

## Navigating Modernity: Factors Influencing the Psychological Well-being of Temuan Elderly in Selangor, Malaysia

*Navigasi Permodenan: Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kesejahteraan Hidup Psikologi Warga Emas Temuan di Selangor, Malaysia*

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### ABSTRACT

*Psychological well-being is an important aspect in achieving sustainability in life but it still under discussed among Orang Asli elderly. They are a vulnerable group that is easily effected due to the current modernisation that is changing the environmental and social landscape. This paper aims to examine the factors that affect the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly in Selangor, specifically across eight villages: Desa Kemandol, Bukit Cheding, Pulau Kempas, Busut Baru, Bukit Tadam, Desa Temuan, Rasau Hulu, and Rasau Hilir. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. A total of 261 Temuan elderly individuals were surveyed, and 38 of them participated in semi-structured interviews. The quantitative results indicate that the psychological well-being of those surveyed is cumulatively in good condition (85.0%), based on five key indicators: harmony (96.0%), happiness (96.0%), interdependence (85.4%), respect (82.4%), and acceptance (66.0%). Chi-square analysis further revealed that socio-demographic factors such as locality, marital status, and working status significantly influence the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly. Concurrently, qualitative findings from the interviews highlight respondents' profound concerns regarding environmental changes, the increasing fragility of social relationships, and their health status. These insights are crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that support the well-being of indigenous elderly populations as they adapt to modern challenges.*

*Keywords: Psychological well-being; Temuan elderly; Orang Asli; Modernisation; Selangor*

### ABSTRAK

*Kesejahteraan psikologi merupakan aspek penting dalam mencapai kelestarian dalam kehidupan tetapi masih kurang dibincangkan dalam kalangan warga emas Orang Asli. Mereka merupakan golongan yang mudah terjejas akibat arus permodenan yang mengubah landskap alam sekitar dan sosial. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologi warga emas Temuan di Selangor, khususnya di lapan kampung: Desa Kemandol, Bukit Cheding, Pulau Kempas, Busut Baru, Bukit Tadam, Desa Temuan, Rasau Hulu, dan Rasau Hilir. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan mod campuran, mengintegrasikan pengumpulan data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Sebanyak 261 responden telah dikaji, dan 38 daripada mereka mengambil bahagian dalam temu bual secara separa berstruktur. Hasil kuantitatif menunjukkan bahawa kesejahteraan psikologi yang ditinjau secara kumulatif dalam keadaan baik (85.0%), berdasarkan lima petunjuk utama: Harmoni (96.0%), kegembiraan (96.0%), saling bergantung (85.4%), penghormatan (82.4%) dan penerimaan (66.0%). Analisis Chi-square mendapati faktor sosio-demografi seperti lokasi, status perkahwinan, dan status kerja dengan ketara mempengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologi warga emas Temuan. Penemuan kualitatif dari temu-bual menunjukkan kebimbangan besar responden mengenai perubahan alam sekitar, peningkatan kerapuhan hubungan sosial, dan status kesihatan. Pemahaman ini amat penting untuk merangka intervensi dan dasar yang menepati sasaran bagi menyokong kesejahteraan warga emas masyarakat Orang Asli dalam menyesuaikan diri dengan cabaran dunia moden.*

*Kata kunci: Kesejahteraan psikologi; Warga emas Temuan; Orang Asli; Modenisasi; Selangor*

## INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being, which encompasses an individual's emotional, social, and mental health, is a cornerstone of a fulfilling and sustainable life (Yunanto, 2020; Dhanabhakya & Sarath, 2023). While extensive research exists on the well-being of general elderly populations, there remains a critical gap in understanding the specific nuances of psychological well-being among indigenous communities, particularly in the context of rapid modernisation and socio-environmental shifts (Sokk, 2024). Indigenous groups, such as the Orang Asli in Malaysia, often possess unique worldviews and traditional ways of life that are deeply intertwined with their natural environment and community structures (Benjamin, 2002; Shah et al., 2018). These deeply rooted connections render them particularly vulnerable to the transformative effects of contemporary development and urbanisation (Kozlov et al., 2003).

The Temuan, one of the indigenous subgroups of the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia, traditionally live in close harmony with nature, deriving their livelihoods and cultural identity from their surroundings (Indriatmoko, 2006). However, increasing modernisation has led to significant environmental changes, including deforestation and land development, alongside shifts in social dynamics and economic structures (Shaharudin et al., 2004; King, 2007; Katiman et al., 2010; Seow, 2013; Quigley et al., 2022). These changes can exert considerable pressure on the traditional support systems and cultural practices that have historically underpinned the well-being of the elderly (King, 2007; Ninomiya et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on elderly well-being, specific attention to the psychological well-being of indigenous elderly populations, particularly the Temuan in the context of rapid environmental and social modernisation in Selangor, remains limited. Existing studies often overlook the unique cultural, environmental, and socio-economic factors that shape the experiences of these communities. Therefore, this paper aims to examine factors influencing the psychological well-being of the Orang Asli Temuan elderly due to environmental changes in Selangor. Moreover, this study contributes significantly to the literature by deepening our understanding of Orang Asli elderly psychology, which is intrinsically linked to their traditional worldview and way of life.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section critically reviews existing literature on psychological well-being, focusing on elderly populations and indigenous communities. It highlights the impact of modernisation and identifies research gaps addressed by this study.

### CONCEPTUALIZING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being is a multifaceted concept that is distinct from subjective well-being (happiness, life satisfaction) due to its emphasis on individual functioning and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Karademas (2007) distinguishes between aspects of positive psychology, characterised as a cognitive and affective reaction to self-perception, achievements, and social

integration, and aspects of negative psychology, defined as a response to self-weakness. Understanding these aspects is crucial for meeting the needs of older people to sustain their well-being (Fisk & Roger, 2002; Suridah & Rahimah, 2018).

For indigenous communities, well-being is often a holistic and inseparable concept encompassing physical, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual dimensions (Viscogliosi, 2020; Australia Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022; Colomeda & Wenzel, 2000). This contrasts with mainstream societal approaches. Indigenous perspectives, such as the Maori's "Te Wheke" (octopus analogy) and "Where Tapa Whā" (four walls of a house), illustrate well-being as an interdependence between spiritual, mental, physical, and social elements, including ancestral heritage and life principles (Pere, 1995; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Durie, 2006). Research on the Orang Asli elderly population also emphasises the importance of health, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, environmental, education, and basic needs for wellness (Muhammad Afiq et al., 2021; Muhammad Luqmanuddin et al., 2021). These perspectives underscore a collective, nature-interconnected view of well-being (Datta et al., 2024).

#### VULNERABILITY AND WELL-BEING IN ELDERLY POPULATIONS

Elderly individuals are generally categorized as a vulnerable group due to age and health factors (Sarvimäki & Stenbock-Hult, 2016; Barbosa et al., 2019). While their global population is growing due to improved quality of life and declining mortality rates (Hairi, 2001; Fisk & Roger, 2002; Selvaratnam et al., 2010; Tengku Aizan, 2015; Nur Amalina & Yarina, 2019; Wang et al., 2020), ageing inevitably brings health deterioration (Normah & Nor Hayati, 2018). Ageing also carries a negative societal stigma, often associating the elderly with slow thinking, resistance to change, and being left behind (Belsky, 1990).

The mental health vulnerability of the elderly significantly impacts their psychological well-being (Prieto-Flores et al., 2008). Globally, an estimated 14% of elderly individuals experience mental health problems (World Health Organization, 2023). Psychological well-being issues, including emotional changes, lack of self-confidence, disappointment, loneliness, low self-esteem, and restlessness, are common during ageing (Kovalenko & Spivak, 2018; Rain et al., 2024; Seow & Sanmargaraja, 2014).

Addressing elderly well-being is crucial for ensuring a calm and happy old age, aligning with the active ageing model that optimises health, lifelong learning, engagement, and safety (Nurul Hidayawatie et al., 2024; Hijas-Gómez, 2020). This aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG 2030) theme of 'Leaving No One Behind' emphasising the rights of the elderly to dignity, freedom from poverty, marginalisation, violence, and discrimination in policy interventions related to economic, health, well-being, gender equality, and sustainable environments (HelpAge Global Network, 2017; United Nations, 2018).

#### INDIGENOUS ELDERLY AND THE IMPACTS OF MODERNISATION

For indigenous elders, psychological well-being is deeply rooted in their cultural, social, and physical environment (Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2020), with nature and forests often viewed as a primary source of life (United Nations, 2009; Masni et al., 2022). However, this intrinsic bond with their environment is being eroded by modernisation, leading to emotional distress (United Nations, 2009; Feiring, 2013; Johansen, 2003). These changes exacerbate pre-existing issues such as poverty, loss of customary land ownership, discrimination, prejudice, and marginalisation

(United Nations, 2009; International Work Group for Indigenous – IWGIA, 2010; Mohd Roslan, 2019; Bourhis, 2020). Consequently, indigenous communities, particularly the elderly, experience psychological impacts, including feelings of dissatisfaction and increased stress in old age (Hossain et al., 2019; Muhammad et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2008; Spurling et al., 2009; Agarwal & Chaudhary, 2022). High rates of suicide among indigenous elderly due to emotional stress and low psychological well-being further underscore this crisis (Gracey & King, 2009; McNamara et al., 2018; Hossain & Lamb, 2019; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024). The historical trauma of colonial occupation also contributes significantly to these psychological consequences, impacting the ageing process (Hillier & Al-Shammaa, 2020; González et al., 2022; Quigley et al., 2022).

Areas inhabited by indigenous communities are frequently targeted for various development projects (Feiring, 2013), resulting in the loss of ancestral lands. This loss profoundly affects their mental health, as the environment exerts a strong influence on indigenous elderly well-being (King, 2007; Ninomiya et al., 2023). Environmental changes also trigger social shifts in culture, relationships, and lifestyles (King, 2007; Quigley et al., 2022), contributing to lower well-being, particularly psychological well-being (Lynn et al., 2013; Ramos-Castillo et al., 2017; Hossain et al., 2019; Hillier & Al-Shammaa, 2020; Sánchez-Moreno et al., 2020; Muhammad et al., 2023). Prejudice and discrimination, exacerbated by environmental changes, also adversely affect the psychological well-being of the elderly (Butler, 1975; Bratt et al., 2018; Rothermund et al., 2021; Maurya et al., 2022; Agarwal & Chaudhary, 2022).

Modern landscapes contribute to the elderly's vulnerability. Society's shift towards openness, democracy, and complexity necessitates new skills and knowledge, diminishing the traditional high social status and respect previously accorded to elders (Petković, 2007; Tavernier, 2019). Furthermore, modern life fosters individualism (Hofstede et al., 2010), which Veenhoven (1999) argues damages family institutions and neighbourhoods, negatively impacting society. These changes are often linked to land-use transformations affecting natural areas (Shaharudin et al., 2004). Urban growth and urbanisation are global phenomena (Sabariah & Kadaruddin, 2023), driving population migration and suburban expansion (Katiman et al., 2010). This migration is fueled by job opportunities, infrastructure access, and improved living standards (Yaacob, 1991; Ishak & Asan, 1997; Noor Fakhira & Rosniza, 2021; Katiman, 2006; Katiman et al., 2010). For the Orang Asli in Malaysia, migration often manifests as group displacement due to development projects on customary land, leading to ancestral land loss (Seow et al., 2013).

Currently, 63.2% of Orang Asli settlements are in suburban areas, 36.1% in remote areas, and six villages are in urban areas (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2016). Remote areas are characterised by difficult transportation, lack of basic facilities, and subsistence economies (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2011). Periphery villages are near Malay villages, with better access to roads, utilities, and permanent income, while urban villages have complete facilities with no ongoing land development. Physical development, driven by land-use changes, transforms agricultural land into urban, industrial, housing, commercial, and recreational areas (Shaharudin et al., 2004), leading to land fragmentation and urban sprawl (Sabariah & Kadaruddin, 2023). These environmental changes are particularly pronounced in Selangor, a financial hub with rapid economic and population growth (Ma et al., 2024; Mohd Yusof & Zakariah, 2008).

Orang Asli have also been impacted by resettlement programmes, initially for security during the emergency period (1946-1960) and later for socio-economic development (Tuan Pah et al., 2017; Mustaffa Omar, 2008). However, these programmes are often deemed unsuccessful, with many Orang Asli remaining in poverty (Ronzi et al., 2019) and preferring to stay in ancestral

villages (Jamalunlaili & Che Bon, 2019). While development offers some benefits like education and employability, it often leads to natural resource destruction and affects traditional lifestyles and culture (Mohd Roslan et al., 2024), shifting them from self-sustaining to a consumer-based economy (Ramlee, 2001; Mohd Roslan, 2019).

Malaysia is projected to become an ageing nation by 2030, with an estimated 15.3% elderly population (Department of Statistics, 2021; Nik Norliati & Suriati, 2021). Policy interventions have prioritised social, economic, environmental, health, and spiritual aspects (Department of Welfare Malaysia, 2015). However, further improvements are needed, especially from a psychological perspective, as an estimated 20% of Malaysian elderly may experience depression due to health problems and loss of social relationships (Astro Awani, 2023). This is particularly relevant for the Orang Asli elderly population whose well-being, including psychological aspects, is highly dependent on land and has been significantly affected by current development-induced customary, environmental, and land-use changes (MalaysiaKini, 2024; Muhammad et al., 2023; Mohd Roslan et al., 2024).

#### GAPS IN CURRENT RESEARCH

Despite the extensive literature on elderly well-being and the impacts of modernisation, several critical gaps remain, particularly concerning indigenous populations like the Temuan. First, while general trends in elderly vulnerability and mental health are documented, specific in-depth analyses of psychological well-being within Malaysian indigenous contexts, specifically for the Temuan, are scarce. Second, previous studies often address modernisation's impacts in broad socio-economic terms but rarely delve into its nuanced psychological consequences on the indigenous elderly. This is particularly true when considering their distinct, nature-centric worldviews. Third, a systematic exploration of how environmental changes, alongside shifts in social relationships and health concerns, collectively influence the *specific indicators* of psychological well-being (harmony, happiness, interdependence, respect, and acceptance) in this particular group is lacking. Finally, the existing literature predominantly adopts either quantitative or qualitative approaches. There is a dearth of mixed-methods studies that triangulate statistical associations with rich lived experiences to provide a holistic understanding of psychological well-being among the Temuan elderly. This research aims to bridge these gaps by providing a culturally informed, mixed-methods assessment of factors affecting Temuan elderly psychological well-being.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting the psychological well-being of Temuan elderly in Selangor, Malaysia. This triangulation of methods allowed for a robust investigation, complementing statistical findings with rich, in-depth narratives from the participants.

## STUDY DESIGN

The research adopted a cross-sectional design for the quantitative component, collecting data at a single point in time from a representative sample. The qualitative component utilised a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of the Temuan elderly regarding their psychological well-being amidst environmental and social changes.

## STUDY AREA

The study was conducted across eight Temuan villages located in Selangor, Malaysia. These villages were Desa Kemandol, Bukit Cheding, Pulau Kempas, Busut Baru, Bukit Tadam, Desa Temuan, Rasau Hulu, and Rasau Hilir. These sites were selected to capture variations in exposure to modernisation and urbanisation within Temuan settlements in Selangor. FIGURE 1 shows a map of the study area in Selangor.

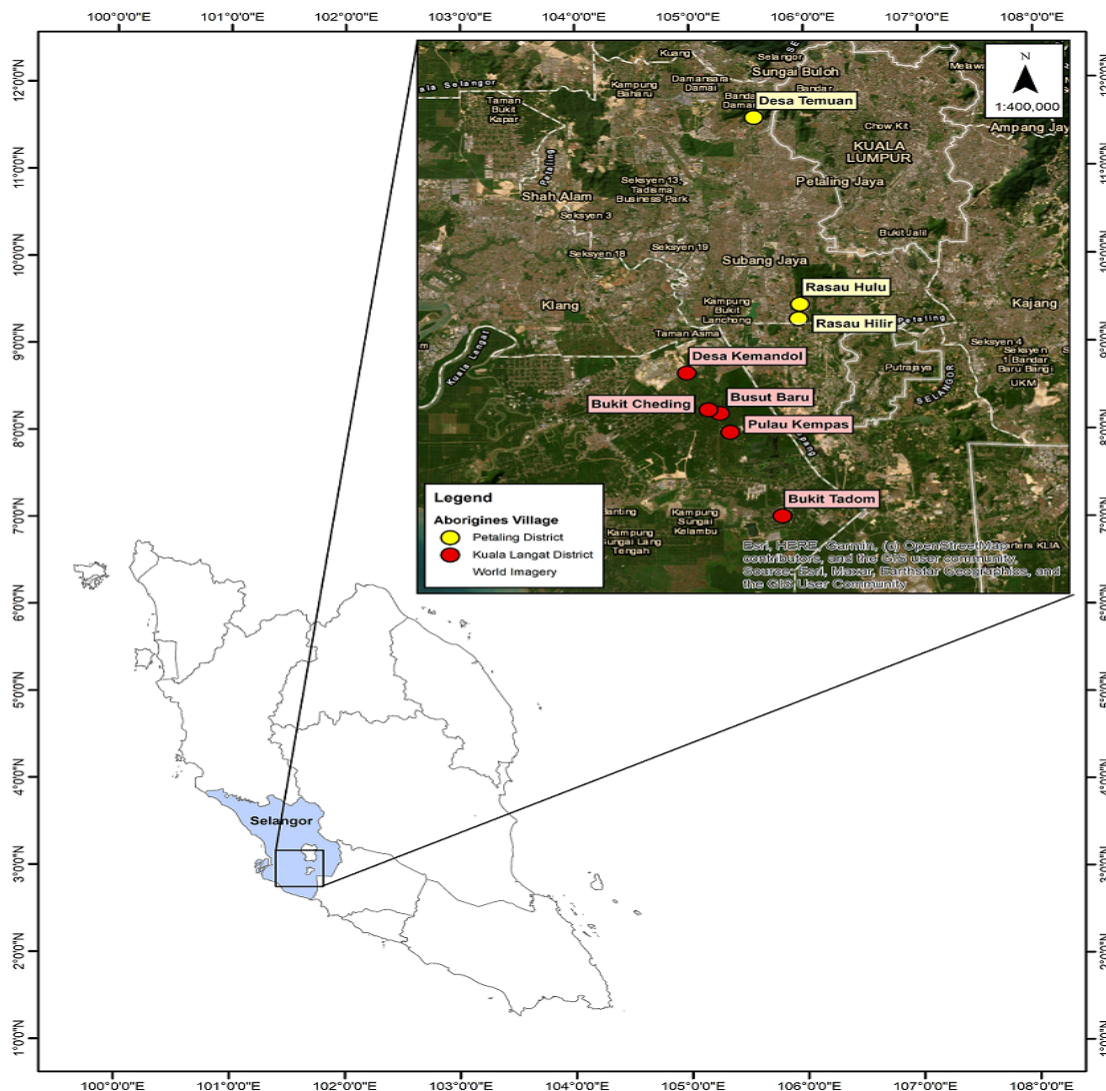


FIGURE 1. Location of the Study Area in the State of Selangor  
(Source: Area Coordinates Based on Global Position System -GPS)

## PARTICIPANTS

A total of 261 Temuan elderly individuals (aged 60 years and above) participated in the quantitative survey. Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, facilitated by community leaders. For the qualitative component, a subset of 38 individuals from the surveyed group were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews, ensuring diverse representation across age, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. All participants provided informed consent before data collection.

## DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire included demographic information (locality, marital status, working status) and items assessing five indicators of psychological well-being: harmony, happiness, interdependence, respect, and acceptance. The indicators were measured using a Likert-scale format, adapted and validated for the local context.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the 38 selected participants. The interview protocol focused on eliciting their experiences and perceptions regarding environmental changes, social relationships, health status, and their overall sense of well-being. Interviews were conducted in the local language, audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies) were used to summarise the overall psychological well-being and its indicators. Chi-square tests were employed to examine associations between demographic factors (locality, marital status, working status) and the indicators of psychological well-being. A p-value of  $<0.05$  was considered statistically significant. Qualitative data transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. The process involved familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Key themes emerging from the interviews concerning environmental changes, social relationships, and health status were identified and presented to provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) for the duration of field research. Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw at any time and the anonymity/confidentiality of their responses. All procedures adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, particularly vulnerable populations as required by JAKOA.

## FINDINGS

This section presents the study's findings, beginning with the socio-demographic profile of the participants, followed by quantitative results on psychological well-being and its associated factors, and finally, qualitative insights.

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 261 Temuan elderly participated in this study. The demographic profile of the respondents indicates a slightly higher proportion of females (56.7%) compared to males (43.3%). Age distribution shows that the majority (59.8%) were in the 50-59 age cohort, with decreasing percentages in older age groups. In terms of religious affiliation, the majority (77.0%) adhered to ancestor religions, while others practised Islam (18.4%), Christianity (3.8%), or Buddhism (0.8%). Most respondents were married (65.9%), followed by widowed (31.4%). Educational attainment was generally low, with over half (56.7%) having attended only primary school and a significant portion (32.2%) having no formal education. Regarding employment, 39.8% of the respondents were currently working. The majority of participants resided in suburban areas (70.5%), with a smaller proportion in urban areas (29.5%). Furthermore, 64.0% lived in Resettlement Programme areas, while 34.0% resided in traditional villages. A detailed breakdown of respondent demographics is presented in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Respondent Demographics (N=261)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	113	43.3
Female	148	56.7
<b>Age</b>		
50-59	156	59.8
60-69	80	30.7
70-79	20	7.7
80-89	4	1.5
90 and above	1	0.3
<b>Religion</b>		
Ancestor	201	77.0
Islam	48	18.4
Christianity	10	3.8
Buddhism	2	0.8
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	5	1.9
Married	172	65.9
Widow	82	31.4
Separated	2	0.8
<b>Level of Education</b>		
No formal education	84	32.2
Primary school	148	56.7
Secondary School	29	11.1
<b>Working Status</b>		
Working	104	39.8
Not working	157	60.2
<b>Settlement</b>		
Urban	77	29.5
Suburban	184	70.5
<b>Type of Settlement</b>		
Traditional village	94	34.0
The Resettlement Programme	167	64.0



## OVERALL PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND ITS INDICATORS

The quantitative analysis revealed that the majority of the Temuan elderly in the study exhibited a good overall level of psychological well-being, with 85.0% of respondents reporting to be in good psychological condition. When examining the five core indicators of psychological well-being, a strong sense of harmony and happiness was reported by a significant proportion of respondents, at 96.0%. Interdependence was felt by 85.2% of the participants, indicating a generally strong communal connection. Furthermore, 82.4% expressed feeling respected, while acceptance was reported by 66.0% of the elderly. These findings are visually represented in FIGURE 2, which illustrates the distribution of psychological well-being across these indicators.

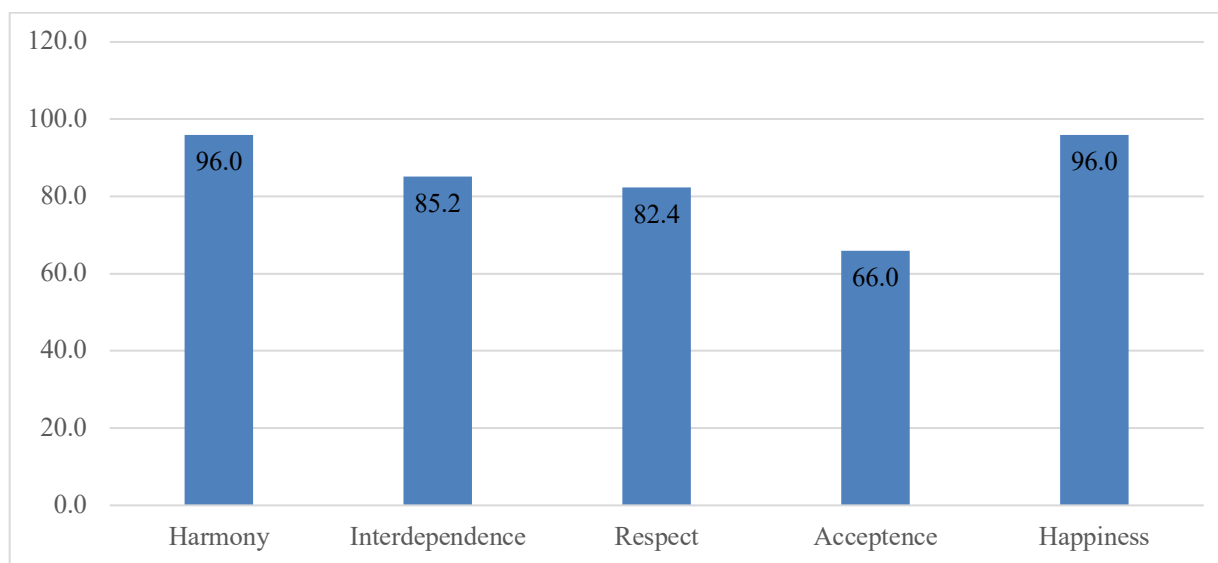


FIGURE 2. Psychological Well-being of Temuan Elderly

## DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationship between demographic characteristics and psychological well-being among the Temuan elderly. The overall psychological well-being was found to have a significant association only with the village of residence ( $X^2 = 32.9$ ,  $df = 21$ ,  $p = 0.047 < 0.05$ ). Further detailed analysis of the five psychological well-being indicators showed varied associations with demographic items. The harmony and acceptance indicators did not exhibit a significant difference with any of the demographic characteristics. However, the indicators of interdependence, respect, and happiness demonstrated significant associations with several demographic variables. Specifically, the **interdependence** indicator had significant differences with working status ( $X^2 = 10.3$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.016 < 0.05$ ), village ( $X^2 = 41.3$ ,  $df = 21$ ,  $p = 0.005 < 0.05$ ), and type of settlement ( $X^2 = 8.74$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.033 < 0.05$ ). The **respect** indicator showed significant differences concerning the village ( $X^2 = 35.8$ ,  $df = 21$ ,  $p = 0.023 < 0.05$ ) and the settlement classification ( $X^2 = 8.74$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.033 < 0.05$ ). Lastly, the **happiness** indicator demonstrated significant differences with marital status ( $X^2 = 19.54$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p = 0.021 < 0.05$ ) and the overall settlement classification ( $X^2 = 10.6$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.014 < 0.05$ ). The comprehensive results of these demographic findings and their associations with psychological well-being indicators are depicted in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2. Demographics and Psychological Well-being Indicators (p-values)

Demographics Profile	H	ID	R	A	HP	PW
Age	.231	.794	.983	.171	.752	.729
Gender	.934	.120	.140	.124	.582	.198
Married Status	.987	.794	.912	.512	.021*	.134
Education Level	.073	.949	.316	.966	.673	.765
Working Status	.284	.016*	.922	.700	.489	.763
Settlement	.209	.886	.033*	.071	.014*	.413
Type of Settlement	.198	.033*	.157	.496	.431	.302
The Village	.187	.005*	.023*	.081	.202	.047*

(Note: \*P< .05, H- Harmony, ID-Interdependence, R-Respect, A-Acceptance, HP-Happiness, PW-Psychological Wellbeing)

### QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS ON WELL-BEING FACTORS

Even though the quantitative findings indicated that the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly is overall on the high side, results from the semi-structured interviews captured detailed perceptions and nuanced experiences. These qualitative insights revealed that some elderly individuals still felt sad and found it difficult to accept their current disposition. Thematically, four main reasons emerged as contributing to these feelings of distress: migration and environmental changes, erosion of social cohesion, grief from death in the family, and personal health problems.

#### i. Migration and Environmental Changes

Migration or displacement among the Orang Asli is rarely a voluntary choice but largely a consequence of state-led development activities impacting their traditional ancestral villages (*kampung asal*). This often involves the relocation of entire village populations from their traditional homelands to new residences, referred to as Resettlement Programmes. Desa Kemandol, for instance, represents one of the more recent Resettlement Programmes included in this study. Respondents frequently expressed a profound sense of nostalgia and sadness for their old villages, recalling places where they grew up and where their ancestors had lived. These ancestral lands were perceived as comfortable, allowing for traditional domestic work without difficulty. The forced displacement profoundly affected their emotions, leading to feelings of unhappiness and sadness, as exemplified by the following quotes:

"I miss the old village so much. Every day I go to the old village area. I keep remembering the village. Here is peat land. Its patchy soil and look at those rocks. In the old village, it was easy to plant, but not now in this patchy soil. There used to be a forest here. There were Mahang trees, and there were tigers too."

(Respondent 3, 78 years old)

"I am not happy. Because the house is like this (terrace house). It's hard. There's no enthusiasm, there is no forest here. There's nothing left. A lot of things need to be paid. You don't have to pay if you live there (the original village). Your own village. You can plant sweet potatoes and bananas. Here, you can't grow anything."

(Respondent 2, 64 years old)

"Before, when I moved, I couldn't even eat. I couldn't sleep well. Because I remembered my old village. Now, I feel a little better, but I also remember my old village. The people next door sometimes come to visit the old village. I rarely visit the old village. I will feel sad."

(Respondent 5, 65 years old)

Beyond emotional distress, the Resettlement Programmes significantly impacted their socio-economic lives. Previously, the Temuan engaged in self-sustenance through harvesting forest products and maintaining personal orchards. However, these orchards and roaming areas were often developed as part of the new resettlement sites, leading to a loss of traditional activities and a forced adaptation to a market economy. While some received compensation, such as palm oil plantations located far from their new homes (e.g., in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan), managing these proved difficult due to travel expenses and time constraints. Consequently, some resorted to working in the private sector as contract labourers in nearby palm oil plantations. Respondent 1 (54 years old) shared:

"Right now, we get palm oil compensation but it's in Rembau. We can already harvest it but it is far from our home. At first, we thought of doing it ourselves but a Chinese man offered to buy the palm oil fruits. He asked for the place from me first, and he wanted to take care of it for four to five years. Later, he would give it back to us. We got four hundred because we didn't do any work."

In Desa Temuan, specifically, residents experienced profound changes to their natural environment due to large-scale urban development. Their village is now situated within a bustling metropolitan area. The resulting high-density, mixed development (housing, businesses, and public transport infrastructure) prompted many Orang Asli residents to either move in with relatives in other Orang Asli villages (e.g., Sungai Buloh) or settle permanently in their orchards. Respondent 7 (60 years old) commented:

"I live in the orchard. I only come back here (Desa Temuan) once in a while. I am just visiting the house, otherwise, I'm staying in the orchard."

## ii. Erosion of Social Cohesion

Respondents noted a significant shift in the practice of cooperation within their communities. Traditionally based on communal effort, cooperation now increasingly involves monetary rewards or compensation. This perceived reliance on external incentives, rather than genuine willingness, has led to a decrease in what was once considered sincere mutual aid. The younger generation, preoccupied with urban employment, often cannot commit to traditional collaborative activities in the village. Respondents 40 (66 years old) and 35 (56 years old) highlighted this departure from past practices:

"...cooperation is lacking. Well, half of the youngsters are gone, working in the town. Mutual cooperation is lacking. Nowadays, if there is no work, what will happen? Most are working in near Cyberjaya, people are concentrated on working there. But it is manual labour work."

(Respondent 40, 66 years old)

## iii. Grief from Family Loss (Death in the Family)

The issue of mourning the death of a family member emerged as a significant factor affecting the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly. Several respondents expressed profound and lingering grief over the loss of a loved one, making it difficult for them to come to terms with the event. When interviewed, some felt as though the event was still fresh, constantly being replayed in their memories. This pervasive feeling of loss and loneliness was evident in their narratives:

"After my husband passed away, I moved back to my village. I couldn't stay there (the old village), I kept thinking about it. Now I'm okay, I go fishing with my siblings. I just got lost in the quiet for a while."

(Respondent 35, 56 years old)

iv. Health Challenges

Health problems significantly affect the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly. While health deterioration is a natural part of ageing, some respondents also faced health issues due to accidents or, in specific cases, excessive alcohol consumption. These health problems often lead to limitations in movement and an inability to perform routine work, impacting their sense of purpose and functionality. For instance, Respondent 30 (53 years old) shared his disappointment after a road accident left him unable to perform strenuous work like tying palm oil trees and leaving him only able to do light work such as collecting fallen fruit fragments. Respondent 4 (82 years old) underwent stomach surgery due to excessive alcohol consumption that necessitated prolonged rest and limited his physical activities.

## DISCUSSION

This study offers valuable insights into the psychological well-being of Temuan elderly in Selangor, highlighting the complex interplay between internal states, demographic factors, and external environmental and social changes. While the overall psychological well-being appears generally good, the findings also identify critical areas of concern, particularly those revealed through qualitative narratives.

### GENERAL STATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The finding that a significant percentage (85.0%) of the Temuan elderly exhibit good overall psychological well-being is noteworthy. Strong results in indicators like harmony and happiness (both at 96.0%) suggest inherent resilience and positive coping mechanisms within the community, possibly rooted in their cultural values and traditional way of life. For many indigenous communities, the concepts of harmony and happiness, are deeply connected to communal living and a balanced relationship with nature (Patel, 2007). The relatively lower, yet still good, percentages for interdependence and acceptance (85.4% and 66.0% respectively) hint at potential areas where modernisation may be exerting subtle pressures.

Acceptance, in particular, may reflect challenges related to adapting to new norms or feeling recognised in a rapidly changing world. From a psychological perspective, acceptance is the willingness to experience events that affect thoughts, feelings and memories without avoiding them or allowing them to overly influence behaviour (Hayes, 1999). In this study, the Temuan elderly experienced a range of feelings and memories but their behaviour remained normal. Individual differences in emotional regulation and coping mechanisms (Butler & Ciarrochi, 2007) resulted in varied processes of acceptance and management of sadness. The time required to heal is especially critical for issues related to forced displacement, social cohesion, the death of family members, and health problems.

### INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

According to Rain et al. (2024), demographic factors influence the psychological well-being of the elderly. This study also shows notable associations between indicators of psychological well-being and factors like locality, marital status, and employment status underscoring the diverse experiences within the Temuan elderly population.

i. Locality

Locality issues, including the village of residence (eight villages), settlement type (traditional village versus the Resettlement Programme) and settlement classification (urban versus suburban), affect indicators of psychological well-being, particularly interdependency, respect and happiness. These locality factors have emerged as a result of development that has transformed environments into urban and suburban settings. For many indigenous communities, a reliance on the natural environment is a vital aspect of their traditional way of life, contributing to their overall well-being (Lewis, 2010). However, environmental changes resulting from planned development, rather than voluntary migration, have adversely impacted their psychological well-being.

The specific area in which they live has a profound influence on the psychology and well-being of the elderly (Asmawati et al., 2009; Dudgeon et al., 2017). The Resettlement Programme has disrupted their livelihoods as they had to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar environments. Many Temuan elderly expressed a deep sense of loss for their ancestral villages, as their new homes cannot replace their ancestral lands and homes. The contrast between their traditional lifestyles and the new living conditions, despite being modernized with basic amenities, creates a significant emotional divide (Jamalunlaili & Che Bon, 2019).

For the Temuan elderly, migration did not entail moving to formal elderly care facilities, rather, it involved forced relocation alongside family and community members. Today, issues such as living alone and abandonment can lead to 'empty nest syndrome' among the elderly, leading to emotional stress and diminished well-being (Lim & Kua, 2011; Nurul Aini & Fatanah, 2014; Noor Ayuni & Khadijah, 2024). However, the Temuan elderly do not face such challenges, as they remain integrated with their families and communities. Even if some live alone, they are usually surrounded by their relatives and loved ones. They also experience ageing in place within a community that shares a similar lifestyle and culture, which fosters their emotional resilience.

According to Khadijah (2012), the preference for ageing within the community outweighs living in elderly care institutions or hospitals. Therefore, the primary challenge confronting the Temuan elderly is the change of locality, as Selangor now has limited remote areas, forcing them to reside in urban and suburban settlements under the Resettlement Programme. The increasing conversion of natural environments into developed areas - an outcome closely tied to modernisation - has significant implications for their cultural identity and psychological well-being.

ii. Marital Status

Marital status is an important determinant of psychological well-being among the Temuan elderly, as it directly impacts their emotional support systems and overall quality of life. Among the elderly individuals with different marital statuses, those who are still married or single generally reported no negative effects on their happiness presumably because they have not experienced the emotional turmoil associated with losing a partner whom they relied on for support. In contrast, individuals who have lost a spouse often remain in a state of shock which affects their lives significantly (Farhah et al., 2023; Noor Ayuni & Khadijah, 2024). According to Myers (1992) and Wan Ibrahim (2009), elderly individuals who have never married, who are divorced and who have lost a spouse also need support to maintain a comfortable life. Similar to the mainstream elderly populations, the Orang Asli elderly also experienced feelings of sadness and loneliness following the death of a spouse. Loneliness affects psychological well-being and has become a major concern for the elderly in recent times (Kovalenko & Spivak, 2018; Newmyer et al., 2021).

For the elderly, the support from family members help them recovered from the sadness caused by the loss of their spouse. In indigenous communities, family members are a social unit that affects the well-being of life (Gee et al., 2014). In their old age, they depended on their children for social and financial support (Khadijah et al., 2011). The support from family and friends important to ensure success to their psychological well-being (Siu & Philips, 2002; Diener & Seligman, 2002). The sadness is due to their loss of support and dependence on family members. The importance of family in the life of the indigenous community is due to the concept of self (self does not reflect individual characteristics but collectively) and dependence on family is a value that exists in the community (Quigley et al., 2022).

### iii. Working Status

The working status also affects the interdependence indicators related to the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly. Environmental changes have compelled them to conform to mainstream working styles and rules, disrupting their traditionally nature-dependent way of life. As a result, they now have to earn money to sustain themselves, a necessity that was previously less urgent when their basic needs could be easily met through foraging in the forest. Rapid development in this region has made it more challenging due to resource depletion.

Research by Gubhaju et al. (2015) and Temple & Russell (2018) indicates that the quality of life for the indigenous elderly in this era of modernisation is low due to their socioeconomic status. They can no longer depend on a self-sustaining economy to support themselves and their families, especially as many elderly are now responsible for young school-going children. Family members are also unable to gather resources from forests and rivers as they once did, leading to an increasing dependence on the elderly.

This shift reflects a decrease in their reliance on the environment as natural resources are becoming harder to obtain, while the dependence on financial resources is becoming more critical. The Temuan elderly are therefore experiencing a forced transition from a self-sustaining economy to a consumer-based one. Psychological well-being issues involving economic struggles, which were previously confined to mainstream elderly populations, are also spreading to the Orang Asli elderly. Their dependence on the capitalist economy has intensified because of the depletion of natural resources.

These demographic findings underscore the need for tailored interventions that consider the diverse circumstances and vulnerabilities within the Temuan elderly population, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Issues related to relocation are not the primary concern of the Orang Asli community. They prefer to remain in their ancestral localities. However, the pressures of development and modernisation have compelled the Orang Asli to adapt to changes alongside mainstream society. Nevertheless, any development initiatives involving the Orang Asli should consider their cultural background and worldview.

## IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The qualitative data strongly suggests that concerns about environmental changes are a significant stressor for the Temuan elderly. Their worldview is deeply intertwined with nature, traditional knowledge, spiritual beliefs, and subsistence activities are often dependent on the health of their surrounding forests, rivers, and land. Deforestation, pollution, and the loss of access to ancestral lands due to development projects can lead to profound feelings of loss, displacement, anxiety, and a diminished sense of identity. Environmental changes give rise to ecological grief, which in

turn affects psychological well-being (Comtesse et al., 2021; Boafa & Yeboah, 2024) and has a direct impact on their sense of harmony and purpose in life, even if quantitative indicators of well-being remain relatively high. The rapid pace of these changes leaves little room for adaptation, further exacerbating their concerns.

#### FRAGILITY OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Another critical theme from the interviews was the perceived fragility of social relationships. Modernisation often brings about changes in family structures, community cohesion, and intergenerational support. The shifts in community cooperation reflect an adaptation to mainstream societal norms, where economic activities may not require collaborative efforts, fostering more individualistic attitudes (Edles & Appelrouth, 2014). Increased mobility among younger generations seeking urban employment, exposure to new cultural influences, and a transition from communal living to more individualised lifestyles can undermine traditional social bonds. The Orang Asli are now compelled to shift from a carefree lifestyle to one driven by survival values in order to navigate mainstream society, often facing rules imposed by external entities that fundamentally alter their way of life (Wan Ahmad, 2020).

For the Temuan elderly, whose sense of interdependence and respect often stems from strong community ties, this weakening can lead to feelings of isolation and neglect, resulting in a decline in social capital that ultimately affects their psychological well-being. This is particularly concerning given the importance of collective identity and mutual support in indigenous cultures. Hence, for the elderly, a supportive social environment greatly contributes to their overall satisfaction and quality of life (Ivankina & Ivanova, 2016).

#### HEALTH CHALLENGES

In this study, health also affects the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly. Initially, they could function and help the family by working and doing household chores. However, health problems caused them to lose their ability to function. According to the Ministry of Health Malaysia (2023), before falling ill, the functionality of the elderly was high and stable, but health problems can cause functionality to decline and subsequently lead to loss of functionality. Physical health problems often lead to depression (Chang-Quan et al., 2010). This affects their psychological well-being because their functional abilities are limited. Health constraints affecting the psychological well-being of the elderly will limit their ability to do daily activities (Ooi et al., 2021). This situation occurs among the Temuan elderly, making them unable to be as active as before.

#### BRIDGING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The mixed-methods approach reveals a nuanced picture. While quantitative data shows a generally favourable state of well-being, qualitative insights provide crucial context, exposing underlying stressors and vulnerabilities that may not be immediately captured by survey responses. The "good condition" indicated by the quantitative data could indicate a strong baseline resilience or a cultural tendency to report positively. However, the qualitative findings highlight emerging threats to this well-being, particularly those stemming from rapid external changes. This suggests that without proactive interventions, the current positive state could be at risk.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing the psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly in Selangor, Malaysia, against the backdrop of ongoing modernisation. The findings indicate that while overall psychological well-being remains largely positive, evidenced by high levels of harmony and happiness, key demographic variables significantly influence these outcomes. More importantly, the qualitative insights reveal deep-seated concerns related to environmental degradation, the weakening of traditional social bonds, and health challenges. These insights underscore the critical need for interventions that are not only comprehensive but also culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique vulnerabilities and strengths of this indigenous community.

The psychological well-being of the Temuan elderly is generally considered good. Nevertheless, environmental changes, the fragility of social relationships, and shifts in socio-economic capabilities emerged as influential factors impacting their psychological well-being. These factors are consequences of the modernisation process, which affects not only the Temuan elderly but also mainstream elderly communities. The primary issue highlighted in this study is how changes in their locality—from traditional villages to Resettlement Programmes and exposure to urban/suburban environments—significantly affect various indicators of their psychological well-being. If these issues are not adequately addressed, the psychological well-being of the Orang Asli elderly could be severely impacted, especially as changes to their natural environment fundamentally alter their traditional lifestyles and cultures. For indigenous communities, cultural change or loss can profoundly affect mental health (Kirmayer, 2000).

Understanding the psychology of the Temuan elderly through their unique cultural lenses is crucial for addressing their needs and problems (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2004; Pe Pua, 2015). In Malaysia, the National Elderly Policy assesses elderly well-being through social, economic, spiritual, environmental, and health elements. Based on our findings, we suggest that psychology be explicitly included as an integral element of elderly well-being within this policy framework. This addition is vital because an individual's psychological state in the modern age cannot be fully evaluated solely from an external perspective; understanding their inner experiences is essential to prevent mental health issues from escalating within society.

Empowering existing intervention programmes with insights from community psychology would benefit not only the Orang Asli elderly but also all senior citizens in Malaysia, as psychological well-being significantly impacts their engagement in old-age activities (Chai & Harifah, 2022). For the Temuan elderly, they serve a vital role as agents of socialisation for their families and community (Carey, 1976). Informal learning imparted by the elderly can foster cultural empowerment, building resilience among present and future generations. This can help sustain traditional life patterns such as togetherness, interdependence, and strong family spirit (Masni et al., 2022), even amidst environmental and lifestyle changes. Importantly, recognising and valuing the wisdom and traditional knowledge of the Temuan elderly is essential, as it contributes significantly to shaping environmental policies towards sustainability.

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