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## **THE GENERATIONAL OF AGEING IN PLACE DECISION- MAKING PREFERENCES IN MALAYSIA**

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### **Abstract**

Housing fulfils a person's physical, psychological, social, and economic needs. Housing choices are made by maximizing satisfaction with the home by focusing on various factors, whether external or internal and this varies between generations (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y) or by age group. As age increases, an individual's needs and preferences also change due to the ageing factors. This study aims to identify the Malaysian generational Ageing in Place (AIP) housing decision. AIP refers to a person's preference to remain in the same place for as long as possible, which links to their sense of attachment towards a place. This study also aims to provide an overview of the AIP decision-making preferences of the generations in Malaysia. Thus, the objectives of this study are: (i) To identify the factors influencing AIP housing decisions and (ii) To determine the generational AIP decision-making by the generations in Malaysia with Johor Bahru, Johor as the case study. This study adopted a mixed methods of research strategies (qualitative and quantitative). The main findings revealed four (4) main ageing in place preferences such as (1) Economics, (2) Help and Support, (3) Dwelling characteristics, and (4) Neighbourhood. The findings are significant to the public and private sectors in understanding the housing consumers better. The in-depth information gained will help narrow the demand and supply gap between housing consumers and housing providers.

**Keywords:** Generation, Housing decisions, Ageing in place (AIP), Ageing-In Place Housing Decision, Place Attachment

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Each generation has unique characteristics that is linked with individually diverse needs and preferences (Ismail et al., 2020). Generations are distinct categories of population that differ based on their age cohorts or birth year. Lack of knowledge about what the science of generations tells us leads to misunderstandings of the evidence about generations, their existence, and their purported impact. In relevance, age and ageing research are neither remedy nor equivalent approaches to studying generations (Rudolph et. al., 2021).

Older adults are generally more active, healthier, wealthier, and highly educated than the previous generations. Older adults are also more often to be single and childless (having no child). Due to the changes of their life cycle stages including the retirement or the age-related losses incidents (e.g., death of partner or friend), along with the declining of health and the increasing of mobility limitations, more older adults experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation (Von Hippel et al., 2008). Therefore, interest in subjective aspects of the Quality of Life (QoL) in older adults, such as well-being, happiness, social satisfaction, and loneliness, is expanding.

Grimmer et al. (2015) stated that Ageing in Place is mainly about the opportunity for older people to remain in their homes for as long as possible without moving to a long-term care facility. Horner and Boldy (2008) defined Ageing in Place as a positive approach to meeting the older person's needs, supporting them to live independently, or with some assistance, for as long as possible. When people age in place, it somehow shows some bonding (attachment) to a place or location. However, the mechanisms of how people-place bonds play in the decision-making processes of taking pro-environmental behaviours still need to be explored (Wan et al., 2021).

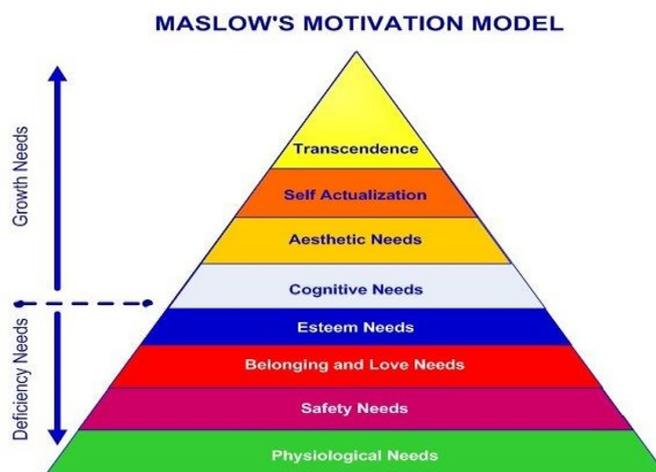
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Generations**

Generation refers to the population categorized by age cohorts and their birth years. The name of each generation and their distinctive birth years are as follows: (i) Baby Boomers - born between 1946 and 1961; (ii) Generation X (Gen-X) - born between 1962 and 1976; Generation Y (Gen-Y) - born between 1977-1999; and Generation Z (Gen-Z) - born after 1992 (Ismail et al., 2019). The concept of generation is utilized both as an approach for grouping age cohorts (defined as groups of people born at a similar time), and for analysis of tracking people on a range of issues, behaviours and characteristics (Mahmoud, 2021). Significantly, generations are influenced by their generational characteristics, beliefs, experiences, lifestyles, ideals, and demographic backgrounds (Ismail et al., 2023).

### Consumer Decision Making

Every person plays the role of a consumer and makes many purchase decisions every day. Purchase decisions are made based on people's needs and preferences. A person's basic needs can be referred to the Maslow's motivation model (Figure 1). It is essential to understand the factors that influence personal buying decisions (Stankevich, 2017). In addition, the meaning of home for people is linked to their individual experiences of security, positive identity, and self-esteem, which are associated to the sense of ability to cope and ownership; identity comprises both self-identity and social identity (Chou & Kröger, 2022).



**Figure 1:** Maslow's Motivation Model (Kotler et al., 2007)

Problem recognition	Information search	Evaluation of alternatives	Purchase decision	Post-purchase evaluation
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**Figure 2:** Consumer Purchasing Decision Process

*Source: Adapted from Solan (2020)*

The study of consumer behaviour recommends that consumers experience or go through five steps of the decision-making process whenever they want to make a purchase (Solan, 2020). The model in Figure 2 indicates that consumers experience and pass through five steps in each purchase.

### Ageing in Place (AIP) and Place Attachment

Ageing in Place (AIP) is a term that covers many domains (Wong et al., 2023). A current review of the existing literature classified five AIP themes, covering

places, social networks, supports, technologies, and personal characteristics. According to Pani-Herreman et al. (2021), AIP can also be defined as independent living, healthy ageing, housing for elderly, and ageing at home. Despite the acceptance on the concept of Ageing in Place worldwide, it may also be argued that healthy ageing is an overriding concept put forward by the World Health Organization (WHO) and adopted by the United Nations, which is currently promoting the 2020–2030 as the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing. A prerequisite of Ageing in Place should enable healthy ageing to occur through the provision of a physical and social environment that able to maximise functional ability with ageing aspects (Wong et al., 2023). Moving into old age, relocation and housing transition have become significant issues in debates about Ageing in Place (Chou & Kröger, 2022).

Search Item	Synonyms	Linked Search Terms
Aging in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent living</li> <li>• Healthy ageing</li> <li>• Housing for the elderly</li> <li>• Ageing at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent living</li> <li>• Healthy ageing</li> <li>• Housing for the elderly</li> <li>• Staying home</li> <li>• Ageing</li> <li>• Gerontology</li> <li>• Well-being</li> </ul>
Elderly people	Aged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged</li> <li>• Later life</li> <li>• Third age</li> <li>• Fourth age</li> </ul>

**Figure 3:** Definitions, Key Themes and Aspects of Ageing in Place  
*(Pani-Herreman et al., 2021)*

Place attachment is associated to bonds between people and places. Three levels of attachment to place are described as home, home environment and neighbourhood. As stated before, people usually wish to stay at home for as long as possible; they are quite attached to their home environment (Pani-Herreman et al., 2021). People will continue to stay in certain places or places attached if they are satisfied with the place and the environment, or move to other places if they are dissatisfied (Ismail et al., 2023). The concept of Ageing in Place involves many aspects of disciplines including architecture, building management, urban planning, neighbourhood facilities and social support. However, the most aspect is, these aspects involve the elder people themselves (Wong et al, 2023).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This exploratory study engaged a mixed-method research strategy with qualitative and quantitative data gathering. The expert interviewed surveys (industrial players – registered estate agents, local authorities, and housing developers) as part of the initial data collection to provide a comprehensive overview of the current Ageing in Place housing decision. The research stage was then followed by the final questionnaire surveys (housing consumers by generations) to acquire an insight into the future Ageing in Place housing decision preferences in the Malaysian context. The elderly Malaysian generation is anticipated to increase continuously, and by the year 2030, Malaysia will become an ageing nation. Thus, understanding the needs and the preferences of multi-generational place attachment decision-making is crucial in stipulating better, more focused housing provisions that can support the interdependency between generations. Johor Bahru was chosen as the case study due to its city status, which is equipped with a high population in Peninsular Malaysia. This paper will present and discuss only the main quantitative data findings.

## **MAIN FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Table 1 presents the main demographic background of the respondents gained from the distributed survey questionnaires.

**Table 1: Demographic Background**

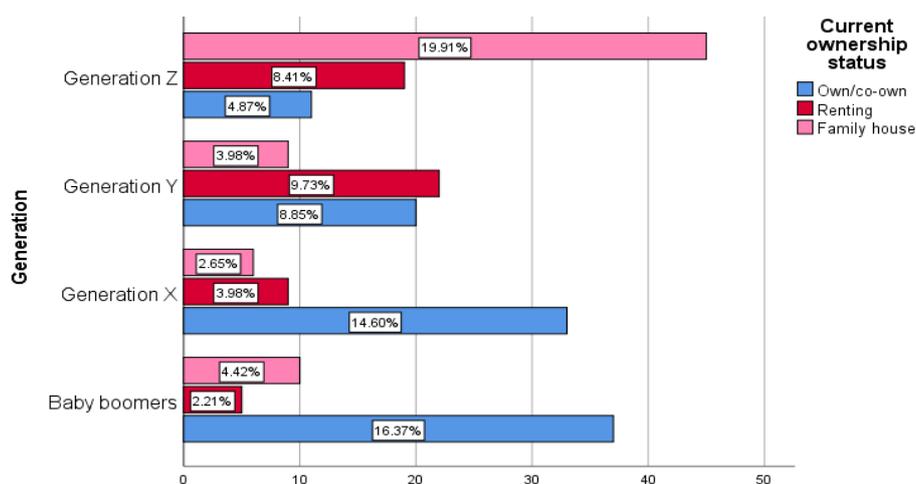
Characteristics	Frequency (N = 226)	Percentage of Respondents (%)
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	107	47.3
Female	119	52.7
<b>Generation (Years of born):</b>		
Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964)	52	23.0
Generation X (1965 -1977)	48	21.2
Generation Y (1978 -1994)	51	22.6
Generation Z (1995 onward)	75	33.2
<b>Ethnicity:</b>		
Malay	189	83.6
Chinese	24	10.6
Indian	12	5.3
Bumiputera	1	0.4
Others		
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Single/Never married	82	36.3
Married	116	51.3
Divorce	13	5.8
Widowed	15	6.6
Others		
<b>Education Level:</b>		
Primary School	21	9.3
Secondary School	53	23.5
Tertiary Level	112	49.6
Postgraduate Level	21	9.3
No proper education	19	8.4
Others		
<b>Occupation:</b>		
Employed in Public Sector	11	4.9
Employed in Private Sector	68	30.1
Self-employed	23	10.2
Retired	53	23.5
Unemployed/ Housewife	32	14.2
Student	39	17.3
<b>Group household Income (per month):</b>		
B40 (Less than RM4,850)	108	47.8
M40 (RM 4,850 – RM 10,959)	96	42.5
T20 (RM 10,600 onward)	22	9.7

Among 226 respondents surveyed, the female respondents (52.7%) slightly outnumbered the male respondents (47.3%). The responses came from the Baby Boomers generation (23%), Generation X (21.2%), Generation Y (22.6%), and Generation Z (33.2%). Most of the respondents were Malays (83.6%), followed by Chinese (10.6%), Indian (5.3%), and Bumiputera (0.4%).

Most respondents (51.3%) were married, whilst the remaining were single and never married (36.3%), followed by widowed (6.6%) and divorced (5.8%). Almost half of the respondents had tertiary level qualification (i.e. STPM/

STAM/Matric/Diploma/bachelor’s degree) (49.6%), followed by secondary school qualification (23.3%), followed by primary school (9.3%), postgraduate level (9.3%) and had no proper education (8.4%). Many of the respondents were those working in the private sector (30.1%), followed by retirees (23.5%), students (17.3%), unemployed or housewives (14.2%), self-employed (10.2%), and the least were people working in the government sector (4.9%).

In terms of household income (per month), most of the respondents were in the category of B40 (less than RM4,850) (47.8%), followed by M40 (RM4,850-RM10,959) (2.5%), and the T20 group (RM10,600) (9.7%). Hence, the respondents of the survey questionnaires of this study were mainly Malays, married, with tertiary level qualifications, working in the private sector, and coming from the B40 group household income group (monthly household income of not more than RM4,850).



**Figure 4:** The Current Housing Ownership Status by Generation

Figure 4 shows the current housing ownership status by generations in Johor Bahru. For Baby Boomers, about 16.37% of them were owners or co-owners of the current house they live in. Most of the Baby Boomers (16.3%) were owner-occupied, followed by family houses (4.42%) and renting (2.21%). Likewise, many of Generation X also were owner-occupant, followed by renting (3.96%) and family houses (2.65%). Compared to younger generations, most of them still did not own a house: Generation Y (9.73%) and Generation Z (19.91%).

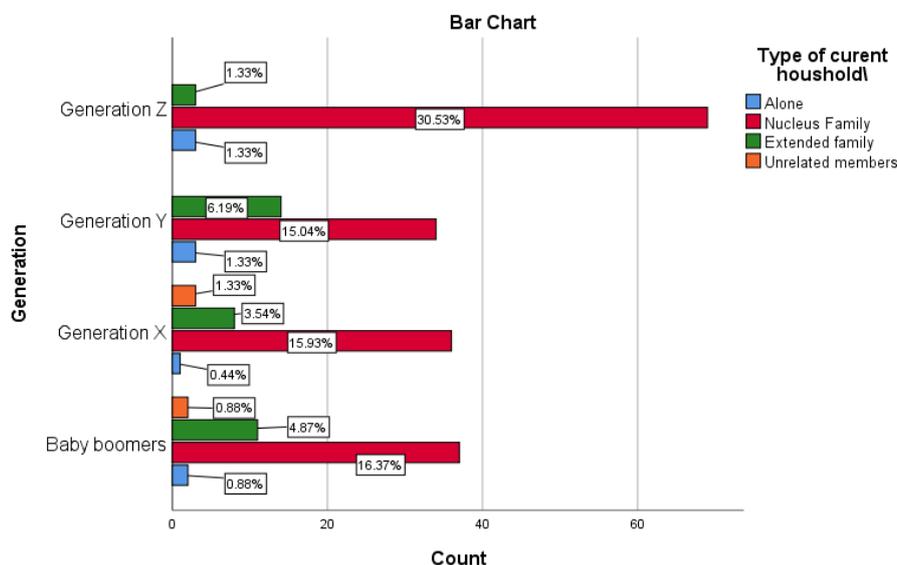
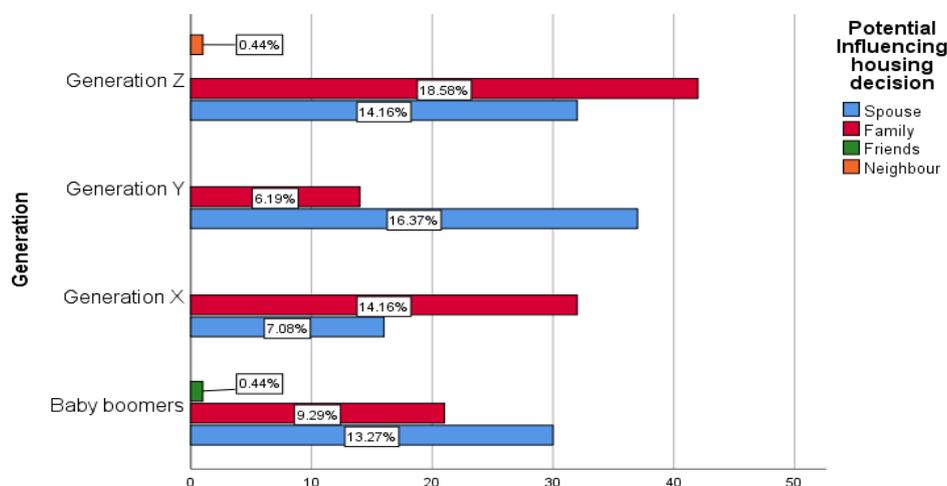


Figure 5: The Current Household Types by Generations

Figure 5 displays the type of current household by generation. There were four (4) types of households comprising person stay alone (consisted one person only), nucleus family household (consisted the head of household and members who were related by blood, marriage or adoption), extended family household (consisted a nuclear family like parents, or married children or other related members) and unrelated members household (consisted the head of household and members who were unrelated to household). The majority of the four generations were nucleus family households: Baby Boomers (16.37%), Generation X (15.93%), Generation Y (15.04%), and Generation Z (30.53%). The second highest type of household of the generations was extended family households: Baby Boomers (4.87%), Generation X (3.54%), Generation Y (6.19%) and Generation Z (1.33%). The high percentage of nucleus and extended family household compositions indicated that multi-generational households are a typical living arrangement in Malaysia. This household arrangement offers numerous advantages, especially in terms of financial expenses that family members can share and, most importantly, the shows of support between family members.

Figure 6 shows the person influencing the generations' housing decisions. The housing decisions of the Baby Boomers were highly influenced by their spouse (13.27%), followed by their family (9.29%). In contrast, most Generation X housing decisions were influenced by their family (14.6%) and their spouse (7.06%). As for Generation Y, many decisions were influenced by

their spouse (16.3%) and their family (6.19%). The housing decisions made by Generation Z were greatly influenced by their family (19.56%), followed by their spouse (14.16%). Most generations considered spouse (husband/wife/partner), and family as their main influential person to be considered in Ageing in Place (AIP) decision-making. This finding shows that each critical decision that the generations will make with the consideration of others, especially the family.



**Figure 6: Person Influencing Housing Decisions by Generations**

Figure 7 shows the future housing plans of the generations. All generations mostly preferred to age in place in their senior years: Baby Boomers (17.26%), Generation X (17.70%), Generation Y (13.72%), and Generation Z (19.47%). The generations also preferred to stay in their own house with children or move to their houses. The findings here suggested that the Malaysian generation prefers to age in place alone or with their immediate family members (children).

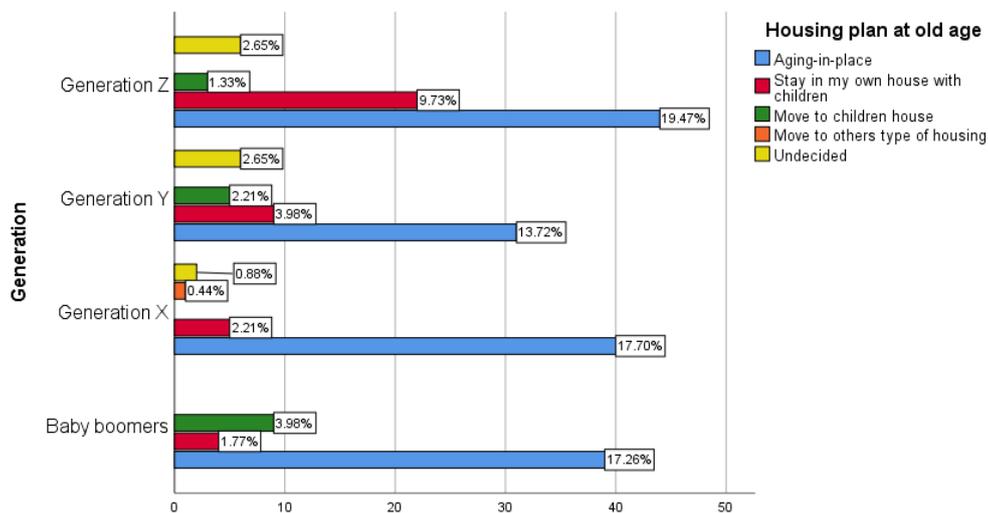


Figure 7: Future Housing Plan by Generations

Table 1 and Figure 8 present the Ageing in Place (AIP) preferences by generations. By ranking, the Baby Boomers generation preferred AIP decision-making factors and ranked as Rank 1 - dwelling characteristics, followed by Rank 2 – Economic, Rank 3 – Help and Support factors economic and Rank 4 – Neighbourhood Quality.

Table 1: Factors influencing Ageing in Place (AIP) housing decisions by generations

Generation	Baby Boomers			Generation X			Generation Y			Generation Z		
	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank									
<b>Economic</b>												
Relocation costs to new house	4.25	0.763	1	4.17	0.781	2	4.25	0.757	2	3.76	0.942	2
House price	4.21	0.825	2	4.25	0.729	1	4.63	0.528	1	3.89	0.938	1
<b>Help and Support</b>												
Proximity to children	4.15	0.826	1	4.25	8.853	1	4.69	0.583	1	3.79	1.044	1
Proximity to friends	3.79	0.848	5	3.69	0.949	4	3.90	1.063	3	3.29	0.983	5
Proximity to siblings/families	4.00	0.929	3	3.75	1.120	5	3.45	1.254	5	3.47	1.057	2
Social activities	3.92	0.763	4	3.81	1.065	3	3.92	0.483	2	3.37	1.112	3
Relation neighbourhood	4.10	0.846	2	4.02	0.100	2	3.88	1.125	4	3.37	1.124	4
<b>Dwelling</b>												
Dwelling size	4.12	0.963	1	4.02	0.743	3	4.71	0.460	1	3.91	0.791	1
Condition/quality of the house	4.08	0.788	2	4.15	0.714	1	4.24	0.551	4	3.95	0.868	2
Garden/Yard	3.92	0.947	4	3.98	0.863	4	3.43	0.944	2	3.76	0.998	3
Number of storeys	4.00	1.029	3	4.06	1.119	2	4.25	0.659	3	3.60	1.197	4

Generation Factors	Baby Boomers			Generation X			Generation Y			Generation Z		
	Mean	Std Deviation	Rank									
<b>Neighbourhood</b>												
Proximity to services	4.37	0.817	1	4.27	0.869	1	4.69	0.469	1	4.13	0.759	1
Geographic conditions	4.04	0.862	4	3.79	1.010	4	3.84	0.731	4	3.48	1.167	4
General qualities of the neighbourhood	4.21	0.723	3	4.33	0.694	2	4.18	0.439	3	3.93	0.794	3
Public facilities	4.31	0.755	2	4.13	0.866	3	4.59	0.497	2	4.08	0.882	2

In terms of economic factors by generations, Baby Boomers considered relocation to a new house (Rank-1) as the prime factor of AIP decision-making, followed by house price (Rank-2). In contrast, the other three generations, namely Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, all regarded house price (Rank-1) as their prime factor compared to relocation to a new house (Rank-2). The finding of the AIP decision revealed that relocation costs and high housing prices are considered as the most financial considerations, while the elderly chose to age in place.

Regarding help and support factors, Baby Boomers perceived proximity to children (Rank-1) as the most critical factor in AIP decision-making, followed by proximity to friends (Rank-2), siblings/families (Rank-3), social activities (Rank-4), and relation neighbourhood (Rank-5). Interestingly, despite different age cohorts, all generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z) regarded proximity to children as the most important criterion to be considered for AIP decision-making. The findings here revealed that immediate family members (children) are the generations' prime factor for Ageing in Place. Living near their immediate family members is the prime reason they stay in the same location/house or age in place.

Baby Boomers shared same opinion with Generation Y and Generation Z, who regarded dwelling size (Rank-1) as the prime factor for AIP decision-making. In contrast, Generation X considered the condition/quality of the house (Rank-1) as their prime factor (Rank-1) for AIP decision-making, in terms of dwelling. This finding showed that for the older generation, the size of the house is the main factor of dwelling consideration for Ageing in Place, either with or without family members in the house.

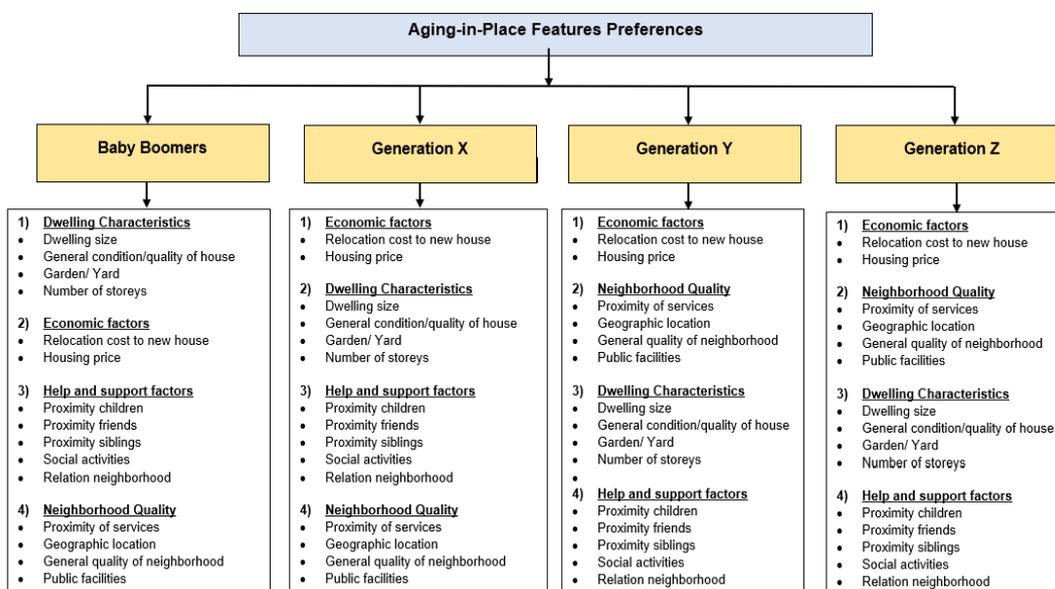


Figure 8: Ageing in Place Preferences by Generations

All generations considered service (Rank-1) as the most important neighbourhood factor. Public facilities were regarded as the second most important (Rank-2) factor by the three generations (Baby Boomers, Generation Y, and Generation Z) while Generation X considered it as less important (Rank-3). Meanwhile, general qualities of the neighbourhood were deemed to be the third (Rank-3) factor of by the three generations (Baby Boomers, Generation Y, Generation Z). Geographic conditions of the neighbourhood were perceived as the fourth important (Rank-4) by all generations. The findings revealed that neighbourhood considered service facilities (nearness to hospitals/clinics, banks, shops, or the town centre) as vital factor in deciding Ageing in Place. The elderly nowadays can mostly live independently in the senior life stage due to a good and healthy lifestyle (healthy and active ageing).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consumer behaviour explores not only the behaviours of consumers but also reveals the reasons for those behaviours (Ismail & Shaari, 2020). In relevance, consumer decision-making is influenced by the needs and the preferences of individuals. Different generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z) are equipped with their needs and preferences, including their housing decision-making.

The findings of this study revealed four (4) main Ageing in Place (AIP) housing decision-making factors influencing the Malaysian generations consisting economic, help and support, dwelling, and neighbourhood.

The Malaysian generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z) are found to favour Ageing in Place and living independently on their own or with children during their elderly (senior) age. Due to a healthy lifestyle, most of the elderly generation, also known as Baby Boomers, remained healthy and active (active ageing) in the community. Therefore, public and private agencies should make more options for elderly-friendly or well-designed multi-generational housing provisions available to guarantee a good Quality of Life (QoL) for the Malaysian generation.

More elderly-friendly houses should be designed and made affordable to various generations (age-group/age cohorts) of housing consumers to support Ageing in Place in Malaysia. Housing neighbourhoods should be equipped with the housing design and the features that support active ageing. Furthermore, ageing is a dynamic process that requires home modification iterations when homes reach the threshold of unsuitability (Ma et al., 2022). Therefore, a comprehensive viewpoint is required to understand the opportunities and the challenges associated with implementing intelligent technologies in the home modification process and promoting Ageing in Place (Engineer et al., 2018). In addition, it supports the elderly in living independently by providing a regular, safe, and affordable transport system to be physically active and socially connected (Rashid et al., 2022).

Findings suggested that greater availability of age-friendly features influences older adults' perception towards their community, leading to a desire to age in place, supporting processes of belonging and agency. Housing, outdoor spaces and buildings, and transportation are essential in promoting the community's age-friendliness and the critical determinants of AIP (Choi, 2022). Thus, strategies from the recent research on Ageing in Place, place attachment, active ageing, and identifications of problems and countermeasures of independent living for the Malaysian generations, especially the elderly (seniors/Baby Boomers), should be taken into serious consideration and actions, by both the government and real estate players to guarantee the success of Ageing in Place in the Malaysian context.

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