

## THE ELEMENTS OF ACTIVE AGING FOR ELDERLY COHOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA

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### ABSTRACT

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*In 2015 all the United Nations (UN) member states, including Malaysia, agreed on the 17 Sustainable Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This paper highlighted the significant development of cohousing for the elderly in Malaysia based on the Maqasid Shari'ah governance. The significant development of cohousing for the elderly in Malaysia encourages the country to achieve SDGs Goal 9 regarding the necessities of innovation in infrastructure and enhancing the healthy lifestyle of the elderly in Malaysia. The enhancement of a healthy lifestyle and active aging living is significant for the country to reach SDGs Goal 3, which is related to good health and well-being of all ages. The development of cohousing with the consideration of Islamic values is essential for Malaysian society since most Malaysian is Muslim. Quantitative data are collected from the questionnaire survey, and the frequency data analysis is applied to the data. Results proved that most respondents agreed with the concepts of cohousing development, and the elements of cohousing development are supported. This paper provided the essential elements and the concept of cohousing for Muslim elderly in Malaysia with the suggested housing plan development. (192 words)*

Keywords: cohousing; ageing population; active aging; community; elderly; sustainable development goals

### INTRODUCTION

United Nations (UN) introduced the 17 Sustainable Goals (SDGs) that aimed to be improved for Sustainable Development by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). SDGs included no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, and many others, which identified as the global solutions for global problems. The related SDGs for this research topic are Goal 3 and Goal 9, which regarding the good health and well-being of all ages (Goal 3) and the necessities of sustainable innovation on infrastructure (Goal 9). This paper suggested the significant development of cohousing for the elderly in Malaysia based on the Maqasid Shari'ah governance. Therefore, Goal 3 is related to the well-being and good health of the elderly. Meanwhile, Goal 9 correlated with the suggested development of cohousing with the compliance of Maqasid Shari'ah that aims for the development of sustainable innovation of cohousing for the elderly.

Cohousing development brings an advantage to residents economic, environmental, and social lives compared to other development (Williams, 2008). Cohousing models are suitable for sustainable development because it is closely related to making urban lives more social and greener (Lietaert, 2010). The adaptations of cohousing development in Malaysia is still at an early stage. There is still a vast part of cohousing application

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towards Malaysia's housing market that needed to be improved, especially as the elderly residence in Malaysia (Jumadi et al., 2019).

The proportion of people over 60 years old are growing faster than any other group of age worldwide. The United Nations, through the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015, come out with a policy framework for active aging. WHO acknowledges the rising numbers of elderly worldwide and the importance of the elderly to stay healthy and active. Malaysia, as a developing country, will become an aging society by the year 2030. The development of a community centre for the elderly to meet up and socialize is essential for them to gain community support (Radhi and Arumugam, 2019). Therefore, the idea for the development of cohousing for the elderly in Malaysia will benefit the elderly's physical and social lifestyles. This paper aims to discussed the concept and essential elements of cohousing for Muslim elderly in Malaysia.

The flow of this research paper started with the introduction, which briefly explains the research's foundation. Next, the background of cohousing development is discussed. The significance of active aging living is highlighted, then the development of cohousing with Maqasid Shari'ah compliance is clarified. Furthermore, the paper explained the research methodology of the research from the data obtained to the data analysis. The result and discussion are emphasized, which lastly lead to the conclusions of the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cohousing Development**

Cohousing was first established in Denmark around 50 years ago, and since then, cohousing development has started to emerge in Northern Europe, America, and other countries (Williams, 2008). The essence of cohousing is known as the group of people that agreed to live as a community and building the area of residential together (Belk, 2006). The communities are small to medium size, around 20 to 40 houses (Belk, 2006), and aims to provide balance for residents' privacy and live independently alongside a cohesive community (Williams, 2008).

Cohousing helps fill the void in modern residential concept, especially in the urban area regarding the family, community, and the sense of belonging among residents (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). The cohousing concept consists of private space and a common place for residents' activities (Brenton, 2001). It is identified that the development of cohousing in America is increasing and cohousing improves people's lives with the child and senior-friendly neighborhood (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). The number of population living alone is rising in America, and the number will continue to grow together with the number of people aged 60 years old and above. The urban residential concept is too individualistic. Meanwhile, cohousing encouraged community engagement and improved quality of life (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). This is because cohousing provided feelings of security and comfort (Glass, 2009) and demolished fear and loneliness (Bamford, 2005) among the residents.

Cohousing maintains the traditional neighborhood elements that mostly encourage community activities (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). The similarities of cohousing and traditional village concept proved that cohousing residential provided the traditional needs for modern problems. With access to the park and gardening area, residents are more engaged in gardening and exchanging knowledge. Besides sharing knowledge, residents can share their resources and borrow from each other, which is convenient to reduce their cost of living. Basically, cohousing concept teaches the residents to listen to others, consider other views with respect, and be kind to people (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). Elderly benefit a lot from the larger community's activities. It is easier for them to get help and engage with other residents (Brenton, 2001).

In Malaysia, the development of cohousing is still not widely known or applied. However, the already established traditional village is maintained and continued to prosper even in the city centre, Kuala Lumpur. For example, the famously known village in the city center of Kuala Lumpur is Kampung Baru, which is located just across the landmark of Malaysia, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC). The maintenance of traditional villages in Malaysia has proven that the Malaysian people fully accepted the community's function in their daily lives. The application of cohousing towards the elderly in Malaysia could be encouraged, leading them to healthy community engagement.

To ensure comprehensive cohousing development, three types of approaches could be implemented. Firstly, is a resident-led approach mainly led by the residents with the planning and the development of the cohousing. The resident-led approach created some issues with the development process because of the lack of involvement of the developers in the development. Therefore, to tackle the issues arising from the resident-led approach, the other two approaches are introduced, which are the partnership approach and the speculative approach. The partnership approach included the involvement of the resident before, during, and after the development process. Meanwhile, the speculative approach only involves the residents after the development is finished (Williams, 2008).

The development of conventional cohousing is related to six cohousing elements. The first element is the joint involvement of the residents in the development of cohousing. The second element is the neighborhood style of development, such as the formation of the community area and common space area. Thirdly is the existence of the community area, which functions as the center for common activities, use, and sharing space between the community. The next element is the joint responsibility for the management of the cohousing community. The fifth element included the non-existence of structure and hierarchy for any decision-making. The decision-making for the community would involve all the community management bodies. The last cohousing element is the related monetary element of cohousing which there will be no income and any financial sharing between the community. Therefore, with the related cohousing development approaches and cohousing elements, this study would suggest a suitable development that enhances the active aging lifestyle of the Muslim elderly in Malaysia.

## **Active Aging Living**

Active aging is the process that maintains individual health with the participation of activities within the community in the scope of their objectives, abilities, and opportunity (Lak et al., 2020). The individual old age is defined as 60 years old and above (WHO, 2002). WHO stated that active aging included the determinants of autonomy, independence, and quality of life. Autonomy represents the right to self-govern and individual control over personal decisions and preferences. Independence is the person's ability to perform daily tasks and live independently among the community. Quality of life is the perception towards life culture and normative value system (Kalache and Gatti, 2003). The individual's state to age well is closely related to active aging (Zanjari et al., 2017). Active aging is also seen in the broad concept that included the physical health, mental health, independence state, social structure, religion or personal beliefs, and essential connection of people with the environment (WHO, 1998).

Based on a systematic literature review with 92 articles regarding active aging, the aspect of active aging is divided into five themes called the 5P model: person, process, place, policymaking, and prime (Lak et al., 2020). Person represented the personal characteristics and attitude towards the behavior. Process is the core ecological theme for active aging consisting of the social, economic, and cultural environment. Next, place comprises the use of land, physical form, residential, access, and public space. Meanwhile, policymaking involved the government administration, which generally focused on the good governance of the authorities. Lastly, prime signify the main health of the elderly, such as physical, mental, and social health. Several factors are compulsory in the research of people's well-being. Therefore, to signify the level of well-being for a group of people such as the elderly, the essential areas to be focused on are the family, work, community participation, and social life of the people (Alidoust and Bosman, 2015). Therefore, the development of a local

environment that emphasizes the health and well-being of the elderly is very important, especially towards urban development (Zanjari et al., 2017).

As mentioned, one of the significant factors of active aging is individual participation with the community (Kalache and Gatti, 2003) and the enhancement of their social engagement (Lak et al., 2020). The active aging factor of community engagement correlates with cohousing's main element of community living. Moreover, the application of cohousing development towards the elderly could ease them in living actively, prevent loneliness, and enhance the community's togetherness and unity (Bamford, 2005). The cohousing environment developed the community's support towards each other and created better mental health conditions for the elderly (Glass and Vander Plaats, 2013). In the prospect of Malaysian cohousing development that aims to enhance the active aging living among the elderly, the locality elements should be considered. The community living with the traditional villages is very well known among Malaysian and widely accepted as the way of living for generations. Therefore, to particularly focus on Malaysian Muslims, cohousing development should apply the Maqasid Shari'ah elements for the elderly to enhance the locality personal belief's suitability.

This study is among the pioneer in implementing the Maqasid Shari'ah elements towards cohousing development focusing on the elderly in Malaysia. The correlation of Islamic values, which are the Maqasid Shari'ah elements, together with the good health and well-being of the elderly with the active aging lifestyle (SDGs 3) to be implemented in the development of cohousing. The aims of the development are toward the Muslim elderly community, which would enhance their Islamic lifestyle and help them focus on their daily activities as Muslims.

## **THE ELEMENTS OF COHOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR ACTIVE AGING**

### **Cohousing Development for Active Aging based on Maqasid Shari'ah**

The development of cohousing that mainly focused on the elderly could benefit them by encouraging active aging living. The social relationship among the community demands accountability and, in return, provided security with a sense of belonging (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). Among the various established cohousing, there are the common characteristics identified as the components of cohousing development. The common features are participatory process, designs that facilitate community, extensive common facilities, resident management, non-hierarchy structure, and separate sources of income (McCamant and Durrett, 2011).

The participatory process involved the participation of residents in the planning and design of the cohousing. There are three development approaches to cohousing: the resident-led (grass-roots) approach, the partnership approach, and the speculative approach (Williams, 2008). The resident-led approach involved the participation of residents in the design and the formation of the community. Meanwhile, the partnership approach included the residents with the developer working together in all stages. Lastly, the speculative approach is fully designed and built by the developer, and the community takes part only as the residents of the cohousing (Williams, 2008). The second characteristic of cohousing is designed that could ease the community. The cohousing's physical design, such as the house's design and the facilities' location, should encourage a strong community living sense (McCamant and Durrett, 2011).

The next characteristic is the variety of common facilities for the community. The common house existent provided the cooking and dining facilities, guest room, laundry room, children's room, meetings room, and exercise room (Sanguinetti, 2014). These facilities could ease community activities, including physical, religious, mental support, and dining activities (Sanguinetti, 2014). The fourth characteristic is the resident's management because the residents are responsible for the management of the ongoing cohousing community (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). The common meetings could be held once a month to discuss the issues or problems among the community. Meanwhile, cohousing is well known as the non-hierarchy structure since

every issue is discussed together, and every opinion matters (McCamant and Durrett, 2011). Lastly, the characteristic of cohousing is the separate source of income among the community. As the cohousing is not a commune, every resident should earn their own income without depending on other residents (Lietaert, 2010). The six characteristics of cohousing should reflect the needs of the community since there are various communities worldwide. Therefore, the characteristics of cohousing might be different, however the scope of the cohousing elements are still the same (McCamant and Durrett, 2011).

The cohousing community formed based on similar religious beliefs, focuses on developing their own cultural acceptance (Brenton, 1998). In this study, the implementation of cohousing is concentrated on the Muslim elderly in Malaysia. Therefore, to enhance the suitability of cohousing towards the locality and culture of Malaysian Muslim elderly, the application of Maqasid Shari’ah should be considered in the cohousing development. Islamic Shari’ah is the Islamic principle that aims to enhance the well-being and peacefulness of human lives. There are three main components of Maqasid Shari’ah, which are the needs of daruriyyah (human necessities), hajiyyah (needs to ease human life), and tahsiniyyah (complementary purposes that lead to a better life). From the three human needs, the Maqasid Shari’ah filter the needs to five essential elements known as religion (ad-din), life (an-nafs), intellect (al-aql), descendants (an-nasl), and property (al-mal) (JAKIM, 2015). Figure 1 explained the Maqasid Shari’ah with the connection of the three human needs and the five elements of Maqasid Shari’ah.

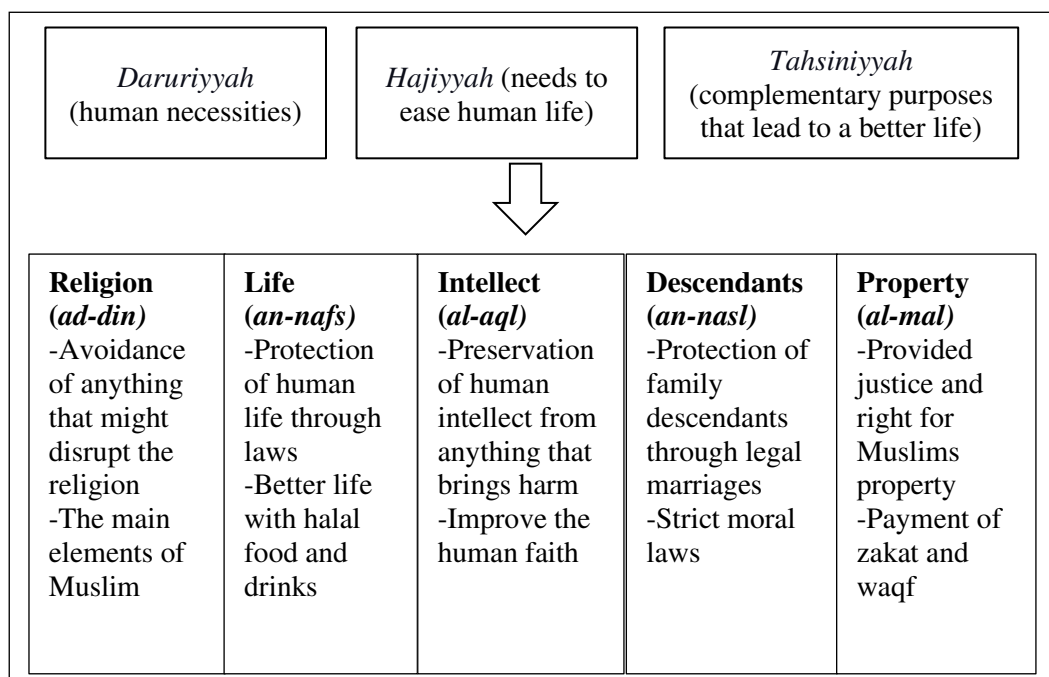


Figure 1: Maqasid Shari’ah elements

In the development and management of cohousing, the five essential elements of Maqasid Shari’ah are crucial as it brings the betterment surroundings for Muslims elderly. The protection of religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property of Muslims is considered among human rights as it is important for Muslims’ preferable future (JAKIM, 2015). The development of cohousing to encourage active aging living among the elderly covered a significant part of the community’s social and physical needs. Meanwhile, the application of Maqasid Shari’ah enhances the spiritual or religious needs of the elderly. This study’s main idea is to provide innovation on the infrastructure of cohousing by applying Maqasid Shari’ah elements. Therefore, the development of cohousing for the Muslim elderly is more suitable and closely accepted among Malaysia’s locality.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology flow started with the identification of research problem, literature review, formation of research objectives, data collection, data analysis, and the results and discussion (Creswell 2012). The main objective of this study is to identify the Muslim's elderly views and support regarding the cohousing development for active aging living alongside Maqasid Shari'ah compliance. The data collected are primary and qualitative data that contained the respondents' viewpoints towards the cohousing development. The respondents consist of Muslims elderly aged 50 to 70, staying in either Selangor or Johor state in Malaysia. The study area focuses on Selangor and Johor because the Department of Statistics Malaysia projects that the numbers of elderly are mostly from Selangor (16%) and Johor (12%) in the year 2020. The qualitative data collected are from the open-ended questions stated in the questionnaire, and the data are analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The data collected are analyzed through content analysis, grouped among the same categories, then calculated and summed up with the frequency method. The analysis of demographic data of the respondents is stated in the next section.

### Demographic Data

The respondents' demographic data are analyzed using the descriptive statistic, frequency analysis from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The total data collected are 641, which are 308 from Selangor and 333 from Johor state. The first section of the questionnaire contained the question regarding the demographic information of respondents. The respondents' demographic data consist of variables regarding the gender, age, status, number of children, educational level, working status, working sector, state residents, and monthly income of the respondents. Table 1 simplified the demographic data of respondents with numbers of total frequency and percentage of the variables.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>		
Male	284	44.3%
Female	357	55.7%
<b><i>Age</i></b>		
50-55	267	41.7%
56-60	177	27.6%
61-65	127	19.8%
66-70	70	10.9%
<b><i>Status</i></b>		
Married	545	85%
Single	18	2.8%
Widow/Widower	78	12.2%
<b><i>Number of children</i></b>		
None	33	5.1%
1-3	218	34%
4-6	307	47.9%
7 and above	83	12.9%
<b><i>Education level</i></b>		
No formal education	28	4.4%
SPM and below	286	44.6%
Certificate/Diploma	118	18.4%
Degree	139	21.7%
Master/PhD	70	10.9%
<b><i>Working status</i></b>		
Unemployed/Retired	275	42.9%
Working	366	57.1%

<b>Working Sector</b>		
None/Not related	275	42.9%
Government	102	15.9%
Private	101	15.8%
Self employed	100	15.6%
Business	63	9.8%
<b>State resident</b>		
Johor	333	52%
Selangor	308	48%
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Less than RM3,000	298	46.5%
RM3,000-RM6,000	194	30.3%
RM6,000-RM9,000	69	10.8%
RM9,000-RM12,000	34	5.3%
RM12,000-RM15,000	10	1.6%
More than RM15,000	15	2.3%
Missing	21	3.3%

As stated in Table 1, most respondents are female and aged around 50 to 55 years old. The range of respondents aged 50 to 60 years old is included in this study to expected the acceptance of the elderly in the future ten years. As stated in Table 1, 85 percent of the respondents are married, and it is shown that most of the respondents are married. Moreover, the number of children is considered for this study to presume the size of the respondent's family. Surprisingly, many respondents are considered to have a large family with around 4 to 6 children. Since the respondents are Muslims elderly, the number of children is deemed to be acceptable. This is because Islam emphasizes the build of family through legal marriages and encourages the number of children with the safe right of children, as stated in the Maqasid Shari'ah elements of descendants (*an-nasl*).

The respondents' education level is mostly with the Malaysian high-school certificate *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) and below. The working status of the respondents is mainly working with 57.1 percent. Meanwhile, 42.9 percent are unemployed or retired. Therefore, the working sector stated that the not related or none working sector is the same as the non-working respondents with 42.9 percent. The number of government, private, and self-employed working sectors is almost the same, around 100 respondents. Lastly, as stated in Table 1, respondents' monthly income is less than RM3,000 (46.5%), followed by RM3,000 to RM6,000 (30.3%). The respondents' range of monthly income has proven that the development of cohousing is supposedly affordable for middle to low-income people. The demographic data represents the state of most elderly, and it is essential to study the conditions and suitability of the cohousing development with the current or future state of the elderly.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 641 respondents were asked regarding the cohousing elements. Most of the respondents are interested in and support the development of cohousing with the compliance of Maqasid Shari'ah. The cohousing development aims for the development of sustainable innovation of cohousing for the elderly. Table 2 states the preferences of the Muslim elderly based on the cohousing elements, which are represented by respective items.

Table 2 : Respondent Preferences based on the Cohousing Elements

Cohousing Elements	Item	Frequency (Agreed)	%
<i>I<sup>st</sup> Element</i>	<b>Item 1</b>	570	88.9
Joint involvement in development	I agree to be involved with the location selection		

	process to build the residence		
	<b>Item 2</b>	572	89.2
	I agree that housing construction needs to be planned together with the community		
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Element</b>	<b>Item 1</b>	612	95.5
Neighbourhood design	Housing design that protects privacy of the residents		
	<b>Item 2</b>	587	91.6
	I agree that small neighbourhoods are easier to manage		
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Element</b>	<b>Item 1</b>	618	96.4
Community centre as a centre of common activities and are	I agree that a community housing needs to provide a common space area		
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Element</b>	<b>Item 1</b>	608	94.9
Joint responsibility	I agree that the task of managing the housing area needs to be divided fairly		
	<b>Item 2</b>	625	97.5
	I agree that every community member needs to be responsible and involved in managing the neighbourhood together		
	<b>Item 3</b>	618	96.4
	I agree if there is a management body to manage the housing area		
	<b>Item 4</b>	637	99.4
	Management involving physical aspects, facilities, good environment and security will produce a quality lifestyle		
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Element</b>	<b>Item 1</b>	633	98.8
No structure and hierarchy in decision making	I agree that a meeting should be held to make a decision for anything related to the neighbourhood		
	<b>Item 2</b>	630	98.3
	A neighbourhood needs to have a leader/chief, but his decision is subject to		



	discussion by the community		
	<b>Item 3</b>	550	85.8
	I will often attend meetings for the benefit of the residents		
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Element</b>	<b>Item 1</b>	589	91.9
No income and financial sharing	I agree that the source of income is from our own efforts without depending on other residents		
	<b>Item 2</b>	635	99.1
	Savings are needed to support the elderly life		

Based on Table 2, most of the respondents agreed with the elements of cohousing development. Figure 2 represented the cohousing elements chart which further supported the findings.

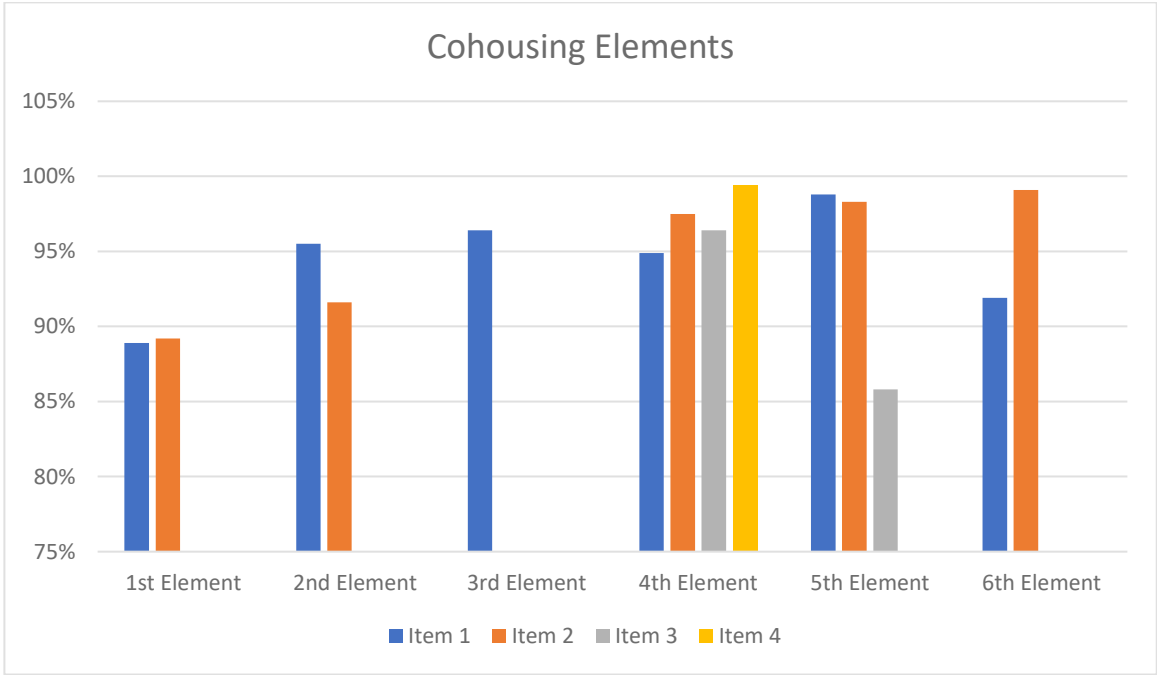


Figure 2 : Cohousing Elements Chart

Based on the findings, the development of cohousing in Malaysia is supported, especially by the Muslim elderly. All of the six elements of cohousing development are proven to be essential for the construction of cohousing projects in Malaysia. Furthermore, this research also produced the layout plan for the cohousing development with the compliance of Maqasid Shari’ah, as described in Figure 3. The layout plan is based on the result of the findings of the cohousing elements and the references from related cohousing styles in Malaysia, which focus on the Muslim elderly community.



## Maqasid Al-Shari'ah Of Sustainable Cohousing Framework For Malaysian Active Ageing Community

Figure 3 : Layout Plan for the Cohousing Development in Malaysia

### CONCLUSIONS

In order to enhance the sustainable development of cohousing and encourage the country to achieve SDGs of Goal 3 (good health and well-being of all ages) and Goal 9 (innovation on infrastructure), the suggested development of cohousing is considered significantly required. This paper proposed the development of cohousing for active aging living with the fundamental elements of Maqasid Shari'ah. The encouragement of active aging living among the elderly is crucial and enhances Goal 3 regarding the good health and well-being of the Muslim elderly in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the innovation of the cohousing development with the implementation of Maqasid Shari'ah elements as part of the spiritual or religious needs of the elderly enhance Goal 9 of SDGs. The findings proved that most elderly supported and agreed with the elements of cohousing development. The improvement of active aging living among the elderly could improve their physical health and positively impact their role in society. The proposed development covered the social, physical, and spiritual needs of the Muslim elderly from establishing the cohousing community. Islamic values are closely related to cohousing elements since individuals' needs to be a part of the community is always encouraged in Islamic teachings. Further studies are needed to develop a more specifics proposed development of the cohousing for active aging based on Islamic values. This proposed built environment focuses on establishing the elderly community that constantly supports each other and lives peacefully and healthy as one Muslim community.

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