdependence that closely related to life satisfaction and well being (Dosil, 2004). This study focused on interdependency in the institution among Malay older people is contribution for their quality of life. One superordinate theme was emerged from the interview; life satisfaction. The superordinate theme was represented by two master themes that were “*Alhamdulillah*” (contentment) and “*Redha*” (acceptance). These themes facilitate the sense of the quality of life among older people in the institution. These findings support previous finding that stressed the important of inter-dependency contribution to QoL (Dahlan, Nicol & Maciver, 2010; Ibrahim et al., 2013; Gunawan & Chich-Jen, 2014).

“*Alhamdulillah*” (contentment) is relating to love, belonging, affection and health, care, safety. This theme show that the interdependence elderly to the humans. This resembles to their relationship with the staff and resident at the institution, people who are visiting them, and other people that connected with them in the institution. Elderly want to be loved by others within surrounding. Engagement in meaningful relationship creates a sense of direction for quality of life. The close relationship between the staffs in the institution and the resident provide special meaningful in social relationship. That is a positive affect that contributes feeling of happiness (Meeks, et al., 2007). The positive affect facilitates a sense of satisfaction with life (Clare, et al., 2008) and will increase their quality of life (Kashchuk & Ivankina, 2015).

Relationship reflects from a solid communication with other people. According to Nistor (2014) mentioned that one of the advantages in engaging communication among elderly would diminish the isolation and loneliness feeling in institutions, which obviously promote a better and healthy quality of life. When an older people attending the ceremony that implement social participation and interaction between them, they were pursued to build relationship and adaptation to their emotional and regulation. Thus, they are most likely to enhance personal interest, sociability, and integration toward improving quality of life (Eseuder-Mallon, et al., 2014).

Proper health services and safety are basic thing that an elderly wish to have to perform daily occupation activities. They want to engage in occupational activities related to previous experience and roles. According to Elavsky, et al., 2000 and Elavsky, et al., 2005 stated that, engagement in meaningful activities create a sense of direction and purpose in life, a sense of ability, and achievement. The finding in this study show that the need of good health in institutionalized older people is one of their hope and wishes even they are deteriorating in functions.

“*Redha*” (acceptance) is relating to the acceptance with the current living environment and current condition. This theme show that the interdependence among the elderly people with other people who provide them with comfortable living environment and the interdependency with the ‘higher power’. Every human in this world built trust and believe in faith and religion preach and to rely on Him and to worship Him is inherent in the nature of man. This unique feeling were born naturally with man and continued in each period. Participants mentioned that this is the fate that determined them to carry on their life in the institution, thus they do accept the situation. This finding is similar to the result in other studies in which older people consider the ageing process as the usual factor for deterioration in health condition (Sarkisian, at el., 2002 & Sarkisian, et al., 2005).

However, acceptance has some advantages: (1) helps older people to make sense of their life condition, (2) helps older people to adjust and to avoid disappointment (Tsai & Tsai, 2007), and (3) helps older people to accept and to cope (Pitani, et al., 2008). Accept with our own fate, will improve our life and basic need will fulfill. Furthermore, when basic needs are covered, quality of life can be influence (Escuder-Mallon, et al., 2014). Self-acceptance is one of the factors that contribute to self-perception of quality of life. Previous studies indicates that people who come with terms of their illness and accept their conditions have a higher quality of life that people who did not accept their conditions (Lewkow et al., 2007 and Palos & Viscu, 2014) and are able to adjust well with mental health problem (Connell et al., 2012).

In summary, the benefits of interdependence in Malay older people who live in the institution is improvement in quality of life by fulfill their satisfaction of life. Two type of interdependency which are interdependency to human and interdependency to higher power have contributes to elderly life satisfaction. Both of the benefits are able to increase and enhance their quality of life.

5. Conclusion and implication of the study

There are some differences between dependency and interdependency among older people in Asian countries and European countries. Thus, it become difficult for Occupational Therapist to implement successful rehabilitation programs for Malay older people especially those who live in institutions. In Malaysian context, there are no studies focusing on interdependency among older people. Hence, this situation needs to be studied to obtain information about Malaysian perspective of interdependency among the older people especially who are living in the institutions.

Therefore, it is important carry out this study, as it will help to improve Occupational Therapy service in future that results for client satisfaction and clinical decision-making. Meanwhile, the new generation of Occupational Therapist in Malaysia will get the benefits, which would help them in their education and future. The implication from this study: health care professional such as an Occupational Therapist should highlight the importance of interdependency in their intervention that helps older people to maintain their life satisfaction and quality of life. Besides, the policy makers could play an importance role by encouraging family members to reconnect with older people in institutions.

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