



A STUDY ON RESIDENTS' QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE  
IN WANGSA MAJU AREA, KUALA LUMPUR CITY,  
MALAYSIA

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The well-being of Malaysians has improved significantly throughout the last 12 years, and the public now enjoys better services. Based on the new Malaysian Wellbeing Index (MWI) which replaced the Malaysian Quality of Life Index (MQLI), there was a significant increase by 25.4 points during the period from 2000 to 2012. While Mercer's quality of living (2012) ranked Kuala Lumpur 80 out of 207 cities; however, these indexes do not match the quality of urban life at the city level, and there is a significant need to investigate the quality of urban life of Kuala Lumpur city which intends to A World Class City by 2020. Moreover, investigating the quality of urban life of Kuala Lumpur city requires working on neighborhood level which is the main determinant of the overall quality of life of Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, this research is undertaken to study the quality of urban life of Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur. The literature review of works regarding the theoretical framework of quality of urban life with their applications in certain urban areas was undertaken. The researcher finds out that the subjective assessment of the quality of urban life which depends on people's perception is more suitable for the neighborhood level. The key aim of the research is to examine the overall quality of urban life in Wangsa Maju Area, Kuala Lumpur based on residents' perception. A questionnaire survey was undertaken with a sample size of 200 as the primary data of the research. Several types of data analysis were conducted to obtain results such as descriptive statistics, satisfaction levels, correlation matrix analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). From the findings, it was found that the residents' assessment of the overall quality of urban life in Wangsa Maju was "good". Having the correlation matrix analysis for the overall satisfaction levels of all quality of urban life sectors with the overall assessment of quality of urban life in neighborhood, the researcher finds that the overall assessment of quality of urban life in neighborhood is most significant when correlated to overall satisfaction with spiritual life. From SEM, The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is employed to achieve model good fit as found in the literature based on certain criteria. Also a part by part analysis revealed that Malays are more concerned with their spiritual life compared to the other races. Afterward, the study has made several recommendations towards improving Wangsa Maju residents' satisfaction and the quality of urban life. Finally, a suggestion was made for further research on related topics.

## خلاصة البحث

خلال السنوات الاثنتي عشرة الماضية تحسن مؤشر الرفاهية الماليزي بشكل كبير وقد انعكس ذلك على قطاع الخدمات العامة بماليزيا. واستنادا إلى مؤشر الرفاهية الماليزي الجديد (MWI) الذي حل محل مؤشر جودة الحياة الماليزي (MQLI) فإن زيادة كبيرة بمقدار ٢٥,٤ نقطة أضيفت خلال الفترة الزمنية من ٢٠٠٠ - ٢٠١٢م. بينما تصنيف جودة الحياة لـ ميرسر (٢٠١٢) صنف كوالالمبور في المرتبة ٨٠ من أصل ٢٠٧ مدينة. ومع ذلك فإن هذه المؤشرات لا تتماشى مع مؤشرات جودة الحياة على مستوى المدن مع وجود حاجة ملحة لدراسة جودة الحياة الحضرية لمدينة كوالالمبور والتي تطمح أن تصنف ضمن المدن المتقدمة على مستوى العالم (A World Class City) بحلول ٢٠٢٠م. لكن دراسة جودة الحياة الحضرية في مدينة كوالالمبور تتطلب العمل على مستوى الأحياء والتي بدورها تكون العامل الرئيس الذي يحدد جودة الحياة الحضرية عموما في كوالالمبور نفسها. لذلك عني هذا البحث الموسوم بـ (دراسة جودة الحياة الحضرية في منطقة وانجسا ماجو) بدراسة جودة الحياة الحضرية في تلك المنطقة والتي تتألف من عدة أحياء. في البداية تم استعراض الدراسات السابقة بجانبها النظري والتطبيقي والمتعلقة بجودة الحياة الحضرية. بناءً على ذلك اختار الباحث منهجية التقييم الشخصي أو الذاتي لجودة الحياة الحضرية والتي تعتمد على تصور السكان لمناسبتها في دراسة جودة الحياة الحضرية على مستوى الأحياء. وقد استطلع الاستبيان آراء ٢٠٠ مقيم في منطقة الدراسة. وبعد ذلك أجريت عدة أنواع من تحليل البيانات للحصول على النتائج، مثل: الإحصاء الوصفي (Descriptive Analysis)، ومستوى الرضى (Satisfaction Levels)، وتحليل مصفوفة الارتباط (Correlation Matrix Analysis)، وهيكلية معادلة النمذجة (Structural Equation Modeling). وقد أظهرت النتائج أن تقييم السكان العام للحياة الحضرية في وانجسا ماجو "جيد". فضلا عن أن التقييم العام لجودة الحياة الحضرية في وانجسا ماجو هو الأكثر أهمية عند ربطه بالرضى عن الحياة الروحية للسكان. كما كشفت النتائج أن الملاويين أكثر اهتماما بالحياة الروحية مقارنة بالأجناس الأخرى مثل: الصينيين، والهنود. وبعد ذلك قدمت الدراسة عدة توصيات من أجل تحسين مستوى الرضى لدى سكان وانجسا ماجو مع تحسين جودة الحياة الحضرية. وأخيرا قدم اقتراح لإجراء مزيد من البحوث حول الموضوعات ذات الصلة المباشرة بالبحث.

## 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 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.

Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Haj Moustafa

Signature .....

Date .....

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WANGSA MAJU AREA, KUALA LUMPUR CITY, MALAYSIA**

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Planning Unit (EPU), in its report on the Malaysian Quality of Life Index (MQLI) 2002, defines quality of life as encompassing personal advances, a healthy lifestyle, access and freedom to pursue knowledge, and attaining a standard of living which surpasses the fulfilment of the basic and psychological needs of the individual, to achieve a level of social well-being compatible with the nation's aspirations. However, determining the quality of urban life requires working on their dimensions and having a set of indicators to measure them. This research intends to study the quality of urban life of the residents of Wangsa Maju area, Kuala Lumpur based on subjective methods through residents' perceptions.

### **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Based on Economic Intelligent Unit's QOL index (2005), Malaysia is ranked 36 out of 111 countries while Mercer's quality of living (2012) ranked Kuala Lumpur 80 out of 207 cities. Nevertheless, these indexes do not reflect quality of urban life at city level, and there is a critical need to determine quality of life of Kuala Lumpur city which intends to A World Class City by 2020. Moreover, investigating quality of life of Kuala Lumpur city requires working at neighbourhood's level which is the main determinant of the overall quality of urban life of Kuala Lumpur. However, there is a lack of studies on neighbourhood's level of Kuala Lumpur City. The main contribution of this study is investigating the subjective quality of urban life of Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The key aim of this research is examining the overall quality of urban life in Wangsa Maju area, Kuala Lumpur. In particular, there are four objectives which reflect the key aim:

- A. Investigating the subjective quality of urban life in Wangsa Maju area, Kuala Lumpur through people's perceptions and satisfactions.
- B. Identifying the main determinants of Wangsa Maju area satisfaction and quality of urban life.
- C. Determining a relationship between Wangsa Maju area satisfaction and quality of urban life
- D. Overall assessment of quality of urban life and satisfaction of Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur.
- E. Making recommendations towards improving the residents' quality of urban life and satisfaction of Wangsa Maju area, Kuala Lumpur.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1. What are the residents' perceptions about subjective quality of urban life indicators in different parts of Wangsa Maju area, Kuala Lumpur?
- 2. What are the variables and indicators of residents' quality of urban life and satisfaction?
- 3. What is the relationship between Wangsa Maju area satisfaction and quality of urban life?
- 4. What policy should be adopted to improve the quality of life of Wangsa Maju are, Kuala Lumpur?

## **1.5 SCOPE OF WORK**

The research aims at producing information about the households and residential environments in Wangsa Maju area of Kuala Lumpur which includes residents' perceptions of their neighbourhoods in order to investigate the overall quality of urban life in the selected area. The research tries to reveal how residents are satisfied about different attributes of their urban quality of life such as economic capacity, physical and emotional health, spiritual life, environmental functionality, safety & security, home condition, social involvement and community participation. According to McCrea, Western and Stimson (2011) the subjective measurement of quality of urban life has been conceptualized as satisfaction in a set of urban attributes (e.g. housing and neighbourhood satisfaction) in which contributing to the overall life satisfaction. This research adopts this approach with most of the analysis and discussion referring to the measures of satisfaction in different urban attributes

## **1.6 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

This study is intended to investigate the quality of urban life and level of satisfaction in the selected area through residents' perception about their neighbourhood where the following have significant benefits in different ways:

- 1. Local authority:** this study might be a source of information for the government to measure the impacts of the physical planning and adopted strategies in which enables the adoption of a proper policies that direct the development in the selected area with its surroundings.
- 2. Residents:** exploring peoples' perception is the key priority of this study that helps in improving satisfaction levels, and to know what is bad and what is good from their perception.

3. **Planners and designers:** this study contributes to the urban planning in the way that helps planners to utilize the findings to improve the overall residents' quality of urban life for the selected area with its surroundings.
4. **Further studies:** this study might present a database about the selected area where it can be utilized in a larger study such as the quality of urban life for city level.

### **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The study is divided into four phases as following: the first phase includes the theoretical and empirical background; the second phase is primarily about data collection; the third phase provides data analysis and finding; the final phase is entirely about recommendations and conclusion. Chapters' details are as following:

**Chapter one** consists of an overview of the research structure and outline which makes a solid ground to build on. The chapter begins with introducing the topic and problem statement. Then stating the research aim and objectives followed by research questions and the scope of work. Finally research significance and organization of the research are stated.

**Chapter two** deals with the theoretical and empirical studies that cover quality of life and quality of urban life studies. It is an overview of theoretical framework and its applications in certain urban areas. It also reviews some of the empirical studies that conducted by researchers around the world to explore their methodologies with its findings.

**Chapter three** contains the research methodology, and the primary concern is explaining the study approach of data collection which is needed so as to fulfil the

study objectives and answer the study questions. It includes also a description of the analytical process of the extracted data from the questionnaires.

**Chapter four** presents a brief description about the study area so as to enable further understanding of the site.

**Chapter five** is the most important chapter which is concerned with the major analysis and findings. The chapter starts by analysing extracted data using SPSS with several analytical techniques, and then the obtained results are described.

**Chapter six** presents a summary of the entire study, and it draws a conclusion based on the key findings addressing quality of urban life. The chapter also draws some recommendations for enhancing quality of urban life for neighbourhood level and further studies.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the research is outlined through introducing the topic with the short background. At the beginning, the problem is selected and research questions are defined. The main aim and related objectives of the research are also stated that indicate the research contribution. The scope of research is discussed beside the way that the study is organized.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Quality of urban life study is crucial for improving person or group condition, and it is also essential for policy makers to help them make the right decision. Therefore, the key focus of this chapter is on the theoretical and empirical studies that cover quality of life and quality of urban life studies. It is an overview of theoretical framework and its applications in certain urban areas which copes with residents' perception. In addition, the major aim of this review is exploring strategies and applications of the theories on the real ground. We also review some of the empirical studies that are conducted by researchers around the world to explore their methodologies with its results which can guideline this research.

#### **2.2 QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE CONCEPT**

The concept of the quality of urban life contains all manifestations of existence that includes various disciplinaries such as geography, health, social sciences, among others. Perhaps the meaning of quality of urban life is subjective and means different things to people; it incorporates a sense of socioeconomic security with the fulfilment of other non-material needs and aspirations. It is also considered as the most important aspect of prosperity. The Legatum Prosperity Index takes into consideration the quality of urban life as multidimensional, containing both wealth and wellbeing. Generally in most of quality of life indicators, education and health are included; however components of quality of life in urban areas such as environment and infrastructure are often neglected. Moreover, the concept of quality of urban life is

usually connected with well-planned, basic services, sustainable transport systems, green open spaces, cultural and sports facilities, and healthy and supportive environment.

## **2.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Trying to define urban quality of life seems complicated, and it requires a wide understanding of a complex concept of various disciplines that deal with the term of urban quality of life. It can be said that the term quality of urban life tends to explain or describe the dynamics and the reticular relationships that exist between different physical features. Therefore, to be precise, we will take the term urban quality of life apart into more accurate terms, and then find the relationship between those terms.

### **2.3.1 Quality**

To begin with, the word quality is the cornerstone in which we can build on, and its precise meaning can express or illustrate the term urban quality of life. The word quality is widely used in the daily life without thinking about its own comprehensive meaning. Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'quality' as "the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something".

### **2.3.2 Quality of Life**

The concept of quality of life is central for a lot of studies which conducted to measure different dimensions of physical features; however there is no consensus on a precise definition which can lead to one direction or share the same perspective. Many authors have indicated that there are several definitions but no universal accepted one

(Lim, Yuen, & Low, 1999; Ormel, Lindenberg, Steverink, & Vonkorff, 1997; Snoek, 2000).

When we take a look at different definitions, we can notice easily that some of them too general as Dalkey and Rourke who stated a broad definition: “a person’s sense of well-being, his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life, or his happiness or unhappiness” (Ferrans & Powers, 1985). “Well-being” and “satisfaction” are utilized commonly in many definitions. Moreover, quality of life, satisfaction, wellbeing, happiness and self-esteem are often used interchangeably (Felce & Perry, 1995; Lim et al., 1999). Basically this variety makes it more complicated. Felce & Perry (1995) argue that a definition must take in account subjective circumstances. The emphasis on including life conditions stated via Clark (2000) who suggests “.. the quality of life for an individual is affected significantly by his or her social environment.” Nevertheless, regardless of the lack of consensus there are some points of convergence that are manifested via the concept of multidimensional construct of quality of life by many researchers (Massam, 2002). Those dimensions which were proposed are; environmental, psychological and social (Snoek, 2000). In addition, there is a great emphasis on adding both objective and subjective elements to the definition.

### **2.3.3 Quality of Urban Life**

The concept of quality of urban life is complex in the way that requires a better understanding of the relationship, the dynamics and the reticular relationship that exist among several dimensions of this concept. It refers to the quality of built environment in urban areas as well as built environment in rural areas in accordance with the sustainability of the development with respect to an individual’s quality of life.

Planners seek to enhance quality of life for person or group or in a specific place. Additionally, enhancing quality of urban life is complicated, and it requires an integral approach to achieve human satisfaction with different attributes (urban attributes, social attributes and environmental attributes) table 2.1

Table 2.1 Quality of Life Attributes

<b>Urban Attributes</b>	<b>Social Attributes</b>	<b>Environmental Attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- population and building densities</li> <li>- quality of public spaces</li> <li>- land use patterns</li> <li>- transportation</li> <li>- ease of access for all to basic goods</li> <li>- services and public amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- protecting public health</li> <li>- safety and security</li> <li>- education and social integration</li> <li>- promoting equality and respect for diversity and cultural identities</li> <li>- increased accessibility for persons with disabilities</li> <li>- preservation of historic buildings and districts</li> <li>- promoting spatial diversification and mixed use of housing and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- respecting local landscapes and treating the local environment with respect and care</li> </ul>

Source: Van Kamp, Leidelmeijer, Marsman, & De Hollander (2003)

## 2.4 QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE DIMENSIONS

It is clear that the concept of quality of urban life is a multi-dimensional concept, and the correlation among these dimensions makes up the overall quality of urban life. However, determinants of the correlations between different dimensions vary in accordance with places and societies. We can specify seven major dimensions which

determine quality of urban life: (i) physical urban quality of life such as facilities, urban fabric, land use, services, facilities and infrastructure, (ii) economical urban quality of life, (iii) environmental urban quality of life such as natural aspects of the neighborhood (iv) mobility urban quality of life such as accessibility, traffic and transportation issues, (v) social urban quality of life such as social attributes and people interaction, (vi) psychological urban quality of life such as the feeling of citizens toward their neighborhood, and (vii) political urban quality of life. In addition, these dimensions are interdependent and interrelated in which they serve as one union. (Figure 2.1)

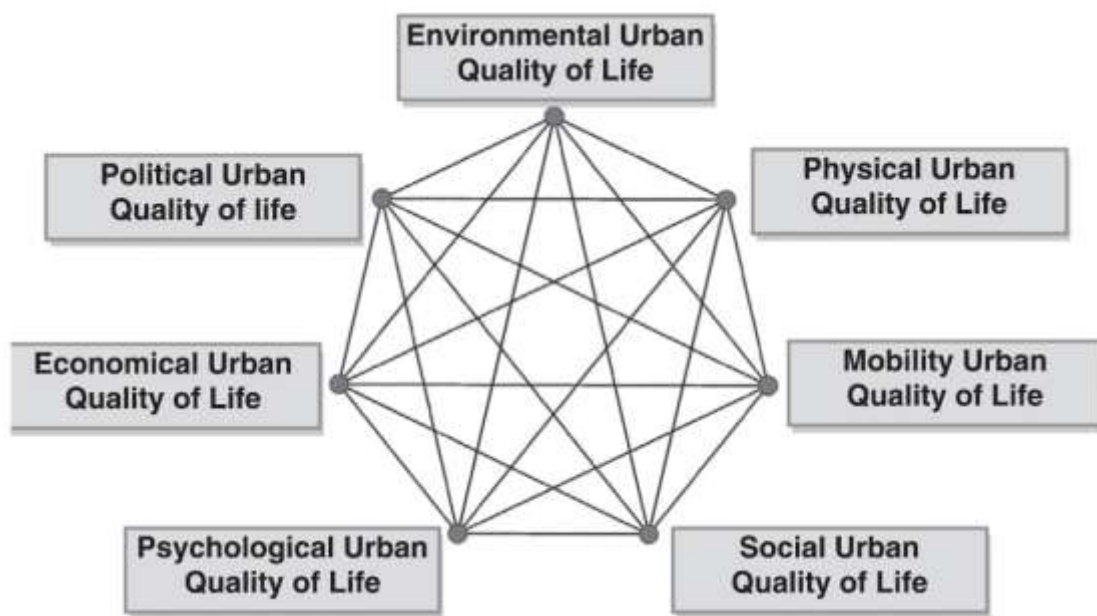


Figure 2.1 Quality of Urban Life Dimensions  
Source: Van Kamp, Leidelmeijer, Marsman, & De Hollander (2003)

## 2.5 SURVEYING QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE STUDIES

Indeed, there are two main parts of the current research that consist theoretical perspective and empirical studies: