



**ASSESSMENT ON THE RECREATIONAL
PARTICIPATION AND SATISFACTION AMONG
LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR**

BY

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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science in Built Environment**

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ABSTRACT

Dissatisfaction with living condition in an urban low-income neighbourhood, and many of the associated issues, can be traced to the apparent inability to meet the basic need of its inhabitants. In an urban situation, one of the fundamental components of the people's well-being is the feasibility to recreational opportunities regardless of the socio-economic status. Evidence on health issues related to low-level of participation in physical and recreational activities are more prevalent among lower income, less educated, and unemployed populations compared to higher income individuals. Although it has been discussed around the globe, very few were found in Malaysia. The main aim of this study is to assess the neighbourhood park as recreational resource in low-income housing. This study presents the assessment of two aspects which are in terms of the recreational participation and satisfaction among the low-income community. Four (4) neighbourhood parks in low-income housings located within Kuala Lumpur were selected as the study sites. Data were collected through survey questionnaire from 253 park users. Additionally, this study also provides valuable assessment by four expert panels in the related fields using an existing Quality Neighbourhood Park Criteria. Findings from the recreational participation highlighted that non-working group such as students and housewife as the main users in the park. This study also found that women and senior adults from the age group above 50 years old as the potential users and should be given consideration to encourage their participation in recreational activities. Another significant finding is that, the participants indicated that safety and immoral activities are found to be among the main reasons people to disengage from participating in recreational activities in the neighbourhood. In overall satisfaction, it is summarized as fairly satisfied with every component except, towards the park and recreational facilities. Broken and poor maintenance of park facilities are found to be the main reason of dissatisfaction among the participants. However, the main concern or suggestion from the participants is mainly related to the improvement of program and activities in the park. Finally, based on the expert panel assessment, it can be concluded that the neighbourhood parks in the low-income housing has the advantages in terms of good accessibility, however, the facilities, choice of materials and the appearance of the park has major room for improvement. These findings provide a foundation for an improved understanding on the participation of low-income community in recreational activities which can assist in future improvement. Insight gained from this study would be useful for researchers, parks and recreation practitioner, authority seeking to improve the living quality from the recreational aspects among the low-income communities in Malaysia.

خلاصة البحث

عدم الرضا عن الظروف المعيشية في أحياء ذوي الدخل المحدود في المناطق الحضرية، والعديد من القضايا المرتبطة بها يمكن أن تعزى إلى عدم القدرة الواضحة لتلبية الحاجة الأساسية لسكانها، ففي الحالة الحضرية، تعتبر الجدوى من الفرص الترفيهية المكون الأساسي لرفاهية الشعوب بغض النظر عن الوضع الاجتماعي، والاقتصادي. إن دلائل القضايا الصحية المرتبطة بانخفاض مستوى معدلات المشاركة في الأنشطة البدنية، والترفيهية تُعد الأكثر انتشاراً بين الأفراد من ذوي الدخل المحدود، والأقل تعليماً، والعاطلين عن العمل بالمقارنة مع الأفراد من ذوي الدخل المرتفع. فبالرغم من مناقشة هذا الأمر في جميع أنحاء العالم إلا أنه قد تمَّ العثور على أعداد قليلة جداً في ماليزيا. إن الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو تقييم متنزهات حي من الأحياء الإسكانية لذوي الدخل المحدود كمصدر ترفيهي لهم. هذه الدراسة تُقدم تقييماً لجانين، لقد تم اختيار أربع. وهما: الناحية المشاركة الترفيهية، ومستوى الرضا لأوساط المجتمع من ذوي الدخل المحدود متنزهات للأحياء السكنية ذات الدخل المحدود والتي تقع في كوالالمبور كمواقع دراسية. وقد تم جمع البيانات مستخدماً هذه المتنزهات. إضافة إلى ذلك، تُقدم هذه 25 من خلال استخدام استبيان المسح الإحصائي لدراسة تقييماً قيماً لأربع لجان من الخبراء في الحقول ذات الصلة باستخدام معايير الجودة القائمة لمتنزهات الأحياء. أبرزت النتائج بأن المشاركة الترفيهية كانت الأبرز استخداماً لهذه المتنزهات من قبل المجموعات التي لا تعمل مثل الطلاب، وربات البيوت. كذلك وجدت هذه الدراسة بأن النساء، وكبار السن من الفئة العمرية فوق الـ 50 سنة باعتبارهم المستخدمين المحتملين لذا ينبغي إيلاء الأهمية بهم من أجل تشجيعهم على المشاركة بالأنشطة الترفيهية. نتيجة مهمة أخرى كشفت عنها هذه الدراسة، وهي: بأن المشاركين قد أشاروا بأن عامل السلامة، والأنشطة الغير أخلاقية تعدان من بين أهم الأسباب الرئيسة لعدم المشاركة في الأنشطة الترفيهية في متنزهات الحي. بالنسبة لمستوى الرضا بشكل عام، تتلخص بالرضا إلى حد ما، من كل المكونات ما عدا ما يتعلق بالوصول إلى المنتزه، والمرافق الترفيهية. الخراب والدمار، والصيانة السيئة لمرافق المتنزهات تعد من الأسباب الرئيسة لعدم رضا المستخدمين. كذلك انصبت اهتمامات، واقتراحات المشاركين على ضرورة الاهتمام بتحسين البرامج، والأنشطة في المتنزهات. وأخيراً، بناء على تقييم لجنة الخبراء، فإنه يمكن أن نخلص إلى أن متنزهات الأحياء السكنية في إسكان ذوي الدخل المحدود لديها ميزة من حيث سهولة الوصول بشكل جيد. ومع ذلك، فإن اختيار المواد الجيدة للمرافق، والمظهر العام للمتنزهات تُعد وسيلة مهمة نحو التطوير. هذه النتائج توفر الأساس لفهم أفضل حول مشاركة مجتمعات ذوي الدخل المحدود في الأنشطة الترفيهية والتي من الممكن أن تساعد على التحسين نحو الأفضل في المستقبل. إن التبصر المكتسب من هذه الدراسة سيكون مفيداً للباحثين،

للمنتزهات العامة، والممارسات الترفيهية، والسلطة التي تسعى لتحسين نوعية المعيشة في الجوانب الترفيهية
بين المجتمعات ذوي الدخل المحدود في ماليزيا.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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I dedicate this thesis wholeheartedly to my beloved family;

To my parent who I am proud to be their daughter,

“There is no blessing of Allah without their blessing...”

And to my beloved husband for his patience and support at all time,

*And to my beloved daughter and son who always be the strength and motivation in my
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Parks, recreation and socioeconomic status has a longstanding relationship. According to Le Gates and Stout (1998), before 18th century, parks were exclusively for people with high socioeconomic status. Private and forbidden gardens were among the earliest form of parks and green space that these were depicted as the symbols of power and luxury. Later, in the middle of 18th century, parks were integrated in the new town planning and started to open to the public which remarks the opening of land use for parks and open spaces throughout the world.

Since then, the direction of parks and open spaces has been evolved through time. Parks and green open spaces were created for people to carry out their outdoor recreational and leisure activities. Evolving with time and the dynamic of people's need, the importance of these spaces has increased the people appreciation of its functions and benefits. Thompson (2002) believes that parks and open spaces presently no longer can be treated as traditional spaces that gather certain people and offer rigid functions. It needs to further expand its ability to serve people from diverse background and allows users to experiment and explore in a more loose green spaces.

Equality in access to better quality of life and living environment regardless socioeconomic status has been discussed seriously around the world (Sirgy and Cornwell, 2002; Kowaltowski et al., 2006; Abercrombie et al., 2008;Salleh and Badarulzaman, 2012). The importance of parks and open spaces to the people's

quality of life and well-being in low-income communities is receiving increasing attention from researchers of various backgrounds. Disadvantage in accessibility to park facilities and poor park conditions in low-economic population are proven to influence low level of park use and recreational activities and thus, reflected in the poor health status commonly associated with poor people.

Low-levels of participation in physical and recreational activity are more prevalent among lower income, less educated, and unemployed populations compared to higher income individuals. Evidence of health issues related to low level of physical activities are being observed and many suggested that due to lack of opportunities for near-home and at no-cost outdoor activities are among the factors that contributes to the inactive living (Oreskovic, Kuhlthau, Romm, and Perrin, 2009; Lovasi et al., 2013; Ward Thompson, Roe, and Aspinall, 2013). Findings of these studies added to the understanding of the significant relationship between green space, active living and the well-being of low-income community.

Low-income neighbourhood in urban areas is normally found as a walk-up flats with high density of residents built on constraint land. Unlike neighbourhood with individual private yard, open space in low-income neighbourhood is more of a necessity rather than luxury as it provides extended space for the residents to move around and more importantly, access to nature and fresh air. The availability of outdoor green space is essential in making the housing conditions more livable. These spaces become more crucial in high density living environment where private open spaces are reduced to mere balconies or worse, corridors. In housing for the low-income group, open spaces become more of a necessity, providing extra room for dwellers to move around and away from confined living quarters.

In fact, growing number of research has been looking into the differences and how it affect the quality of life of people in different economic status (Abercrombie et al., 2008; Floyd, Taylor and Whitt-Glover, 2009; Dahmann, Wolch, Joassart-Marcelli, Reynolds, and Jerrett, 2010; Veitch, Salmon, Ball, Crawford, and Timperio, 2013; Thompson, Aspinall, and Roe, 2014). These studies highlighted that people with economic disadvantages have less opportunities to recreational access due to lack of parks and open spaces in their neighbourhood. The provision of park facilities and amenities were noticeably varies and influenced by the socioeconomic factor especially in terms of quality (G. C. Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd, and Payne, 2005).

In Malaysia, high-density walk-up flats are the most common structure that sheltered the living of low-income people in urban area such as Kuala Lumpur. A study by Ghazali (2013) highlighted that, with no access to private garden, the residents' of walk-up flats desire for outdoor space is higher than one having private yard. These suggested that in such limited spaces, the availability of appropriate outdoor green space is essential in making the housing conditions more livable. It becomes more of a necessity, providing extra room for residents to move around and away from confined living quarters.

According to the Malaysia Standard on Open Space and Recreation, (Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, 2013), it is mandatory to set aside 10% of the overall development as green space and functioning as recreational area in every residential development. The aspiration behind the 10% green space requirement is to achieve the 2 hectare open space for every 1,000 urban dwellers which is among the key in achieving Malaysia as a developed country by the year 2020. However, the provision of parks and open space for recreation is reported to be at minimum level and insufficient to compare with the density of the population. Study by Ibrahim, Md

Dali, and Muhammad Yusoff (2013), reported that the implementation of the open space policy is found varies from one authority to another. This inconsistency would make the aim not only unachievable, but in greater effect, is the disparity of recreational access and opportunities.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Much of dissatisfaction with living condition in low-income neighbourhood, and many of the associated issues, can be traced to the apparent inability of the city to meet the basic need of its inhabitants. In an urban situation, one of the fundamental components of the people's well-being is the feasibility to recreational opportunities regardless of the socio-economic status. Though many international studies have been discussed on this issue, it is found that very little studies have been done in Malaysia.

However, throughout the past 10 years, concerns on the issue of living quality in low-income housing in Malaysia have been given much attention. Growing number of Malaysian studies on assessing the quality of life among residents in urban low-cost housing suggested that neighborhood environment; such as access to public facilities, amenities and recreational spaces are found to be among the indices of residents' living satisfaction (Mohit, Ibrahim, and Rashid, 2010; Aziz and Ahmad, 2012; Hashim, Samikon, Nasir, and Ismail, 2012; Karim, 2012; Teck-Hong, 2012; Zainal, Kaur, Ahmad, and Khalili, 2012).

The provision of open space in every residential is mainly to provide recreational access for the public. People participate in recreational activities is simply for better health in both physical and emotional. However, low-level of participation in recreational activities among low socioeconomic status has been widely reported around the world. Yet, very few studies were found in Malaysia. For that reason, this

study attempts to address this evidence gap, firstly by understanding the participation of people of the low-income in recreational activities and secondly, by investigating the satisfaction of the low-income users towards the recreational access in their neighbourhood. Insight gained from this study would be useful for researchers, parks and recreation practitioner, authority seeking to improve the living quality from the recreational aspects among the low-income residents in Malaysia.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the earlier explanation, several research questions have been proposed;

1. What is the recreational participation among the low-income residents in using the neighbourhood park provided in the Malaysia low-income housings?
2. What is the satisfaction level of the low-income residents in using the neighbourhood park provided in the Malaysia low-income housings?
3. How does the neighbourhood park in low-income housings can be assessed to provide recommendation for future improvement?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to assess the recreational participation and satisfaction among the low-income residents of Kuala Lumpur in using the neighbourhood park.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on that, several objectives are formulated to achieve the research aim;

1. To analyze the recreational participation in the neighbourhood park among the low-income residents.

2. To evaluate the recreational satisfaction in the neighbourhood park among the low-income residents.

3. To assess the provision of the neighbourhood park in low-income residential to suggest best possible recommendation for future improvements.

1.6 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

This study was made based on the assumption that the participation in recreational activities in the provided neighbourhood park among the low-income residents is characterized by certain demographic pattern and preferences. It is also assumed that, based on the present condition of the neighbourhood park in the low-income housing, the recreational needs among the residents are not well-satisfied.

1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY

The importance of green space to urban quality of life among the people with low-socioeconomic status is the centre of attention in this study. Investigation of the current issue on participation, opportunities, experiences and accessibility is an integral part of this research. Evaluation on the participation and satisfaction of the local low-income community in using the green space in their neighbourhood helps to understand the actual experience of how the availability of the recreational facilities can affect the local participation in active living.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

This research undertakes a quantitative approach using survey questionnaires and expert panel inputs. Methods used in collecting data included survey questionnaires

among the residents of low-income public housings and neighbourhood park assessment by the selected expert panels. This study provides sampling of 253 numbers of participants whom are defined as residents encountered in the neighbourhood parks. The questionnaire survey was designed to identify the participation of the low-income communities using the neighbourhood park provided in their residential for recreational activities. This research used an existing assessment tools named Quality Neighbourhood Parks Criteria (QNPC) by Abdul Malek, Mariapan, & Mohd Shariff (2012). The purpose of environmental assessments was to assist the interpretation and analysis of the survey findings. The aim was to gather perceptions from both professionals and from the local community. Four local professionals from the field of landscape architecture as well as parks and recreation were selected as the expert panel to conduct the assessment.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES SITES

In order to better research this situation, the *Projek Perumahan Rakyat* (PPR) housings in Kuala Lumpur are chosen because it provides controlled parameters in terms of economic status, accessibility to the open space. More importantly, the provisions of the facilities are relatively same in common. Several selection criteria were sets to narrow down the focus of study as it is almost impossible to study into all 29 PPR housings within the short time frame. The selection criteria that were sets are first, based on the year of built. Selected PPR were based on the completed years of the past 10 years. Secondly, the numbers of populations were more than 5,000 residents. Third, is the size of the neighborhood open space was set to be more than 2 acres and lastly, one PPR were selected to represent each zone of Kuala Lumpur. Based on that, four PPR housings in Kuala Lumpur have been selected to be the site