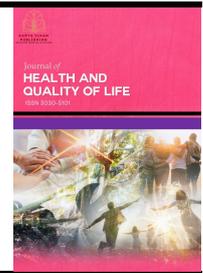




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# Golden Years Enrichment: Exploring the Basic Needs as Motivational Factors Encouraging Retirement Village Living

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### ABSTRACT

As there is an increase in the aging population globally, the concept of retirement village living is gaining prominence as a viable and enriching option for older adults. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the underlying motivational factors that influence seniors' decision to move into retirement villages. Grounded by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the research explores how basic needs help to encourage the transition of the elderlies into the retirement village settings. This study is a pilot survey whereby a quantitative method is used. A structured survey was developed and distributed to a sample of 30 adults currently residing in Kuching. The study identifies the motivational factors that encourage the movement of the future elderlies to the retirement village. The findings clearly indicate that fulfilling physiological and safety needs serves as a primary factor for older adults in choosing to live in retirement village. Hence, this research contributes to the broader disclosure on senior living and offers strategic insights for policymakers, developers and gerontology professionals aiming to support dignified and fulfilling ageing experiences.

## 1. Introduction

The world is witnessing a demographic transformation marked by the rapid aging of populations. Aging population is defined as a process where older individuals take on a larger proportion of the total population [1]. It is expected that the number of people aged 60 and above is expected to double by 2050, and Malaysia is expected to become an ageing nation in 2030 with 15% of the population aged 60 and above [2]. This shift is driven by increased life expectancy and declining birth rates: trends that are particularly evident in developed nations and increasingly significant in emerging countries [3].

As life expectancy increases and birth rates decline, societies around the world are experiencing a significant rise in the proportion of older adults. Hassan & Jiaqi [4], state that the number of small families and old age dependency ratio in Malaysia are expected to increase rapidly. The growing proportion of elderly individual poses unique challenges to societies, particularly in ensuring adequate support systems that promote dignity, independence and quality of life. Schwitter [5]

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highlighted that as the number of older people grows, the life situations, problems and accommodation as well as care requires attention. Hence, this transformation has spurred interest in innovative housing and lifestyle solutions tailored to the needs of the elderlies.

Retirement villages have emerged as a popular choice for many older individuals that seek an enriching and supportive living environment. It has become an accepted living accommodation option [3]. These villages typically offer a mix of independent living units, assisted living options and access to healthcare facilities. The concept offers a purpose design housing that incorporate both care services and a range of non-care related facilities and activities [5]. Much research has discussed the functional benefits of such communities. However, less attention has been given to understand the underlying motivations that drive the elderlies to make the transition. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the motivational factors that encourage retirement village living in terms of basic needs.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Retirement Village Concept*

Retirement village, also referred to as senior living communities, is designed to offer a combination of independent living with access to support services. It is a purpose-built residential communities designed to support older adults in maintaining an independent and fulfilling lifestyle while providing various levels of assistance as needed [6]. Retirement villages provide a specialized residential environment tailored to the unique needs of older adults, fostering independence, community and a high quality of life. It is convenient accommodation as the residents can enjoy the facilities and various activities [3].

A retirement village offers a structured living environment that balances autonomy with access to essential services such as healthcare, recreational activities and social engagement opportunities. The concept has evolved from traditional elderly care institutions to a more dynamic, self-sustaining neighborhood that caters to the diverse needs of the aging populations. It has been widely accepted as a viable accommodation option and is seen by an increasing number of retirees as an option to life after retirement [7].

Another aspect of a retirement village is, it is a residential community designed explicitly for older adults, typically those aged 55 years and above [8], who seek for an independent yet supportive living environment. These villages offer a range of housing options, from a standalone home to apartment with combined and shared amenities as well as services. Unlike traditional elderly care facilities, such as nursing home, retirement villages cater to relatively active and self-sufficient seniors aim to provide an environment that balances autonomy with communal engagement.

Recent literature further expands the retirement village concept by highlighting its evolution toward smart and sustainable senior living. According to Tan *et al.*, [9], studies on smart retirement villages conceptualize these communities not only as residential environments but also as integrated systems that incorporate sustainable housing features and technology acceptance models. This shows to support the intention of older adult not only to relocate but also to broadening the functional scope of retirement villages to include environmental and technological dimension of ageing in place [10]. Furthermore, the retirement villages within the context of age inclusive of urban futures, suggesting that such environments must be designed with accessibility, community, facilities and sustainability at the forefront to meet the diverse needs of an ageing population in urban setting [11].

## 2.2 Motivational Factor through Maslow Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a valuable theoretical lens for understanding motivation among older adults. It emphasizes the progression from basic physiological needs to self-actualization (illustrated in figure 1).

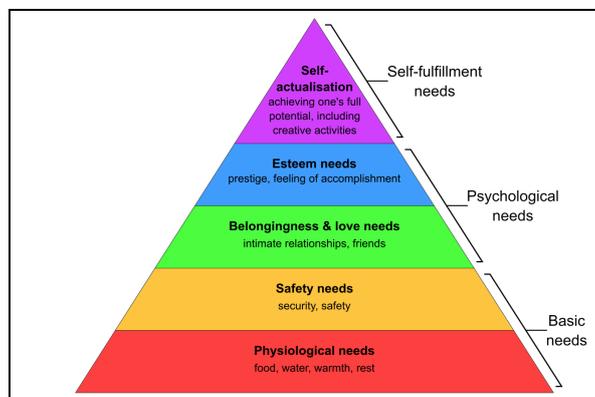


Fig. 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs [12]

The decision of future elderlies to move into retirement village involves a range of factors. Hence, motivation theories provide valuable insights into the factors influencing seniors' choices and behaviors regarding their living arrangement. One foundational framework that studies the needs is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, emphasizes the progression from basic physiological needs to higher level aspirations like self-actualization.

As lifestyles keep changing, people are now paying more attention towards their retirement life. The decision of where to live during their retirement life is related to financial, time and health status [3]. The decision for the elderly to move or accept the concept of retirement village is often driven by the motivational factors that are aligned with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The theory encompasses five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, social belonging, esteem needs and self-actualization. In general, basic needs for retirees after retirement are finance, housing and health care [3].

## 3. Research Methodology

This study is a pilot study in which it employs a quantitative approach to examine the motivational factors encouraging retirement village living. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to a sample of 30 adults currently residing in Kuching. Participants were selected using random sampling to ensure representation across variables such as age group, gender, and socioeconomic status.

The survey instrument is inclusive of likert scale item measuring motivational domains such as health and wellness, social engagement, autonomy, lifestyle preferences, emotional security and future planning. Prior to distribution of main data, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, reliability and content validity of the instrument. Reliability of a measure indicates stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concepts [13].

The pilot test was executed by using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the instruments. According to Aripin [14], reliability is the degree to which scale or instrument consistently measures whatever it measures. A coefficient value in Cronbach's Alpha is

between 0 to 1, and if the value exceeds 0.60 the scale is then said to have internal consistency, hence it is reliable to be used [14,15].

The analysis is conducted consecutively to interpret the alpha value derived from the test using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 29. The number of respondents for this pilot survey is 30. The Likert-scale level of agreement from scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) has been used in this survey. The results are generated and presented in descriptive analysis. A self-administered questionnaire based on Likert-scale is prepared for the determination of the respondents' level of agreement with the designated questions.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research objectives. The primary objective of this research is to identify and examine the key motivational factors that influence the acceptance of retirement village among the older adults. To address the objective, a quantitative approach was employed, in which data were collected using a structured questionnaire and is analysed using SPSS and is presented in descriptive analysis. The findings are as follows:

**Table 1**  
 Reliability analysis on the motivation factors towards basic need

Ref	Item	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SA1	Fear of crime	4.43	.946
SA2	Personal insecurity	4.23	.943
SA3	Safety	4.67	.944
SA4	Accessibility to shops and lack of services near neighbourhood	4.27	.941
SA5	Structural design (Area house to big, stairs, steps and etc)	4.17	.942
SA6	Medical facilities (Nursing home, medication, room for visiting doctors & other allied health professional)	4.53	.942
SA7	Current health status	4.40	.942
SA8	Disability	4.23	.942
SA9	Hospitalization	4.33	.942
SA10	Changes in mental health	4.27	.942
SA11	Frequent outpatient visit	4.30	.942
SA12	Cognitive status	4.10	.942
SA13	High rental and maintenance cost	4.30	.940
SA14	No income, jobless, changes in income status & retirement	4.20	.942
PH1	Loneliness	4.30	.943
PH2	Isolation	4.13	.942
PH3	Depression	4.13	.945
PH4	Seeking new lifetime	4.33	.945
PH5	Changing lifestyle	4.37	.945
PH6	Fear of burdening family member	4.43	.947
PH7	Desire to downsizing	4.07	.945
PH8	Maintenance of house – difficult to manage and expensive	4.13	.944
PH9	Billing – difficult to manage and expensive	4.30	.942
PH10	Regret and fear about letting home deteriorate	4.30	.944
PH11	Facilities – library, gymnasium, swimming pool, computer room, laundry service, meal service, transportation service	4.40	.942
Alpha= .945		Standardized item alpha = .947	

#### 4.1 Physiological Needs

Physiological needs represent the most fundamental level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Figure 2 shows the results of motivation factors which are associated with physiological needs. These include the essential requirements for human survival such as food, water, shelter and others. For older adults, the ability to consistently meet these needs become increasingly important due to age related changes in physical health, mobility and independence.

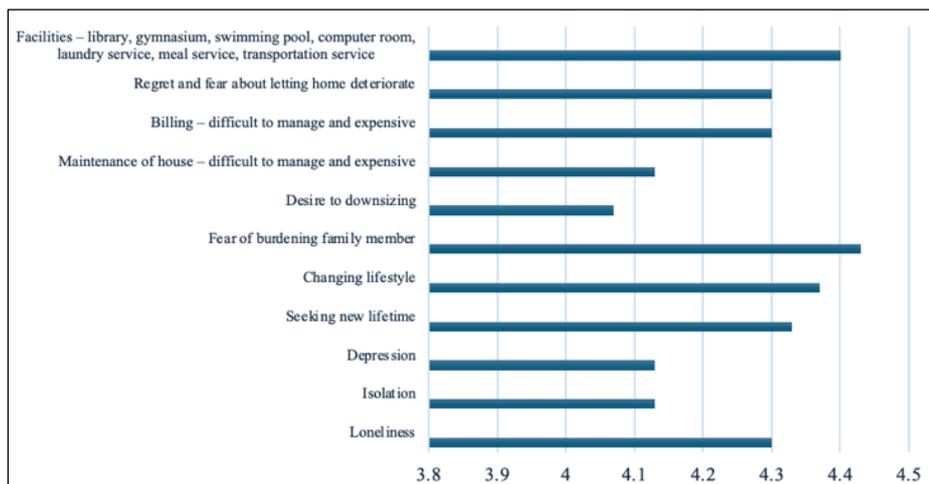


Fig. 2. Motivation factors towards physiological needs

Retirement villages are designed to address these basic needs comprehensively, making them an attractive living option for seniors. One of the key motivators for older adults to accept retirement village living is the assurance of reliable access to meals, safe housing and medical assistance. The retirement village is perceived as a place that provides facilities [3]. The analysis revealed that psychological needs and practical life challenges play a significant role in motivating older adults to consider moving into a retirement village. The high agreement across all items suggests that physiological and practical needs are not only about survival but also about comfort, dignity and emotional well-being.

Among the eleven items analysed, all show high mean scores (ranging from 4.07 to 4.43), which suggest strong agreement across respondents. The highest rated factor was the fear of burdening family member ( $M = 4.43$ ), underscoring a deep-rooted desire among older adults to maintain independence and avoid becoming a source of stress to loved ones. This is closely followed by the availability of comprehensive facilities ( $M = 4.40$ ) provided in the retirement villages such as libraries, gyms and transportation, which directly support both physical and practical daily needs. The aspiration for a changing lifestyle ( $M = 4.37$ ) and seeking a new lifetime experience ( $M = 4.33$ ) reflects a proactive approach toward ageing in a supportive and a vibrant environment. Emotional challenges such as loneliness, isolation and depression also registered high concern ( $M = 4.13 - 4.30$ ), further highlighting the importance of social integration in senior living environments. Additionally, practical concerns including home maintenance, billing and the emotional burden of deteriorating homes ( $M = 4.13 - 4.30$ ) indicate the daily challenges that retirement villages are well-positioned to mitigate. Collectively, the findings emphasize that retirement village address far more than survival needs, as it offers a holistic solution that enhances physical comfort, emotional stability and improving quality of life.

#### 4.1 Safety Needs

In Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, safety needs represent the second level in the pyramid. For older adults, safety needs take a critical role due to increased vulnerability associated with ageing. Figure 3 shows the results of motivational factors toward the safety needs.

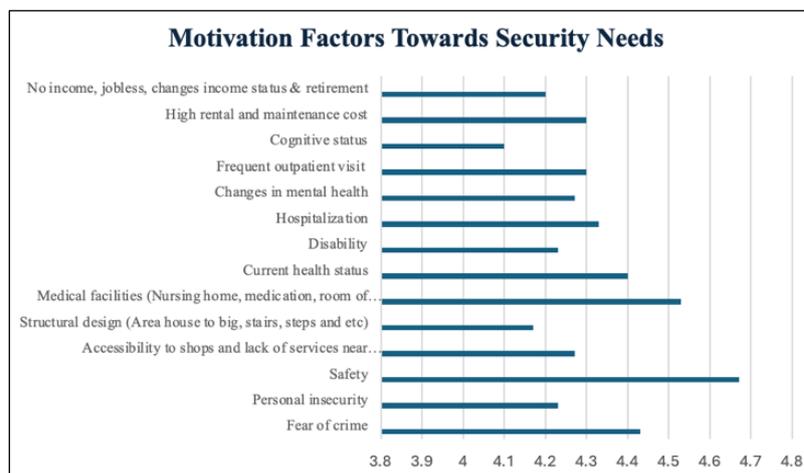


Fig. 3. Motivation factors towards safety needs

The findings demonstrate that security needs, encompassing physical, health, environmental and financial aspects are the critical motivational factor influencing older adults in accepting the concept of retirement village. Retirement village need to provide with 24 hours emergency response system considering the declining health or disability of elderly [3]. Safety was identified as the most significant concern (M = 4.67), followed closely by fear of crime (M = 4.43) and the need for personal security (M = 4.23), highlighting a strong desire for protection and peace of mind. Structural design challenges, such as large homes and the presence of stairs (M = 4.17) further emphasize the importance of age-friendly environments. Older adults seek environments where healthcare services are easily accessible and responsive to their evolving needs. The findings revealed that the health-related concern was equally pronounced, with high scores for access to medical facilities (M = 4.53), current health status (M = 4.40), hospitalization (M = 4.33) and frequent outpatient visits (M = 4.30). Additionally, changes in mental health (M = 4.27), cognitive status (M = 4.10) and disability (M = 4.23) reflect the need for psychological and supportive care. Environmental security was also underscored by issues related to limited accessibility to shops and services (M = 4.27), which retirement villages often mitigate through integrated or nearby amenities. Finally, financial stability emerged as a crucial consideration, with high rental and maintenance cost (M = 4.30) and income insecurity due to retirement (M = 4.20) prompting a preference for affordable and predictable living arrangements. Thus, the findings underscore the multifaceted nature of security needs and affirm that retirement villages provide a comprehensive solution that supports safety, wellbeing and financial peace of mind.

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings clearly demonstrate that both physiological and safety needs are fundamental motivators influencing the acceptance of retirement village living among older adults. Physiological needs, such as the desire to avoid loneliness, reduce the burden on family members and transition into a more manageable and supportive lifestyle reflect a deep concern for physical

comfort and emotional wellbeing. Concurrently, safety needs that range from the concerns about personal security, access to healthcare, environmental design and financial stability further reinforce the preference for structures and secure living environments. These two levels of Maslow's hierarchy often consider foundational are especially pronounced in later life stages where vulnerability increases. Hence, retirement villages offer a comprehensive solution that respond directly to the elderly needs, thereby positioning themselves as ideal settings that promote independence, safety and directly improving the quality of life for ageing population.

A limitation of this paper was the findings are solely based on pilot survey. The pilot survey provides a valuable initial insight into the motivational factor; however, the sample size was relatively small and may not be representative of the broader older adult population, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Building upon the limitations identified in this pilot survey, future research should aim to enhance the validity and generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse sample is essential to capture a wider range of experiences and motivational factors across different demographic group. Furthermore, future studies should consider employing mixed method approaches to complement survey data and provide richer contextual understanding.

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