

# SENIORS

## INTRODUCTION

The Seniors Panel consists of:

1. **Muhammed Faiz Edwin Ignatious**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors and Deputy Director (Legal) at the Singapore Food Agency (SFA)
2. **Siti Mariam Mohamad Salim**, member of AMP Singapore Board of Directors and Therapist at Private Space
3. **Dr Nur Farhan Alami**, Geriatrician Specialist, Alami Clinic
4. **Abdul Hamid Abdullah**, Golden Age Lifestyle Coach
5. **Normala Manap**, Director, Age Matters Consultancy and Training

In January 2022, the panel members convened and conducted extensive discussions to identify the various problems, issues, definitions, complexities, and personalities involved in the matter at hand.

After deliberation, the Panel established three main objectives for the study.

- The first objective was to **understand the issues caregivers face when taking care of seniors**.
- Following that, we sought to **understand whether these issues are being resolved within Singapore's current caregiving system**.
- Finally, we wanted to **see the impacts that cultural values such as filial piety have on perceptions of caregiving in Singapore**.

Before unpacking the study's objectives, it is worthwhile to understand what the eldercare landscape and the ageing process look like in Singapore.

The ageing population in Singapore is a topic of increasing concern, as the State grapples with how to promote successful ageing among its citizens. Successful ageing can be defined as high physical, psychological and social functioning in old age without major disease<sup>1</sup>. The government has focused on several pillars to promote successful ageing, including personal responsibility and self-reliance, as well as family relations. Through tax incentives and legislation to enforce parental maintenance by adult children, the State has made it clear that individuals and their families are the primary pillars of geriatric care, with the government only playing a residual role in providing safety nets.

However, as population ages and the number of elderly citizens increases, the need for alternative sources of care also increases. Community-based care for seniors has become increasingly prevalent, with the Ministry of Health launching the Agency for Integrated Care in 2009 to enhance and integrate the Long-Term Care sector. This aligns with the "Many Helping Hands" approach that reflects the tripartite partnership of the government, community, and family in the delivery of community-based services.

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<sup>1</sup>Rowe, John W., and Robert L. Kahn. "Successful Aging." *The Gerontologist*, vol. 37, 1997, pp. 433-440.

Currently, there are a variety of community-based services available to care for the elderly, including home nursing services, senior citizens' clubs, and day care centres. However, as caregiving tenures have lengthened due to increased life spans, the burden on caregivers has also increased – both financially and emotionally. This has led to more children of elderly parents looking to providers of eldercare for help. At the same time, caregivers must deal with the stigma of getting outside help – a stigma rooted in Singapore's tradition of filial piety, which values family involvement in caring for older relatives. Appendix A goes into more detail on what filial piety looks like in Singapore.

### Paper Outline

This paper adopts a qualitative approach in three stages:

1. It will first explain the methodology of defining the problem statements, which includes a survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
2. It will expound on the key findings and the problem statements derived
3. It will explore the methodology of the ideating stage, and discuss the results

The subsequent sections outline the methodology, findings, and recommendations of each phase.

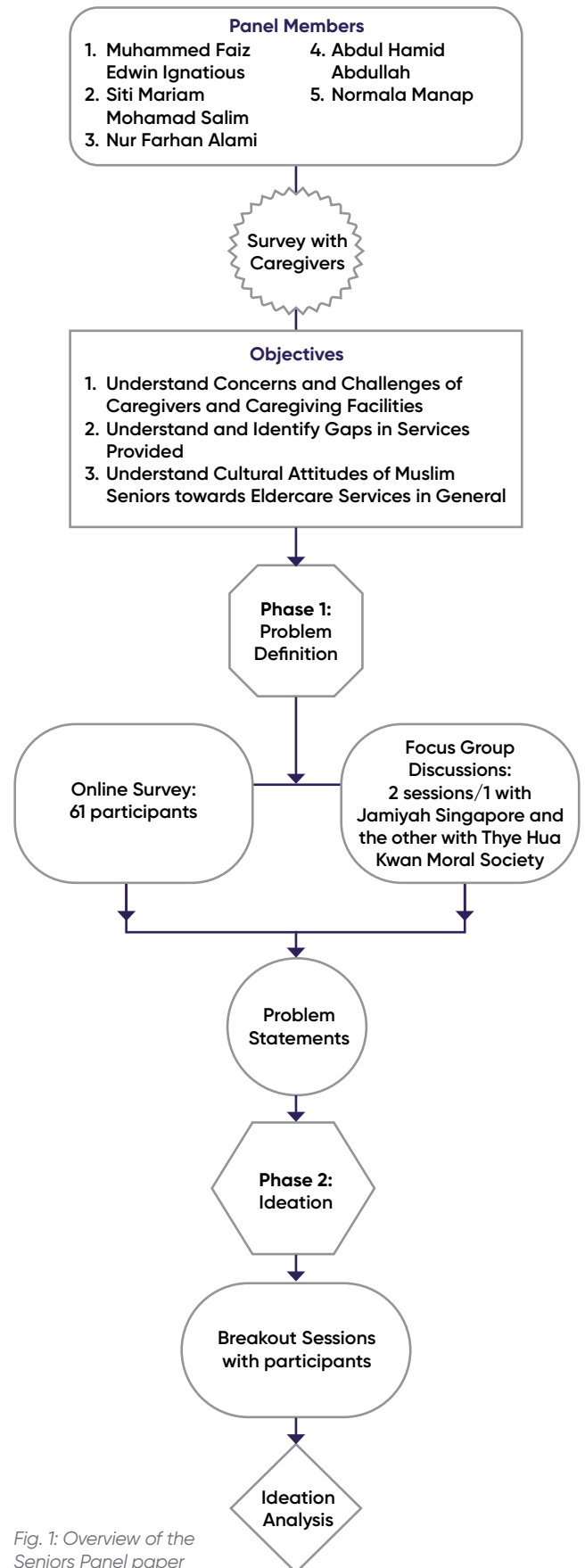


Fig. 1: Overview of the Seniors Panel paper

## PROBLEM DEFINITION

### Methodology

#### Perception Survey

A Perception Survey was conducted to gain a better understanding of the prevailing attitudes of the Muslim community towards ageing issues and services. Respondents were aged 20 and above from various income levels, educational backgrounds and races. In total, 61 respondents participated, of which more than half were acting as caregivers.

Overall, extrapolated data from the survey substantiated the view that more robust community care support and more advocacy groups for eldercare issues in the Muslim community are needed.

#### Face-to-Face Interviews

In addition to designing surveys, AMP also collaborated with research firm Blackbox to conduct interviews with the Muslim community to increase understanding of aspirations and expectations the local Malay/Muslim community has towards various social issues.

Overall, 977 interviews were conducted with members of the Muslim community, grassroots leaders, and others holding prominent leadership positions such as religious educators and civil servants. From these interviews, we realised that there was a deepening cultural divide between the older and younger generations of Muslims, which informed our surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). We included questions about how cultural perceptions are impacting the notions of senior caregiving and filial piety in the younger and older generations of Muslims in Singapore.

#### Focus Group Discussions

We also held FGDs with six practitioners from the caregiving sector. They were chosen for three reasons, as we wanted to:

1. Understand their concerns and challenges formed through experience in providing community care services
2. Understand and identify gaps in the services provided

3. Understand cultural attitudes of Muslim seniors towards eldercare services in general

Respondents had a full understanding of the research projects prior to interviews and were also guaranteed full anonymity. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded in both video and audio for transcription. Interview data were then analysed to identify salient issues and patterns.

While we believe that insights gathered are necessary to focus on the chosen theme – by highlighting key areas of concern – we acknowledge the limitations of ground-sensing interviews. Speaking to practitioners limits our scope as they provide only case-specific responses. It would be imprecise and unreliable to solely work with findings from these interviews.

### Key Findings

The following section delves into key findings of the pre-convention data collection. The findings are separated into four key topics, namely:

1. Awareness of the challenges of elderly care
2. The way senior services are operated
3. The type of programmes in senior care centres
4. The role of the Muslim community in raising awareness of senior issues among Muslim families

Appendices A and B provide more information on the senior caregiving infrastructure in Singapore.

#### Awareness: Knowledge of caregivers' challenges but not how to overcome them

- Respondents were aware of the challenges of ageing, but were less aware of the services and programmes available to help people manage these concerns.
- More than half of the respondents felt they were sufficiently aware of ageing and related matters.
- The top two concerns for respondents were health and financial issues.
- 65.6% of respondents were worried about the deterioration of their health, which included

both physical and mental health concerns such as stroke, diabetes, dementia, boredom and loneliness.

60.6% of respondents were concerned about financial issues related to healthcare costs, such as having insufficient assets to pay off medical bills and the perceived high medical costs in Singapore.

29.5% of respondents listed the process of caregiving as a concern in relation to ageing, with worries including not having enough caregivers and feeling guilty of being a burden to their adult children.

While respondents were aware of the challenges of caregiving, they were less aware of the services and programmes available to help them manage.

Only 36% of respondents rated themselves as having a good, very good, or excellent awareness of the programmes and services available to seniors, with 64% demonstrating a less than good level of awareness.

Only 11 respondents were able to list down services and programmes available for seniors, and only 3 could cite programmes and services offered by Muslim providers.

These findings are significant, given that 60.7% of respondents were caregivers, showing how Muslim caregivers are unaware of the resources available to help them address the challenges faced.

**Operations of senior services: More cultural sensitivity, located closer to caregivers, and affordable**

Muslim seniors in Singapore face challenges accessing senior care services due to factors such as religious needs, distance from home, and costs.

Respondents wanted senior services to cater to Muslim seniors' needs, including the presence of Muslim staff, halal food, and activities that cater to their spiritual needs.

Many respondents desired senior services to be located closer to their homes or to be more accessible via public transport.

Respondents also wanted more affordable services for seniors and greater subsidies from the government.

Home nursing services and day care centres are two senior care services that the Muslim community in Singapore wants more of.

Home nursing services enable seniors to live in their own homes while receiving the support they need, which is attractive to caregivers who feel a sense of filial piety.

Day care centres are seen as a significant resource for caregivers to tap on, as seniors only stay there during the day and return home at night, so caregivers can avoid the stigma of being unfilial.

**Programmes: More Muslim activities and reduced language barriers**

Respondents hoped for more daily programmes for seniors that are catered to the Muslim community.

Senior services are currently run by both Muslim and non-Muslim centres.

Respondents were worried that non-Muslim organisations running care centres decrease the likelihood of Muslim-centric activities.

Respondents acknowledged that some efforts have been made to cater to the Muslim population, but more needs to be done.

Respondents hoped for senior services to introduce more Quran-reading sessions, allocated time slots for prayers, *dhikr* sessions, and having more Muslims in the cohort to overcome the perceived lack of Islamic activities.

A Jamiyah Singapore representative suggested carrying out "blended programmes" such as karaoke and storytelling in the Malay language, which can be inclusive of the Muslim community without being purely religious in nature.

Respondents noticed that many staff in senior services speak mainly in English, which diminishes the cultural and religious sensitivity of staff towards Muslim needs.

- Respondents were sceptical about how staff with different religious and cultural backgrounds can adversely affect the experience of seniors in day care centres and other senior services.
- Senior services may have “programmes (that) are held during prayer timings” or they even make accommodations for seniors to have the “timing and opportunity to break for prayers”.
- Accommodations for religion are possible, although such accommodations are rarely requested.
- 88.5% of respondents felt there is a need for an advocacy group that informs and educates non-Muslim organisations about activities that are sensitive to Muslim needs.
- Advocacy efforts also need to be targeted towards the Muslim community, who are perceived to feel passive towards issues faced by seniors.
- Day care centres offer rehabilitation and nursing services while keeping seniors occupied with various activities. These help maintain their sense of independence and mental health.
- Respondents highlighted the importance of seniors remaining active mentally and socially to decrease their sense of loneliness and increase their perceived social support.

- piety and advocating caregiving roles to be carried out by non-family members.
- Mosques can serve as a site for senior caregiving by conducting activities specifically geared towards elders, such as Quran recitation classes and befriending.
- Some mosques have already begun serving as go-to points for people with dementia, setting a precedent for more incorporation of initiatives that serve seniors in the Muslim community.
- Respondents wanted advocacy efforts to reach out to Muslim youths, who are perceived to have a diminished sense of filial piety towards caring for seniors.
- Future research could investigate advocacy efforts to foster intergenerational consensus towards the question of caring for seniors.

### Advocacy: Role of the Muslim community

- 70.5% of respondents agreed that the Muslim community is passive towards issues faced by seniors due to the high sensitivity of eldercare issues and the concept of filial piety.
- Receiving care from one’s family is ideal in the Muslim community, and there is stigma towards outsourcing caregiving to external programmes and services.
- Respondents hoped to see a gradual shift towards discussing senior care issues and expanding the definition of filial piety to include caregiving beyond family members.
- Mosques in Singapore were identified as a key player in expanding existing definitions of filial

## PROBLEM STATEMENTS

From research, three problem statements were created for the Seniors panel. All three problem statements were crafted to approach senior caregiving from a holistic perspective, dealing with issues faced by caregivers, seniors, and the larger community.



Fig. 2: Issues related to senior caregiving in Singapore

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

**1**

The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.

**Guiding Questions During Ideation**

- What are some issues seniors face in old age?
- What channels are available to resolve caregiving issues?
- What resources are needed to resolve these issues?

- What notions of filial piety exist in the Muslim community in Singapore?
- Why do notions of filial piety play such an oversized role in determining who is responsible for taking care of seniors?
- How do these notions impact our impression of caregiving?

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

**2**

The current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.

**Guiding Questions During Ideation**

- What is the caregiving system like for seniors in Singapore?
- What are the needs of Muslim seniors?
- How are seniors' needs being fulfilled or not fulfilled?

From our pre-convention research, we found that caregivers need more awareness of how to overcome challenges associated with caregiving. Hence, the first problem statement we arrived at is as follows: **the community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.**

We also found that existing services do not cater to the preferences of Muslim seniors or their caregivers, which leads us to the second problem statement: **the current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.**

Finally, we found that Singaporean Muslims believe that conceptions of filial piety must acknowledge the challenges of providing care for seniors. Additionally, our surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) highlighted that individuals in the Muslim community must lead the way in altering the concepts of filial piety. Hence, the final problem statement relates to all of the above, and it is: **traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.**

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

**3**

Traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.

**Guiding Questions During Ideation**

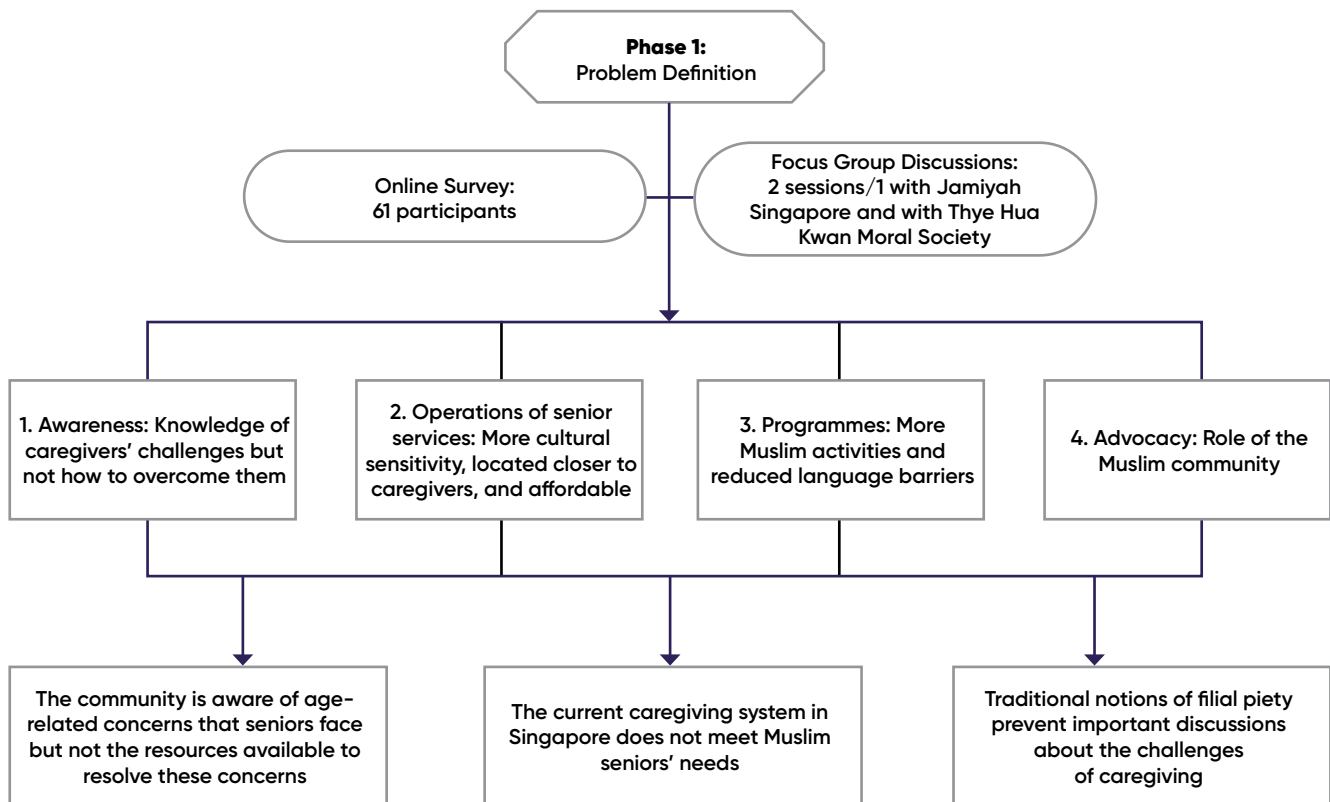


Fig. 3: Overview of ideation phase for the Seniors Panel paper

## IDEATION

One key research method used to derive solutions for ageing issues in the Malay/Muslim community was an ideation breakout session (conducted on the convention day). This section will outline the methodology, key findings, and ideation analysis of the breakout session.

### Breakout Session Methodology

A total of 72 people participated in the breakout session. The ideation session was structured to encourage active participation and engagement from all attendees, with a total of 10 breakout groups. Each group was assigned a facilitator and a scribe, and they were tasked to ideate on the three problem statements related to ageing in the community. These problem statements were developed based on prior research, and were intended to serve as a starting point for discussions.



Fig. 4: Overview of ideation phases

There were three phases of the breakout session, as follows:

**Phase 1:** Participants were asked to provide input on whether the problem statements were true to their experiences.

**Phase 2:** Once participants provided input, they crafted rephrased/renewed problem statements and set the parameters of discussion for each problem statement. This allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by the community, and helped to ensure that the ideation process was grounded in real-world examples.

**Phase 3:** The ideation process began. Participants were encouraged to think creatively and propose solutions to the problems identified.

Solutions proposed during the ideation session were diverse, covering a wide range of topics including healthcare, financial support and community engagement. The goal of the session was to generate a variety of potential solutions that could be refined and further developed in the future. A simplified diagram showing the solutions for each problem statement can be found in Appendix C.

The report highlights three major themes related to caregiving for seniors in Singapore. These themes include increasing awareness of available resources, meeting the unique needs of Muslim seniors, and challenging traditional notions of filial piety.

#### **PROBLEM STATEMENT 1:**

**The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns.**

**1. Increasing awareness of solutions** – Participants felt that more could be done to increase awareness of the solutions available to caregivers to resolve age-related issues, particularly in highlighting the kinds of help available to relieve certain conditions faced by seniors. Participants also found that caregivers were not putting enough effort into looking for resources, which aligns with the prevailing ideology in Singapore that individuals must be able to help themselves.

**2. Fatigue from caring for seniors** – Overall, participants found caregiving challenging and demanding, especially when it involved caring for seniors with chronic conditions. They thought it was important for caregivers to have access to the right resources and support to help them manage caring for their loved ones. However, many caregivers struggle to find the information and resources they need, which can lead to feelings of isolation and burnout. The lack of awareness and resources for caregivers can also have a negative impact on the seniors being cared for, as they may not be receiving the best possible care.



#### **IDEATION ANALYSIS**

Collaboration among organisations, government, and community groups is essential to improve caregiving awareness and support

Participants believed that organisations, mosques, government bodies, and community groups need to work together more to increase awareness of the available resources and support for caregivers in Singapore. Although these institutions were mentioned, respondents also acknowledged that organisations such as mosques and community groups already have an overwhelming burden to resolve other social issues, and that other institutions must step up and spearhead efforts to raise awareness and provide support for senior caregiving. By providing more information and support to caregivers, we can help ensure that seniors receive the best possible care and that caregivers are able to manage the demands of caregiving. Setting up an advocacy group that is focused on raising awareness for senior care was suggested as a way to address the lack of relevant information for caregivers to select appropriate avenues of senior care.



Mass media should actively promote alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources

Participants collectively emphasised the need for mass media and social media to actively promote solutions for senior care. Currently, participants found that media channels only promote one form of geriatric care, which idealises the family as the main source of caregiving. However, such depictions provide no alternative way of caregiving in a good light, which deepens the stigma against sourcing for care outside of the family. Hence, to raise awareness of alternative forms of senior care in a way that is detached from stigma, mass media should actively highlight the lives and responsibility of healthcare professionals in the senior care sector. Importantly, social media should also be harnessed to reach out to the younger generation, who will constitute the next generation of caregivers.

Empower caregivers to proactively find solutions for their parents through targeted outreach and education on the inevitability of eldercare

At the same time, participants acknowledged that caregivers should be more proactive in finding solutions for parents approaching their golden years. To encourage proactiveness among caregivers, more outreach needs to be done to help the general population think about eldercare for seniors around them and even for their future ageing selves. By instilling that eldercare is inevitable, participants believe that caregivers can begin their search for eldercare solutions and contingencies early on in life.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT 2:

The current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs.

**1. Needs of Muslim seniors** – Participants found that the current caregiving system in Singapore

does not meet the needs of Muslim seniors. Currently, many senior centres are operated by Christian organisations, which could result in a mismatch between the makeup of the seniors and the care staff. This can complicate catering to the needs of Muslim seniors.

**2. Being Muslim in old age** – Participants thought there was a need for clearer demarcation and listing of what Muslim seniors require, as being Muslim in old age brings about different priorities. These requirements need to be heard and catered to, including understanding cultural and religious practices that are important to them, and ensuring that eldercare programmes are designed with these considerations in mind.

**3. Preferences of Muslim seniors** – Additionally, it is important to consider that there may be certain things that Muslim seniors may not be fond of, and these must be considered when creating programmes for them. With an ageing population, it is essential that the needs of all seniors are met, including those in the Muslim community.



## IDEATION ANALYSIS

Government support required for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres staffed with trained individuals to meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors

The government must take urgent action to address the gap in care for Muslim seniors in Singapore. One crucial step is to provide increased funding for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres. These centres, staffed by individuals who are trained in the integration of Muslim values and operations, would be better equipped to meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors.

Foster cultural and religious sensitivity in senior care centres to better serve the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors

According to the experiences of Muslim caregivers, Muslim seniors have specific

preferences, including a desire to be closer to God and to practise their religion more closely. Therefore, it is essential that senior care centres are more attuned to these needs. This can be achieved through staff training and education programmes that focus on cultural and religious sensitivity.

Moreover, the **government should also establish a mechanism to gather feedback** from Muslim seniors and their caregivers in order to understand and address their needs better. This will help in creating programmes that are tailored to the needs of Muslim seniors, which will improve their quality of life. Overall, participants found that it is necessary for the government to take steps to ensure that Muslim seniors receive the care they deserve. The provision of adequate funding, staff training, and an emphasis on cultural and religious sensitivity is essential in achieving this goal. Specifically, a government or civil society organisation could be formed to simultaneously gather feedback and act as an educational resource centre for Muslim caregivers considering caregiving solutions.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT 3:

Traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving.

- 1. Feelings of responsibility to care for ageing parents** – Participants experienced pressure in taking on the responsibility of caring for ageing parents. This pressure often comes from societal expectations, as well as from the parents themselves, who may have high expectations of their children to provide care.
- 2. Western conceptions of filial piety** – The increased use of social media in recent years has led to the spread of Western concepts of filial piety that may not align with traditional Asian concepts. This can create tension and conflicts within families, as well as a sense of pressure and responsibility for the caregiving children. In recent years, the pressure on children to provide

care for their ageing parents has become more prevalent. Hence, it is important to understand and alleviate the cultural and societal factors that contribute to this pressure. It is clear that participants saw an urgent need for solutions to address the pressure placed on caregivers to take on the responsibility of caring for their ageing parents.



### IDEATION ANALYSIS

Normalise alternative forms of care such as sourcing for care outside of the household

More needs to be done to reassess traditional concepts of filial piety, which often involve children assuming the primary caregiving role. To address this issue, participants proposed that there be more normalisation of alternative forms of care, such as hiring domestic helpers or utilising day care services.

Engage Islamic community leaders to address traditional expectations of filial piety to support modern Muslim caregivers

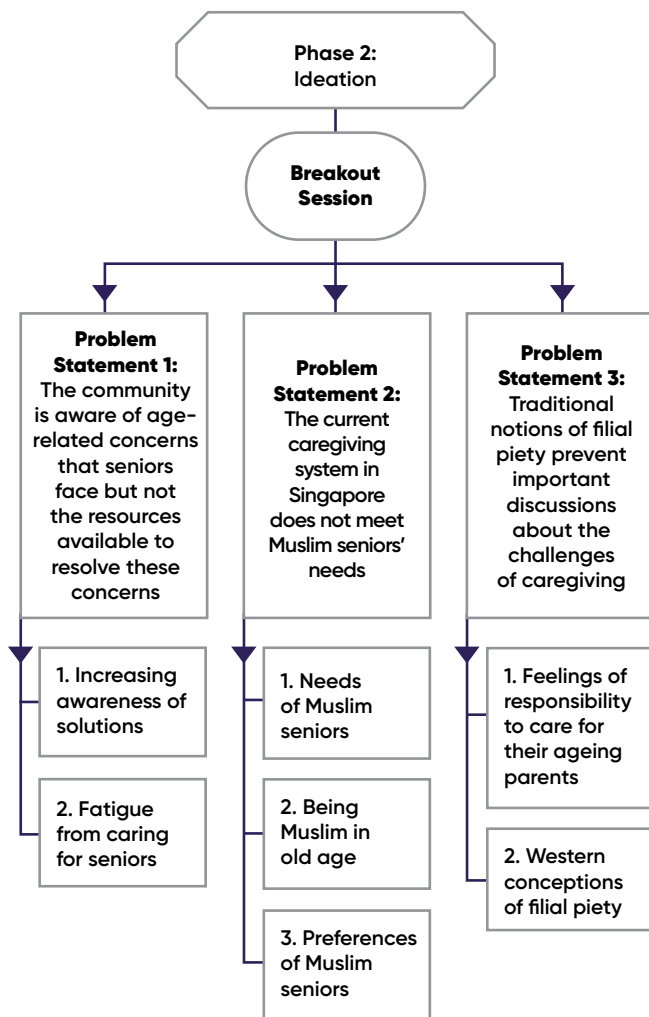
This can be done by ensuring leaders at Islamic community nodes, such as mosques and religious classes, are comfortable in creating an open forum with everyday Muslims. This will undoubtedly involve analysing the more Westernised ideas of filial piety that have been spread through the use of social media, and seeing how those beliefs can be harmonised with traditional Muslim notions of filial piety. Furthermore, there needs to be greater acknowledgement that many caregivers have other responsibilities – involving their personal physical, mental and emotional health, childcare, self-care, financial, career, marital, lifestyle, cultural and social obligations (and more) – that may prevent them from adhering to traditional expectations.

Improve domestic helpers' caregiving skills and reduce stigma by elevating their reputation as skilled caretakers

At the same time, there should be more training and resources available to ensure that domestic helpers are equipped with the necessary skills to provide high quality care for seniors. The reputation of domestic helpers and non-familial caretakers can be elevated societally if they are known to be skilled in eldercare. This may reduce the stigma of engaging individuals outside of the family for help in providing senior care.

## CONCLUSION

As part of the AMP 4<sup>th</sup> National Convention, the Seniors Panel conducted an investigation on the state of senior care for Muslims in Singapore, with an equal focus on how seniors experience care, the care systems available for seniors at the State level, and how caregivers deal with the challenges of caregiving. In an effort to gather first-hand information, both the caregivers and the staff at senior care centres were interviewed, which allowed qualitative data to be gathered. After analysing the interview and survey findings, three problem statements were generated for the Seniors Panel. These findings are also available in the appendixes.



### Problem Statement 1:

The community is aware of age-related concerns that seniors face but not the resources available to resolve these concerns

The findings of the study indicate that caregivers in Singapore encounter significant challenges in obtaining adequate resources and support in caring for their ageing loved ones. The study highlights lack of awareness of available resources among caregivers, which could lead to isolation and burnout. These challenges highlight the importance of developing collaborative efforts among organisations, government bodies, and community groups to increase awareness of available resources and support for caregivers in Singapore.

Moreover, the media plays a critical role in promoting alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources. Our study also suggests that empowering caregivers through targeted outreach and education can be effective in ensuring they proactively find solutions for their seniors. This includes education on the inevitability of eldercare and providing caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge to care for their loved ones. Such empowerment can reduce the burden on caregivers and promote care for ageing loved ones.

Fig. 5: Overview of ideation for the Seniors Panel paper



**Problem Statement 2:**  
**The current caregiving system in Singapore does not meet Muslim seniors' needs**

In Singapore, Muslim seniors have cultural and religious needs that require specific attention in the caregiving system. However, the current system falls short in meeting these needs. Therefore, it is recommended that Muslim-specific senior centres be established, possibly through a co-funding arrangement between the government and the Muslim community; and staffed with trained personnel to address the unique requirements of Muslim seniors. These centres would provide culturally and religiously sensitive services that cater to the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors.

To better serve Muslim seniors in senior care centres, there is a need to foster cultural and religious sensitivity among staff. This includes training and education to ensure that staff members are aware of and can meet the unique needs of Muslim seniors. The government should also establish a mechanism to gather feedback from Muslim seniors and their caregivers to understand and address their needs better. This feedback can be used to develop policies and guidelines that support the cultural and religious needs of Muslim seniors.



**Problem Statement 3:**  
**Traditional notions of filial piety prevent important discussions about the challenges of caregiving**

In Singapore, traditional notions of filial piety can hinder discussions about caregiving, which can be detrimental to the well-being of both caregivers and their ageing loved ones. Caregivers often feel pressured to take on the responsibility of caregiving, which can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and isolation. Encouraging open and honest conversations about caregiving can help reduce the stigma surrounding the challenges of caregiving, and promote greater awareness of the available resources and support.

To support caregivers, the government should consider providing more financial assistance and access to respite care to alleviate some of the stress associated with caregiving. By challenging traditional notions of filial piety and providing more support for caregivers, Singapore can promote a more compassionate and sustainable caregiving system that benefits both caregivers and their ageing loved ones.

In conclusion, the report highlights the need for increased awareness of available resources, meeting the unique needs of Muslim seniors, and challenging traditional notions of filial piety in Singapore. By addressing these issues, we ensure that seniors receive the best possible care, and that caregivers are better equipped to manage the demands of caregiving. Collaboration among organisations, government bodies, and community groups is essential in achieving this goal.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Overview of the Senior Caregiving System in Singapore

In Singapore, the government has focused on several pillars to promote active ageing. At the individual level, policies urge citizens to exercise personal responsibility and self-reliance. At the familial level, social policies promote intergenerational dependence, which translate into tax incentives and legislation for children who are responsible for their elders' well-being.

The Active Ageing Policy Framework developed by the World Health Organization (2002) (Figure 6) summarises how the broad determinants of health affect the process of ageing, namely in terms of health and quality of life of older persons. Though difficult to attribute direct causation to any one determinant, a substantial body of evidence suggests that all these factors – and the interplay between them – are good predictors of how well both individuals and populations age. This framework is a useful tool in allowing us to evaluate the effectiveness of current ageing policies/programmes in place, as well as identify potential areas of concern regarding successful ageing.

#### The Determinants of Active Ageing



Fig. 6: Active Ageing Policy Framework<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. "Active Ageing: A Policy Framework." 2002. Accessed 11 January 2022. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/67215/WHO\\_NMH\\_NPH\\_02.8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/67215/WHO_NMH_NPH_02.8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health. "Action Plan for Successful Ageing." 2016. Accessed 11 January 2022. <https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider3/action-plan/action-plan.pdf>.

Locally, the Action Plan for Successful Ageing, which provides a framework for Singaporeans to age more confidently and gracefully, was jointly developed by government agencies, voluntary welfare and non-profit organisations, academia, businesses, and union members, with feedback from public consultations. The Plan includes more than 70 initiatives spanning 12 areas:



These 12 areas are expected to prepare Singapore for rapid population ageing in the next decade.

### Appendix B: Ideals of Successful Ageing in Singapore

Following are key extrapolations from the action plan that will be useful in setting the context and directions for deeper conversations<sup>3</sup>.

#### Successful and Active Ageing

To better understand the seniors' perceptions of physical, psychological and social health, as well as the processes of adaptation and self-management of these health perceptions, a study was conducted

with ethnically diverse seniors in Singapore aged 60 and above, resulting in the following.

Five main themes emerged regarding perceptions of physical, psychological and social health:

- 1 Slowing down
- 2 Relationship harmony
- 3 Financial harmony
- 4 Social connectedness
- 5 Eating together

Adaptation and self-management of these health perceptions revealed six additional themes:

- a. Keep moving
- b. Keep learning, where continued self-determination and resilience is a key method in adapting to negative thoughts about declining physical health
- c. Adopting avoidant coping behaviours
- d. The "It feels good to do good" mantra where finding meaning in life is to help others
- e. The "power of prayer" perception, which highlighted how seniors relegated responsibilities to a higher spiritual power
- f. Social participation, which included engaging in community and religious social activities<sup>4</sup>

These findings are helpful in highlighting specific cultural nuances in seniors' perceptions of health, particularly psychological and social health, which

can allow us to develop more targeted intervention programmes and better methods of measuring seniors' health in our community.

**Social Participation**

A continuum of social participation amongst seniors has been studied extensively through ethnography and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The results from this study are categorised as follows:

- 1 Marginalisation and exclusion
- 2 "Comfort-zoning" alone
- 3 Seeking consistent social interactions
- 4 The expansion of social networks
- 5 Giving back to society

Notably, seeking consistent social interactions was shaped not only by a preference for cultural grouping and ethnic values but also a desire for emotional safety<sup>5</sup>.

These aspects of social participation are important to consider, given that participation can improve the mental health of seniors. Depression is the most common mental and emotional disorder that emerges in the later stages of life, and one that is closely associated with poor health, disability, mortality, and suicide. The risk factors of depression in later life, especially psychosocial factors, were studied among a sample comprising 162 community-dwelling Singaporeans aged 65 years and above. Results from the hierarchical regression analysis show that 32.9% of the variance in geriatric depression can be explained by three psychosocial factors – loneliness, perceived social support, and the emotional regulation component of resilience were significantly associated with depression in seniors<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Shiraz, Farah, Hildon, Zoe, and Vrijhoef, Hubertus. "Exploring the Perceptions of the Ageing Experience in Singaporean Older Adults: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, vol. 35, 2020, pp. 389-408. doi:10.1007/s10823-020-09414-8.

<sup>5</sup> Aw, Su, et al. "Explaining the Continuum of Social Participation among Older Adults in Singapore: From 'Closed Doors' to Active Ageing in Multi-Ethnic Community Settings." *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 42, 2017, pp. 46-55. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2017.07.002.

<sup>6</sup> Li, Jinhui, Theng, Yin-Leng, and Foo, Schubert. "Depression and Psychosocial Risk Factors among Community-Dwelling Older Adults in Singapore." *J Cross Cult Gerontol*, vol. 30, 2015, pp. 409-422. doi:10.1007/s10823-015-9272-y.

## **Developing a Sustainable Community Care System for an Ageing Population**

Seniors aged 65 and above will comprise approximately 25% of the total resident population. Given the growing ageing population, the average family eldercare is expected to increase by 41%, from 29 to 41 hours per week. This will be disproportionately borne by families with elders exhibiting five or more limitations<sup>7</sup>. To accommodate the rise in family- and community-based services, the Ministry of Health launched the Agency for Integrated Care in 2009 to enhance and integrate the Long-Term Care sector<sup>8</sup>. Juxtaposed with its aim to enhance the community-care ecosystem, the Agency seeks to increase access to care and to provide support to patients and their caregivers while it develops the primary and community care sectors.

This aligns with the “Many Helping Hands” approach that reflects the tripartite partnership of the government, community, and family in the delivery of community-based services. Apart from reducing the burden of public expenditure on the eldercare sector, there are immense intangible benefits to involve the community by means of neighbours, friends, schools, religious and ethnic institutions. The result of this synergy could be a spirit of caring and sharing as a process of community development that is immeasurable, particularly if it leads to intergenerational cohesion. The nation stands to gain in the long run.

Currently the types of community-based services available include<sup>9</sup>:

- **Home nursing services**, in which frail and infirm elderly people are provided with basic nursing care within their own homes. Many of the requests for nursing care arise from recently discharged hospital patients, and referrals from outpatient clinics or general practitioners.
- **Befriending services**, which involve mobilising volunteers to befriend elderly people in their

own homes as well as in institutional homes. In addition to government initiatives, a number of voluntary welfare organisations are also involved in befriending services.

- **Senior citizens’ clubs**, which meet the needs of the increasing number of elderly people at present and in the future, set up by the People’s Association, Residents’ Committee, Citizens’ Consultative Committee and voluntary organisations. About 166 senior citizens’ clubs have a combined membership of 47,600 elderly people. Most of the activities coordinated by these clubs are social, recreational, and educational in nature.
- **Day care centres**, which are established to help elderly people remain independent in the community. These centres provide a range of services, from clinical interventions to social and recreational activities.
- **Meal services**, where meals at low prices are either provided for elderly people from low-income families within the premises of an agency or delivered to their homes.

Apart from home nursing services, the other community-based services have yet to be fully developed. For example, the significant increase in the number of senior citizens’ clubs has resulted in teething problems in attracting members as well as organising appropriate programmes for them.

The same applies for day care centres, which may face difficulties customising recreational and social programmes that meet the needs of every elderly person. In addition, these day care centres are not generally convenient for elderly people who live far from the centres. However, as there is general agreement among policymakers and academics that elderly people should remain active in the community for a long as possible, more day care centres should be set up in public housing estates. This is necessary for services to be more accessible to elderly people who are mainly housed in these estates.

<sup>7</sup> Chan, A. “An Overview of Singapore’s Long-Term Care System: Towards a Community Model Care.” *Coping with Rapid Population Ageing in Asia*, edited by O. Komazawa and Y. Saito, ERIA, 2021, pp. 28-35.

<sup>8</sup> “About Us.” *Agency for Integrated Care*. Accessed 22 March 2023. <https://www.aic.sg/about-us>.

<sup>9</sup> “Care Services.” *Agency for Integrated Care*. Accessed 22 March 2023. <https://www.aic.sg/caregiving/care-services>.

**Appendix C:**

	Increasing awareness of solutions	Fatigue from caring for seniors
Collaboration among organisations, government, and community groups essential to improve caregiving awareness and support	✓	✓
Mass media should actively promote alternative forms of senior care to reduce stigma and increase awareness of available resources	✓	
Empower caregivers to proactively find solutions for their parents through targeted outreach and education on the inevitability of eldercare	✓	✓

Fig. 7: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 1

	Needs of Muslim seniors not being met	Lack of understanding on being Muslim in old age	Preferences of Muslim seniors
Government support required for the establishment of Muslim-specific senior centres staffed with trained individuals to meet unique needs of Muslim seniors	✓	✓	✓
Foster cultural and religious sensitivity in senior care centres to better serve the specific needs and desires of Muslim seniors	✓	✓	
Establishment of feedback mechanism for Muslim elders		✓	✓

Fig. 8: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 2

	Feelings of responsibility to care for parents	Western conceptions of filial piety
Normalise alternative forms of care	✓	
Engage Islamic community leaders to address traditional expectations of filial piety to support modern Muslim caregivers		✓
Improve domestic helpers' caregiving skills and reduce stigma by elevating their reputation as skilled caretakers	✓	

Fig. 9: Solutions addressing Problem Statement 3