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From Social Policy to Urban Thinking: A Community Resilience Framework for Active Ageing in Malaysia

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Abstract

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Population ageing presents increasing challenges for urban communities, particularly in translating social policy commitments into everyday urban practices. In Malaysia, active ageing is formally recognised within national social policy frameworks; however, its integration into urban and community based contexts remains limited and conceptually fragmented. This paper addresses this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that bridges social policy and urban thinking through the perspective of community resilience. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from social policy, urban studies, and community development, the paper critiques policy centred approaches that overlook the spatial, social, and institutional realities of urban communities. It argues that community resilience provides a useful analytical lens to understand how urban environments, local institutions, and social networks collectively support active ageing beyond formal welfare provision. The proposed framework conceptualises active ageing as an interaction between older persons, community spaces, governance structures, and the built environment, highlighting the importance of place based and community driven approaches for inclusive urban policy development.

Keywords: Active ageing; community resilience; urban communities; social policy; built environment; Malaysia

1. Introduction

Population ageing has emerged as one of the most significant demographic transformations globally, with profound implications for social systems, economic structures, and urban environments. According to the World Health Organization, the global population aged 60 years and above is expected to increase from 1 billion in 2019 to 1.4 billion by 2030, reflecting an unprecedented acceleration of ageing across both developed and developing countries. Malaysia is experiencing a similar trajectory, with national statistics indicating that individuals aged 60 years and above are projected to constitute approximately 15 percent of the population by 2030, officially marking the country's transition into an ageing nation. Recent data further show that older adults already represent more than 11 percent of the population, highlighting the immediacy of this demographic shift. This rapid transition is occurring within a compressed timeframe, placing increasing pressure on existing policy frameworks, urban systems, and community structures to adapt accordingly.

Despite this demographic urgency, policy responses in Malaysia have largely remained anchored within a social policy paradigm that prioritises welfare provision, healthcare services, and institutional support. While these interventions are essential, they tend to frame ageing primarily as a condition requiring care rather than as a lived experience shaped by everyday environments. As a result, active ageing, although formally recognised within national policy discourse, remains insufficiently translated into urban and community based contexts. Existing approaches often overlook the spatial dimensions of ageing, including how the built environment, neighbourhood design, and access to services influence independence, mobility, and social participation among older adults. This reveals a critical gap between policy recognition and practical implementation, where ageing is conceptually acknowledged but not adequately embedded within urban practice. Consequently, the everyday realities of older persons continue to be shaped by environments that are not fully aligned with their needs.

In response to this limitation, there is a growing need to shift from a policy centred perspective towards a broader urban thinking approach that recognises the role of place, space, and community in shaping ageing experiences. This study argues that active ageing in Malaysia remains conceptually recognised but spatially underdeveloped, highlighting the need for a more integrated and context sensitive framework. The paper therefore aims to critically examine the limitations

of existing policy approaches, bridge the gap between social policy and urban practice, and propose a community resilience framework as an alternative analytical lens. By positioning community resilience as a connecting concept, the study emphasises the interaction between individuals, community networks, governance structures, and the built environment in supporting active ageing. This shift from social policy to urban thinking is essential for developing more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable responses to population ageing in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Active Ageing and Social Policy

The concept of active ageing has been widely institutionalised within global and national policy frameworks, particularly through the work of the World Health Organization. Active ageing is defined as the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age (World Health Organization, 2002). This framework has significantly influenced policy development by shifting attention towards enabling older adults to remain engaged and independent. However, in practice, the implementation of active ageing has largely been confined within a social policy paradigm that prioritises welfare provision and healthcare services. Policies often focus on income support, medical care, and institutional assistance, reflecting a predominantly service oriented approach to ageing (Rudnicka et al., 2020; Beard et al., 2016). While these interventions are necessary, they tend to conceptualise ageing as a condition that requires management rather than as a lived experience shaped by everyday environments.

This policy orientation has attracted increasing criticism for its institutional bias and limited engagement with the spatial dimensions of ageing. By focusing primarily on formal systems of care, existing approaches often overlook how the built environment, neighbourhood conditions, and access to public spaces influence independence, mobility, and social participation among older adults. Scholars argue that such perspectives reinforce a fragmented understanding of ageing, where social policy operates in isolation from urban planning and spatial design (van Hoof, 2021; Buffel et al., 2022). As a result, there is a growing recognition that active ageing cannot be fully realised through institutional support alone, but requires a more integrated approach that accounts for the environments in which older people live and interact.

2.2 Urban Thinking and Ageing

Urban thinking provides a critical lens for understanding how cities shape the ageing experience through spatial, social, and infrastructural conditions. Urban environments are not neutral backdrops but active determinants of well being, influencing access to services, opportunities for mobility, and patterns of social interaction (Aziz Amen & Ali, 2025). The concept of age friendly environments highlights the importance of designing cities that enable older adults to live safely, remain active, and participate in community life (World Health Organization, 2007). Key elements include accessible public spaces, safe transport systems, and housing that supports independence. These factors are closely linked to broader discussions on the built environment, which emphasise how physical design influences health outcomes, social inclusion, and quality of life (Yen et al., 2021).

Recent literature further underscores that urban form plays a decisive role in either enabling or constraining active ageing. Walkability, connectivity, and proximity to essential services are critical in supporting daily functioning and reducing social isolation among older adults (Woolrych et al., 2022; Amen et al., 2023). Conversely, poorly designed urban environments can reinforce exclusion, limit mobility, and increase dependency. This highlights the need to move beyond policy recognition towards spatial implementation, where urban planning actively incorporates age sensitive considerations. The assertion that urban environments are not neutral is therefore central to rethinking ageing, as it challenges conventional approaches that treat ageing as separate from spatial contexts and instead positions the city as a key site of intervention.

2.3 Community Resilience as Analytical Lens

Community resilience has emerged as a valuable analytical lens for bridging the gap between social policy and urban practice in the context of ageing. It refers to the capacity of communities to adapt, respond, and sustain well being in the face of social, economic, and demographic changes (Norris et al., 2008; Patel et al., 2017). Unlike traditional policy approaches that focus on institutional provision, community resilience emphasises the role of social networks, local resources, and collective action in shaping outcomes. This perspective highlights that resilience is not only about coping with challenges but also about building adaptive capacity and fostering supportive environments that enable individuals to thrive.

Key elements of community resilience include strong social networks, which provide emotional and practical support, adaptive capacity, which allows communities to respond to changing conditions, and the presence of effective local institutions that facilitate coordination and resource distribution (Levasseur et al., 2020). In the context of active ageing, these elements are particularly important as they complement formal policy interventions by addressing everyday needs at the community level. Importantly, community resilience functions as a bridge concept that connects individual experiences, spatial environments, and governance structures. By integrating these dimensions, it offers a more holistic framework for understanding how active ageing can be supported beyond institutional settings. This makes it especially relevant for contexts such as Malaysia, where community dynamics and informal support systems play a significant role in shaping the ageing experience.

2.4 Theoretical Tension

A central tension emerging from the literature lies in the disconnect between social policy frameworks and the lived realities of ageing within urban environments. While active ageing has been widely institutionalised through policy discourse, particularly under the guidance of the World Health Organization, its practical translation into everyday life remains uneven and limited. Social policy approaches tend to emphasise welfare provision, healthcare services, and institutional support, often framing ageing as a condition that requires management rather than as a dynamic experience shaped by place and context (World Health Organization, 2020; Beard et al., 2016). However, the lived reality of older adults is deeply embedded within urban environments where factors such as accessibility, mobility, and social connectivity determine their ability to remain independent and engaged. This creates a critical gap in which policy commitments exist at a conceptual level but fail to adequately address the spatial and social conditions that define daily life.

This tension is further reflected in the divide between institutional and spatial perspectives on ageing. Institutional approaches are typically concerned with governance structures, service delivery, and programmatic interventions, whereas spatial perspectives emphasise the role of the built environment, neighbourhood design, and urban infrastructure in shaping outcomes. Existing research suggests that the neglect of spatial considerations leads to environments that inadvertently reinforce exclusion, limit mobility, and constrain participation among older adults (van Hoof, 2021; Yen et al., 2021). As a result, ageing policies that are not spatially grounded risk remaining abstract and disconnected from implementation realities. The challenge, therefore, lies in integrating these perspectives in a way that recognises the interdependence between policy systems and urban form, ensuring that policy objectives are embedded within the physical and social fabric of cities.

Another important dimension of this theoretical tension concerns the dominance of top down policy approaches in contrast to the potential of community driven processes. Conventional policy frameworks are often designed and implemented through centralised decision making structures, which may not fully capture the diversity of local contexts or the everyday experiences of older adults. In contrast, community driven approaches emphasise participation, local knowledge, and collective action, recognising communities as active agents rather than passive recipients of policy interventions (Buffel et al., 2022; Levasseur et al., 2020). This distinction highlights the importance of shifting towards more inclusive and participatory forms of governance that empower local actors and strengthen community resilience. Addressing this tension requires rethinking the relationship between policy and practice, moving towards approaches that integrate institutional frameworks with spatial realities and community dynamics. In doing so, it becomes possible to develop more responsive, context sensitive, and sustainable strategies for supporting active ageing in urban settings.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual research design that develops a theoretically grounded framework through interdisciplinary synthesis. A conceptual paper is appropriate for advancing understanding in areas where empirical evidence exists across multiple domains but remains insufficiently integrated into a coherent analytical model (Jaakkola, 2020). In this context, the study seeks to bridge social policy, urban studies, and community development perspectives in order to reconceptualise active ageing within urban environments. Rather than generating primary data, the research focuses on critically examining existing knowledge and identifying conceptual gaps that limit the translation of policy into practice. This approach enables the study to move beyond descriptive analysis and contribute to theory building by proposing an integrated framework that connects policy, space, and community dynamics.

The analysis draws on three main categories of sources to ensure both conceptual depth and contextual relevance. First, global frameworks developed by the World Health Organization provide the foundational understanding of active ageing and age friendly environments, including key documents such as Active Ageing A Policy Framework and the Decade of Healthy Ageing reports (World Health Organization, 2002; World Health Organization, 2020). Second, Malaysian policy documents are examined to understand how ageing is framed and operationalised within national contexts, particularly through social policy and urban planning strategies. Third, literature from urban studies and community development is incorporated to provide insights into the spatial and social dimensions of ageing, including the role of the built environment, governance systems, and community networks (Buffel et al., 2022; van Hoof, 2021). The combination of these sources allows for a comprehensive understanding of how ageing is addressed across different levels of analysis.

The study employs a critical review approach combined with conceptual integration to synthesise insights from diverse bodies of literature. The critical review involves evaluating existing theories, frameworks, and policy approaches to identify underlying assumptions, limitations, and areas of tension, particularly between institutional policy perspectives and spatial realities (Grant and Booth, 2009). This is complemented by conceptual integration, where key concepts from social policy, urban thinking, and community resilience are systematically connected to develop a unified analytical framework. Through this process, the study highlights how active ageing can be understood not as an isolated policy outcome but as an emergent condition shaped by the interaction between individuals, communities, governance structures, and the built environment. This methodological approach strengthens the theoretical contribution of the study by providing a coherent basis for rethinking the relationship between policy and practice in the context of urban ageing.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Limits of Policy Centred Approaches

The analysis reveals that current approaches to active ageing in Malaysia remain heavily anchored in policy centred frameworks that prioritise welfare provision and healthcare services. While such interventions are necessary, they tend to frame ageing as a condition that requires institutional management rather than as a lived experience shaped by everyday environments. This over reliance on welfare oriented strategies limits the scope of policy interventions, as they often address the consequences of ageing without adequately engaging with the structural and spatial conditions that influence independence and participation. Evidence from global ageing discourse suggests that policy frameworks that focus primarily on service delivery risk overlooking the broader determinants of well being, including environmental and social contexts (World Health Organization, 2020; Beard et al., 2016).

A further limitation lies in the lack of spatial translation of policy objectives. Although active ageing is widely recognised at the conceptual level, its principles are rarely embedded within urban planning and design practices. This results in a disconnect between policy commitments and the physical environments in which older adults live. Urban planning systems often operate independently from social policy frameworks, leading to fragmented implementation across sectors and governance levels (van Hoof, 2021). Institutional fragmentation also contributes to this gap, as responsibilities for ageing, urban development, and service provision are distributed across multiple agencies with limited coordination. As a result, policy frameworks remain largely abstract and insufficiently operationalised within the spatial realities of cities.

4.2 Urban Realities of Ageing

The lived experience of ageing in urban environments highlights a range of structural challenges that are not fully addressed by existing policy frameworks. One of the most significant issues relates to constraints within the built environment, including inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, limited accessibility, and poorly integrated transport systems. These conditions restrict mobility and reduce the ability of older adults to engage in daily activities, ultimately affecting their physical and mental well being. Research consistently shows that the design of the built environment plays a critical role in shaping health outcomes and social participation among older populations (Yen et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2007).

In addition to physical barriers, social isolation has emerged as a growing concern in urban contexts. Despite higher population density, cities can create environments that limit meaningful social interaction, particularly for older adults who may face mobility challenges or lack access to community spaces. This is further compounded by unequal access to services, where disparities in infrastructure, transportation, and service availability create uneven ageing experiences across different urban areas. Studies indicate that such inequalities can exacerbate vulnerability and reduce quality of life among older populations, highlighting the need for more inclusive and context sensitive approaches to urban development (Buffel et al., 2022). These findings underscore that ageing is deeply embedded within urban systems and cannot be effectively addressed without engaging with the spatial and social realities of cities.

4.3 Role of Community

In contrast to the limitations of formal policy frameworks, the analysis highlights the critical role of community as an intermediary layer that supports active ageing in everyday contexts. Informal social networks, including family ties, neighbourhood relationships, and community groups, play a significant role in providing emotional support, practical assistance, and opportunities for social engagement. These networks often compensate for gaps in formal service provision, particularly in urban settings where institutional support may be uneven or inaccessible. Research on community resilience emphasises that strong social connections are essential for enhancing well being and reducing vulnerability among older adults (Levasseur et al., 2020).

Local adaptation also emerges as an important mechanism through which communities respond to the challenges of ageing. Communities often develop context specific solutions that reflect local needs, resources, and cultural practices, enabling more flexible and responsive forms of support. Community spaces, such as public parks, religious centres, and local gathering areas, further facilitate social interaction and collective engagement. These spaces serve as important sites for maintaining social cohesion and promoting active participation. The findings therefore highlight community as a missing layer in existing policy frameworks, which tend to focus on institutional provision while overlooking the everyday practices and social dynamics that shape ageing experiences. Recognising the role of community is essential for developing more holistic and grounded approaches to active ageing.

4.4 Reframing Active Ageing

The findings point towards the need to fundamentally reframe how active ageing is conceptualised and operationalised within policy and practice. Current approaches tend to emphasise policy delivery, where success is measured in terms of services provided and programmes implemented. However, this perspective fails to capture the complexity of ageing as a lived experience that is shaped by interactions between individuals, environments, and communities. A more effective approach requires shifting the focus from policy delivery towards everyday experience, where the quality of urban environments, accessibility of spaces, and strength of social networks become central considerations.

This reframing aligns with emerging perspectives that emphasise the importance of place based and environment centred approaches to ageing. Active ageing should be understood as an outcome of dynamic interactions between physical environments, social structures, and governance systems, rather than as a static policy objective. By moving from a focus

on policy to a focus on lived experience, it becomes possible to develop more inclusive and responsive strategies that reflect the realities of urban life. Such a shift is critical for bridging the gap between policy and practice, and for ensuring that ageing populations are supported not only through institutional mechanisms but also through environments and communities that enable participation, independence, and well-being.

5. Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a Community Resilience Framework for Active Ageing that reconceptualises active ageing as an interaction system rather than a discrete policy outcome. Drawing on the principles advanced by the World Health Organization, the framework integrates insights from social policy, urban studies, and community development to address the identified gap between policy intent and lived reality. While existing frameworks emphasise health, participation, and security, they often remain insufficiently grounded in spatial and community contexts (World Health Organization, 2020). The proposed framework extends this perspective by positioning active ageing as an emergent condition shaped through continuous interactions between individuals, communities, spatial environments, and governance systems. In doing so, it shifts the analytical focus from isolated policy interventions to a relational understanding of ageing that is embedded within everyday urban life.

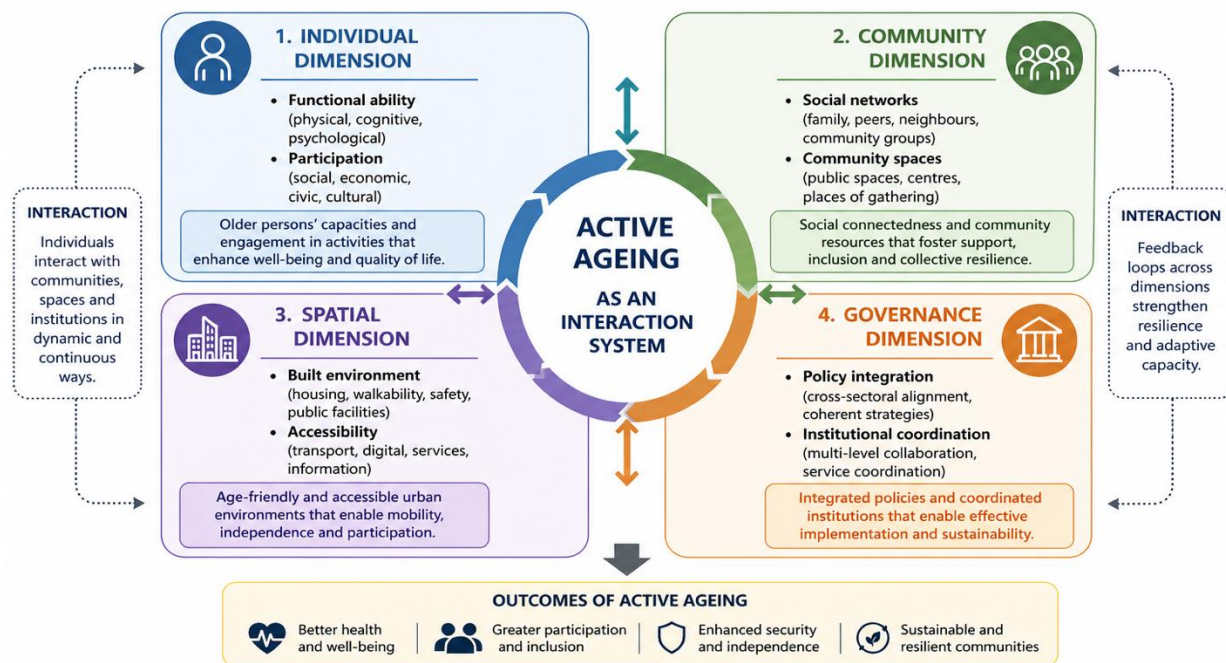
The first component of the framework is the individual dimension, which centres on functional ability and participation. Functional ability refers to the capacity of individuals to perform activities that they value, influenced by both intrinsic capacities and environmental conditions (World Health Organization, 2020). Participation encompasses engagement in social, economic, cultural, and civic activities, which is essential for maintaining well-being and a sense of purpose in later life. However, this study emphasises that individual outcomes cannot be understood in isolation, as they are deeply shaped by external conditions. Research indicates that functional ability and participation are significantly influenced by environmental and social factors, highlighting the need for an integrated perspective that connects individual capacities with broader systems (Rudnicka et al., 2020).

The second component is the community dimension, which highlights the role of social networks and community spaces in supporting active ageing. Strong social networks provide emotional support, facilitate access to resources, and enhance resilience in the face of change. Community spaces, including public areas and local gathering points, serve as platforms for interaction, engagement, and collective participation. These elements are critical in fostering social inclusion and reducing isolation among older adults. Studies on community resilience demonstrate that social connectedness and local engagement are key determinants of well-being, particularly in ageing populations (Levasseur et al., 2020; Buffel et al., 2022). By incorporating the community dimension, the framework recognises that ageing is not only an individual experience but also a collective process shaped by relationships and shared environments.

The third component focuses on the spatial dimension, which encompasses the built environment and accessibility. Urban environments play a decisive role in enabling or constraining active ageing through their design, infrastructure, and spatial organisation. Accessible built environments, including safe pedestrian pathways, integrated transport systems, and age sensitive housing, are essential for supporting independence and mobility. Conversely, poorly designed environments can reinforce exclusion and dependency. Empirical evidence consistently highlights the strong relationship between the built environment and health outcomes, social participation, and quality of life among older adults (Yen et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2007). This dimension underscores the importance of embedding age sensitive considerations within urban planning and design processes, ensuring that cities are responsive to the needs of ageing populations.

The fourth component addresses the governance dimension, which involves policy integration and institutional coordination. Effective governance is essential for aligning the various elements of the framework and translating conceptual principles into practical outcomes. As identified in the analysis, fragmentation across policy domains remains a significant barrier to the development of age friendly environments. This framework therefore emphasises the need for integrated governance structures that connect social policy, urban planning, and community development. Policy integration ensures that objectives are aligned across sectors, while institutional coordination facilitates coherent implementation at multiple levels of governance (Howlett and Cashore, 2009; van Hoof, 2021). By strengthening governance mechanisms, the framework enhances the capacity of urban systems to respond proactively to demographic ageing.

The core contribution of this framework lies in its conceptualisation of active ageing as an interaction system that emerges from the dynamic interplay between individual, community, spatial, and governance dimensions. Rather than treating active ageing as a static policy outcome, the framework recognises it as a process that is continuously shaped by relationships, environments, and institutional arrangements. This perspective provides a more holistic and realistic understanding of ageing, particularly in urban contexts where multiple factors interact simultaneously. By integrating community resilience into the framework, the study offers a pathway for bridging the gap between policy and practice, enabling the development of more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable urban strategies for ageing populations.

FIGURE 1. Community Resilience Framework for Active Ageing in Urban Malaysia*Active ageing as an interaction system shaped by individuals, communities, environments and governance.*

Note. The framework positions active ageing as an emergent outcome of the interaction between individual capacities, community resources, spatial environments and governance systems.

Source: Adapted from World Health Organization (2020, 2023); Buffel, Phillipson, and Scharf (2022); van Hoof (2021); Levasseur et al. (2020).

6. Policy Implications

The findings of this study underscore the need to move beyond welfare based policy approaches that have traditionally dominated ageing discourse in Malaysia. While welfare provision and healthcare services remain essential, an over reliance on these mechanisms limits the capacity of policy to address the broader determinants of well-being in later life. Active ageing requires a shift towards approaches that recognise the role of environments, communities, and everyday practices in shaping outcomes. Global policy frameworks advanced by the World Health Organization emphasise that supportive environments are critical for enabling independence, participation, and quality of life among older adults (World Health Organization, 2020). This suggests that policy must extend beyond institutional support to incorporate spatial and social dimensions that influence how ageing is experienced in urban settings.

A key implication is the need to integrate urban planning with social policy in a more coherent and systematic manner. Current fragmentation between these domains has resulted in policies that operate in parallel rather than in alignment, limiting their overall effectiveness. Integrating urban planning and social policy would enable the translation of active ageing principles into tangible spatial outcomes, such as accessible public spaces, inclusive housing, and age sensitive transport systems. Research has shown that the built environment plays a decisive role in shaping health, mobility, and social participation among older populations, reinforcing the importance of embedding ageing considerations within planning processes (Yen et al., 2021; van Hoof, 2021). Such integration requires not only technical adjustments but also a conceptual shift towards recognising ageing as a cross cutting issue within urban development.

Strengthening local governance is another critical priority for advancing age friendly urbanism. Local authorities are central to the implementation of policies related to land use, infrastructure, and service delivery, making them key actors in shaping age friendly environments. Enhancing institutional capacity at the local level through targeted training, resource allocation, and performance monitoring can improve the effectiveness of policy implementation. At the same time, promoting community driven planning is essential for ensuring that policies are responsive to local needs and contexts. Community engagement enables the incorporation of local knowledge, strengthens social networks, and fosters a sense of ownership among residents. Evidence from community resilience research indicates that participatory approaches can enhance both the relevance and sustainability of interventions, particularly in ageing contexts (Buffel et al., 2022; Levasseur et al., 2020).

In addition, the findings highlight the importance of adopting place based policy approaches that are sensitive to the specific characteristics of different urban contexts. Ageing experiences vary across neighbourhoods depending on factors such as infrastructure quality, service availability, and social cohesion. A place based approach allows for more targeted and context specific interventions that reflect these variations, rather than applying uniform solutions across diverse settings. Finally, the complexity of population ageing necessitates a whole of government approach that promotes coordination across sectors and levels of governance. Ageing intersects with multiple policy domains, including health, housing, transport, and urban development, and therefore requires integrated responses that align objectives, resources, and implementation strategies (Howlett and Cashore, 2009). By adopting a whole of government approach, Malaysia can

move towards a more coherent and effective policy framework that supports inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban ageing.

7. Conclusions

This study has examined the limitations of prevailing policy approaches to active ageing in Malaysia and highlighted the need to move beyond a narrowly defined welfare and healthcare orientation. The findings demonstrate that although active ageing is widely recognised within policy discourse, its translation into everyday urban contexts remains fragmented and insufficiently grounded in spatial realities. Key gaps were identified in the lack of integration between social policy and urban planning, the persistence of institutional silos, and the limited attention given to the built environment and community dynamics that shape ageing experiences. The analysis further shows that ageing is not solely determined by policy provision but is significantly influenced by the interaction between individuals, environments, and social systems. These findings reinforce the importance of adopting a more holistic perspective that recognises the complexity of ageing within urban settings (World Health Organization, 2020; van Hoof, 2021).

In light of these insights, this study asserts that active ageing must be spatially grounded in order to be effectively realised. Urban environments play a central role in enabling or constraining independence, mobility, and participation among older adults, and therefore must be treated as a core component of policy design rather than a secondary consideration. International evidence consistently highlights that accessible built environments, inclusive public spaces, and integrated transport systems are essential for supporting active ageing outcomes (Yen et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2007). Without embedding these considerations within urban planning and development processes, policy commitments risk remaining abstract and disconnected from lived experience. A spatially grounded approach ensures that ageing is addressed not only through institutional mechanisms but also through environments that support everyday functioning and social engagement.

This study contributes to the literature in two significant ways. First, it advances theoretical understanding by proposing a Community Resilience Framework for Active Ageing that integrates individual capacities, community dynamics, spatial environments, and governance structures into a unified analytical model. By conceptualising active ageing as an interaction system, the framework moves beyond static policy interpretations and offers a more dynamic and relational perspective. Second, the study provides practical policy contributions by outlining an integrated approach that bridges social policy and urban planning through community resilience and place based strategies. This approach offers a pathway for addressing fragmentation and enhancing policy coherence across sectors and governance levels (Howlett and Cashore, 2009; Buffel et al., 2022). Overall, the study underscores the need for a fundamental shift in how ageing is understood and governed, positioning spatial integration and community engagement as essential elements of inclusive and sustainable urban development.

8. Future Research

Future research should extend the conceptual contributions of this study through empirical testing that examines the relationships proposed within the Community Resilience Framework for Active Ageing. While the current study offers a theoretically grounded model, further validation is needed to assess how the interaction between individual capacity, community dynamics, spatial environments, and governance structures operates in practice. Quantitative and mixed methods approaches could be employed to measure key constructs such as functional ability, social participation, accessibility, and institutional coordination, as well as their combined effects on active ageing outcomes. Empirical testing would not only strengthen the robustness of the framework but also provide evidence based insights that can inform more targeted and effective policy interventions (World Health Organization, 2020; Yen et al., 2021).

In addition, there is a need for in depth case studies within urban Malaysia to capture the diversity of ageing experiences across different local contexts. Urban areas in Malaysia vary significantly in terms of infrastructure development, service provision, and community structures, which in turn shape how ageing is experienced and supported. Case studies conducted in cities such as Kuala Lumpur, George Town, and Johor Bahru could provide valuable insights into the spatial and social dimensions of ageing, including barriers related to accessibility, mobility, and social inclusion. Such studies would enable a more nuanced understanding of how policy is implemented at the local level and how community resilience mechanisms operate in real settings (Tan et al., 2022; Buffel et al., 2022). This place based approach is essential for translating conceptual frameworks into practical strategies that reflect the realities of urban life.

Furthermore, comparative research across cities within the ASEAN region would offer important opportunities to contextualise Malaysia's experience within a broader regional perspective. Countries such as Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia are also experiencing rapid demographic ageing, yet they differ in terms of policy approaches, urban development trajectories, and institutional capacities. Comparative studies could examine how different governance models, urban designs, and community structures influence active ageing outcomes, thereby identifying transferable lessons and context specific strategies. Such cross national analysis would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of ageing in Southeast Asia and support the development of regionally relevant frameworks for inclusive urban policy (Muramatsu and Akiyama, 2021; World Health Organization, 2023). By advancing empirical, contextual, and comparative research, future studies can play a critical role in refining theoretical models and strengthening the evidence base for age friendly urban development.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) report no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analysed in this study; all sources are cited within the article.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

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All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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