



INVESTIGATING RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE IN
TAMAN TUN DR. ISMAIL, KUALA LUMPUR

BY

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ABSTRACT

Where we live influences our lives and, thus, our quality of lives. Therefore, urban environments should be designed as places with the best quality of life – those with the least preventable daily obstructions. This study utilised subjective approach as the direct effects of objective social dimensions on subjective assessments of social environment have been found to be weak. The study utilised seven life domains that contribute to the residents' quality of life (QOL). Sixteen hypotheses have been tested to investigate which life domains contribute the most and the least to residents' satisfactions with their quality of urban life (QOUL), and which domains and indicators are significantly related to one another. The assessment was collected via questionnaire survey with a sample of 260 respondents living in TTDI. The secondary data were obtained from desktop research, books, and KLCH. The frequency analysis found that the mean for overall QOUL in the neighbourhood is "slightly good." The mean for all life domains are "slightly satisfactory." Spiritual life has the highest mean, while economic ability has the lowest mean. However, when the analysis distinguishes QOL from conventional QOUL domains, i.e. health and spiritual life are excluded; domain with the highest mean is home features, while the lowest mean is still economic ability. Similarly, correlation analysis found that spiritual life contributes the most to their overall QOUL, while the least is economic ability. However, when spiritual life and health are excluded from correlation analysis, domain that contributes the most to overall QOUL is social involvement and community participation. Multiple regression analysis found that all domains contribute significantly to the prediction of overall QOUL in the neighbourhood, except economic ability and safety in the neighbourhood. Recommendations were made based on the findings – to improve safety through CPTED measures; to solve insufficient home parking by improving public transport system; and improving residents' home privacy through quality soundproof wall. Suggestions for further research have been made to improve similar type of study in the future.

ملخص البحث

مما لاشك فيه إن للمكان الذي نعيش فيه تأثير على حياتنا، وعلى نوعية حياتنا أيضاً. وعلى هذا الأساس، فإن الفكرة الأساسية تعتمد على ذلك والتي يجب أن يبني عليه نهج البيئات الحضرية، وتخطيطه لأن البيئات الحضرية ينبغي أن تصمم كأماكن تتسم بنوعية حياة أفضل لسكانها الذين لديهم على الأقل بعض المشاكل اليومية التي يمكنهم الوقاية منها. وقد لوحظ أن هنالك بعض الآثار المباشرة من حيث الأبعاد الاجتماعية الموضوعية للشخص عند تقييمه للبيئة الاجتماعية بحكم أنها ضعيفة. ولمعرفة هذه الأثر، المنهج المتبع في هذه الدراسة استخدام بعض مجالات الحياة التي تسهم في نوعية حياة السكان. فإن هناك ست عشرة الفرضيات التحقق منها لمعرفة أي من مجالات الحياة قيد الدراسة بإمكانها أن تسهم بطريقة أكثر أو أقل على رضا السكان بنوعية حياتهم الحضرية، وأي نوع من الأبعاد والمؤشرات يمكن أن يكون له ارتباطاً معنوياً وفقاً لعلاقة كل منها بالآخر. تم الحصول على البيانات باستخدام الاستبيان الشخصي لعدد 260 فرداً. بينما تم الحصول أيضاً على المصادر الثانوية من المكتبة، ومجلس بلدية كوالالمبور. و أثبتت الاختبارات بمتوسط يقدر بأنة أقل من الجيد لكل مجالات الحياة قيد الدراسة مجتمة وذلك وفقاً لنتائج التحليل الاحصائي التي تم الحصول عليها. أوضحت الدراسة أيضاً أن الحياة الروحية أعطت أعلى معدل بينما القدرة الاقتصادية ادنى معدل . ولكن إذا تمت مناقشة التحليل عن طريق التمييز بين نوعية الحياة الريفية ونوعية الحياة المدنية هنا أستبعدت الحياة الصحية والحياة الروحية. بينما أشارت النتائج أيضاً أن أعلى معدل هو السكن، والقدرة الاقتصادية يبقى ادنى المعدل . من جهة أخرى أوضح تحليل الارتباط أن الحياة الروحية ساهمت بشكل أكبر في نوعية الحياة الحضرية، في حين أن أدنى المجالات هي القدرة الاقتصادية. والمجال الذي يسهم أكثر في نوعية الحياة المدنية عموماً هو المشاركة الاجتماعية والمشاركة المجتمعية. تم تقييم تحليل الانحدار المتعدد من أجل التنبؤ العام لنوعية الحياة الحضرية للجيران قيد الدراسة باستثناء التنبؤ العام للرضا مع القدرة الاقتصادية والسلامة. بناء على النتائج أوصت الدراسة تحسين بعض أنواع السلامة كمواقف السيارات المنزلية، وتحسين المواصلات العامة، وتحسين خصوصية المنزل وتزويده بجدار عازل للصوت لتجنب الإزعاج. أخيراً من المهم جداً إجراء المزيد من الدراسات والبحوث لتحسين مثل هذه الدراسة مستقبلاً.

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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Mohammad Abdul Mohit
Supervisor

I certify that I have 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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This dissertation is dedicated to fellow Malaysians and others who desire places with the best quality of life to live in their home countries.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
EIQ	Educational Institution Quarters
EUI	European University Institute
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
GIS	Geographic Information System
ILO	International Labour Organization
KL	Kuala Lumpur
KLCH	Kuala Lumpur City Hall
KLSP	Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MQLI	Malaysian Quality of Life Index
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit
QOL	Quality of Life
QOUL	Quality of Urban Life
RA	Resident Association
SD	Standard Deviation
TTDI	Taman Tun Dr Ismail
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Where we live influences our lives and, thus, our quality of lives. On this basis, a fundamental notion that should underlie planning approaches is that urban environments should be designed as places with the best quality of life – those with the least preventable daily obstructions. This study investigates residents' perceptions of their quality of urban life in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail (TTDI), Kuala Lumpur.

Quality of life is a holistic concept that comprises not only the material aspects such as housing and amenities but also the intangible aspects of life such as good health and the time to have leisure (Yuan et al., 1999). There is a distinction between the terms quality of life (QOL) and quality of urban life (QOUL). QOUL is derived from the urban environment, i.e., satisfaction is “derived from” urban domains, such as housing, neighbourhood, community and region. On the other hand, QOL is understood as satisfaction that typically includes experiences across all life domains (Marans & Stimson, 2011).

This study includes the discussions on both QOUL and QOL domains. QOUL domains included in this study are housing, functional environment, safety and security, as well as social involvement and community participation. On the other hand, the QOL domains are economic ability, health, and spiritual life. However, since this study is about the residents' perceptions of their quality of life in an urban neighbourhood, the term QOUL instead of QOL will be used when referring specifically to the study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2005, Kuala Lumpur is ranked 34 out of 70 cities by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Liveability Index (The Economist, 2005). In 2012, EIU hosted a competition offering users the opportunity to combine data from the Worldwide Cost of Living and Liveability surveys with other sources to provide a ranking of their own. In the new ranking, Kuala Lumpur ranks 37 out of 70 cities. In 2015, Kuala Lumpur is ranked in 84 out of 230 cities from all over the world by Mercer's Quality of Living. The purpose of the assessment is to help multinational companies and other employers to compensate their employees fairly when sending them to work in different countries.

It is not unusual for rating agencies to have different results because they usually use different indicators. The rankings also usually lack transparency in measures that are used and how the rankings are derived. Besides that, the studies above only utilised objective approach. Attempts to rank cities or particular neighbourhoods within a city according to the agencies' objective QOUL are rather pointless if residents are attracted to the place according to what is important to them (Marans & Stimson, 2011). Something that is considered significant to one person may not be significant to another. Hence, subjective approach is chosen for this study because the approach reveals how people are different in terms of their values, experiences, perceptions, and evaluations on their urban living.

In Malaysia, QOL studies at local or city level are very limited. There are only two studies (Mohit, 2014), which utilised subjective approach, and neither was conducted in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, it is very pressing for more local QOL studies to be conducted in Kuala Lumpur, in order to better understand QOL issues and learn what can be improved for the betterment of residents' lives.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the residents' perceptions of their QOUL in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail (TTDI)?
2. Which life domains contribute the most and the least to residents' satisfactions with their QOUL?
3. How do the residents and the authority can improve the QOUL in TTDI?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate residents' perceptions of their QOUL in TTDI.
2. To find out which life domains contribute the most and the least to residents' satisfactions with their QOUL.
3. To propose appropriate recommendations based on the findings towards improving overall QOUL in TTDI.

1.5 SCOPE OF WORK

The study is conducted at all housing types in TTDI. Currently, there are total of eight housing types available: detached, semi-detached, terrace, townhouse, condominium, government quarters, KLCH longhouse, and staff hostels. The researcher has been assigned to find at least 30 respondents from each housing type. The total number of respondents who participated in the survey is 260.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Places where we live can be viewed at various levels – from housing to neighbourhood, city, region, state or even nation. Where we live influences our lives

and, consequently, our quality of lives. On this basis, a fundamental notion underlying many planning approaches is that urban environments should be designed to increase residents' satisfaction level with their lives. Satisfactions in different urban domains influence both overall life satisfactions and intentions of people to move, where eventually, it affects regional implications for economic growth, population growth, environmental sustainability and migration patterns (Glaeser et al., 2000; Keeble, 1990; Ley, 1996; Liaw et al., 2002, cited in Marans & Stimson, 2011).

Therefore, studying QOL is important because it enables us to know what motivate people behaviour, and what contribute to their life satisfaction and happiness (Marans & Stimson, 2011). QOL study is significant for urban policy specifically because they directly shape the liveability of cities and provide a set of metrics that enable planners and policy makers to measure the effectiveness of their efforts (Marans, 2002); affect residential location decisions and choices (Campbell et al., 1976b; Golledge & Stimson, 1987; Zehner, 1977, cited in Marans & Stimson, 2011) and motivate the demand for public action (Dahmann, 1985; Lu, 1999, cited in Marans & Stimson, 2011).

Since population in Kuala Lumpur is rapidly increasing, and the city is expected to continue growing over the next few decades, it is necessary to examine the relationships between the characteristics of urban environments and the residents' perceptions of their quality of lives.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF STUDY

The study has been organised into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study background, statement of problems, provides the objectives, raises the research questions, and states the significance and scope of the study. Chapter two discusses

various theoretical and empirical studies related to the topic, that lead to the formulation of the hypotheses. Chapter three is about the research design, and method of data collection and analysis. Chapter four covers the background and importance of the study area. Chapter five provides data analysis and findings. Chapter six concludes the study by providing conclusions from the analyses, and recommendations are then proposed, as well as suggestions for further research to improve similar type of study in the future.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces the study background. The statement of problem is to discuss why the research is worth studying and the research contribution to social theories. The research objectives are stated to provide the focus of the study. The research questions are raised to investigate the unexplored yet crucial aspects of QOUL in TTDI as the study is unprecedented in the study area. The scope of work is explained and followed by how the study is organised. The next chapter discusses the theoretical and empirical studies related to the study in creating the basis for the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between quality of life and urban environments is complex. Residents' satisfactions of living in urban environments vary to what they believe as important. Satisfactions are influenced by their personal characteristics, such as values, expectations, perceptions and evaluations, as well as their demographic and socioeconomic attributes (Hsieh, 2003).

Scholars in both the social sciences and environmental design fields have been arguing that in addition to having an objective reality, "quality" of any entity also has a subjective dimension that is perceptual. Fundamental to that assertion is the notion that "the environment may be defined as having built, natural, and sociocultural dimensions," and different environmental settings will have specific attributes in terms of those dimensions. Research findings have proven that those three dimensions form important components of QOL and the subjective well-being of people (Marans, 2005, cited in Marans & Stimson, 2011).

2.2 QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)

There is still no general accepted definition of QOL and no consensus on the best way to measure QOL (Evans and Huxley, 2002). So far, WHOQOL's definition on QOL is the most referred definition. WHO created an international cross-cultural comparable QOL assessment instrument called WHOQOL-BREF. The assessment is based on the

individual's perception in the context of their culture and value system and their personal goals, standards, and concerns (WHOQOL Group, 1995):

An individual's perception of his/her position in life 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.

In recent years, there is a growing consensus that nations and governments need to develop a more holistic view of progress, rather than focusing mostly on economic indicators. In other words, there is a growing public interest in the interrelationships between economic, social and environmental aspects of life. The need to improve data and indicators to complement GDP has been increasingly acknowledged (Hoegen, 2009).

This has directed to numerous initiatives and adjustments. The UNDP has created Human Development Index (HDI) to provide a standard to countries based on combined measurements of GDP / capita, health and education. The World Bank with its calculation of savings has initiated to include social and environmental features when evaluating the wealth of nations. Several countries have taken national efforts to measure their development and progress in a more extensive way (Hoegen, 2009).

UNDP created HDI to highlight that people and their skills should be the ultimate criteria for evaluating the development of a nation, instead of economic growth alone. The HDI can also be utilised to question national policy choices, if two nations with similar level of GNI per capita end up with different results of human development. These differences can raise debate about government policy priorities (UNDP, 2015).

In brief, the HDI is a measurement of average achievement of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledgeable, and a decent standard of living. The health dimension is measured by life expectancy at birth. The education dimension is evaluated by mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and above; and expected years of schooling for children. The standard of living dimension is assessed by gross national income per capita (UNDP, 2015).

On the other hand, World Development Indicators evaluates social progress and quality of life, in addition to government role, development, environment, and physical infrastructure. The indicators are gathered by the World Bank and international associates, providing more than 900 variables for 208 economies since 1960 to 2015 (EUI, 2016).

The World Bank publishes the World Development Report (WDR) annually since 1978. WDR provides thorough analysis of a specific feature of economic development, such as equity, public services delivery, transition economies, labour, infrastructure, environment, and health. The reports are World Bank's well-known contribution to thinking about development (EUI, 2016).

2.3 QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE (QOUL)

QOUL is the satisfaction that a person receives from surrounding human and physical conditions, which are scale-dependent and can influence the behavior of individuals and groups of individuals (Mulligan et al., 2004). There is significant evidence that proves "place" matters in QOL concerns, and studies focusing on QOUL allow us to better understand the meaning of QOL and how to measure QOL (Marans, 2002, cited in Marans & Stimson 2011).