Protect, Promote and Prevent

Spearheading Social Protection Initiatives for All



Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC)



THE PERSPECTIVE:

Social Protection for

Foreign Workers

Yoreign labour is a touchy issue in Malavsia. Its origin began during the industrialisation period, probably as a temporary solution for transitory labour shortage. It was a transitory issue since the labour-intensive production process was anticipated not to last forever. It must give way to a sounder technological-capital intensive type of production in order to maintain a higher productivity growth. Today, after more than three decades, the transitory notion of foreign labour has decreased. It has probably become the nation's biggest development paradox. Job creation is crucial for development, as witnessed during the industrialisation era of the 1990s. Nowadays, we are acknowledging growth without creating jobs for the citizens. The only thing that matters seem to be the economic growth.

This love-hate subject of foreign labour in Malaysia has triggered various policy complications. A high dependency on foreign labour is the breading ground of many other serious socio-economic issues. All these issues could be best summed up by lowproductivity economic growth. We are forced to accept a low-productivity economic growth by sacrificing the creation of skilled jobs. Undoubtedly, this issue needs to be addressed for the nation's long-term Notwithstanding development. important issues about foreign labour, this article is focussing on the topic of social protection.

Since the foreign workers are already in the country, the main concern should be about



their social protection instead of questioning the reason they are here. Social protection is increasingly accepted as a basic human right. Article 2 (two) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) guarantees no discrimination against any national or social origin. Meanwhile, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (no. 102) requires member states to rectify three of the nine social security branches. The nine branches include medical care. sickness. unemployment, old-age, employment injury, family, maternity, invalidity, and survivors'

benefits. Malaysia should prioritise the application even though the ratifying countries are offered flexibility in their application, depending on their socioeconomic level. It is also consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of reducing inequality within and among countries.

The rationale to consider social protection for foreign workers can be established from the economic perspective. The economics of social protection is based on two principles, that is, the life cycle hypothesis and the saving-investment macroeconomic management paradigm. This framework rides on the idea that income protection is a responsibility of an individual. Based on the life cycle hypothesis, individuals will try to smooth out their lifetime expenditures to maximise their lifetime satisfaction according to their income constraints (Figure 1). From this perspective, individuals will try to save a portion of the income that they received during their productive working life for their old age consumption.

All individual workers, foreigners or locals, hypothetically will try to save for their old-age consumption. Nevertheless, most people are tempted to overspend a portion of their current income that should have been saved for the future. Therefore, а built-in automatic mechanism riding on the life cycle hypothesis individual workers to save a for all predetermined portion of their income for old age is accommodating. This concept of pay-as-you-go (PAYG) defined contributions like the EPF savings scheme for private sector workers in Malaysia.

As for now, foreign workers are allowed to contribute to the EPF scheme voluntarily, 11% of their monthly salary. However, employers are only required to contribute a flat rate of RM5, regardless of how much the foreign workers earn. The low contribution on the part of the employers can be a deterrent to foreign workers from enrolling in the scheme. Subsequently, it may also bring unintended outcomes to the labour market in which it might discourage employers from hiring local workers since the mandatory EPF contribution for local workers is much higher. Eventually, this will hamper the effort of reducing the country's dependency on foreign labour.

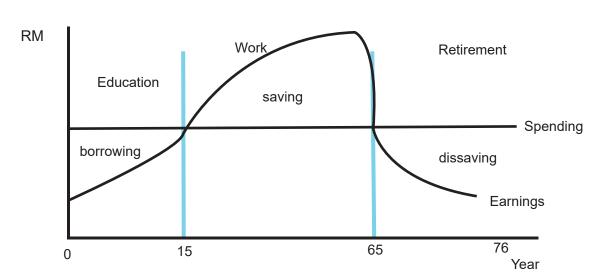


Figure 1: Life Cycle Hypothesis of Earnings and Savings

SOCIAL PROTECTION COVERAGE

for Foreign
Workers
in Malaysia



Unlike local workers, EPF contribution is voluntary for foreign workers.

The contribution rate for employees is 11%, while contribution for employers is a flat rate of RM5, regardless of the employee's salary.

If the foreign workers decided to return to their country of origin, they may opt to withdraw all of their EPF savings.



"Effective January 2019, employers who hire foreign workers shall register their employees with the Social Security Organisation (SOCSO) and contribute to the Employment Injury under the Employee's Social Security Act 1969 (Act 4)."

The rate of contribution is 1.25% of the employee's monthly salary and to be paid by the employer.

Foreign workers registered under SOCSO's Employment Injury Scheme are entitled to receive the following benefits: medical, temporary and permanent disablement, dependants', funeral and rehabilitation (except for dialysis, educational benefit, vocational training or Return to Work programme).

Foreign workers are excluded from contributing to and receiving benefits under the SOCSO Invalidity Scheme.



Employment Insurance System (EIS) only covers for Malaysian citizen. It does not provide coverage for foreign workers.

two principles mentioned above, EPF could be generated (Table 1). contribution for foreign workers should be made compulsory with contribution rates Currently, registered foreign workers in similar to that of their local counterparts, Malaysia are also protected by the Social both for the employees as well as the Security efficiency. The improved capital efficiency, contribution rate is 1.25% minimised.

A mandatory contribution for foreign Nevertheless, additional savings of about RM4.11 billion employment.

The second principle that forms the basis a year if a mandatory contribution is of the economics of social protection is implemented for all the legal foreign related to macroeconomic management. workers in Malaysia based on the current Saving attributed to social protection is contribution rates (11% for employees and growth enhancing. Saving leads to RM5 for employers). If the contribution investment. Investment, in turn, propels rates for employees and employers are potential growth by strengthening the similar to Malaysian workers, an additional supply side of the economy. Based on the savings of close to RM9.0 billion a year

Organisation's (SOCSO) employers. First, it guarantees their Employment Injury Scheme. Beginning old-age income protection while they are January 2019, employers that hire foreign working here. Second, the amount of workers are required to register their savings can be channelled to capital employees with SOCSO and contribute to investment that will improve capital the Employment Injury Scheme. The in turn, will lead to productivity growth. employee's monthly salary and is to be Eventually, more skilled jobs can be paid only by the employers. According to created to absorb the local skilled the Ministry of Human Resources, there workforce and at the same time, the need are 1.94 million foreign workers registered for unskilled foreign workers can be with SOCSO as of July 2022. This will contribute to about half a billion-ringgit economy. savings vear to the а foreign workers workers will significantly increase savings excluded from contributing to the Invalidity in the economy. In our simulation using Scheme. The exclusion from the invalidity data from the Department of Statistics, scheme means that foreign workers are Malaysia (Salaries and Wages Survey not protected from permanent injury or Report 2019), EPF could generate an death outside or not related to their

Table 1: Savings Generated from Foreign Workers Compulsory Retirement Plan

| Foreign workers mandatory EPF contribution | Potential savings (RM billion) |
|---|--------------------------------|
| PAYG with the current contribution rates (11% from employees; RM5 from employers) | 4.11 |
| PAYG with the rates similar to Malaysian workers (11% from employees; 13% from employers) | 8.95 |

*data for number of non-citizens employees and their mean salary is extracted from Salaries & Wages Survey Report 2019 (DOSM, 2019)



SNAPSHOT OF

Foreign Workers in Malaysia

Malaysia enjoyed an episode of rapid economic growth during industrialisation period that started in the mid-1980s and lasted for more than a decade, thanks to the favourable inflow of foreign direct investments (FDIs), particularly in the manufacturing sector. GDP grew by 8.9 percent a year for the period 1986-1997. Many jobs were created during that period as FDIs were dominated by labour-intensive technology. Households experienced rapid income improvements and poverty rates were decelerated. Malaysia rose to a highmiddle income country.

The infamous Asian Financial Crisis at the dawn of the new century put a serious test on Malaysia's economic structure. The economy began to deindustrialise. Heavy export-oriented dependency of the manufacturing sector on the global value chain (GVC) networks failed to elevate the educated and high-skilled jobs. Meanwhile, foreign low-skill investors already in the country were at contributing supply cheap labour. Thanks to the influx reported that foreign workers have been of foreign low-skilled workers neiahbourina investors total countries. production technology.



economy towards higher-value-added Consequently, Malaysia entered a period production. At the same time, Malaysia of slower economic growth. Productivity started to suffer from serious low-skilled grew at a slower pace derailing Malaysia's labour shortages as more Malaysians are progress towards a high-income and expect more developed nation status. The demand for labour continued to low-productivity the crossroad, to stay put in the country or economic growth. There were only around relocate to other cheaper countries. The 350 thousand foreign workers in Malaysia new investors in favour of labour-intensive in 1992, accounting for about 5.0 percent production technology had an easy of the labour force. More recently, the decision to make if Malaysia cannot Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) from hovering around 15 percent of Malaysia's labour force continued to invest in the country with a several years. In 2019, there were about serious setback for the much-needed 2.24 million registered foreign workers and adoption of higher technological-based about 40 percent of them were employed in low-skilled occupations (DOSM, 2019).

PROTECT, PROMOTE AND PREVENT

Another pressing issue that adds to the and asylum-seekers. Number of Foreign Workers workers.

As the economy grows, Malaysia has Lanka and Palestine. become a destination country for refugees

Refugees and discrepancy in the labour market is the asylum-seekers are classified as illegal or growing number of illegal foreign workers undocumented migrants since Malaysia in the country. The World Bank in its report has not ratified the 1951 Refugee 'Who is Keeping Score: Estimating the Convention. According to UNHCR, there in were around 184,980 refugees and Malaysia', estimated that there were asylum-seekers in Malaysia as of July between 2.96 million to 3.26 million foreign 2022; 40.0 percent of them (slightly more workers in our country in 2017, with about than 70,000) are illegally participating in half of them (between 1.23 million to 1.46 the labour market, mostly in lower-skilled million) were estimated to be illegal foreign and low-earning jobs. A huge proportion of them primarily came from conflict-affected countries such as Myanmar, Yemen, Sri





Top sending countries:*

Indonesia: 495,860 Nepal: 392,854 Bangladesh: 251,625 Myanmar: 115,887 India: 117,659 Pakistan: 62,566 Philippines: 17,348 Vietnam: 14,796 China: 8,313 Thailand: 6,847 Sri Lanka: 4,209 Cambodia: 1,352 Laos: 10

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs (2017)



2.2 million

legal foreign workers in Malaysia (DOSM, 2019)



Mostly are concentrated in

low-skilled and 3Ds jobs



1.23-1.46 million

illegal foreign workers in Malaysia (World Bank, 2017)



184,980 thousand

refugees and asylum-seekers

in Malaysia (UNHCR, 2022)



Services: 876.0 thousand

Manufacturing: 575.8 thousand

Agriculture, forestry and fishing: 491.3 thousand

Construction: 287.2 thousand

Mining and quarrying: 5.1 thousand

FEATURED PUBLICATIONS

Factors associated with Objective and Abdominal Objective and Abdominal Objective Control of the Control of the

Obesity and Abdominal Obesity among Malaysian Older Adults



INTRODUCTION

- Growing prevalence of elderly obesity globally.
- National Health Morbidity Survey: adults, 67.3%-abdominal obesity (AO) & 32.6 % (obesity).
- Risk factor for life-threatening health conditions: heart diseases, diabetes, stroke, gall stone, dementia, and cancers.
- Elderly obesity-Multifactorial involves aging, endocrine, immunological, lifestyle, environmental, genetics, and epigenetics.
- Abdominal obesity (AO) significant predictor of obesity-linked diseases, and all-cause mortality regardless of having normal or overweight BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Regular PA is crucial for healthy aging, where inactivity is a key risk factor for morbidity and disability.
- There are limited longitudinal studies on obesity and AO for ageing population in Malaysia.

OBJECTIVE

To examine the prevalence of overweight, obesity, and AO, and their associated factors among older Malaysian adults.

METHODS

- Study: Malaysia Ageing and Retirement Survey (MARS) Wave 1 conducted in 2018-2019 among 5,613 Malaysians aged 40 years and older.
- MARS-Nationally representative longitudinal study on ageing and part of international family studies, namely Health and Retirement Survey (HRS) in the US, Europe, China, UK, Mexico, Japan & India.
- AO was defined as WC ≥90 cm in males or ≥80 cm in females based on the WHO/ IOTF/IASO cutoffs.
- BMI: Malaysia CPG (≥ 27.5) and WHO Cutoffs (≥30).
- Study protocol approved by University Malaya Ethics Committee (UM.TNC2/ UMREC-341).

RESULTS

Table 1: Prevalence of Obesity and Abdominal Obesity

| | BMI WHO (%) | BMI CPG/WHO Asian (%) | WC WHO/IASO/IOTF (%) | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| Underweight | 3.8 | 3.8 | NA | |
| Normal | 36.8 | 20.4 | 36.9 | |
| Overweight | 37.1 | 38 | NA | |
| Obesity/AO | 22.3 | 37.8 | 63.1 | |

RESULTS (cont.)

- Highest AO rate among those aged between 50 and 59 years (65.1%) and decreased thereafter.
- Obesity and AO were highly prevalent among Malays (64.3%) and Indians (75.8%).
- Prevalence of obesity and AO were 42.8% versus 65.9% in females, and 30.9% versus 59.2% in males, respectively.
- Homemakers showed the highest proportion of obesity and AO while the lowest proportion was observed among respondents who are unemployed/no longer working.
- Prevalence of obesity and AO among respondents earning income ≥RM 2000 was 40.2% and 66.1%, respectively.
- Increasing rate of obesity with increasing education.
- Respondents performing low levels of vigorous and moderate PA had an almost similar proportion of obesity and AO.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank all the study participants.

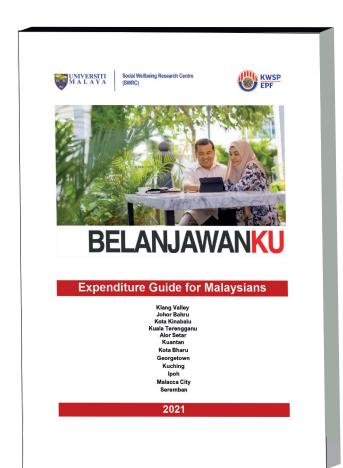
Reference: Apalasamy YD, Awang H, Mansor N, Ab Rashid N, Kamarulzaman ND, Lih Yoong T. Factors Associated with Obesity and Abdominal Obesity Among Malaysian Older Adults. Asia Pac J Public Health. 2021 Jul;33(5):547-554. doi: 10.1177/10105395211014634.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

- Increasing age was significantly associated with decreased odds for obesity and AO in Malaysian older adults.
- The ethnic disparities could also be influenced by dietary habits that are affected by the traditional cultural beliefs, and values as well as genetic, epigenetic and environmental factors.
- The study participants earning higher income are prone to become obese, which could be influenced by their eating habits.
- Ethnicity (Indians), gender (female), older adults (all ages), and higher income were associated with higher risks for both obesity and AO.
- Different factors (health status, physical activity, and marital status) are also linked with obesity and AO among older Malaysians.
- Healthy eating and physical activity to slow the progress of obesity epidemic.
- As prevalence of obesity continues to increase, effective intervention strategies should be the top priority to avoid overwhelming social and economic.

BELANJAWANKU

Report 2021



Belanjawanku is an expenditure guide, providing estimated minimum monthly expenses on various types of goods and services for different household categories in Malaysia.

Belanjawanku can help you plan your personal and family budgeting to achieve a reasonable standard of living. It is developed based on actual spending patterns on common goods and services by urban households in Klang Valley and selected cities in Malaysia.

Belanjawanku Report 2021 is expected to be officially launched soon.

For more info, log on to (or scan the QR code): https://swrc.um.edu.my/belanjawanku-report-2021/



Activities and Gallery



ILMA Expert:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yong Chen Chen Deputy Dean (Postgraduate), Faculty of Business and Economics, UM



FSP course is the first level of the three Pension and Retirement Professionals Programme (PRPP).

FSP took place between 25-28 August 2022 at EPF Learning Campus, Kajang, involving 41 participants from various organisationsincluding SOCSO, EPF, MOF, KWAP and ICU.

This course provided an expansive introduction to the concept of social protection and ageing. Participants also learned the basics of retirement planning and personal financial skills. This training course intended to help participants navigate the complexities of social protection concepts and its effects on ageing, pension and retirement.



FSP Experts

- Dr. Halimah Awang SWRC, UM
- Dr. Zulkiply Omar SWRC. UM
- Mdm. Nik Noor Ainoon Nik Osman SWRC. UM
- Mdm. Farizan Kamaluddin Employees Provident Fund (EPF)
- Mr. Edmund Cheong Peck Huang Life Insurance Association Malaysia

FSP Modules

- Introduction to Social Protection
- Social Protection in Malaysia
- Ageing and Related Issues: Part 1 & 2
- A Comprehensive and Integrated Social Protection System
- Personal Financial Planning: Part 1 & 2
- Retirement Planning: Part 1 & 2





Invest Shariah Conference 2022: Alleviating Old-age Poverty Through Islamic Finance

SWRC Director, Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, was invited as a panellist for the Invest Shariah Conference 2022 on Alleviating Old-Age Poverty Through Islamic Finance.

Date: 26th July 2022

Venue: Bursa Malaysia Berhad, Exchange Square, Bukit Kewangan, Kuala Lumpur





ICMR's closed-door **Behavioural Workshop:**

Understanding New Age Vulnerability within the Malaysian context

SWRC Director, Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, was invited as a panellist for the closed-door Behavioural Workshop on Understanding New Age Vulnerability within the Malaysian context by the Institute for Capital Market Research (ICMR) to share her understanding of the structural issues that have contributed to the current state of vulnerability in Malaysia, the role of policymakers and if behavioral interventions can be applied to help these vulnerable groups.

Date: 14th July 2022

Venue: Securities Commission (SC),

Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur

PROTECT, PROMOTE AND PREVENT



Consequences of Russia's

Invasion and Sanctions

SWRC Director, Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, was invited as a moderator for the seminar on "Consequences of Russia's Invasion and Sanctions". The panellist for the session was Dr. likka Korhonen, Director of Bank of Finland, Institute for Emerging Economies.

This public lecture assessed the effects of sanctions on the Russian economy and global economy. The lecture also discussed how Russia's actions had exacerbated the global energy and crisis, resulting in shortages and high prices in many countries.

Date: 9th September 2022

Venue: Dewan Kuliah 3, Faculty of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaya





The 17th East Asian Economic Association (EAEA) International Convention:

Malaysia's Economic Recovery: Digitalization and Green Transition

SWRC Director, Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, was invited as a panellist for the 17th EAEA International Convention plenary session titled "Malaysia's Economic Recovery: Digitalization and Green Transition" at Sunway University.

Date: 28th August 2022

Venue: Sunway University, Kuala Lumpur



Policy Roundtable:

The Future of Pensions and Social Protection in Malaysia

On 6th September 2022, SWRC was invited by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) to participate in Policy Roundtable: The Future of Pensions and Social Protection in Malaysia.

SWRC was represented by Dr. Halimah Awang, Puan Nik Noor Ainoon Nik Osman and Puan Kama Firdaus Subbahi.

Date: 6th September 2022

Venue: Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER), Bukit Petaling, Kuala Lumpur



SWRC x EPF:

Discussion on Belanjawanku 2022

On 7th September 2022, SWRC held a discussion with EPF to review and update on the latest figures for the Belanjawanku 2022 booklet, pamphlet and apps.

Date: 7th September 2022

Venue: Menara KWSP, Kwasa Damansara



AWCA Technical Seminar

Managing Social Security Post COVID-19: The Malaysian Perspective

SWRC Director, Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, was invited as a panellist for AWCA Technical Seminar on Social Security Protection for Foreign Workers.

Date: 6-8th September 2022

Venue: Intercontinental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur



On 13th September 2022, SWRC organised a roundtable discussion on "MARS Wave-2 Findings and Policy Issues".

The roundtable discussion was aimed at drawing policies that could be used to provide meaningful discussions related to ageing in Malaysia.

As Malaysia's population is ageing rapidly, the roundtable discussion focused on five main components of ageing and related issues:

- 1) Family support and living arrangement
- 2) Health, healthcare utilisation, psycho-social and cognition
- 3) Work, employment and retirement
- 4) Income, savings and assets
- 5) Social protection and COVID-19.

The roundtable discussion was participated by various agencies, ministries and research centre including EPF, SOCSO, MOH, KPWKM, MOHR, EPU, UNDP, ICU, KRI, World Bank, UM and MyAgeing UPM.





Belanjawan ku app provides a medium for users to track their expenses and plan their budget smartly to achieve a dignified standard of living.

With an inclusivity approach in mind, this app is designed to be used by various household categories in Malaysia, from single individuals to married couples, single parents and seniors.

This app was developed based on the expenditure guide for 11 primary baskets that a household typically spends including food/grocery, housing, transportation, utility, personal care, health care, child care, discretionary expenses, ad-hoc expenses, social participation expenses and savings.



For iOS



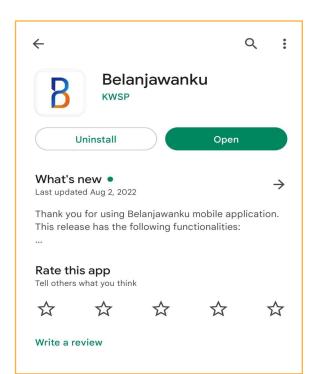
For Android

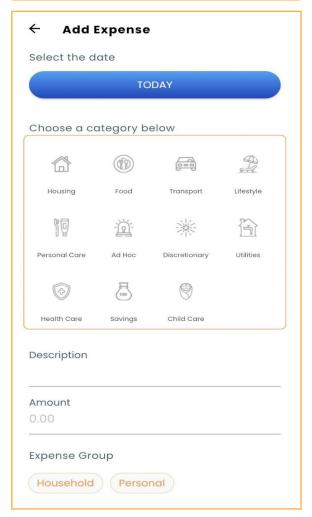
Download yours now!





Belanjawan kini lebih mudah









About SWRC

The Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC) is an academic multi-disciplinary research entity, focusing on conceiving and implementing research in social security and old age financial protection. SWRC has been providing evidence-based expertise and consulting in the aforesaid domains to elevate economic development on social cohesion in Malaysia.

The Centre supports research in social protection in general and old-age financial protection, in particular. The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) of Malaysia has graciously provided an endowment fund to create the nation's first endowed Chair in Old Age Financial Protection (OAFPC), now known as Social Wellbeing Chair (SWC) at Universiti Malaya.

Editorial Team



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Please scan the QR code to visit SWRC's website

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS



Malaysia Ageing and Retirement Survey (MARS)



Reference Budget for Malaysian (Belanjawanku)

STRATEGIC PARTNERS











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