

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Enhancing Well-being in Older Adults: Exploring the Impact of Paid Companionship Services Through Outdoor Mobility and Activity Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The challenges associated with outdoor mobility and activity participation significantly impede the ability of older individuals to navigate and engage in outdoor pursuits. A potential solution employed is companionship, a prevalent intervention utilized to support older adults facing physical or mental health challenges, frequently facilitated by volunteers. This study was conducted to investigate the factors influencing the utilization of paid companionship services in conjunction with outdoor mobility and activity participation in enhancing the well-being of older adults. **Materials and methods:** A comprehensive, semi-structured, one-on-one virtual interview was conducted with seven individuals, encompassing founders and operators of companionship companies. The interviews were meticulously recorded and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, coding was executed by one researcher and independently cross-checked by a second researcher. Following this, two researchers convened to identify and discuss emerging themes, resolving any disagreements with the assistance of a third researcher. **Results:** This study revealed that older adults sought companion services primarily due to health-related conditions and the need for assistance, often due to living alone or the unavailability of family members. Companions provide essential support to older adults in outdoor mobility, assisting with medical appointments, engaging in exercise, recreational and leisure activities, and shopping for necessities and services. The study demonstrated that companionship plays a vital role in assisting older adults in preserving their independence. **Conclusion:** Companionship emerges as a valuable resource in helping the elderly overcome obstacles related to outdoor mobility and activity participation, allowing them to pursue their interests, experience autonomy, and find pleasure in life.

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disabilities (5). Out-of-home mobility is a significant challenge, affecting the independence and quality of life of older adults (6), and is considered a fundamental need in later life (7).

INTRODUCTION

The population of older adults is experiencing rapid growth across numerous countries worldwide (1). The ageing process is commonly associated with a gradual decline in both physical and psychological capabilities (2). Therefore, the ageing population is expected to result in a greater need for assistance with everyday activities (3). Mobility, classified as an essential daily activity, refers to the capability to move from one location to another (4). With the ageing population and the observed decline in functionality among a growing number of individuals as they age, there is a concurrent rise in the total number of people experiencing mobility

Companions can be sought from both the private and charitable sectors. The companion's role may vary according to the client's needs, preferences, and expectations (8). The concept of paid companionship may be achieved through befriending, which is defined as a relationship between two or more individuals initiated, supported, and monitored by an agency whereby one or more parties are deemed likely to benefit. Ideally, this relationship embodies qualities of non-judgement, mutual respect, and purposefulness, with a long-term commitment to maintain the relationship (9). The befriender may act more like a friend, but the assumption of the roles of both companion and befriender is common. Thus, the companion may assist

older adults in overcoming barriers to mobility.

The elderly person required mobility to meet their basic needs (food, clothing, medical services, and money) as well as their additional needs (socialising, leisure, religious activities, and recreation) (10). Previous studies have indicated that ageing and health issues significantly impact mobility and engagement in outdoor activities among the elderly in the community and institutions (11, 12, 13). Depression, anxiety, and bewilderment are common among dementia patients, posing challenges for them to perform tasks (14). Additional factors commonly influencing mobility in older adults include residing alone (15, 16), the accessibility of facilities (17, 18), financial constraints (19), and vehicle ownership (20). Older adults often have limited transportation options due to impairments resulting from health conditions. Active and semi-active modes of transportation, such as bus, train, walking, and cycling, may no longer be viable for them (21, 22). Ensuring the continued mobility and involvement of older adults in outdoor activities can significantly enhance their quality of life. However, most of the older adults engage in fewer outdoor activities, primarily due to personal, health, and environmental barriers (12).

Cultural norms in Malaysia persist in placing the responsibility of caring for older parents on adult children despite economic challenges and barriers (12). Adult children's inability to fulfil elderly care demands is primarily hindered by geographic distance resulting from occupational migration (14). Ismail et al. revealed that older adults aspire to lead independent lives since they consider living alone a viable option for their daily routine (13). However, disability and living alone appear as primary factors linked to reduced out-of-home mobility, which then leads to social disengagement (23), which further leads to social isolation, loneliness, and depression as a result of health deterioration (24), as well as experiences of loss and life transitions (25). Traditionally, companions for older adults have typically been family members (26). However, with the growing ageing population, smaller family sizes, increased migration and companionships have evolved into an industry.

The challenges associated with transportation are often eased by the presence of companions. Companions can either offer transportation services themselves (26) or introduce and facilitate the use of public transportation for older adults who may need assistance to seek out the route or modes of transportation or to make bookings (27). Companionship provides solutions to individuals without a driver's license or access to a vehicle, those who have stopped driving, or those who intend to reduce their reliance on children or friends. Most older adults prefer not to rely on family members or friends (28) as they do not want to burden their family and friends and seek to maintain mobility and independence (29).

The convoy model enlightens the older adult's support environment, consisting of family, friends, neighbours, the local community, and support agencies. The presence of these companion services helps the older adult and complements a new entity to the older adult's support environment. These companion services have a significant impact on outdoor mobility and activity participation among older adults because their presence can substitute the role of family, friends, and community to improve older adults' well-being.

The theoretical framework used in this study is the Convoy Model, a concept of social relations introduced by Kahn and Antonucci in 1980. This model describes individual social relations based on three levels of emotional closeness (30). The inner chain (circle) is a network of profoundly familiar and important social relationships. These relationships typically include family members who hold considerable meaning in the lives of individuals. The middle social chain comprises individuals who share close relationships with the individual, which includes relatives, friends, and close neighbours. Finally, the external chain encompasses those who have direct relationships with the individual based on specific roles or positions, such as employers, subordinates, and other professional connections. The Convoy Model shows relationships in various dimensions, including network structure, social relationships, and social support (31).

This model is adaptable, as individuals within these chains can evolve following age-related changes. Social relationships are dynamic and can shift over time, allowing for flexibility within the Convoy Model (32). The Convoy model offers insights into social relationships during individual old age. It suggests that this model can effectively depict the social environment of older adults by considering dynamic interactions and adopting a broader perspective (32). Although the original Convoy model focuses more on the family and its role, this model can be expanded to include social support elements in the social environment of older adults. This dynamic Convoy model makes it possible that the Convoy pattern of older adults in 1980 may differ from those in 2005. Social needs and relationships evolve over time, and consequently, social support will continually adjust according to the needs of older adults, prioritizing those that are most relevant at the time. Fuller illustrates that in 2005, older adults were more often in contact with their Convoy environment due to the sophistication of information technology. In the future, Fuller anticipates further evolution within the Convoy model, particularly regarding changes in family structure and the implications of weakened relationships within the family (32). The influence of technology on social relations presents both opportunities for prevention and intervention.

Previous studies primarily focused on companionship

programs involving volunteers (27) or companions for medical visits (26). In the context of out-of-home mobility among older adults, previous studies have essentially emphasized examining mobility impairment patterns and their associated challenges. The paid companionship industry offers a valuable service to assist older adults in mobility and out-of-home activities. However, their issues have received relatively little attention in previous studies. Malaysia is projected to become an ageing nation by 2030, with 15% of its population reaching 60 years of age or older (11). By this time, approximately 77.9% of the older population is anticipated to require mobility assistance, with approximately 6.8% living alone (12). Two research questions from a paid companion perspective are to be addressed in the study: i) What factors influenced the elderly to use companion services? and ii) What outdoor activities do the elderly do with their paid companions? Thus, this study aims to explore factors of using paid companionship services through outdoor mobility and activity participation to improve older adult's well-being in the community.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach to comprehend the companionship experience. This method was appropriate for an exploratory study because paid companion services are a relatively new industry in Malaysia and geographically limited. The number of companion operators offering this service was also limited, resulting in a restricted sample size. Thus, the phenomenological approach can provide in-depth explanations for problems regarding particular issues and circumstances (33). This phenomenological approach can delve deeper into the experiences of service providers to collect sufficient and high-quality data on the impact of paid companionship on the out-of-home mobility and well-being of older adults (34).

Location

This study was conducted in the Klang Valley, a densely populated region with a high demand for mobility or transportation services (35). According to the British Council study (36), the Klang Valley has the highest number of social entrepreneurship enterprises in Malaysia. As a result, the chosen area was surrounding Putrajaya and the Klang Valley, where various service providers have been recognized to operate.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually in depth. Prior to meeting with each participant, a protocol for conducting interviews was devised, with the primary questions pertaining to the participant's personal and professional history, companionship activities, the reason why older adults used companionship services, and how they assisted older adults in outdoor

activities. The interviews were filmed and subsequently transcribed. These interviews were conducted separately and continued until data saturation was reached (34), at which point no additional information was added. All participants have provided written informed consent prior to study participation.

Participants Recruitment

Participants were selected using the techniques of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The purposive sample was initiated by selecting and analysing the backgrounds of several related senior care firms. Since there is no official government list of companies that provide services to older adults, a list is built by browsing websites for companies that provide such services. The firms were initially filtered by acquiring basic information from the company's official website. The eligibility criteria of the service provider were: (i) it provides outdoor companionship services; (ii) it provides services within the Klang Valley region of Malaysia; and (iii) the target clientele is senior citizens. The firms that pass the screening criteria are then contacted via their official WhatsApp or email. The snowball technique was used to recruit the individual who was the companion operator. The companion operators were selected based on the recommendations of the firm's founder. The criteria for the operator of the companion service were: (i) a minimum of six months of working experience in the industry; and (ii) prior experience accompanying senior citizens to outdoor activities.

Since there is no specific data list on the list of companion service providers available, the researcher used the internet search method through websites and Facebook pages. The service profile of this company was studied to provide outdoor mobility companion services to older adults. A total of five companies were shortlisted and contacted to participate in this study. Among these five companies, three companies agreed to participate in this study by delegating to the founders of their respective companies. The total number of informants is four people from three different companies. These four informants were selected based on their credibility as founders of companionship service providers.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was performed using the NVivo 12 program, following the standards of Braun and Clarke (37). TA works well with a qualitative design that uses a phenomenological approach and uses in-depth interview methods. The themes were determined from the companion's experience carrying out activities with elderly clients. According to Braun and Clarke (37), TA can produce a more comprehensive data analysis outcome (breadth). It can provide a comprehensive view of the similarities and differences between the study's data sets. TA also indicates the frequency with which a pattern occurs. This will increase the study's accuracy

and complexity, as well as its overall significance. This article comprises nine (9) themes that emerge to highlight factors associated with using companion services in the data analysis.

Following through the process, the first step of the thematic analysis is to familiarise yourself with the data. In this regard, the researcher has been directly involved with in-depth interviews. Transcripts were also produced after the interviews were conducted by the researcher. The second step is to create the starter code. Braun and Clarke stated that likened code to a block in a building (37). The code represents a data element that is significant to the study. The third step is to identify the theme. Themes can consist of concepts, ideas, or topics in a set of data that have meaning and significance to the research. The fourth step is to review the formation of code groups or themes. This step is implemented by repeatedly reviewing the process of building code groups and themes. This review process will be easier to implement with a thematic map. The fifth step is to define and name the theme. It is implemented after the researcher is satisfied with the group of codes or themes that have been produced. This repetition process is a validation step so that the data produced has good validity and reliability. In this study, themes were identified inductively based on two main categories, namely the factor of the elderly using companions and outdoor activities carried out.

Lincoln and Guba's (38) trustworthiness framework to assess qualitative research reliability and validity, including credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. We used multiple approaches, including the researcher part of the research, member checking, and data triangulation. This data triangulation is accomplished through the combination of information from two distinct sources. This study included two groups of informants: founders and operators.

This study has potential limitations such as time constraints have for the in-depth interview of informants due to post-pandemic C-19. In this study, the researcher was unable to include older persons' perceptions of their experiences in using mobile care services. Therefore, this study focuses on the challenges, needs and impact of the service from the perceptions of service providers. Future studies could expand by using quantitative or mixed methods to analyse companion operators among various races with study locations throughout Malaysia because this service industry is growing gradually.

Ethical Clearance

This study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Research Ethics Committee (S190331) and approved on 31st January 2021 with the title

'Diagnostic study to form a long-term care model for the older adult in Malaysia'. All participants in this study provided written informed consent after receiving a comprehensive explanation of the study's background and procedures. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage, and their personal information was treated as confidential and protected.

RESULTS

Three eligible companion operators have consented to participate in this study. A total of seven participants have been interviewed in depth to determine the role of companions in enhancing the mobility of older adults. The data acquired from these seven participants helped us understand the factors of older adults employing companionship services and the activities to engage.

Participants Profile

The participants range in age from 23 to 39 and have six months to four years of expertise in the companion sector. These companionship service companies utilized all gig economy strategies and hired gig companion operators. Gig companion is a comprehensive and flexible service care for older adults who choose to age at home. The founders also conduct out companion operator activities if they have free time. The overview of the participant profile is shown in Table I.

Table I: Participants Profile

Category	Informant	Gender	Marital status	Age	Experience
Founder	1	Women	Married	32	2 years
	2	Women	Married	32	2 years
	3	Women	Married	31	1 year
	4	Women	Single	23	4 years
Operator	5	Women	Single	23	1 year
	6	Man	Married	39	6 month
	7	Women	Married	32	2 years

Factors associated with using companionship services

The data analysis has identified four prominent themes for the utilization of paid companionship services among older adults: health status, unavailability of family members, living alone, and maintaining self-reliance.

Health Condition

The older adults' mobility restriction was primarily attributed to health issues. Informant 1 and informant 2 explained that the majority of her agency's service recipients were older adults with health issues. Informant 2 stated that: "Our clientele often consists of older individuals who are unwell and immobile. Therefore, he requires our assistance.". Meanwhile informant 1 stated

that: "We never targeted certain criteria of older adults as our customer, but most of them are having certain health issues and need assistance".

Unavailability of family members

Normally, older adults are accompanied by their children or close friends when they venture out for activities beyond their homes. However, there are instances when the children are unavailable to accompany their parents. In such situations, hiring a paid companion service can significantly enhance the experience. Informant 4 illustrates this aspect: "They expect their children to accompany them. But their children need to go to work. None of them can accompany their parent." While informant 2 mentioned, "For the family or children, their burden is lighter. In contrast to the old, he is not alone. If no family members are available to accompany him, he might seek our assistance".

Living alone

Adult children are often the ones engaging in companionship services for their parents. However, paid companionship services are also utilized by older adults who live alone. This aspect is evident in the statement provided by informant 2: "Usually, the older adult's children will call for our help. But there is also an older adult who calls us by herself. She's living alone." Informant 4 also provided a statement on the same issue: "... but she did not have any friends available to accompany her. So, she hired two of our companions who gladly joined her activities".

Maintaining self-reliance

The older adult often feels uncomfortable with the idea of relying on their family for assistance in their daily tasks. The availability of paid companions can help ease the burden of relying on their loved ones and alleviate any associated feelings of guilt. By hiring a companion who is not a family member and is solely responsible for engaging in activities with the older adult, they are likely to experience a reduced level of anxiety and discomfort. Informant 1 stated that: "We (companion) can empower them (older adult). An older adult frequently expresses concern that they are causing trouble for their children. Therefore, when they were with us, they had the perception that we were outsiders and being paid. So, they felt that they were not burdening their children. To them, we appear more like a friend".

Furthermore, the presence of paid companions also empowers older adults to make independent decisions without feeling that they are burdening their family members. By having a companion to facilitate access to assistance and remove any feelings of loneliness, older adults are better equipped to make their plans and choices themselves, leading to a greater sense of independence. Informant 3's statement supports this aspect: "He (older adult) feels in control and independent since he is aware that other people can aid him and he

can make his own decisions. Therefore, he will negotiate his outside activities plan with his children. At the same time, children need not be concerned".

Companionship activities

Through interviews with informants, the researcher discovered that companions and older adults frequently engage in numerous activities when they leave the house. The themes that emerged in this study related to companionship activities according to priority in interviews were medical visits, exercise and recreation activities, leisure activities, and shopping goods and services among older adults with their care workers.

Medical visit

All informants agreed that companionship services were primarily hired by older adults directly or through family carers, to accompany them to medical appointments. Hospital visits usually consisted of outpatient visits to government healthcare facilities, occurring only on weekdays from Monday to Friday. Informant 1 stated, "Most of the requests we get are to accompany the elderly to the hospital". The presence of companions makes hospital visits more manageable for older adults, as they can provide assistance with navigating the hospital, providing directions to specific locations, and even collecting medications on their behalf at hospital pharmacies. Informant 6 agreed that having a companion helps elderly patients in the hospital, "This older adult (sick) man has extensive medical requirements. Upon hospital admission, the patient will encounter various departments and physicians. It can be exhausting for the patient if they get lost while moving from one department to another. However, when I, as a companion, am present, the patient does not have to worry. I assist and aid him throughout the hospital visit, and I also collect his medication from the pharmacy."

Exercise and recreation activities

Older adults who have mobility limitations and require assistance with daily tasks are less likely to engage in exercise and recreational activities. Nevertheless, companions have been found to facilitate the participation of these individuals in such activities. Informant 5 shared an experience in which clients were assisted with simple recreational activities, such as walking or riding in a vehicle: "As one of my tasks, I love taking the older adult out for a leisurely stroll, and I make sure to assist those who need help walking. Seeing their smile when they feel the grass under their feet is priceless! If they express a desire to go on a sightseeing tour, I arrange for transportation using an e-hailing service, with proper authorisation of course".

Leisure activities

Leisure activities and hobbies are often shared among friends and family members, yet adult children may lack the time to assist older adults in pursuing such activities. Interviews with informants revealed that dining at

favoured restaurants and engaging in conversation are among the preferred pastimes of older adults and their companions. Informant 4 recounted his experience of fulfilling the request of an older client to accompany him in pursuing his hobbies of singing and exploring local sights: "One of our clients wanted to go karaoke but did not have any friends available to accompany her. So, she hired two of our companions who gladly joined her for singing and other activities like visiting the museum. Our client was thrilled and willing to pay a good amount for the companionship and fun experience."

Going out to dine at a favourite restaurant is a common activity for older adults when accompanied by companions outside the home. Companions also assist with fulfilling orders at self-service machines, which may be less old-friendly due to technology. Informant 6 shared an experience of accompanying an older couple to their favourite restaurant: "Once, I had the pleasure of taking this lovely older adult couple to McDonald's, and they were so excited! But when we got to the self-ordering machine, they were a bit lost. So, I happily stepped in and helped them order their favourite meals. While they got a bit carried away ordering everything they wanted, I couldn't help but smile at their excitement and joy. It was such a heart-warming experience for all of us!"

Older adults enjoy casual conversations and may use the paid companionship as a channel to express their thoughts and emotions. Informant 7 confirmed this while accompanying his regular older customers on outdoor activities: "Every time we went out, we would visit a coffee shop. We didn't eat much. She would share stories about her life, her family, and her friends. Some of them are amusing, and some of them are touching."

Shopping goods and services

Obtaining necessities or services is fundamental to daily activity. Although family or guardians can purchase the older adult's essentials, purchasing on their own allows them to select what they would prefer and confers personal satisfaction. Therefore, older adults often utilize companionship services to visit stores to shop for essential goods and access essential services, as stated by Informant 6: "I had a regular customer, an older adult man, who always had a list of things he wanted to do every time we went out. He would request tasks such as getting a haircut, withdrawing money from an ATM, purchasing items, mending his trousers, drinking coffee at his favourite coffee shop, and going to the pharmacy. However, sometimes he would get too exhausted to complete all of them." Informant 3 stated the same information: "When we headed out, I had to make a stop at a shop. He enjoyed selecting things and purchasing them by himself."

Companionship activities such as medical visits, exercise and recreation activities, leisure activities,

and shopping goods. The services provide benefits that have great potential to increase the mobility of older adults. Companion services are capable of providing psychological support to older adults and improving their well-being of life in carrying out daily activities with better quality. Therefore, skilled companions are able to drive and be a catalyst for the well-being of older adults.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings, the reasons why elderly people or elderly caretakers seek companionship services are as follows: i) Elderly people were sick and disabled (11, 12, 13), ii) Elderly people who were alone or unaccompanied (14, 16, 39) require assistance leaving the house because their children or caregivers work, and iii) Elderly people who wish to feel more competent and less dependent on their families (13).

The elderly's decreased mobility was caused by the aforementioned challenges (health issues, living alone, and the absence of family members). As a result, this obstacle influences the elderly's decision to seek companionship services. The findings of this study are consistent with the Cadwin Mφn program run by Robert and Windle the program determines that the elderly participate in the companionship program for reasons such as isolation, loneliness, health decline, and physical difficulties (27). The existence of this companion is an alternative for the elderly to continue their mobility activities despite health issues, the absence of relatives, or living alone.

For older individuals who require assistance during outpatient visits, a companion could take on the role of a family member. This complements the role of healthcare workers within busy and overcrowded government hospitals in outpatient departments by acting as the patient advocates. Overworked healthcare workers within outpatient clinics are often unable to provide the required attention to older patients during their visits, leading to potential omissions and errors in their medical management. The companion plays a potentially vital role of spokesperson, and advisor, and subsequently assists in the retention of information, and administration of treatment plans including organizing investigations, future follow-up appointments and referrals and filing of prescriptions at the hospital pharmacy (40). Sheehan et.al. indicated that the medical visit companion even helps older clients planning to travel for appointments, managing and consolidating appointments, delivering information, and ensuring that customers are aware of the necessary follow-up tasks (26).

The desire to be independent motivates older adults to use companionship services. This feeling of freedom and independence is present when the older adults feel that they: i) Do not interfere with children's affairs (26)

so that they can continue their routine activities, such as work, ii) Do not feel troublesome (13, 41), iii) believes that they make their own decisions. (Independent) (42), and iv) feel more confident in performing activities (27). Older adults benefit from companionship, which offers psychological support through various means such as providing a sense of freedom, attentive listening, participating in favourite activities, instilling confidence in handling tasks, and showcasing them in community activities. Nur Syakiran's (13) study revealed that older individuals had higher expectations for living independently. Elderly individuals should have the chance to autonomously decide on their mobility to enhance their sense of independence (43). The elderly will have more self-confidence and a more fulfilling existence, leading to an enhanced quality of life.

Indeed, a positive relationship has been discovered between older adults' participation in physical activity and their overall well-being (42). Engaging in physical activities can enhance the quality of life, increase self-satisfaction, and significantly contribute to creating positive emotions in older people (43). The results of this study indicate that older people participate in physical activities such as shopping, recreation, exercise, accessing services, and pursuing particular hobbies in addition to medical appointments. Consumer market interactions, such as purchasing products or receiving services, have a similar impact on the elderly as social support. Kang and Ridgway (44) discovered that seniors with strong consumer participation tend to be healthier than the elderly with low consumer involvement. Engaging in leisure activities can enhance the quality of life and self-satisfaction of older adults (43, 44). Physical activities are a key factor in triggering pleasant feelings in older individuals. Engaging in favourite activities that require competence, skill, or mastery of the environment can evoke good feelings due to the sense of success and perceived usefulness (45).

The relationship between companionship activities and their effects on the elderly is illustrated in Figure 1 through the mobility companionship support model. This model displays the reasons why the elderly seek companionship services, the support provided by companions, and the resulting impact on their well-being. The top box displays the reasons why the elderly utilise companionship services, including absence from family members, declining health, living alone, and motivation to maintain self-reliance. Utilising companion services can help overcome this challenge. This companion can help alleviate mobility constraints and minimise feelings of isolation, loneliness, and despair commonly experienced by the elderly. The companionship can help wealthy older adults' individuals overcome mobility issues.

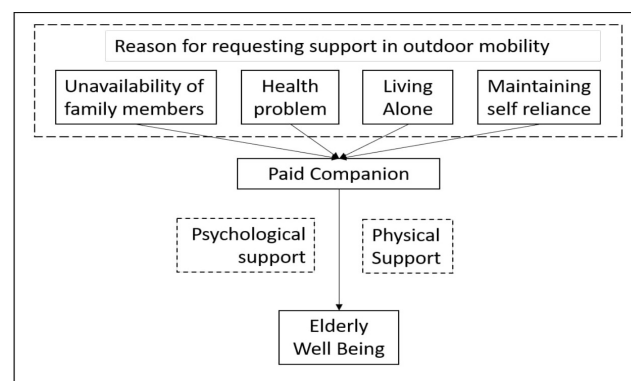


Figure 1: The impact of paid companionship towards older adults'well being

The theoretical framework of this study is to use the Convoy Model to explain the influence of social support on the subjective well-being of older adults. Kahn and Antonucci suggest that qualitative assessment of social support networks has a strong relationship to subjective well-being. Considering that many studies have proven that there is a relationship between social support and subjective well-being (45), the Convoy Model is very suitable to explain the support from certain individuals that have significant implications on the subjective well-being of an individual, especially among older adults (46, 47). This model provides guidance to researchers to see significant individuals who can provide various support to the older adult in the community and further encourage their subjective well-being through companionship services.

The Australian government has developed a holistic act and policy to ensure that the elderly receive quality services from the elderly support institutions through the Aged Care Act 1997 and revised act by year 2019. This Act not only protects the rights of consumers who are consumers of the elderly but also benefits the elderly care services industry. Elderly support institutions benefit from the point of view of integrated training, skilled workers, constant monitoring from the government, and stable financial resources. Through this act, the image and professionalism of the elderly care and management sector can be enhanced accordingly, and the elderly support industry can develop in line with the demand and standards of quality of elderly care in mobile services.

CONCLUSION

A companionship enhances the ability of older adults to venture outside the home and maintain their daily activities. Many individuals would employ these services to attend outpatient clinic appointments at busy government healthcare facilities, addressing health issues that may also contribute to mobility restrictions. In

addition, companionship also facilitates access to food and retail outlets, exercise, and social activities, thereby enabling older adults to maintain their independence and alleviate concerns about becoming a burden. The physical and psychological supports provided through companionship services will, in turn, address social isolation and loneliness. Future studies should consider incorporating outcome measures using larger sample populations and investigating the effects of outdoor mobility companionship interventions on the well-being of older adults.

The role of companionship is focused not only on family members but also on the community and elderly care institutions. Elderly care institutions can enhance their services by implementing strategic collaborations with companion service providers, whether as paid commercial service providers or voluntary organizations. These seniors require contact and social support, and companions are individuals who can carry out these responsibilities either as friends, assistants, facilitators, or activity companions. In Europe, companionship services, known as befriending, offer psychological support to the elderly in family settings, communities, and institutions. Whether provided by families or paid companions, caregivers must be aware of the needs of the elderly in maintaining their well-being throughout their lives.

This study suggests policy implications through the development of the Aged Care Act to protect the rights of consumers who are users and providers of elderly care companionship services. This Act can also improve the image and professionalism of the elderly care workers and management employment sector to align with international elderly care standards. Similarly, an urgent need for the development of the Gig Economy Act, which is a new job that is more popular among the younger generation to be involved in jobs as paid companion providers. The gig economy is best known as freelance with the adaptation of an online-based workforce.

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