



**NEIGHBOURHOOD SATISFACTION AND QUALITY
OF URBAN LIFE IN A TERRACE HOUSING
NEIGHBOURHOOD IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia has been undergoing rapid industrialization and economic growth, which has led to rapid urbanization since the 1970's. It is estimated that 72.8% of the Malaysian population will be living in urban areas by 2050. This rapid urbanization will lead to deterioration of quality of life (QOL) of the people if nothing is done. QOL means goodness of life and being able to live successfully and happily. Although the City Plan 2020 of Kuala Lumpur has improving the quality of life of the people as one its visions, there is very little research conducted in Malaysia about Quality of Urban Life. Since the people live in neighbourhoods, this study was undertaken to study the relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and QOUL. Terrace housing is the most popular choice of housing among the residents of KL, Taman Setiawangsa, a predominantly terrace housing neighbourhood was selected as a case for the study. Extensive literature study of works related to the topic was undertaken before forming the objectives and research requirements. After literature review on the topic it was found that subjective perception study was more appropriate for QOL and neighbourhood satisfaction studies and so such was adopted. The research was based on the hypothesis that QOUL is dependent on overall satisfaction with neighbourhood, which in turn is dependent on overall satisfactions of physical features, social conditions and economic conditions of the neighbourhood. So satisfaction levels of each were to be collected and analysed. A questionnaire survey was undertaken with a sample size of 100 as the primary data of the research. The secondary data was obtained from reports, articles, etc. Different types of data analyses were carried out to obtain different results. Descriptive statistics, correlation matrix analysis and structural equation modeling were employed to test the hypothesis and the results were obtained. From the findings, it was found that the residents were "very satisfied" with the neighbourhood and the overall quality of urban life. The satisfaction with the neighbourhood is most related to the satisfaction with home and satisfaction with QOUL is most related to the satisfaction with economic conditions. It is also found that QOUL is dependent on neighbourhood satisfaction and any modification and neighbourhood satisfaction is in turn dependent on its physical, social and economic features. Any modifications or changes in them will eventually lead to change in QOUL. Recommendations were made from the findings for improving both the neighbourhood satisfaction and QOUL. Finally, suggestions were made for further research on topics related to the subject. Thus, the research fulfilled its aims and objectives and added to the existing knowledge.

ملخص البحث

وقد ماليزيا تمر التصنيع السريع والنمو الاقتصادي الذي أدى إلى التوسع الحضري السريع منذ عام ١٩٧٠م. وتشير التقديرات إلى أن ٧٢.٨% من سكان ماليزيا سيعيشون في المناطق الحضرية بحلول عام ٢٠٥٠م. وهذا التوسع الحضري السريع يؤدي إلى تدهور نوعية الحياة. من الناس إذا لم يفعل شيء. نوعية الحياة. من يعني الخير من الحياة والقدرة على العيش بنجاح وبسعادة. على الرغم من أن خطة ٢٠٢٠م من مدينة كوالالمبور وتحسين نوعية حياة الناس باعتبارها واحدة رؤاه، هناك القليل جدا من البحوث التي أجريت في ماليزيا حول نوعية الحياة الحضرية. منذ الناس يعيشون في الأحياء، وأجريت هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة العلاقة بين رضا الحي ونوعية الحياة الحضرية. شرفة السكن هو الخيار الأكثر شعبية من المساكن بين سكان كوالالمبور، تامان ستيا ونغسا، وقد تم اختيار شرفة حي الإسكان في الغالب كحالة للدراسة. وأجريت دراسة الأدب واسعة من الأعمال ذات الصلة بالموضوع قبل تشكيل أهداف ومتطلبات البحث. بعد مراجعة الأدبيات حول هذا الموضوع تبين أن دراسة التصور الذاتي كان أكثر ملاءمة ل نوعية الحياة. من ودراسات رضا الحي واعتمد مثل ذلك. واستند البحث على فرضية أن نوعية الحياة الحضرية يعتمد على الرضا العام مع حي التي هي بدورها تعتمد على الرضا العام من الميزات المادية والظروف الاجتماعية والظروف الاقتصادية من الحي. لذلك كانت مستويات الرضا من كل ليتم جمعها وتحليلها. وأجري الاستبيان مع حجم عينة من ١٠٠ كما يتضح من البيانات الأولية للبحث. تم الحصول على البيانات الثانوية من التقارير، والمقالات، وما إلى ذلك نفذت أنواع مختلفة من تحليل البيانات خارج للحصول على نتائج مختلفة. كانوا يعملون الإحصاء الوصفي، وتحليل مصفوفة الارتباط والنموذج المعادلة الهيكلية لاختبار الفرضية وتم الحصول على النتائج. من هذه النتائج، وجد أن سكان في المنطقة ان "راض جدا" مع الحوار والجودة الشاملة للحياة الحضرية. الارتباط مع منطقة هو الأكثر ارتباطا بما يرضي مع الداخل ورضا مع نوعية الحياة الحضرية هو الأكثر ارتباطا بما يرضي مع الظروف الاقتصادية. كما أنها وجدت أن نوعية الحياة الحضرية تعتمد على رضا الحي وأي تعديل ورضا حي هو بدوره يعتمد على معلمه المادية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية. فإن أي تعديلات أو تغييرات تطراً عليها تؤدي في النهاية إلى تغيير في نوعية الحياة الحضرية. وقدمت توصيات من نتائج لتحسين كل من رضا الحي ونوعية الحياة الحضرية. وأخيراً قدمت اقتراحات لمزيد من البحث حول مواضيع تتعلق بهذا الموضوع. وبالتالي الوفاء بالبحوث أهدافها وغاياتها، وأضاف إلى المعرفة القائمة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declared that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institution.

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I dedicate this dissertation to:

My grandparents, my parents, family and well-wishers, who stood by me throughout this academic journey.

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Thanks and praises to the all mighty Allah for his protection and guidance right from the single first step of this academic journey. With his mercy and blessings, I have come this far and I wish no more wants but grant me my needs to achieve a blessed and happy ending, Ameen.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
EPZ	Environmental Protection Zone
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KL	Kuala Lumpur
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MQLI	Malaysian Quality of Life Index
QOL	Quality of Life
QOUL	Quality of Urban Life
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SWB	Subjective Well Being
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Quality of Life can be interpreted as the satisfaction that a person receives from surrounding human and physical conditions, conditions that are scale-dependent and can affect the behavior of individual people, groups such as households and economic units such as firms. (Mulligan, 2004). In order to understand the QOL in a particular setting, such as a city, we need to measure conditions in that place using sets of indicators. Furthermore, we need to monitor changes in those conditions over time in order to appraise or determine if and how those conditions have changed. And if they have changed, we need to determine if they have improved or deteriorated and by how much. QOL is studied by various fields and in the built environment, it is interpreted as Quality Of Urban Life (QOUL) (Marans and Stimson, 2011). Studies are being undertaken by various researchers to establish the relationship between QOUL and neighbourhood satisfaction and one such example is that of Derya and Ahmet (2011) in the historical city of Famagutsa in Turkey. In this dissertation, an attempt is made to find out the relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and its relationship to QOUL in Setiawangsa, a small middle-income residential neighbourhood of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Malaysian economy has grown steadily in the past decade making it a middle-income nation from a agriculture and commodity-based economy. The per capita GDP has

grown and the Malaysian Quality of Life Index has improved by 7.0 points during 1990-2000 and another 11.9 points from 2000 to 2010 (EPU,2011). According to Mohit (2013), variations exist in the regional quality of life in Malaysia. This gives an objective analysis of the quality of life in various regions of Malaysia. Although the works of DasimahBte Omar (2009), Hafazah Abdul Karim (2012) give a subjective analysis of QOL in Malaysia, there is insufficient literature explaining the subjective analysis establishing a relationship between QOUL and neighbourhood satisfaction.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions arise from the problems stated which need to be answered:

- What are the satisfaction levels of the residents about the neighbourhood and quality of urban life?
- What are the factors, which affect their satisfaction levels?
- What is the extent to which neighbourhood satisfaction is related to the quality of urban life?
- What improvements should be made to enhance the neighbourhood satisfaction level and the quality of urban life?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to determine the relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life.

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To assess the level of satisfaction of the residents about the neighbourhood and

quality of urban life.

- To identify the key determinants of neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life.
- To establish a relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life.
- To provide recommendations that may improve the neighbourhood satisfaction level and the quality of urban life.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study about neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life is significant in many ways:

- At first, it benefits the residents and the public at large as the findings of the research can help in improving their satisfaction levels.
- Then it helps the policy makers, administrators, politicians, etc. who are involved in the decision and policy making to form policies accordingly to improve the quality of urban life of the people.
- It contributes to the field of urban planning as planners could make use of the findings in their neighbourhood designs to enhance the wellbeing of the residents.
- The construction industry, developers, etc. will benefit by knowing the needs of the public and thereby providing the appropriate facilities.
- Last but not the least, it adds to the existing knowledge about the subject and assists in further research on the subject.

1.6 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study aims to determine the relationship between neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life in a middle-income neighbourhood in Kuala Lumpur. The neighbourhood of Setiawangsa in Kuala Lumpur is chosen as the study area. The terrace houses of the neighbourhood were chosen for primary data collection. The study will help know how far the residents are satisfied with the physical, social and economic features of the neighbourhood and their perception about the quality of urban life. This will help establish a relationship between both. This study deals with the perception of the residents and therefore is subjective. The subjective analysis is much suited at the neighbourhood level as it focuses more on the individual's perceptions. Arndt(1981) stressed that this type of analysis has a higher degree of validity compared to the objective analysis. Therefore, objective analysis is not undertaken here.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into four stages as background and theoretical study, data collection, findings and analysis, and conclusions and recommendations. The first stage contains chapters one and two. Chapter one introduces the subject, statement of problems, gives the aims and objectives, the research questions raised, the significance and the scope of study. Chapter two deals with the study of various literatures related to the topic from which the definitions are formulated. It also reviews other researches undertaken related to the subject. The second stage consists of the background and details of the study area, the methods of data collection used, etc. These are discussed in chapter three. The third stage is the findings and analysis stage which is under chapter four. In this chapter, the data is analyzed using various analysis techniques

and the results are obtained. The final stage or the fourth stage is under chapter five. Chapter five gives the conclusions from the results obtained and it gives the recommendations for improving the neighbourhood satisfaction and quality of urban life.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the subject and gives the background to the study. The main problem is stated and the research questions are raised. The aim and objectives of the research is stated which sets the focus for the research. The contribution of the study to various fields is also given. The scope of the study is also explained along with the way in which the study is organized. The next chapter deals with the review of the existing literature and works related to the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature review is an examination of the works of others related to the topic to get the necessary background. This chapter highlights the relevant documents as contributed by other writers to the subject matter from both theoretical and empirical perspective. Books, articles, journals, newspapers etc. relevant to this study were critically examined, analysed and explained in relation to the study. In this chapter also, terms and terminologies are defined to broaden the scope and understanding of the subject matter i.e. QOL and neighbourhood satisfaction.

2.2 QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life (QOL) is used and understood by most people as ‘goodness of life’ and being able to live successfully and happily within the environment (Brown & Brown, 2005). QOL should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is based primarily on income. Instead, standard indicators of the QOL include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time and social wellbeing (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, & Watts, 2009). There is no universal definition or a standard form of measurement for quality of life and this has made studying it more challenging and interesting for researchers (Cummins, 1997). This is because different people in different parts of the world have defined QOL differently based on their own cultures, social environment and level of economic development. Persons living in under developed or developing

countries have different perception on level of comfort, enjoyment and ability to pursue their daily activities from their peers in developed countries.

In spite of this, WHO or World Health Organization has prepared a cross-culturally comparable quality of life assessment instrument called WHOQOL-BREF. It defines QOL as-

“An individual’s perception of his/her position in the context of culture and value systems in which they live in and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept incorporating in a complex way, the person’s physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and relationships to salient features of the environment” (WHOQOLGroup, 1998).

The QOL can be conceptualized as a construct possessing the following characteristics: (Cummins, 2005)

- a. It is multidimensional and influenced by personal and environmental factors and their interactions.
- b. It has the same components for all people.
- c. It has both subjective and objective components.
- d. It is enhanced by self-determination, resources, purpose in life and sense of belonging.

2.3 QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE

As the world is becoming rapidly urbanised, it is estimated that more and more people will start living in urban areas. By the year 2050, it is predicted that 64.1% of the developing and 85.9% of the developed world will be urbanised. In Malaysia, in 2011,

72.8% of the population were urbanised and by 2050, it is predicted that 86% of the population will be urbanised(United Nations, 2012). As the urban population grows, maintaining the quality of life in the urban areas becomes more difficult and is a matter of concern. Therefore, studies on quality of life related to urban areas become a necessity as QOL can:

- Provide the necessity for public action(Dahmann, 1985),(Lu, 1999).
- Affect the liveability of urban areas and provide a set of indicators that help policy makers and planners to assess the effectiveness of their policies and works (Marans, 2002).
- Influence choices of residential location.(Golledge & Stimson, 1987)
- On a broader scale, affect the patterns of regional migration, economic growth, and environmental sustainability (Kemp, et al., 1997).

In the 1980s, the perception of QOL was becoming imperative in studies focusing on the quality of a place or the geographic setting at various scales (country, city, community and neighbourhood). These kinds of studies referred to quality of urban life (QOUL) which dealt mainly with assisting urban policy development and leading resources to urban needs (Marans, 2012). This focus is conceptually distinct from individual QOL research that has examined factors impacting individual's well-being. Thus, the quality of life is divided into two distinct concepts that are individual QOL, including family life, friends, partner satisfaction and environmental QOL, involving the quality of urban life as a term of particular interest to designers and environment behaviour researchers. The second group ranged in scale from the individual dwelling, community, neighbourhood, city, region, or even to the state or nation. It has been documented that where people live, will influence their lives and therefore, their overall QOL (Marans & Stimson, 2011). The city is probably the most

researched social and spatial unit as far as QOL studies are concerned. In QOL research when done on urban areas or cities, the more appropriate term to be used will “Quality of Urban Life (QOUL)” (Eva, Alex, & Psycharis, 2011). This term, Quality of Urban Life or QOUL has been used by a number of researchers in their studies about QOL in urban areas in preference over the term quality of life or QOL (Marans & Stimson, 2011). The studies of QOUL are multi-dimensional and involve various fields of sciences. Because of this, there is no standard methodology of research and as such, different approaches can be undertaken for the study of QOUL (Eva, Alex, & Psycharis, 2011).

2.4 NEIGHBOURHOOD SATISFACTION

2.4.1 Definition of Neighbourhood

A neighbourhood is a geographically localised community within a larger city, town, suburb or rural area. According to Chaskin (2006), neighbourhood has different connotations depending on an individual’s interpretation. Neighbourhood can be defined at different scales and by various characteristics depending on context and purpose (Galster, 2001). Schuck, Amie, & Dennis (2006) say that researchers have not agreed on a definite definition for neighbourhood. So they define it as follows,

“Neighbourhood is generally defined spatially as a specific geographic area and functionally as a set of social networks. Neighbourhoods, then, are the spatial units in which face-to-face social interactions occur – the personal settings and situations where residents seek to realise common values, socialise youth, and maintain effective social control.”

According to theorists of neighbourhood, it is both a physical and social space. (Ruth, 2003). Suttles (1972) argues that neighbourhood exists at three levels.

First, one being the home area, has a psycho-social purpose which foster a sense of attachment and belonging, wherein one can demonstrate and reflect their values and connect with others. The second one being the locality is the area for residential activities, which denotes the social status and provisions. Provisions of local shops and services operate at this level. The third one, the urban district or region has broad social and economic opportunities. Thus, people assess their neighbourhood with reference to the friendliness of their next-door neighbours, the quality of local schools or parks, and the atmosphere and facilities of the city centre and the job opportunities within an even broader travel-to-work area.

Galster (2001) as cited in Ruth (2003) defines neighbourhood as “bundles of spatially-based attributes” which include:

- Environmental characteristics – topographical features, pollution etc.
- Proximity characteristic – influenced by both location and transport infrastructure.
- Characteristics of the buildings – type, design, materials, density, repair etc.
- Infrastructural characteristics – roads, streetscape etc.
- Demographic characteristics of the population.
- Class status characteristics of the population.
- The existence and quality of local services.
- Political characteristics – political networks, involvement of residents etc.
- Social-interactive characteristics – friend and family networks, associations, strength of social control forces etc.
- Sentimental characteristics – sense of identification with place, historical significance, etc.

2.4.2 Neighbourhood satisfaction

Campbell et al. (1976) define satisfaction as the perceived discrepancy between aspiration and achievement, ranging from perception of fulfillment to that of deprivation. It is seen as a product of comparisons between assessments of life situations in which individuals find themselves and their internal standards derived from past experiences and observations. It is also a process of evaluation between what was received and what was expected (Parker & Mathews, 2001). Satisfaction is a subjective response to an objective environment. (Potter & Cantarero, 2006).

Satisfaction with social and physical features of the neighbourhood tends to contribute to the overall neighbourhood satisfaction, which influences positively the overall feelings toward life, i.e. quality of life (Salleh, 2012). On the other hand, neighbourhood satisfaction measures the difference between resident's actual and desired neighbourhood's circumstances. In fact, residents usually make their judgments about neighbourhood conditions based on their needs and aspirations (Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002). Neighbourhood satisfaction arises from three mechanisms i.e. social, physical, and institutional mechanisms (Buck, 2001).

Physical mechanism: quality and design

Some have argued a direct relation between design and criminal or anti-social behaviours as poor design give opportunities for criminal behaviour and obstructed lines of sight forestall social control (Newman, 1972). The assumption is that the impersonal and dreary architecture as well as unsafe design negatively affect the residents and their perception. However, there does not appear to be a singular causal relation between the built environment and neighbourhood satisfaction. The social functioning of a neighbourhood seems to depend largely on the residents, and thus on