

Living Condition in the Low Cost Apartments in Malaysia: An Empirical Investigation

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Abstract

This research on low-cost housing is a detailed socio-cultural background of the people living in the apartment-housing in Malaysian context. Purposefully, this research has been done to explore the housing situation in two low-cost apartments located in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur having based on a sample survey of 60 households who were interviewed and investigated most extensively to know the prevailing cultural fabrics and living condition in these two selected apartment houses. Because there is a fast pace of urban development in Malaysia, it therefore becomes a vital issue for us to understand what is happening in the life of this group of people who have had settled in these low-cost apartments. Based on our objectives, this paper deals with the dwelling features and living condition of the people housed in these low-cost apartments and accordingly, generates data on the basic amenities of life of the people residing in these low cost accommodations. On the basis of our findings, the research finally provides some suggestions in the form of specific recommendations for future planning.

Keywords: living condition, low-cost apartments, Malaysian context, empirical investigation

1. Introduction and Background

This research on low-cost housing has been conducted to know in detail about the socio-cultural aspects of housing in recently-developed residential apartments located in the city centre of Gombak, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Trends in housing development in Malaysia have to be seen in context of its recent economic development, where a structural change of its economy and expansion of its urban industrial sector would have instigated a huge number of the population to settle in the urban areas of the country. It is predicted that with the present trends of urban living in Malaysia, there is an expectation of 70% of its population living in urban areas by the year 2020 (see Zainun, 2010). Kuala Lumpur, being the Federal capital of the country, has recorded as having a total population of 1423,900 persons in 2010; 70% of this consists of the active workforce (see Syafiee, *n. d.*). This situation clearly speaks of the necessity of the people to live in Kuala Lumpur permanently, possessing their own living accommodations. Since the urban population of Kuala Lumpur and its adjoining areas has been expanding very rapidly, more and more land are now taken for residential purposes, which actually convert a huge amount of fertile and vacant land for living purposes. Evidences suggest that Kuala Lumpur has a total of 24, 221 measurement and 05 ha of land areas, of which residential land use comprises about 23% of it (see Syafiee, *n. d.*). Under these circumstances, the Government of Malaysia has adopted strategic policies to build at least 30% low-cost apartment purposefully to accommodate lower-income groups of people (see Government of Malaysia, 1991). This plan has been in effect, allowing a large section of low earners to find their accommodations and home-based living condition in the urban areas.

Due to the hectic pace of urban development in Malaysia, it has become a vital issue for researchers to explore as to what is happening in the life of this group of people who have settled in these apartments. With inquisitive questions in mind, this research is an innovative academic venture to provide a detailed socio-cultural background of the people living in these low-cost apartments in Malaysia. Purposefully, this research has been done to explore the housing situation in two low-cost apartments located in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. Based on a sample survey of 60 households, we have extensively investigated the living condition and community-life in these selected apartments. On the basis of our findings, the research finally provides some suggestions in the

form of specific recommendations for future planning.

1.1 Low-Cost Apartments: Conceptualizing the Present Research

Low-cost housing apartments have now been regarded as important residential concept in the urban living world-wide. It appears that due to tremendous urban growth throughout the world, there has been an urgent need to construct accommodations for a huge number of people in towns and cities around the world. Across the world, Malaysia is significantly noted as one of the five-tigers of Southeast Asia who has moved rapidly in terms of its economic development and urbanization. To keep pace with the flow of urbanization, the Government of Malaysia has to respond immediately by making some strategic planning to build new houses in the form of apartments in different cities and towns of the country. Among these, the most fruitful outcome emerged when the authorities took decision to construct low-cost housing for the lower income group in society. Accordingly, the Government entertained private initiatives for constructing high-raised apartments throughout the country (Note 1).

Many researchers however, mention that low and medium-cost housing in Malaysia have been facing two important problems in regard to its quantity and quality. The first issue was raised by Razali (1993) when he clearly mentions that the number of low-cost housing is quite insufficient in contrast to the total demand in the country. The second issue is that many of the low-cost housing in Malaysia do not provide good-quality living for its residents in terms of their infrastructural needs, socio-cultural privileges and religious facilities (see Tan, 1980).

In Western literature (e.g., Hoffman, 1996; Jones *et al.*, 1991), the term 'low-cost housing' is often designated as 'affordable housing' or 'low-income housing' (Note 2) synonymously to explicate more or less, a similar meaning to denote housing settlement, which are principally constructed for the poor and marginal people. In the United States, the Federal Government considers those housing as 'affordable housing' whose owners and/or residents do not spend more than 30% of their total earning as valuation of their repayment installment for purchase of the house or payment of rental every month (see Jones *et al.*, 1997). As a matter of fact, the term 'affordable' refers to the financial capability of the owners and/or residents and accordingly for that reason, the construction cost of these houses is intentionally curtailed to keep the value of the house very low and reachable. Many researchers (e.g., Othman, 1993) in the Asian context also often use the concept of 'affordable housing' to designate low-cost housing. Whatever may the term be, we may designate those housing which are built for the poor and marginal people as low cost.

In Malaysia, low-cost housing is identified as those dwellings where the buying price of each unit of house is fixed at the range of RM 4,000.00. This price of low-cost housing has been determined and announced by the Government in a newly-revised price-level estimation of all houses in general in June 1998 (see Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1998) (Note 3). We shall return to this discussion in a later section of this article to relate it to the economic development, urbanization and housing requirements.

1.2 Present Research and Its Contextuality

This research on low-cost apartment housing in Malaysia is specifically designed to know in detail the socio-cultural aspects of housing situation in the recently-developed residential apartments located in the city centre of Gombak in Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur is the capital city of Malaysia with a population of 1,423,900 in the year 2000 (Government of Malaysia, 2000). Among them, 70% belongs to the active work-force of which more than 52% are involved in trading and business activities (see Syafiee, n. d.). This situation clearly speaks of the necessity for the people to live permanently in Kuala Lumpur, possessing their own living accommodations and shelter.

Since the urban population in Kuala Lumpur and its adjoining areas has been increasing very rapidly, more and more land are taken for residential buildings which effectually convert a huge amount of fertile vacant land for living purposes. Under these circumstances, the Government has adopted policies to build apartments to accommodate its large number of population in Kuala Lumpur (see Government of Malaysia, 1996; Government of Malaysia, 2006). Since the majority of the people come from middle and low-income background, the Government purposefully has instructed housing developers in the country to cater to these low-earning groups. This plan has been in effect, allowing a large section of the society to find their own community life in the city areas.

Because there is a fast pace of urban development in Malaysia, it therefore becomes a vital issue for us to understand what is happening in the life of this group of people who have settled in these low-cost apartments. This research is an innovative study of the socio-cultural features of the people living in low-cost houses in

Malaysia. The research has been done to explore the housing situation in two low-cost apartments in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. Using a sample survey of 60 households, we have extensively identified the living condition and community life of this selected apartment households. (Note 4) Based on our findings, the research provides some recommendations for future planning. Thus, the main objective of this research is to know about the life and living situations in low-cost apartments in Malaysia and also to know the background-information of the people living therein.

2. Data Sources, Methodology and Review of Literature

This research is an exploratory study based on both quantitative and qualitative information in regard to life and living in low-cost housing in Malaysia. Indicatively, the research has been done in two specific apartments chosen in the Gombak area of Kuala Lumpur. A total of 60 sample families, 30 from each study site have been identified for exclusive interviews (also see note 7 for further clarity). The selection of the respondents had been done by identifying them according to their availability in convenience snowball technique. The identified sample households were interviewed most extensively with a set of lengthy questionnaire which contained all types of socio-demographic and numerical information relating to the life of people living in two low cost apartments. Apart from this quantitative data, the research also incorporated a few case studies to our topic.

In the meantime, a comprehensive documentation survey was also conducted to gather information relating to physical and infra-structural facilities and logistic support available to these housing. This research also provides us with all aspects of the accommodation, structural plan in regard to housing facilities provided to the residents, their access to religious places, vacant space for gardening and other facilities made available to them.

2.1 Review of Literature and Documentation on Low-Cost Housing

A significant number of academics and researchers in Malaysia and elsewhere in the world have conducted a few useful studies regarding housing situation in urban areas; and a few of them have specifically dealt with low-cost housing. Jones *et al.* (1997) wrote a book entitled, “Good Neighbors: Affordable Family Housing” and provide us with a detailed history of this type of family housing in the United States. (Note 5) At the beginning of the book, the writers identify the persons living in those houses with their background information. In this context, they also describe the community aspects of affordable housing, which seem to be relevant to our research. Since we have decided to focus on low-cost housing in the form of apartments, we have fortunately come across another study conducted by Rahim and Co. Research (1994) in Malaysia with the specific title of “The Klang Valley Condominium” which has given us some ideas regarding the marketability of these houses in Malaysia since 1994.

The School of Housing, Building and Planning of the University Sains Malaysia (USM) in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government of Malaysia organized a conference entitled “Low Cost Housing: Affordable Housing in Malaysia-Towards the Year 2020”. Apart from the above two institutions, this conference was further assisted by the University of Wales and British Research Establishment through the British Council. A number of papers relating to affordable housing in Malaysia were presented at the conference which along with other important issues very genuinely focused on the economics of low-cost housing, infrastructural aspects and design perspectives of affordable housing.

Apart from the above-mentioned broad-based research and conferences, there have been a few specific studies regarding Malaysian low-cost housing, focusing more on specificity in this context. Among these, Salleh and Meng (1997) published a book entitled “Low-Cost Housing in Malaysia” relating the issue with urbanization. With a detailed discussion on the performance and economics of low-cost housing, they surveyed the issues, and problems of this housing in general. Two years after this publication, Sirat *et al.*, (1999) with five colleagues from Universiti Sains Malaysia published an important book entitled “Low-Cost Housing in Urban-Industrial Centre of Malaysia: Issues and Challenges” (1997) covering a wide range of topics on low-cost housing. This book outlines the socio-demographic profile of the residents in urban-industrial centres of Penang, Selangor/Klang Valley and Johor through postal survey and field interviews.

Salleh and Yusof (2006) conducted another research on “Residential Satisfaction in Low-Cost Housing in Malaysia”. Research was also first initiative by Husna and Nurijan (1987), focusing on the residential satisfaction of low-cost housing in Malaysia. A total of 575 households from Penang and 223 households from Terangganu was the focus point of this research. In determining the main factors affecting residential satisfaction, Varimax Rotation Methods (VRM) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) strategies were adopted. Besides these, the study also shows the use of Barlett's Test of Sphericity. Based on the description and factor analysis, the study found that the residential satisfaction of the residents in these accommodations was much higher in this context. A more or less similar study was done by Mohit, Ibrahim and Rashid (2010) to gain an assessment of residential

inhabitants in public low-cost housing in Kuala Lumpur. The research dealt with 45 variables which were grouped into five broad components relating to the dwelling unit features, dwelling unit support services, public facilities, neighborhood facilities and social environment. The research gave a concluding observation, saying that the residents were moderately satisfied with their dwelling units.

Syafiee from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning of International Islamic University Malaysia conducted a research on housing in the Malaysian context specially focusing on low and medium cost housing. In the concluding points of his paper, Syafiee (n. d.) emphasized on the significance of this type of housing and urged private and public sectors to provide economic support to the low and medium income people.

Contextually, we may now refer to the works of Suhaida and her associates who carried out a research entitled “A Conceptual Overview of Housing Affordability in Selangor, Malaysia” to identify clearly the income-earner group focusing on their affordability in housing cost in Kuala Lumpur (see Suhaida *et al.*, 2010). In the same year, another research was done by Hashim and Rahim (2010) to emphasize more on community intimacy, specially focusing on the privacy needs of urban Malays, which involved the inclusion of 401 respondents from two study areas, namely Gombak and Kajang. Based on survey method and in-depth interviews, the research indicates that the meaning of privacy of the Malays was influenced enormously by cultural norms and religious beliefs of other ethnic groups, which are traditionally different from their own way of life.

Recently, there has been a massive demand of low-cost housing in Malaysia which effectually has spurred a huge construction of residential areas in the form of apartment houses. Accordingly, Zainun and her associates (2010) have provided us with authentic information on the specific demands of low-cost housing in Johor Bahru with a specific design using Artificial Neural Networks (ANN). In an impact study, Artificial Neural Networks, Amiruddin and Yong (2009) conducted another study on low-cost housing in respect to assessing the impact of it on communities and it provides a detailed insight into the social spaces to ascertain as to how the communities approach the use of public spaces in high-raised housing. Apart from these, Salleh (2008) also carried out an important study on residential and neighborhood satisfaction of housing quality. We have a number of additional references on low-cost housing that have been conducted by Agus (2002), and Mohit *et al.* (2010), Hashim *et al.* (2006) in the Malaysian context.

As we know, there is an acute demand of low-cost housing and it is also simultaneously an electoral promise on the part of present political administrators of the country at the state level. In this context, this research is a venture to know about the living condition of the residents in this type of housing which focus varies distinctively on community aspects.

Alexander von Hoffman (1996) of Harvard University gives us another direction in regard to low-cost housing in the United States. In this context, Hoffman provides us with a broad history of the American low-income housing policy specially focusing on three periods in time showing clearly as to how idealistic thinking has created some sort of disillusionment with housing programme in the United States. A research on the economics of low-cost housing relating to sites, services and subsidies was done by Stephen and David (1987) who was published in World Bank Economics Review of the Oxford Journals of Economics and Social Sciences presenting a guideline and suggestions for housing sector policies. These guidelines allow us to find out how far these suggestions based on their paradigm will be relevant and also will fit our planning for future Malaysian housing policies.

Based on the above, an important paper by Salleh (2010) was published entitled “Housing and Environment” which briefly included some major aspects of the situation of low-cost housing in Malaysia. The paper aptly relates urban growth and urbanization in context to housing needs and thus provides us with a brief idea about the planning and housing development process in Malaysia. In his paper, the idea of low-cost housing was conceptualized with affordability of the consumer. The residential neighborhood and environment have also been identified as important elements of low-cost housing which seem to have some relevance to our present research on low-cost housing.

3. Living Condition in Low-Cost Housing in Malaysia: Data-Based Analytical Documentation

Based on our objectives, this section of the paper deals with the dwelling features and community-life of the people living in these low-cost housing of two selected recently-built apartment houses in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. The housing condition and living situation in low-cost housing are the most important priority in conceptualizing the community-life of these residential units. From that perspective, this part of the discussion generates data on the basic amenities of life of the people in these residential accommodations.

3.1 Tenure of Housing and Basic Amenities Available

Before analyzing the socio-demographic data on family life, it is essential to show the ownership aspects of these residences. As has been indicated before, the rapid expansion of the urban sector and a relatively static economy in Malaysia stimulate its rural people from the *kampung* (village) to move to the cities having found their employment in the centers of trade and commerce in the urban-industrial areas (see Osman-Rani, 1996). Eventually, many new settlers have to buy new houses in the city areas. In that context, both study areas of Terminal Putra and Taman Melati of Gombak are centrally and suitably located, well-connected with link-roads, LRT and bus service called Rapid-KL.

Two types of tenure-houses are available in these apartments; one is the owner-occupied and the other is rental housing. Data reveal that owner-occupied housing remain the pre-dominant tenurial type in Terminal Putra accounting for 73.3% of the families while rental houses in that apartment constitute 26.7%. This situation however, is different in regard to Taman Melati, where the owner-occupied housing is only 43.3% significantly showing an increasing trend of 56.7% among renters.

The profile of the housing structure as it is etched in the measurement provided shows a floor space of 450 sq. ft. in almost all houses. In regard to the basic amenities, these 60 houses (Note 6) have two bedrooms with a dining space and one toilet having sufficient water supply. Our data clearly indicate that none of these houses however, have any drawing room and also at the same time, they do not have any study room for their children. The structural projection further shows that these housing units do not contain any storerooms and also at the same time, they fail to provide any space for balcony-type ventilation. With a very stint living space, these houses are designed within a limited space applying all rudimentary architectural and engineering skills.

3.2 Assessing Overall Residential Satisfaction

To make an assessment of residential amenities, we have identified seven indicators for judging their level of satisfaction. This judgment is done first of all on specific items like having satisfactory water supply, proper bathing facilities, hygienic toilets, sufficient lighting and suitable cooking facilities. The respondents were also asked to mention as to whether they have over-all satisfaction in this type of housing in general.

By appropriate fiscal consideration and planning inducements, the housing structure of these condominiums was built in such a way so that it fulfills the minimal requirements essential for everyday living. We have identified a few such essential items which allow us to have a judgment on the likeability of these apartments. These are shown Table 1 below:

Table 1. Distribution of the family heads showing their satisfaction on facilities available

Items of Facilities	Terminal Putra Apartment Level of satisfaction (N=30)		Taman Melati Apartment Level of satisfaction (N=30)	
	Unhappy	Happy	Unhappy	Happy
	Water supply	--	30 (100%)	7 (23.33%)
Bathing Facilities	1 (3.33%)	29 (96.67%)	5 (16.67%)	25 (83.33%)
Toilet Facilities	1 (3.33%)	29 (96.67%)	8 (26.67%)	22 (73.33%)
Type of Lightening	1 (3.33%)	29 (96.67%)	9 (30.00%)	21 (70.00%)
Cooking Facilities	2 (6.67%)	28 (93.33%)	3 (10.00%)	27 (90.00%)
Overall Living Condition	2 (6.67%)	28 (93.33%)	3 (10.00%)	27 (90.00%)

It is apparent from Table 1 that the respondents were more or less happy with the facilities and privileges provided to them in these apartments. In order to know their overall satisfaction, the respondents were given a question as to whether they were happy living in these apartments. A preponderant majority (55 or 91.67%) of the respondents very reluctantly expressed their satisfaction about the living conditions. This is because the residents were very much aware about housing investment policies of low-cost housing. While talking to a few management people, we learned that the structure of these low-cost housing were designed very carefully to keep the building costs at the minimum so that the poor and marginal people can afford to buy them without having

any financial problems. But in reality, when their replies about the satisfaction had been verified and cross-checked, through an alternative methodological technique, it becomes clear to us that the residents were facing multiple problems and these required to be solved in future planning of low-cost housing. This issue is highlighted at the later part of this paper.

3.3 Demographic Profile of the Residents in Low-Cost Housing

This section of the paper depicts socio-demographic information about the residents in these two study sites. Accordingly, the data on respondents' age have been classified into three broad categories: 'young' (up to 35 years of age), 'middle-aged' (36 to 50 years), and 'old' (51 years and above). Age data however, do not show any significant pattern of dominance of any particular group; rather all ages had equal access to these housing (see Table 2).

Table 2. A table sharing the demographic profile of the residents in low-cost housing

Age of Residents	Terminal Putra Apartment	Taman Melati Apartment
<u>Age category</u>	(N=30)	(N=30)
Young (up to 35 years of age)	8 (26.67%)	15 (50%)
Middle-aged (36 to 50 years of age)	10 (33.33%)	6 (20%)
Old-aged (51 years+)	12 (40%)	9 (30%)
<u>Occupation of Family Heads</u>		
<u>Types of Occupation</u>		
Petty traders, businessmen, and self-employed	8 (26.67%)	7 (23.33%)
Government and non-government personnel	4 (13.33%)	10 (33.33%)
Technicians and IT personnel	6 (20%)	3 (10%)
Bus and taxi drivers	3 (10%)	1 (3.33%)
Retirees	4 (13.33%)	5 (16.67%)
Engineers, Supervisors, Designer and Lecturer	5 (16.67%)	4 (13.33%)
<u>Monthly Earning of the Family-Heads</u>		
<u>Earning(monthly)</u>		
Up to 2000 (low income)	17 (56.67%)	14 (46.67%)
RM 2001-3000 (Marginal Income)	9 (30.0%)	12 (40.0%)
RM 3001 and above	4 (13.33%)	4 (13.33%)
	30 (100%)	30 (100%)
<u>Expenditure of Households</u>		
<u>Expenditure (monthly)</u>		
Up to RM 2000 a month	16 (53.33%)	23 (76.67%)
RM 2001-3000	12 (40.0%)	5 (16.67%)
RM 3001 and above	2 (6.67%)	2 (6.67%)
	30 (100%)	30 (100%)

A much diversified occupation has been identified where 60 persons had mentioned at least 40 different patterns of works. Naturally, this diversification comes due to economic change which combines many types of works at the individual level based on their specialization. For a meaningful analysis, these wide diversities have been categorized under broad headings shown in Table 2 of this paper.

Occupational diversities indicate that by profession, many of these respondents are fixed income professionals who cannot often afford high and medium-cost housing. For that reason, they have chosen these apartments which seem affordable in context to their earnings. The pattern also indicates that many persons residing in these

low-cost housing may be low-income earners but they seem to be educated and academically qualified.

3.4 Earning of the Respondents

It is quite indicative that the low-cost residents are by profession low-income earners in the society. A total of 60 respondents had been grouped into three major earning categories and among them, 52 (86.67%) families earn within the range of RM 3000 which is very low and moderate income. A few of them (i.e., 8 or 13.33%) have satisfactory income level with moderate earnings.

3.5 Two Case Studies

Based on the above discussion, two case studies are incorporated below to supplement our information further.

Case # 1: Siti Fauzia, a 47-year old woman lives in Apartment No 7 of Block D at Terminal Putra condominium. She bought this house in 1987. Siti Fauzia works as a clerical staff earning RM1600 a month with which she has to maintain her husband and four children as her husband is currently unemployed. Although Fauzia seems to be apparently satisfied with the utilities and facilities, she has mixed reaction about staying in this apartment. They have two bedrooms but do not have any specific study room as such for her school-going children. Also at the same time, this house does not have any storeroom. These make her uncomfortable. From cultural and religious points of view, she likes staying here as most of the residents come from her own ethnic group. Yet she has some dislike for these apartments as most of the people she opines are unfriendly. There is not much socio-cultural interaction among the residents nor do they have any special place where the residents could meet and socialize. She further says that although architecturally, the apartment is nice and has all the required facilities, it lacks many privileges. She clearly mentioned that most importantly, they have been missing the community life as they expect for their socio-cultural survival.

Case # 2: Mohammad Hasnizam is a Muslim Malay, a 40-year old resident of Block E, Apartment 8 of Taman Melati. Mohammad is a petty businessman earning RM2500 a month, married to Nor Haslinda, a housewife staying at home. They have 3 children; two boys and a girl, all of whom go to schools. Mohammad Hasnizam is also the owner of the recently bought apartment. For that reason, he has to pay an amount of RM 500 as bank-loan which he borrowed for buying this house. He expressed an overall satisfaction in staying in this apartment and he also has some psychological satisfaction as the building has a *surau* (Muslim prayer room). It allows the people to attend the timely prayers where there occurs an agglomeration of the community people from their own ethnic group.

3.6 Assessing the Needs and Requirements of the Residents

A congruent policy-planning for low-cost housing may begin with a proper assessment of the community needs and requirements as mentioned by the residents of these communities. It is very much essential for the policy planners to identify the location, to fix a reasonable salable price for each unit corresponding to the income of these residents. It will eventually allow us to know about the 'affordability-situation' of these tenants. Accordingly, for that reason, we have listed below a number of needs and requirements of the residents staying in these low-cost apartments.

Table 3. Needs and requirements of the residents as part of apartment living

<u>Residents' Needs and Requirements</u>	<u>Frequency (N=60)</u>
Separate toilet and bathroom for every house	57 (95%)
Separate reading room for the children	59 (83.33%)
Store room and porch for ventilation	49 (81.67%)
Security gate for safety of residents	48 (80.0%)
Repairing, renovating and painting the flats	46 (76.67%)
Sports-court and recreation space for children	46 (76.67%)
Halls and space for community gathering	46 (76.67%)
More lights in the surrounding areas	45 (75.0%)
More space for car parking	44 (73.33%)
Free Health and medical assistance	40 (66.67%)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Rapid expansion of the urban sector in Malaysia has brought several issues to the forefront and one of which is the acute need of housing for its burgeoning population settled in cities and towns. As the urban sector is largely composed of low-income people working in the trade, business and commerce, it therefore becomes necessary to build plenty of low cost accommodations that would suit them financially.

The Malaysian government has a special commitment to provide adequate, affordable and quality houses for all segments in phases (see Government Malaysia, 2001). Accordingly, it has taken positive steps to make housing accessible to the low-earners, and contextually this research has special significance in having empirical evidences which might be useful for policy planners of the country.

It is admitted that simple improvement of the infrastructural development of housing is not always the real improvement of residential living. There should be some congruities between infrastructural developments with that of community life. Characteristically, the development assessment of housing requires fulfillment of community life and living conditions as significant preconditions.

Based on our discussion in the foregoing pages, it can be reasonably concluded here that in assessing community life in urban low-cost housing, it is also partly essential to account for urban growth and proliferation. The residents of Terminal Putra and Taman Melati apartments reflect the total way of life in urban atmosphere. In no way, it is an exception to it.

While we come to the residents of these housing directly, it appears to us that the apartment people had expressed their overall satisfaction in living in these places. The profile of the housing shows that 97% of the residents had such satisfaction in regard to the overall condition of these houses, whereas 91.67% have expressed their specific satisfaction on basic amenities of the estate system shown in detail in preceding section. However, the list of the problems identified by the residents clearly indicates that their needs and requirements about the living space, reading room, storeroom and extra bathroom facilities are major demands of every person living in these apartments. They expressed their major dissatisfaction about community life as well where the residents complained that the people in these apartments usually do not interact with each other very frequently. Moreover, there is no common place or space where the residents could exchange greetings on special days and events. For that reason, it may be mentioned here that in terms of community life, the apartment dwellers have clear dissatisfaction. It seems that the developers somehow ignored this aspect of living condition. Improving quality residential life also requires the opportunities for the improvement of cultural and recreational facilities as well. The construction of new houses thus has to be seen in the context of current housing situation and unfulfilled or pent up demands of the present residents. As a matter of fact, these might be considered as learning strategies for future housing improvements of low-cost residents.

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Notes

Note 1. An apartment in Malaysia is little different from condominium which is usually identified as “a block with multiple dwelling units which allow for sharing of ownership and use of exclusive common areas, facilities and services to individual owners” (Rahim & Co. Research, 1994). Based on this definition, this research has identified a few common facilities for a condominium, which varies from one another. Low-cost apartment does not provide many facilities as compared to high-cost condominium. Condominium living in Malaysia started in the late 1970s especially in high density towns and cities (see Rahim & Co. Research, 1994).

Note 2. Affordable family housing is usually popularized by the Government to allow low-income people to

have their own accommodation and shelter. In Malaysia, the Government asked private developers to make provision of such housing so that it can benefit the people of lower income group.

Note 3. The price structure of housing in general has been categorized into four types depending on their cost and valuation. These four categories are: (i) low cost housing (priced at below RM42000/00); (ii) low medium cost (RM42001–RM60,000); (iii) medium cost (RM 60001–RM 100000) and (IV) high cost (more than RM 100001).

Note 4. A total of 60 households were interviewed most extensively to generate quantitative data for this research. But the research depended on the author's own observation through his own participation and informal interviews with the residents.

Note 5. The concept of low-cost housing has been used here simultaneously to indicate affordable housing. In this context, these two terms are used here in this research to have a synonymous meaning. Among the apartments, there are many low cost accommodations and this research has included them for investigation.

Note 6. We have interviewed sixty families from two apartments located at Terminal Putra and Taman Melati in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur to ascertain the total infrastructural facilities of this housing. But it should be noted here that the total structure of all these houses are similar and 60 units simply represent the total pattern.

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