

The Influence of Land Scarcity on Funeral Method Preferences in the Chinese Community

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Abstract

Chinese public cemeteries in Malaysia, also known as "Yishan," are dedicated burial sites specifically used by the Chinese community for the interment of their deceased loved ones. These cemeteries adhere to Chinese cultural and religious practices related to ancestor veneration and the afterlife. The cemetery land is mostly provided by the local government, and the local association is responsible for managing the cemetery. Since the Yishan located in the city are already nearing saturation, the government cannot afford to allocate land for new Yishan to the relevant guild members, making many Yishan difficult to find. Additionally, Chinese graves occupy more land than those of other races due to the burial practices. Consequently, the Chinese community faces a shortage of burial land, often having to resort to more expensive private cemeteries. This paper is based on a proposal by the Selangor senior exco member, Datuk Teng Chang Khim, to address the issue of land scarcity for Chinese burials. Teng expressed the Malaysia Funeral Association's intention to promote flower burial in Malaysia, a method that uses less land, to alleviate this problem. Therefore, this research aims to identify the funeral methods preferred by the Chinese community and determine their preferences for these methods. In this study, quantitative analysis was adopted to collect data. Central Malacca was chosen as the research location because it is one of the states in Malaysia with a large Chinese population and may face cemetery land scarcity. A total of 384 respondents were needed for this analysis. The results indicate a high preference for flower burial among the respondents. Other methods, such as sea burial and ice burial, also showed satisfactory preference levels. Thus, this research provides insight to the Malaysia Funeral Association that the Chinese community in Malacca is interested in and prefers alternative funeral methods, such as flower burial, which could help address the issue of land scarcity for cemeteries in the future.

Keywords: Preference, Funeral, Chinese Community, Land Scarcity

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chinese public cemeteries in Malaysia, also known as "Yishan", are dedicated burial sites specifically used by the Chinese community for the interment of their deceased loved ones. These cemeteries adhere to Chinese cultural and religious practices related to ancestor veneration and the afterlife. The cemetery land is mostly provided by the local government and the local association will take the responsibility in managing the cemetery. Since the Yishan located in the city is already close to saturation, the government cannot afford to allocate land for new Yishan to the relevant guild members, so many Yishan are already hard to find. In addition, Chinese graves are buried in the ground and occupy more land than those of other races. As a result, the Chinese are faced with the situation of having no land to bury their dead or having to go to private cemeteries which are more expensive. In fact, land scarcity in Malaysia, especially in urban areas like Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Johor Bahru, has made it difficult for the Chinese community to find space for traditional burials. Rapid urbanization and the need for land for residential and commercial development have reduced the availability of land for cemeteries. A study conducted by the Housing and Local Government Ministry under the "Liveable Malaysia" agenda in the 12th Malaysia Plan indicated that many cemeteries in urban areas are nearing full capacity, with some reporting utilization rates of over 90%. To address the lack of burial land for the Chinese community, Selangor senior exco member Datuk Teng Chang Khim expressed the Malaysia Funeral Association's intention to promote flower burial in Malaysia, a method that uses less land.

The existing literature primarily focuses on general urban planning challenges (Bennett and Davies, 2015; Collin, 2011; Afla and Reza, 2012), environmental issues related to burial practices (Shafiqah and Noralfishah, 2014), and policy measures promoting cremation and other alternatives. However, comprehensive studies that delve into the cultural sensitivities, economic implications, and personal preferences of the Chinese community in the context of land scarcity are limited. Therefore, this research intends to identify the funeral methods for the Chinese community and determine the preferences of the funeral methods by the Chinese community. In this research, quantitative analysis has been adopted in collecting data. Central Malacca was chosen as the research location since Malacca is one of the large Chinese population states in Malaysia, and it might have the chance to face land scarcity for cemeteries. Therefore, 384 respondents are needed to analyse this research. As a result, flower burial shows a high preference for funeral methods by the respondents. Other

funeral methods such as sea burial and ice burial also show a satisfied preference. Therefore, it gives a vision to the Malaysia Funeral Association where the Malaysia Chinese community in Malacca have the interest and preference to choose flower burial or others besides burial and cremation as their funeral method which can solve the land scarcity of cemeteries may occur in the future which face by the public and relevant Chinese associations.

■2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Funeral

A funeral is a ceremony connected with the final disposition of a corpse, such as a burial or cremation, with the attendant observances (Alfa, 2019). The complex behaviours and beliefs that a society employs to honour and remember the deceased include funerary traditions (Thote. A., 2009). These customs range from interment to numerous monuments, prayers, and rituals that are performed in their memory. Cultures and religious groups have different customs. Both normative and legal elements are present during funerals. Funerals frequently involve religious components that are meant to assist the deceased's soul in reaching the afterlife, resurrection, or reincarnation. Other common secular reasons for funerals include mourning the departed, celebrating their life, and providing support and sympathy to the bereaved.

2.2 Funeral Policy in Malaysia

According to the information provided, Malaysia's funeral policy is a result of its historical background and the influence of British colonialism. The policy emphasizes the separation of church and state while also recognizing and respecting the diverse ethnic and religious beliefs within the country. Malaysia does not have a specific national funeral statute or a centralized governing body for funeral affairs. Instead, different government departments at various levels are responsible for different aspects of funeral management, forming a system of shared responsibilities and checks and balances. Funeral parlours, cemeteries, and other facilities are often considered religious spaces, and faith organizations are typically responsible for their daily operations. This arrangement allows for specialized management based on the expertise of different units. Non-profit religious organizations also play a role in fundraising and managing burial affairs, contributing to cultural inheritance, religious practices, and social welfare. However, the implementation of funeral policies in Malaysia has its challenges.

Government officials may lack knowledge and understanding of the funeral practices of different religions, potentially leading to limitations in executing policies. This can result in coordination issues among departments and instances where industry operators bypass necessary approval processes. Additionally, the absence of detailed rules and regulations, limited monitoring and law enforcement, and a lack of historical awareness and funeral education can further hinder the effective implementation of funeral policies. The Local Government Act of 1976 provides the basic framework for Malaysia's funeral policy. It empowers local governments to provide suitable land for burials, issue permits for cemeteries and columbaria, and manage burial places. However, the act also has limitations, and the interpretation and execution of its powers are often left to other units or can be subject to debate. In summary, Malaysia's funeral policy is characterized by decentralized management, where different government departments and faith organizations are responsible for various aspects of funeral affairs. While this arrangement allows for specialization and consideration of local customs and beliefs, it also presents challenges in terms of coordination, knowledge, and enforcement.

2.3 The Diversity of Funeral Methods Based on Religion in Malaysia

Malaysia is a multiracial country in Southeast Asia. The three major races in Malaysia are Malay, Chinese and Indian (Kawangit, 2012). The minor races which include are Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Kadazan-Dusun, Melanau, Bajau and others. Although there are so many races that can be found in Malaysia, the religion of Malaysia can be divided into four which are Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity (Neoh, 2020). The funeral method used by Islam in Malaysia is burial. When a death occurs, the local Muslim Community Centre or mosque is first contacted. After the body is carefully washed, it is then wrapped in a shroud or white cloth. The face, however, is not covered so that the family may kiss the forehead of the deceased goodbye. The shrouded body is finally secured with ropes, one above the head, two tied around the body, and one around the feet (Afla, 2018). These rites are usually performed by close family members of the same gender as the deceased. The only exceptions are spouses and children.

Buddhism in Malaysia is prevalent in cremation. When a Buddhist is dead, relatives and friends pour water over one hand of the deceased in a bathing ceremony (Lee, 2022). They then place the body in a casket and surround it with wreaths, candles and sticks of incense. If possible, a photograph of the deceased is placed alongside, and coloured lights are hung around the casket. The funeral for Chinese normally will be held around 1-7 days as a memorial service which gives a chance to the relatives and friends from far away to see his or her last time in the real. After cremation, the spirit is cut off from our world (Chen, 2017). Part of some Chinese Buddhists in Malaysia, in a sense, are not Buddhists (Gomes, 2013). They are religion as Taoism, a traditional religion from China. A believer in Taoism can be called a Taoist. The term that is mostly known by the Malaysians which is called "Ying Yang" is the core value of Taoism (Yeong, 2020). The core value of Buddhism is Karma (Pakhomov, 2004).

For Taoists, the preferred funeral method is burial, as they believe that only burial can allow the dead to rest in peace (Mao, 2011). Therefore, burial will always be the first choice for Taoists, unless cremation is the only option available due to specific circumstances. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, Christianity is a minority religion in Malaysia. In the 2020 census, 9.1% of the Malaysian population identified themselves as Christians about two-thirds of Malaysia's Christian population lives in East Malaysia, in the states of Sabah and Sarawak. According to Nirvana Asia, 3 Christians in Malaysia prefer burials over cremations and the funerals are usually held for 2 nights.

Hinduism embraces many religious ideas. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as a way of life or a family of religions, as opposed to a single, organised religion. Most forms of Hinduism are henotheistic, which means they worship a single deity, known as “Brahman,” but still recognize other gods and goddesses. Hindus believe in the doctrines of Samsara and Karma (Amanda,2020). For Hindus, cremation is preferred because they believe it’s the quickest way to release the soul and help their loved ones with reincarnation (Chappel, 2018). Most will choose to keep the body at home for a night at most and the Ach ache will spread into river or sea (Hans, 2021).

Overall, from the study above, two primary funeral methods can be identified: burial and cremation. However, there are differences between Buddhist and Hindu cremation practices. In Buddhism, the ashes are stored in an urn and kept in a building called a columbarium within a cemetery. In contrast, Hindus typically spread the ashes in a river near their home or in the sea, which is more similar to sea burial.

2.4 Various of Funeral Methods for the Chinese Community in Malaysia.

Burial, also known as interment, is a common funeral method where the deceased body is placed into the ground. Different cultural and religious practices may accompany the burial process, such as dressing the body elaborately or placing burial items alongside it. The choice of burial site can be influenced by health and sanitation concerns, religious beliefs, and cultural customs. Some communities have specific land allocated for burials, while others establish private family cemeteries. The cost of burial can vary, with an average cost of around RM 42,850 according to The Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management Kuala Lumpur. Cremation is a funeral method where the dead body is burned, leaving behind ashes. The ashes are then typically stored in an urn, which can be kept in a columbarium or scattered in a designated area. Cremation is an alternative to burial and is practiced in various countries, with an average cost of around RM 26,150 according to The Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management Kuala Lumpur.

Flower burial, also known as Green Funeral, is a concept that gained popularity in the 1990s. In this method, the ashes are ground again, placed in paper bags, and evenly sprinkled into a designated burial area. There is no tombstone, and the name of the deceased is not recorded. Flower burial is not yet practiced in Malaysia as of 2022, but in Taiwan, it has an average cost of around RM 12,000 according to Grace Funeral Service. Sea burial involves either scattering the ashes into the sea or directly sinking the deceased into the sea. This method is more common in coastal states and can be a suitable option for densely populated areas facing land shortages. In Malaysia, there are limited places where sea burials can take place, with around 13 locations as of 2018. The cost of sea burial is approximately RM 11,970 according to Nirvana Asia.

Ice burial, also known as Profession, is a green burial method that involves freezing the body in liquid nitrogen at extremely low temperatures. The body is then vibrated to turn it into ashes, which are put into a decomposable bag. After about a year, the ashes become organic powder and blend into the soil, providing nutrients for trees and land. Ice burial is not yet practiced in Malaysia, but it is considered more environmentally friendly, and timesaving compared to burial or cremation. Sky burial is a traditional Tibetan and Mongolian funeral method where the deceased's body is left in a designated place for vultures and other carnivorous birds to devour. The belief behind this practice is the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. Sky burial is not practiced in Malaysia, and traditionally, there is no fixed cost, as families give as much as they see fit to the funeral management team.

The Chinese community in Malaysia has various funeral methods to choose from. The common ones are burial and cremation, with the latter being an alternative to burial. Flower burial and sea burial are eco-friendly options not yet widely practiced in Malaysia, while ice burial, a more environmentally friendly method, is also not yet implemented. Sky burial, a traditional Tibetan and Mongolian practice, is not found in Malaysia. Each funeral method comes with different costs, and the choice depends on cultural, religious, and personal preferences.

2.5 Funeral Method in Other Countries with High Chinese Population

In high-population Chinese countries, such as China (Taiwan) and Singapore, new funeral methods have been introduced to address the issue of land scarcity and promote environmental sustainability. These methods serve as potential alternatives or replacements for the traditional Chinese funeral practices in Malaysia. The focus is on utilizing space more efficiently and minimizing the use of solid materials like bricks, cement, and marble. In Taiwan, the government has actively promoted environmentally friendly burial practices, including tree burials and flower burials. The concept is to create cemetery spaces that resemble parks filled with flowers like roses, cherry blossoms, and camellias. People prefer being cremated and returning to nature rather than being buried and decomposed. Funeral ceremonies are planned or held during the individual's lifetime. Innovative green funeral services, such as joint memorial services and online worship, are also being promoted to save energy and provide better services to the public.

Singapore, facing limited land resources, has taken measures to shift from burial to cremation. The government mandates a 15-year use period for burial cemeteries, after which graves are excavated and cremated separately. This has led to a decline in traditional burial practices, and cremation is now widely accepted. Sea burials have gained popularity due to the acceptance of cremation, as the ashes are scattered into the sea after cremation. The high temperature of cremation eliminates germs, and the resulting ashes contain inorganic calcium carbonate without harmful substances. Flower burial is a newer concept in Singapore, which has been promoted in recent years. These new funeral methods have been implemented with government support and have gained acceptance in both Taiwan and Singapore. They offer solutions to land scarcity issues, promote environmental conservation, and provide alternative ways for individuals to remember and pay tribute to their deceased loved ones.

2.6 Land Scarcity in Malaysia

Land scarcity refers to the situation where the demand for land exceeds its supply in each area. This condition arises when there is a limited amount of land available for various uses, such as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational purposes, and the existing land is insufficient to meet the needs of the population and economic activities. Several factors contribute to land scarcity, including population growth, urbanization, economic development, and environmental conservation efforts. Rapid urbanization in Malaysia, particularly in major cities like Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Johor Bahru, has led to increased demand for land. As more people move to urban areas in search of better opportunities, the available land for housing, infrastructure including funeral, and commercial activities becomes limited.

As land becomes scarcer, property prices tend to increase. This phenomenon also affects the availability and cost of land for funeral services, including burial plots. In many urban areas, the high cost of land makes it increasingly difficult for families to afford traditional burial plots. Consequently, there is a growing interest in alternative funeral methods, such as cremation, columbarium, and green burials, which require less land and are often more cost-effective. This shift in preferences is especially noticeable in densely populated regions where land scarcity is most acute, prompting the community to seek sustainable and economical funeral solutions.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Hornby and Diantha (2016) defined methodology as “a set of methods that are used to research specific research subjects”. The methodology describes the actions to investigate the research question and the specific application of the rationale or technique used to identify, select, process, and analyse information to understand the problem, thereby enabling the reader to evaluate the overall validity and reliability of the research critically. The purpose of the research is to obtain data then the method of data collection is the most vital step in research. Those who conduct research will not get the desired data if they do not know what method of collection data shall be used in the research. In this stage, data collection involves two types of data which are the primary and secondary data. In this research, the quantitative method is used because this research includes larger populations and the aims to be identified and determined rely on numerical data and statistical analysis. In addition, quantitative analysis will help in systematically gathering numerical data on preferences, which can then be analysed to draw meaningful conclusions about the community's preferences and practices related to funerals.

3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is the process of collecting numerical data through standardized technical means and then applying statistical methods to derive results. In layman's terms, it involves gathering relevant data about a target audience and then generalizing these results to a larger group to explain a phenomenon. Researchers who follow a scientific paradigm often use this approach. This method attempts to quantify data and generalize results from a sample of the target population. It follows a structured data collection process, resulting in data in numerical form. Quantitative research also emphasizes objective analysis using statistical techniques.

3.2 Data Collection Method

Data collected for research is divided into two categories: primary and secondary data. This research aims to determine how many Chinese individuals can accept alternative funeral methods to address the lack of burial land in the Malacca Chinese population. Therefore, Chinese people will be chosen as respondents for this study through the distribution of online questionnaires via Google Forms, targeting residents of Central Malacca. This study focuses on individuals living in or near the city since Central Malacca is the economic hub of Malacca. Additionally, Malacca has one of the largest Chinese populations in Malaysia, and land scarcity for cemeteries is expected to be a future issue for the funeral industry and the Chinese community. The area of investigation and the research questions determine the appropriate method for conducting research (Johnston, 2014). Choosing the right method is crucial to ensure that the data collected aligns with the study's objectives. A wise choice of methodologies will help the researcher gather the necessary data or information more efficiently.

Primary data collection in this study is conducted through the distribution of online questionnaires via Google Forms towards the residents of Central Malacca. All the questions in the questionnaire are constructed from the findings of the literature review. The selection of respondents is based on the Krejcie and Morgan method, a statistical approach introduced in 1970 by Robert V. Krejcie and David W. Morgan in their article "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities." According to City Population data, the population of Buddhists in Central Malacca is approximately 150,336, and Wikipedia states that the Chinese population in Central Malacca is around 160,000. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample size for this population should be 384. The sample for this study includes Chinese individuals above 17 years old, as this research focuses on the funeral method preferences of the Chinese community. The reason for selecting respondents above 17 years old is that 18 is the legal age in Malaysia, at which individuals have the right to make decisions about their future.

The method used to check the reliability of the questionnaire will be Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is a statistical method used to estimate the internal consistency of a questionnaire. It measures the correlation between different items within a questionnaire and calculates a coefficient, known as Cronbach's alpha, which represents the overall consistency of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with a higher alpha indicating greater internal consistency. A value of 0.7 or higher is generally considered acceptable for most research. Cronbach's alpha is widely used for assessing the reliability of questionnaires, especially in social and behavioural sciences, which is relevant as this research focuses on social aspects.

3.3 Data Analysis Method

After collecting the data, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for data analysis. According to Norusis (1990), SPSS is a computer program used for analysing data. In this research, Frequency Analysis, Index Range Analysis, and Cross-Tabulation Analysis will be conducted using SPSS version 41. These analyses will calculate frequencies and percentages of data, create new variables to define index ranges, and identify significant relationships between funeral method preferences and influencing factors.

Frequency analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the distribution of values within a variable. It involves counting the number of occurrences or frequencies of each value or category in a dataset. All questions asked in the questionnaire will have a frequency analysis to have a preliminary analysis of the data and to understand the distribution of values. Then, identify the most frequent values and assess the variability of the variable.

Index range analysis is a data transformation technique used to categorize or group data based on certain criteria or conditions, also known as recoding or creating new variables based on specific ranges. It involves assigning new values or categories to existing variables based on predefined ranges or intervals. Therefore, the questions in part B will be rearranged and create a new specific range since the data in part B was presented as a Likert Scale. The analysis assesses the effectiveness of the index range analysis in categorizing the data based on the defined ranges.

According to Amir (2017), cross-tabulation analysis is a powerful statistical test used to find the relationship between a given dependent variable and two or more independent variables. The dependent variable is the funeral method chosen by the respondent, and the independent variables will be the respondents' demographic, religion, family or parents, consuming capacity, and self-awareness. In this research, the cross-tabulation analysis was used to study the relationship between the funeral method chosen and the factors that influenced the respondent to make the choice. Therefore, interpreting the relationship between the variables helps to look for patterns, differences, or associations between the categories of the variables.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the funeral method preferences of residents in the district of Melaka Tengah, Malacca. The analysis method employed is descriptive analysis, based on data collected online from residents of Melaka Tengah, such as through posts in Facebook groups for Malacca residents. The data analysis consists of three main parts: frequency analysis, index range analysis, and cross-tabulation analysis. These analyses are conducted from two perspectives: Preference of Funeral Method by the Chinese Community and Factors Influencing Preference of Funeral Method. Each analysis provides unique insights into the data. The analysis of factors influencing preferences aims to offer suggestions or insights for the future, especially if the preference for alternative funeral methods like flower burial does not meet expectations. Finally, cross-tabulation analysis is applied to explore how influential these factors are in shaping respondents' preferences for funeral methods.

4.1 Analysis of the Preference for Funeral Methods

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of respondents' preferences for various funeral methods, ranging from traditional ceremonies to contemporary alternatives. This analysis provides insights into the choices individuals make and their willingness to adhere to these preferences. According to the questionnaire results, nearly one-third of respondents expressed a neutral stance (130 people or 33.9%) towards funeral methods such as Burial, Cremation, Flower or Tree Burial, Sea Burial, and Ice Burial. Flower or Tree Burial received the highest number of responses in the fourth scale (likely), with 135 people or 35.2%. In contrast, Sky Burial garnered the highest frequency in the first scale (very unlikely), with 196 people or 51%, indicating strong aversion among respondents. Overall, most respondents indicated a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty about their preferences. However, preferences were clearer when it came to rejecting certain methods, such as Sky Burial, where a majority expressed strong reluctance.

Furthermore, the fourth scale represents the second highest frequency chosen by respondents, indicating a likelihood that their preferences may be influenced by external factors or future experiences. Overall, based on the data collected through the questionnaire, most respondents expressed acceptance or neutrality towards all funeral methods listed, except for Sky Burial. The results suggest that Sky Burial may not be suitable for introduction or application within the Chinese community in Malaysia, considering Chinese religious and cultural perspectives. Additionally, although Malaysian funeral regulations do not explicitly address the feasibility of Sky Burial, government policies may likely restrict its acceptance in Malaysia. On the other hand, flower burial, as a form of cremation in Malaysia, appears more acceptable to the Chinese community and may face fewer obstacles in gaining government approval for implementation.

Table 1 Preference of funeral methods

Situation	Frequency and Percentage					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
The Preference of Funeral Methods						
1. Burial	6 1.6%	87 22.7%	130 33.9%	114 29.7%	47 12.2%	384 100%

2. Cremation	11 2.9%	51 13.3%	141 36.7%	139 36.2%	42 10.9%	384 100%
3. Flower / Tree	14 3.6%	70 18.2%	130 33.9%	135 35.2%	35 9.1%	384 100%
4. Sea	42 10.9%	104 27.1%	115 29.9%	79 20.6%	44 11.5%	384 100%
5. Ice	61 15.9%	101 26.3%	119 31%	74 19.3%	29 7.6%	384 100%
6. Sky	196 51%	119 31%	46 12%	19 5%	4 1%	384 100%
Total Frequency	330	532	681	560	201	2304

Based on the data shown in Table 2, which uses the Likert scale to measure preferences for funeral methods, the mean scores indicate that respondents are very likely to prefer burial (3.2839), cremation (3.3906), and flower or tree burial (3.2786). In contrast, the sea burial and ice burial methods, with mean scores of 2.9453 and 2.7630 respectively, are somewhat less preferred. The sky burial method, with a mean score of 1.7396, is the least preferred option. Therefore, it can be concluded that cremation, burial, and flower or tree burial are the most preferred options among respondents, while sea burial and ice burial have a slightly lower preference. On the other hand, sky burial is the least favoured. Additionally, respondents consider self-awareness and financial capacity as significant factors affecting their preference for funeral methods, while religion and family or parents are considered less influential.

Table 2 Mean score and scale category for the preference of funeral methods

Question	Mean	Scale Category
Preferences of Funeral Methods		
1. Cremation	3.3906	Very Likely
2. Burial	3.2839	Very Likely
3. Flower / Tree	3.2786	Very Likely
4. Sea	2.9453	Likely
5. Ice	2.7630	Likely
6. Sky	1.7396	Very Unlikely

4.2 Analysis of Factors Affect the Preference for Funeral Methods

Table 3 represent the factors affecting the respondents in their preference of funeral methods and records of how important the factors influencing their preferences.

Table 3 Factors affect the preference for funeral methods

Situation	Frequency and Percentage					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
The Factors Influence the Preference of Funeral Methods						
1. Religion	17 4.4%	84 21.9%	151 39.3%	107 27.9%	25 6.5%	384 100%
2. Family or Parent	16 4.2%	80 20.8%	145 37.8%	107 27.9%	36 9.4%	384 100%

3. Consuming Capacity	22 5.7%	82 21.4%	124 32.3%	104 27.1%	52 13.5%	384 100%
4. Self-awareness	31 8.1%	64 16.7%	91 23.7%	116 30.2%	82 21.4%	384 100%
Total Frequency	86	310	511	434	195	1536

Table 3 shows the factors that influence the preference for each funeral method, including religion, family or parents, financial capacity, and self-awareness. Based on the data collected, the research found that the neutral option (third scale) was chosen by most respondents for all factors except self-awareness. Specifically, 151 respondents (39.3%) chose neutral for religion, 145 respondents (37.8%) for family or parents, and 124 respondents (32.3%) for financial capacity. In contrast, for self-awareness, the highest number of respondents chose the fourth scale, with 116 respondents (30.2%). Overall, the data indicates that most respondents do not have a strong preference influenced by religion, family, or financial capacity, except for self-awareness. This suggests that self-awareness is a significant factor for most respondents, reflecting the characteristics of young people who tend to prioritize their own perspectives and experiences.

In addition, Table 4 stated an analysis of how likely the elements affect respondents' preference for funeral methods.

Table 4 Mean score and scale category of the factors affect the preference of funeral methods

Elements Affect the Preference of Funeral Methods	Mean score	Preference
1. Self-awareness	3.4010	Very Likely
2. Consuming Capacity	3.2135	Very Likely
3. Family or Parents	3.1745	Unlikely
4. Religion	3.1016	Very Unlikely

Based on the data, it can be concluded that financial capacity, with a mean score of 3.2135, indicates that respondents find it very likely that their financial resources will influence their preference for funeral methods. Self-awareness, with a mean score of 3.4010, also signifies that respondents perceive self-awareness as very likely to play a significant role in determining their funeral method preferences. In contrast, religion, with a mean score of 3.1016, indicates that respondents find it very unlikely for religion to significantly influence their preferences. Similarly, family or parents, with a mean score of 3.1745, suggests that respondents consider it unlikely for their family or parents to have a substantial impact on their funeral method preferences.

As stated earlier, flower or tree burial shows potential as an alternative funeral method to burial and cremation for the Chinese community, as it is similar to cremation. Flower burial can be considered a branch of cremation, with the only difference being the handling of ashes. Additionally, the Malaysia Funeral Policy, supported by the Local Government Act 1976, does not present any hindrance to applying flower burial in Malaysia. Sea burial is in a similar situation, but the lower preference for sea burial may be due to religious beliefs, as spreading ashes at sea is seen by some as not allowing the deceased to rest in peace. This perception differs among Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, although some Hindus do spread ashes into rivers.

4.3 Cross-Tabulation Analysis of Preference for Funeral Methods

As a result of the cross-tabulation analysis, burial appears to have the most factors influencing respondents' preferences for funeral methods, including age, income, status, religion, and self-awareness. Sea burial, which has the second most influencing factors such as age, income, and status, shows a different pattern from other analysis methods and literature reviews, as sea burial was found to have a relationship with religion affecting respondents' preferences. Other funeral methods show varying influences: cremation is influenced by family or parents, flower burial by religion, ice burial by status, and sky burial by religion. These findings align with the factors identified in the literature review, indicating consistency between respondents' preferences and the factors studied.

Table 5 Relationship between funeral method and factors

Funeral Method	Factor
Burial	Age, Income, Status, Religion & Self Awareness
Cremation	Family or Parents
Flower or Tree Burial	Religion
Sea	Age, Income & Status
Ice	Status
Sky	Religion

5.0 CONCLUSION

With the development of the country, more and more nations are experiencing a decrease in available land for development, and Malaysia is no exception. Additionally, the Chinese community in Malaysia has always valued cultural preservation, making the diminishing amount of land available for afterlife care a growing social problem. The high costs of private cemeteries are unaffordable for many, leading the public to prefer public cemeteries, known as Yishan. One proposed solution is to offer an alternative burial method to the traditional one. Flower burial, recently implemented in Taiwan, is considered by the Malaysian Burial Association as a new burial method that could gain public acceptance. The cost of flower burial is cheaper than traditional burial and cremation, requires a minimal footprint, and offers increased land recyclability, unlike traditional funeral methods.

This research has a limitation due to the lack of respondents from the medium income and high-income household categories. Consequently, the data may have lower accuracy in reflecting the funeral method preferences of the entire Chinese community in the research area, primarily representing the low-income household group. Despite this, the analysis shows that cremation and burial have high preference rates among respondents, with flower burial also showing significant preference. This suggests that flower burial has the potential to become an alternative funeral method alongside burial and cremation in the future. Using index range analysis, cremation (storing ashes in an urn), burial, and flower burial are all rated very likely on the Likert scale, with mean scores of 3.3906, 3.2839, and 3.2786, respectively.

To address the importance of factors affecting respondents' funeral method preferences, it is recommended to organize events or activities related to self-awareness. These should aim to raise awareness about the significance of personal choices in end-of-life arrangements and educate the public on the benefits and meaning behind flower burial. Emphasizing its environmental sustainability, connection with nature, and personalized approach can encourage individuals to consider flower burial as a viable option. Additionally, securing the cost-effectiveness of flower burial can attract people to choose it as an economical and environmentally friendly post-mortem treatment method.

In conclusion, flower burial shows high preference and potential to replace traditional burial and cremation in the future, addressing the issue of land scarcity for Chinese cemeteries. Furthermore, there are small groups willing to consider other funeral methods in the future, indicating to the Malaysian funeral industry that people are open to alternatives beyond burial and cremation, which could help mitigate future cemetery land scarcity.

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