



The Satisfaction of Residents on Community Facilities in Shah Alam, Malaysia

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Abstract

Residents in urban areas are well provided with available facilities to choose from; may that be for education, grocery shopping, eating, recreation, praying, medical services and others. Residents can choose any of these facilities for their needs and wants. There is however some variance in the choice of facilities for different types of housing areas. The availability of facilities has to some degree affect the satisfaction of residents towards their housing environment. This paper revolves around the findings of a research relating to the level of satisfaction of residents in urban low cost flats towards the availability and accessibility of facilities in two cities. There are a total of eight locations of low cost flats; five of which are located in the city of Shah Alam and three locations in the city of Klang. Combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to approach this study. Survey data were analysed through the SPSS program and also by the Grounded Theory Analysis. The findings show that the factors of availability and accessibility of facilities play an important role in the level of satisfaction of these residents. Findings also show that that the respondents in Shah Alam are more satisfied compared to those in Klang towards the community facilities domain in their housing area. In general, it can be concluded that residents living in Shah Alam has a higher level of well-being than in Klang where community facilities domain is concerned.

Keywords: Low Cost Flats, Accessibility, Facilities, Community, Housing

1. Introduction

The housing environment is an important living domain for human beings. The life of a person is tied to the house in which he lives in. The house represent a shelter from outside elements, gives a status symbol to the owner, becomes an asset for the buyer and give the role of a neighbour or a member of a community to the resident. In the Dictionary of Human Geography (Johnston et. al 2000), housing is defined as a form of shelter, a refuge, a welfare service, an investment and a gateway to jobs, services and social support. In most societies, housing is available both according to need (in areas where housing provision is an element of social policy) and according to the ability to pay (where housing policy is more directly geared to market principles). This definition enlightened us to the reality of the provision of housing in a market economy where only those who can afford will pay the market price and those who cannot afford will be subsidized. Housing constitutes a big economic sector that generates income for the country and building houses provide employment to many people from the labourer to the housing developer. Therefore housing has many functions in a society and also a definite role in promoting the well-being of the residents who live, work and play in it. Housing consists of the physical components and the social components. The physical components include the houses, facilities and utilities while the social components include the families, neighbours and the community. For the purpose of this paper, only the community facilities component will become the focus of discussions.

2. The concept of well-being in housing

The concept of well-being in housing may be approached from the town planning point of view. In essence, town planning is an art and science of shaping the built environment we live in with the objective of creating a comfortable, safe, convenient and healthy living environment. For this purpose planning for housing is best approached at the neighbourhood level. This is because the conception of the neighbourhood unit according to Perry (1910) provides for houses, infrastructure, utilities, green parks, school, shops, places of worship, employment opportunities, clinics, other social and public facilities. These provisions are planned to promote cohesion of residents and therefore the well-being of residents. There are several ideas that encouraged planning at the neighbourhood level and the most classical one is the 'Garden City' concept by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), Perry (1910), Le Corbusier (1923) and Clarence Stein (1928) that can be found in the writings of Ratcliffe (1981). Therefore housing plays an important role in providing quality of life to people. Housing is central to the everyday life of human beings, being the core of social, cultural,

community and economic activity. MacCall (1975) stated the best way of approaching quality of life measurement is to measure the extent to which people's 'happiness requirements' are met. These requirements are necessary (although not sufficient) condition of anyone's happiness but those without which no member of the human race can be happy. What then constitute happiness? Aristotle the Greek philosopher claimed that happiness as being the ultimate end of man. Happiness in all its degree is good and there is nothing more valuable than happiness. Happiness expresses itself in moral virtues (courage, temperance, liberality, magnanimity, love of honour, mildness, truthfulness, friendship and the higher of them all justice) and also manifests itself in intellectual virtues (Sharif 1963). From the viewpoint of Islam, happiness is the feeling that resides in the heart. It is characterized by peace of mind, tranquillity, a sense of well being, and a relaxed disposition. It comes as a result of proper behaviour, both inward and outward, and is inspired by strong faith (Science ISLAM). Therefore it can be summarized that residents in a neighbourhood will be satisfied and happy when their housing 'needs and wants' are met. The literature also acknowledge that there are other reasons for people to be happy with their life but this study only concentrated on the feelings of happiness and satisfaction towards the availability, accessibility and choice of facilities.

3. Low cost housing policy in Malaysia

The nineteenth century saw most of the developed countries experiencing the migration of the majority of their populations moving from the country to the towns and cities and causing rapid urbanization. In the developing world scenario, for reasons of pressure as well as attraction, people had flocked to their cities in their hundreds or millions. These cities try to cope with the provisions of housing and facilities to the urban settlers but this phenomenon is sometimes an impossible task to tackle (Habitat 2001). The migrants moving to the city were at the time, the new pool of workers needed in the manufacturing sector but they had become victims to the lack of accommodation and affordable housing in these places.

In the policy context, the provision for low-cost housing was not explicitly mentioned as an objective in the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970), it was duly stressed that one of the major efforts of the government is to promote the welfare of the lower-income group. Then with the introduction of the NEP in 1971, housing program was undertaken by both public and private sectors directed towards meeting the specific needs of the population. The effort to improve the life quality of the poor was seen in the Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysian Plan (1971-1975) which points out that the provision of low-cost housing is aimed directly at improving the living conditions of the urban poor. In the Third Malaysia Plan, public housing programs focused mainly on low-cost, the construction of houses in land settlement schemes and the continuing provision of staff quarters. However, the provision for adequate and affordable housing for the lower income group was a top agenda in the Fourth Malaysia Plan (1981-1985) and the government included the involvement of the private sector in ensuring an adequate supply of low cost housing for the country. Under the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990), the low cost housing policy stresses not only the need to eradicate poverty but also to create new Malay urban communities which are active in the national economy. The housing policy under the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) still emphasized the development of the low income housing based on the human settlement concept and the continuation of the New Economic Policy. However a new policy of privatization of public low-cost housing was introduced to solve the housing for the poor and lower income group. The low-cost housing policy in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) announced a new strategy to resolve the low-cost housing needs of the country by emphasizing the role of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) to undertake massive low and medium cost housing projects throughout the country. The Malaysia Plans was drafted to assist and facilitate efforts in improving the quality of life for the Malaysian people stating that its citizens will enjoy and optimize available opportunities including education, employment and social facilities. The Plan also state that the government will take effort to ensure wider coverage of improved social facilities for all households.

Under the Eighth Malaysian Plan, (2001-2005), the government wants to undertake a program to upgrade and improve the low cost public housing to ensure that the buildings, common facilities and other public amenities are well maintained. The housing program emphasizes the safety, health, convenience and good living environment. In the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), housing development focus on the adequacy, quality and the affordability of housing for sale or rent, for all Malaysians, especially for those in the low and middle income groups. Among others, the implementation of the low cost housing program will be expedited in the final phase of the Ninth Malaysia Plan with the additional construction of 18 500 *Program Perumahan Rakyat* (Public Housing Program) units for rent. Furthermore, 12,300 units under the *Rumah Mampu Milik* (Affordable Housing) program will be built by 2010.

In summary, the low cost housing program in Malaysia is one of the top agenda in all the Malaysia Economic Plans in that the government wants the housing development to focus on adequate, quality and affordable housing. The Government wants housing for the low income earners emphasizes safety, health, convenience with ample provision of social facilities (Seventh and Eighth Malaysia Plan).

4. The Study Area: Shah Alam And Klang

Shah Alam and Klang are two cities located in the prosperous Klang Valley in the state of Selangor which has the

second highest urban population in Malaysia. According to the 2000 population census, the urban population in Klang is 631,676 persons. It is geographically located south-west from the city of Kuala Lumpur by the coast. Klang is famously known for being the royal town for the State. Between 1974 and 1977, Klang was the capital of Selangor when Kuala Lumpur became a Federal Territory and before Shah Alam was made the capital of Selangor. It was in 1977 when Klang Municipal Council was formed with a total area of 60.9 square kilometers. The city of Klang is made up of an older city centre which has grown radially along major routes and one of them linked the city to a port known as Port Klang. Some parts of the older city centre retained the colonial planning design and contains much of the past history of Klang. The newer parts have undergone massive developments with the building of huge shopping complexes and office towers. Klang has not yet been granted the city status but geographically, by virtue of the size of its population, Klang is considered as a city.

Shah Alam, the first planned new town in Malaysia was developed in 1963, formerly known as Sungai Renggam (later as Batu Tiga) with mostly with rubber and palm oil estates. Its current name was chosen by the then Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, after his late father Sultan Alam Shah. On 7th December 1978, through the proclamation of the late His Royal Highness Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Al Haj, the 8th Sultan of Selangor, Shah Alam has been declared as the new state capital of Selangor. The city was granted city status on 10 October 2000. In the 2000 Malaysian Census, the urban population of Shah Alam is estimated to be 319,612 persons. On the 10th of October 2000, the local council was upgraded from a municipal council to a city council known as the Shah Alam City Council (SACC).

The study area of Klang and Shah Alam is focused specifically on the low cost flats in and around the city centre irrespective of whether they are built by the private, public or a joint venture. They may be of a five storey walk-up flats or higher level flats with elevators. The locations of low cost flats in Klang are further away from the city centre because they were built much later after the land around the city was fully developed during the early years. The flats in Shah Alam are located near to the city centre because they were planned from the start to house the factory workers working in the industrial areas around the city centre. The cities of Klang and Shah Alam have their own unique histories and functions yet they also have similar characteristics such as heterogeneous population, high commercial activity, active housing industry and relatively good transportation system.

5. Methodology

The research into well-being of residents is approached by the qualitative methods and analysis and there are three types of surveys carried out to gather information and data. For this study the surveys are the visual survey, the questionnaire survey and the in-depth interview using the Grounded Theory method. The first two surveys comply with the parameters and the subjective indicators that had been decided for this study (Refer to Table 1). On the other hand the in-depth interview is not guided by any list of queries but the questions revolve on the theme of well-being and community facilities. The interviewer act as a moderator and the respondent is free to tell his side of the story. The study was undertaken in 8 locations in the two cities whereby there are five in Shah Alam and three in Klang.

The visual survey of the facilities includes the observation on the condition and location, with the help of a checklist of facilities. This is helpful towards understanding the daily activities of the community in that area. Photographs of the facilities and the neighbourhood environment are taken to become evidence of any complaints of the residents on the physical shortcomings of the housing facilities such as the lack of playing equipments, the lack of maintenance of playgrounds, the lack of shops or the lack of social facilities. A survey form was designed for personal interview to acquire the perceptions regarding the satisfaction of the facilities that are available in the two cities. The Likert scale measures the responses where scores and ratings are given for example to the perception of satisfaction on certain matters. The sampling methodology used for this research is a combination of both stratified and systematic random sampling. A ten percent (10%) sample of 508 units is found to be the most appropriate size to minimize the sampling error. Furthermore, the sample size is considered large enough to be reasonably confident that it represents the population size. As such a total of 508 questionnaires were systematically and personally distributed for the interview. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software processed the data obtained from the questionnaire survey.

6. Results and discussions

Firstly, the findings from Table 2 show that there are many types of facilities available in the study areas of Shah Alam and Klang. These are community facilities that are necessary to fulfill the needs of the everyday life of the community without which the well-being of the residents will be compromised. The location and distance of these facilities are also important aspects to consider and the findings show that the availability of facilities within the one kilometer radius of the low cost flats is higher in Shah Alam than in Klang. The reason for this is because Shah Alam is a planned new town where facilities inside the city have been planned from the design stage. The one kilometer radius is significant in showing the comfortable walking distance and the accessibility of the facilities. Almost all the fifteen facilities within the one kilometer radius have shown 80 to 100 percent availability in Shah Alam compared to Klang that lacked about five facilities such as secondary school, playing field, government clinic, community hall and mosque. This finding

shows that in the context of this study, the low cost flats in Shah Alam have more types of facilities which are located within the one kilometer radius when compared to those in Klang. The planned new town of Shah Alam has shown that the neighbourhood concept can provide the community facilities for the people in the neighbourhood while the low cost flats in Klang are built not according to the neighbourhood concept but either as an ad-hoc planning, infill planning or just as an afterthought.

Secondly, the results from the opinion and perception survey are shown in Table 3. The findings showed that; the percentages of satisfied respondents are considerably higher in Shah Alam than in Klang, there are more unsatisfied respondents in Klang regarding facilities like grocery shops, library, house of worship, public telephones, playing fields and community halls and, the level of perception of the provision of facilities in Shah Alam fulfilling the needs of the residents is higher as compared to Klang, for example in Shah Alam, most of the respondents are very satisfied with the health services and facilities because they perceive this facility has managed to address most of their health problems.

Thirdly, results from t-tests in Table 4 show that there is a significant satisfaction on the *tadika* (kindergarten), secondary school, children playground, community hall, *surau* (community praying hall) and mosque between the respondents in Shah Alam and Klang except for the primary school. Based on the mean score, the respondents in Shah Alam are shown to be more satisfied with most of the facilities compared to the respondents in Klang. This clearly shows that facilities in Shah Alam offer more satisfaction to the residents as compared to residents in Klang in the context of facilities provided.

The findings from the in-depth interview also agree with the t-test results although the respondents do not always categorize their difficulties as major problems. Some respondents voice out the problems of lack of playgrounds, lack of choice in their shopping outlets or that the schools are not that close to their houses but they seem to be quite forgiving with this situation. They say that there are some difficulties with the lack of satisfactory playing area but consider them only as a minor problem. And although they are unhappy with certain facilities, the respondents only quietly grumble and do not show any visible anger. Yet on closer observation these problems do cause some inconveniences in their life such as the need to use the public transport to go to the government hospital or to go to school (especially in Klang). But one has to understand the background of these respondents where a large number of them used to live in squatter settlements. Moving into the low cost housing environment is a blessing compared to the haphazard condition of squatter housing; with the lack of utilities and infrastructure. In fact there are many respondents who are very thankful and happy to be given the opportunity to live in low cost flats. Therefore from the Grounded Theory Analysis it can be concluded that availability of community facilities has increased the well-being of residents of the low cost flats in Shah Alam and Klang and that the unavailability of some facilities in Klang has to some extent decreased the satisfaction level its residents.

The planning of community facilities must take into consideration the number of population, the location, the type of facility and the distance between the low cost flats and the facility. In the case of Shah Alam, the planning of community facilities follows the appropriate town planning guidelines and standards. This is the normal practice for the planning of any new towns in Malaysia. Therefore it can be assume that planned new towns like Shah Alam will have more satisfied residents relating to the availability of facilities and this is so very true for Shah Alam. The benefits of planning can be enjoyed by all residents including those living in low cost flats.

7. Conclusions

On the whole, a considerable percentage of respondents are quite happy with their low cost flats environment which include the provision of community facilities. Needless to say the location of these flats is relatively accessible to all types of facilities by virtue of their urban location. Yet the findings show that the availability or unavailability of facilities have considerable effect on the well-being of the residents. The feelings of dissatisfaction with their lack of facilities in their housing environment will decrease their level of well-being. Being in the low income group they have little resources to acquire facilities that are located further away from their homes. With the increase in the price of petrol and other necessities in life, the lower income group relies heavily on facilities located within the compounds of their homes. With this in mind, it is hoped that the policy makers, the local authorities and the planners will not overlook the community needs of the people living in low cost housing and to plan accordingly in future.

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Table 1. Examples of Subjective Indicators

PARAMETERS	INDICATORS
Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •availability of facilities for playing •availability of facilities for interaction
Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •adequate facilities •good access to facilities •accessibility
Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •provision of adequate facilities •facilities located nearby •accessibility
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintenance of facilities •design of playing equipment •open drains
Frequency of usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Types of facilities

The data acquired from the survey was based on a questionnaire. The respondents were asked of their opinions about the community facilities based on several parameters. These parameters will guide the questions which can also be known as subjective indicators.

Table 2. The scores given for percentage of availability of facilities within the one kilometer radius of the low cost flats in the study area.

Facilities	Shah Alam		Klang	
	Availability (%)	Scores	Availability (%)	Scores
1. Kindergarten	100	3	100	3
2. Primary School	100	3	100	3
3. Secondary School	80	3	33	1
4. Children Playground	100	3	66	3
5. Playing Fields	100	3	0	1
6. Grocery Shops	100	3	100	3
7. Mini Markets	100	3	66	3
8. Food Stalls	100	3	66	3
9. Restaurants	100	3	66	3
10. Private Clinics	100	3	66	3
11. Government Clinics	40	2	0	1
12. <i>Surau</i>	100	3	100	3
13. Mosque	80	3	0	1
14. Community Hall	40	2	0	1
15. Public Phone	100	3	66	3
Total Scores		43		35

Note: *Surau* is a community prayer hall much smaller than a mosque.

The scores given are based on the percentage of the availability of facilities in each study location within one kilometer radius of the low cost flats (score 1 for 0% to 39%, score 2 for 40% to 65% and score 3 for 66% to 100%). For example; if all five locations in Shah Alam are provided with primary school then for that facility, Shah Alam deserves the score of 100 percent. The total scores given to the availability of facilities within the one kilometer radius of the study locations are 43 for Shah Alam and 35 for Klang. Therefore there is a higher availability of facilities in Shah Alam than in Klang.

Table 3. Percentage of satisfied respondents on the community facilities

Community Facilities	Shah Alam		Klang	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Private and Government Clinics	87.0	1	58.6	4
Primary school	80.2	2	71.2	1
Secondary school	80.0	3	65.3	3
<i>Tadika</i> and kindergarten	79.2	4	66.0	2
<i>Surau and mosque</i>	73.4	5	32.0	7
Grocery shops and mini-markets	69.3	6	45.7	5
Public telephones	65.4	7	31.4	8
Playground and playing fields	60.7	8	25.5	9
Public library	52.7	9	45.7	5
Community hall	53.2	10	11.1	10

These figures are the results of the survey carried out on the respondents in the study area. The rank of satisfaction normally indicates the level of perception of the facility fulfilling the needs of the respondents. The respondents of Shah Alam and Klang highly rated the health/medical facilities and education facilities although not in the same order yet the percentage of satisfied respondents is much higher than in Klang. This shows that there are more respondents with a higher level of satisfaction in Shah Alam than in Klang.

Table 4. T-test results of the significant difference of satisfaction towards some of the facilities in the study area.

Facilities	City	N	Mean	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Tadika</i>	Shah Alam	324	2.35	1.384	0.008*
(Kindergaten)	Klang	135	2.28		
Primary	Shah Alam	330	2.36	0.299	0.261
School	Klang	136	2.35		
Secondary	Shah Alam	324	4.15	1.208	0.015*
School	Klang	134	3.99		
Children	Shah Alam	328	3.67	5.914	0.000*
Playground	Klang	136	2.95		
Community	Shah Alam	335	3.48	9.855	0.000*
Hall	Klang	133	2.36		
<i>Surau</i> and	Shah Alam	302	2.35	3.301	0.000*
Mosque	Klang	113	2.15		

* Significant at 5 percent level

The *p*-value marked with the asterisk show that there is a significant satisfaction of that type of facility between the residents of the two cities.