

*Determinants of age-friendly communities*

M-M. LAI, S-Y. LEIN, S-H. LAU, M-L. LAI. **Determinants of age-friendly communities.** *Gerontechnology* 2014;13(2):228; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.079.00 **Purpose** This paper examines what makes a town elderly-friendly by examining Melaka, Malaysia. We adapted the framework of WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities<sup>1</sup>. An age-friendly community not only enables the elderly to age-in-place but also promotes active aging by providing social support and a healthy and secured environment so that the elderly can live a quality life<sup>1</sup>. **Method** We administered a questionnaire survey to 30 elders and 30 informal caregivers via convenience sampling in the urban and rural areas of Melaka. Six determinants of an age-friendly community were examined: (i) housing in a neighbourhood, (ii) social participation among the elderly, (iii) respect towards the elderly, (iv) civic participation and employment among the elderly, (v) health services provided for the elderly, and (vi) outdoor spaces and environment for the elderly to perform physical activities. Community support served as the dependent variable. Stepwise multiple regression was used in addition to descriptive statistics. **Results & Discussion** The regression result indicated that only respect towards the elderly, social participation, and outdoor spaces determinants were found to be significant for an age-friendly community. Determinants such as health services, housing, environment for physical activity and civic participation among the elderly were found to be non-significant. A possible explanation can be seen from the lower mean score of instrumental activity basic living (IADL) of 2.98. For example, the ability to drive (mean=2.08) requires major assistance as compared to mean of 3.71 activity daily living (ADL) of physical functioning based upon a 5-point scale. To be a more age-friendly community, it requires improvement in transportation within the community, such as ease of walking to a bus stop as well as the presence of interesting things to look at while walking. Lack of mobility could be a possible explanation why the determinants such as health services, civic participation and employment, environment for physical activities and housing were perceived to be insignificant by the elderly. Malaysia has a poor public transport system, so most people prefer using cars. Generally, the bus transport facilities are modern but have poor service quality. There is no rail-based transit system in Melaka<sup>2</sup>. The transportation problem could discourage elders from traveling. Local government and the Ministry of Transportation should look into providing age-friendly public transport in these communities in preparation for the aging society in Malaysia.

**References**

1. World Health Organisation. Global age-friendly cities: A guide. Geneva: WHO; 2007
2. Aldukali SIA, Riza AOKR, Othman J. *The Social Science* 2011;6(1):24-33; doi:10.3923/sscience.2011.24.33

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*Table 1: Regression results of determinants of age-friendly communities; Aged friendly environment features are measured by a five-point scale where 1=strongly disagree, 5=strong agree; \*= $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*= $p < 0.01$*

Age-friendly features	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Cronbach's Alpha
Respect towards elderly	0.422**	3.726	0.000	0.846
Social participation	0.276**	2.797	0.007	0.923
Outdoor spaces and buildings	0.231*	2.029	0.047	0.867
Health services	0.125	1.223	0.227	0.912
Housing in the neighbourhood	0.087	0.822	0.415	0.805
Environment for physical activities	0.051	0.304	0.762	0.934
Civic participation and employment	0.095	0.730	0.468	0.943
R <sup>2</sup>	0.603			