

End-users Participation Approach towards Effective Housing Occupancy in Malaysia: A Review

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Abstract

Having considered housing as vital among other human needs, various governments have geared efforts towards providing housing for their citizens but there exists the challenge of occupancy in most cases. This study aims at investigating the housing delivery system in Malaysia in relation to occupancy status and takes a systematic evaluation of some existing literature on the end-users relevancy in building projects acceptability. The study uses computer search web namely, science direct, Scopus, web of science and Proquest to access the research keywords. Thus, the literature reveals that there exists a remarkable non-occupancy in Malaysia's housing system. This study proffers end-users' participation in Malaysia housing delivery system as an approach that could eradicate non-occupancy.

Keywords: Housing, Occupancy, Investigating, End-users, Participation.

1. Introduction

Housing can be defined as building structure that human live for the reason that meets their shelter and social needs (Olotuah, 2005). Housing has constituted major and unavoidable human needs. The challenges of housing have been pronounced in undeveloped and developing countries where citizens cannot afford the basic need of shelter (Harris and Arku, 2007). Rapid urbanization constitutes a vital factor that triggers lack and poor housing in urban centres. Abdullahi et al. (2012) opined that the problem of housing in developing countries is basically from the high growth of urbanization which has posed high challenges to the government in providing affordable housing for citizens importantly the low-income group. The author stresses that, these dynamics require a policy framework and institutional mechanisms that concentrate on addressing the housing supply to handle growing demand on a sustainable basis. Harris and Arku (2007) suggest that basic accommodation needs are to be met at an affordable price to the majority of the citizens is to eliminate the challenges for the housing policies in developing countries. Hence, decent housing for low-income groups will create a healthy living environment and better the life of the people. In Malaysia, the country capital and various state capitals significantly recorded high immigrants as a result of industrialization and people's zeal to stay and live in an environmentally appealing area. As such, despite various efforts toward low cost housing by the Malaysian government, it is reported that Malaysian public housing programmes recorded low success rates and are far below public expectancy (Dolling, 1999; Agus et al., 2002).

However, the successfulness of housing provision can be ensured by good political oriented leadership (Goebel, 2007) through careful maximization of resources. Housing affordability has remained a big global challenge to humanity. The United Nations Centre of Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat, 2003) reported that in the year 2001, about 924 million people, representing 31.6% of the world's population, were already living in slums. The report stressed that most of the slum inhabitants were from the developing countries. It is disheartening that 42.1% of the slum inhabitants were from the Pacific and Asia continent (UN-Habitat, 2003). The aforementioned necessitated that much attention should be geared towards housing issues in Asian countries. Thus, literature has concentrated on the role of housing and its needs in East and Southern Asian countries with Malaysia factor given much attention (Dolling, 1999; Agus et al., 2002). It is of importance to acknowledge that the Malaysian government has embarked upon several efforts to provide quality and affordable housing for every citizen.

In actualizing the 2nd Malaysia National Development Plan, as part of its approach to eradicate the housing problem in Malaysia, the Malaysian government partnered with the private sector to intensify efforts to provide adequate and affordable housing particularly among the low income earners (Drakakis-Smith, 1977). This partnership was in line with national housing policies applied in many developing countries. The partnership is reported to have fostered the remarkable development of low-cost housing in Malaysia (Jamaluddin, 2005). Friel-Simon and Khoo (1976) have pointed out that improvement in the current Malaysia low cost housing provision can be linked to the economic plan policies.

2. Background of Study

Public housing is housing that is built and owned by government, typically provided at nominal rent to the needy or publicly funded and administered for low income families. Public housing are rental housing created to provide safe and affordable places for low-earnings families, the elderly and people with disabilities to reside (Hryshko et al., 2010). The importance of housing provision successfulness lies on its affordability. Lubell et al. (2007) suggest that the stability of affordable housing or housing rent might have profound effects on childhood development. Therefore, affordability is an essential feature of housing delivery. Users housing affordability degree reflects users' satisfaction (Abdul Mohit et al., 2010). Housing satisfaction encompasses the quality of the building including the safety attached. Hence, dissatisfaction in housing quality facilities, amenities

and housing design affects users' occupancy. The performance of housing, its quality and facilities can affect the users' quality of life and encourage satisfaction (Colesia and Alpopi., 2011).

For more than forty years (40 years), Malaysia government has embarked on the self-build housing approach. The self-build housing approach is reported to yield tremendous advantage and improvement in Malaysia as Umakanthan (2004) stated that it assisted in actualizing 3.5 million of houses as contribution to the Malaysia government towards actualizing 100,000 – 150,000 units of houses per year. This present study acknowledges the achievements recorded in housing provision by Malaysia government through self-build system, private and government participation but noticed the non-occupancy of many of the housing provided for citizen. A housing occupancy report in Malaysia revealed that remarkable percentages of housing provision were not occupied by the citizen or the expected users (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2011) as presented in table 1. Therefore, this study aims at evaluating housing occupancy and the users' satisfaction in Malaysia while involvement of the users' termed; "users' participation" will be discussed and proffered as a dependable approach to develop users interest and support towards housing occupancy.

Table 1: Occupancy Status for Rented Public Housing Programmes (PHP) According to States until 30 September 2011.

STATE	NO. OF HOUSES (UNIT)	OCCUPANCY (UNIT)	VACANT (UNIT)
Johor	6,784	5,810	974
Kedah	1,894	1,807	87
Negeri Sembilan	420	420	0
Perak	675	649	26
Perlis	1,228	1,102	126
Pulau Pinang	698	678	20
Sabah	11,031	10,548	483
Sarawak	1,016	1,016	0
Selangor	3,304	2,594	710
WP Kuala Lumpur	28,970	27,914	1,056
TOTAL	56,020	52,538	3,482

Source: National Housing Department, MHLG Selected Statistics 2011

3. .Housing Delivery in Malaysia

The housing delivery structure in Malaysia involves housing production or housing supply in to the market and also the exchange mediums that intervene on the market process, shape demand and supply. Within the housing production, developers would be the primary supplier of housing models in to the market; they are the real estate agent in charge of physical land use to housing construction; they assemble necessary resources and monitor development process to completion and offered land and housing market places. These government interventions are the primary concern for exchange mediums in housing delivery. The amount of finance needed varies regarding the developer's financial strength, which generally signifies 30% to 35% in the total construction costs as well as the payment period is usually based on the recommended completion date in the project (Esha and Musa, 2006).

The exchange mediums in housing delivery are major concerned with the government's interventions. Government intervenes at various stages of housing provision such as land assembly, development process; construction, finance and consumption. (Doling, 1999). The author government roles involves creating and enforcing laws and regulations, rules and recommendations relating towards the housing sector improvement service delivery system associated with housing delivery through policy coordination and implementation involving various agencies; encouraging the Build-then-Sell (BTS) concept within the housing provision system.

Enhancing relations and collaboration among the private and public sector in addition to professional bodies within the housing sector and Public housing programmes in the federal level are put under one federal agency which plans, implements, sells/rents and uphold them. State government authorities continue to be accountable for public housing programmes at the state level through their subsidiary agencies in line with the Malaysian National housing plan

4. Trends of Malaysia Housing System

Malaysia's low-cost housing provision since independence depends on massive development from both the public and private sectors base on the policy imposition on housing developers to contribute low cost housing in township development. Low cost housing is put at selling price of RM25,000 about US\$8000 cost price per unit aim at target group of households with monthly income not more than RM750 (US\$225) but recently, these limits have been revised by the government (Idrus and Ho, 2008).

However, the first Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) was the turning point for the government's commitment towards low-cost housing provision while the private sector involvement in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971 – 1975) was to ensure an adequate housing supply for the country (Ghani and Lee, 1997). With the 7th and 8th Malaysia Plans (1996-2000 and 2001-2005) the Malaysian government committed to the provision of adequate, affordable and quality housing for all Malaysians in the low income group while the 9th Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) efforts were taken to ensure adequate, quality and affordable housing for all income levels, particularly the low-income group. The private developers were encouraged to developed more of low and low-medium-cost houses in their mixed-development projects while public sector were to concentrate on low-cost houses for public sector employees disadvantaged in urban poor and rural areas (Idrus & Ho, 2008). The authors stress that provision of well organised and systematic urban services programmes improves the quality of life of the urban population for sustainable improvement, promoting greater community participation and the social integration of the population.

4.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics

Ukoha and Beamish (1997) posits that the socio-economic profile of residents affect the level of housing satisfaction. Therefore, studies of the residents profile with different socio-economic backgrounds need consideration. Galster (1987) opined that the profile of residents should be considered because homes with various socio-economic skills have different levels of aspiration, tolerance and psychology on satisfaction towards housing. This opinion is consistent with the findings of Bruin and Cook (1997) on matriarchal low earnings single families which says qualities are excellent precursors to satisfaction towards housing. The amount of satisfaction towards housing also differs based on ethnic origins. Past research by Husna and Nurizan (1987) on low-income residents at Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur public housing have discovered a positive change in satisfaction towards housing among different ethnic origins. The authors discovered that the Malays possess the lowest degree of satisfaction towards housing as in comparison towards the Chinese and Indians. A few of the items analyzed under this variable are earnings as well as the level of education achieved by residents. The research made by Husna and Nurizan (1987) postulated that citizens who achieved a minimal level of education indicated a high level of satisfaction towards every aspect of the houses (except neighbourhood aspects) in comparison to individuals with greater level of education while

citizen earnings do not display any relationship to the level of satisfaction for those facets of housing. Galsters (1987) discovered that older residents possess a lower level of aspiration but a greater level of tolerance towards any shortcoming as in comparison towards the more youthful residents.

4.2 Actors in Low, Medium and High Cost Housing in Malaysia

Housing continues to be recognised being an important development tool for restructuring a society and eliminating poverty. Further towards the Istanbul declaration on human settlement and habitat agenda to ensure sufficient shelter for all in 1996, the Malaysian government has committed huge amounts of Malaysian Ringgit to supplying its citizen with sufficient, affordable and quality housing. In 1996, the “Zero Squatter by 2005” policy was developed in Malaysia. The economic decline within the late 1997 with a four-tier prices system on PPR schemes in metropolitan areas and major towns for that resettlement of squatters was implemented to ensure its citizen, particularly lower income groups to continue to have advantages of affordable and quality housing (Tee et al., 2012). However, it is important to be sure that housing provisions can produce a harmonious society with the promotion of a sustainable and healthy living environment. Kuala Lumpur has arrived at the status of 100% urban population by census 2000, followed by Selangor state with 87.6 % of urban population.

Meanwhile, the public sector concentrates mainly on low-cost housing programmes. The private sector (housing developers), aside from complying on the 30 % low cost housing unit, focuses on medium and high cost housing programmes. The Malaysian government has additionally developed a housing policy which aims to boost the participation of private sectors in housing production and delivery particularly in housing schemes development (Asiah, 1999). Malaysia government see housing as basic human need and an important component of the urban economy. For this reason, both the public and private sector engage in housing production programmes (Rameli et al., 2006).

4.3 Low cost housing development in Malaysia

The problem of low-cost housing development not just covers physical and environment aspects but additionally happens within the human context. This will improve the standard of existence from the residents and also the surrounding community in addition to develop communal living environment. The urban cities are an essential focus where a maximum of 51,800 units of low cost houses were built-in year 2005 in large cities (Ong Ka Ting, 2001). These different methods have been adopted to deal with issues for the lower income group. One of the methods were the public sector role, housing finance for informal sector, open registration for low cost housing, growing low cost housing fund, rental for the urban poor, provision of infrastructure grant, housing for estate and industrial workers, housing programmes for government employees, standardising technical and planning standards and continuous research and development in housing (Salleh and Chai, 1997).

5. Housing Occupancy

One of the most important financial factors that an apartment owner or property manager should consider when making operating decisions is occupancy rate for residential properties. Prices that are too high or buildings that lack amenities when considering comparable properties in the same area might indicate low occupancy rate. High occupancy rates might indicate an opportunity to increase rent, therefore growing profit. Many property mortgages require submission of financial reviews, including occupancy rate on a monthly, quarterly and/or yearly basis to have the ability to evaluate once the lender’s position is protected. Occupancy needs to be calculated daily and averaged for each month. As such, housing occupancy requires effective occupying of housing units by the intending end users’.

6. Public and Private Developers in Housing

The public sector has been involved in carrying out the implementation of Public Housing Programmes (PHP). Government and Institutional Quarters (GIQ), Land and Regional Development Authority (LRDA) and State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). The Ministry of Housing and Local Government has been charged with the supervision and monitoring of the public low-cost housing programmes. Private developers, co-operative societies and individuals or a group of individuals focused on private sector housing. In the 7th Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) private developers accounted for 97% of the overall private sector housing. Private developers are involved in all categories of housing provision, the high, medium and low-cost housing. They are governed by the Housing Developers' Act (Control and Licensing) 1996. Ghani and Lee (1997) posits that participation of private sector has increased in the 2nd Malaysia Plan when the government sought the co-operation of developers of low-cost housing provision with its policy making it mandatory for them to build at least 30% low-cost houses in their housing projects. The non-public sector has carried out very well within the seventh Malaysia Plan period because they build 68% from the total of 190,597 low-cost housing units. The failure of numerous housing projects might be credited to the possible lack of understanding around the determinants of residential satisfaction as the residential satisfaction reflects the degree to which individuals' housing needs are fulfilled. It functions as helpful tips for policy makers to formulate the implementation of housing guidelines.

7. Housing Satisfaction

Idrus and Ho (2008) postulates that housing satisfaction particularly the residential type is predetermine by it features and quality that reflect on the users feelings. The housing environment and it association with the other buildings contributes to its satisfaction. Numerous researchers have emphasises that the degree of safety, the housing environmental condition together with the housing quality predicts users satisfaction with housing unit (Ahmad et al., 2006; Suleiman et al., 1987; Idrus and Ho, 2008). Rapoport (1997b) suggest that people evaluate housing environments as being an important parameter of their choice. Environment of housing requires good treatment as it showcases that the initial impression perceiving by the users or investor. More so, satisfaction as an approach has its role in assessing users and housing quality. Davies (1945) has earlier asserted in the 1940s that satisfaction is important parameter use in various disciplines such as housing, consumer satisfaction, marketing, landscape architecture and in medicine sectors to evaluate users or people contentment. James et al. (2006) in their study on residential satisfaction suggest that social cultural factors contributed immensely to users' residential satisfaction. Housing satisfaction can be considered as choice-full experience of users housing condition. Ogu (2002) and Tan (2012) assert that housing satisfaction is non-economic and the normative quality that capable to determine users residential housing unit quality. Therefore, the relevance of users' contributions cannot be separated from its satisfaction. Human social and capital contribution embedded in their economic and social-cultural needs. Tan (2008) stress that effective housing satisfaction may anchor on the house or homeownership conditions that users are to experience. This encompasses the degree of the housing quality, facilities, and renting terms among other factors. Importantly, studies in Malaysia revealed that housing satisfaction among users depend immensely on the social preference of the users (Hashim, 2003). Hence, application of users' involvement approach that will allow the housing end users preference and basic requirement to be inclusive in housing provision will be of a good improvement in achieving satisfaction housing units' provision. Human social-cultural needs and choice resides in their attitude perceived and cognitive reasoning (Francescato et al., 1989) while Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) postulates that human attitude is important in determine satisfaction and the perceived behaviour. Therefore, end users participation in housing is vital to fashion a residential housing provision that will enjoy adequate occupancy.

8. Users Participation

Participation of end-users in the process of initiation and implementation of users project is a necessity variable that capable to control the interrelationship that exist between the project execution and the users acceptability or satisfaction with the project (Doll and Torkzadeh, 1989). End users participation is the involvement of the expected benefactor of a particular project to make their interest or desires contribution as part of their project quality. It provides opportunity for the government to have a robust dialogue with the expected user thereby creating a sense of belonging that is needed for community social-economic development (Sanoff, 1990). End users participation is a good positive pointer towards community project successfulness (Carroll and Rosson, 2007). Numerous researchers have argue that participation obstacles and unsuccessfulness in several community projects processing were basically because of governmental ways of introducing several laws and restrictions into the participation implementation policies thereby disrupted the process and confused the end users (Agrawal, 1999; Brett, 1998; Dreyer, 1996; Hagg, 1999). Overall acceptability, social-cultural sustainability and the development of the built environment has been argued by Fowles (2000) as a product of adequate end-users participation.

Users participation encompass involving users in the major decision of their projected project by way of creating opportunity to address needs in their housing desires (Tweed and Woolley, 1992). End-users participation in the context of this study involve the inclusion of end users in the project pre-design stage to the construction; the project delivery to the policy associated with the project term of occupancy; and housing maintenance as a holistic means of eradicating non-occupancy in Malaysia housing system.

8.1 End-Users Participation in Housing

User participation, community participation, user involvement, community involvement, citizen participation and resident participation are all synonymous concepts of independence, self determination, control and selection in natural policy processes of people having stakes in their projects. Study by Ok (1985) suggest that participation during the housing delivery process is part of user's contribution to the shaping of his environment. Users' participation in housing process allows beneficiaries make amendments right from the design thoughts according to their needs of spaces. Participation enhances satisfaction and allows good decision making (Carroll and Rosson, 2007). By empirical observation, neither the designers nor the clients have any consideration for the input of the end user in shaping their housing environment particularly in mass housing delivery processes (Doll and Torkzadeh, 1989; Kappelman and McLean, 1991; Nour, 2011). The failure to involve user participation in the housing process often lead to problems of incongruity during occupation. Onder (2007) emphasized that foundational problems are resolved if the end users' are allowed to participate in housing delivery and design process. Thus, Noraini (1993) submits that participation of the end users' in their houses process can create satisfactory results while Ibem (2009) stressed that "Self Help" as a form and concept of participation produced the best outcome towards satisfaction of the prospective home owners couple with good neighbourhood social interaction and cohesion as reflected in table 2.

In the design process evolution technology, the architect is expected to incorporate the users' needs and expectations in the residential planning. The users have little knowledge about design expertise but the architect need to genuinely communicate with the prospective end user effectively. However, the user design expectations and needs can only be incooperated when they are allowed to indicate their concerns which ought to be considered during the processes of the design to occupation. Choices are assumed to reflect preferences (Molin et al., 1996). Users may not be technically inclined design wise, it is obvious that they will have preferences for certain housing design features; housing location choices; housing policies and implementations. The concept of user preferences of housing alternative in his housing environment development is a form of user participation. If this level of participation is lacking it manifest in creating a housing environment that is not satisfactory to the user

and encourage non-occupancy as a result of low-level of satisfaction. Therefore, involvement of users' becomes vital where housing units are to be adequately occupied (Sanoff, 2000). End-users contribution will help the building experts and housing agents to develop affordable and acceptable housing units. However, human needs and preferences are under the influence of variables, such as culture, geography, time and technology; for this reason, researchers should fashion methods that allow users' active involvement in housing process. In line with the aforementioned, Ozsoy (1996) posits that the level of users' participation should initiate all the housing delivery process ranges from initiated policies, Architect table to the site delivery and point of occupancy to maintenance.

When end users are genuinely involved, and they are aware and also understand what the government is planning for them; they build up trust towards government and remove hostility. (King and Stivers, 1998) assert that housing satisfaction and participation process in itself is a transformative tool for social change (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Therefore, citizen involvement if properly channelled is a better option towards decision making process that can bring benefits to the people (Beierle, 1999; Thomas, 1995). In addition, citizens cooperate when policy is familiar to them and take care of their preferences, needs and choice thereby makes implementation cheap and less expensive (Thomas, 1995; Vroom and Jago, 1988). As posited by Irvin et al. (2004), citizen participation has its benefits and the authors stressed that the users' impact depends on the direction of policy maker resources to be expended and in terms of community participation by beneficiaries. Considering the aforementioned, it can be summarily postulate that when users are involved in their project initiation process then the outcome can be assured to be a success. Table 2 illustrates some selected research works on users' participation in public projects outcomes and research methods.

Table 2: Empirical Contingency Studies of User Participation and User Involvement

Study	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	Contingency Factors (CF)	Results
Franz (1979)	User participation	Systems quality	Decision environment structure	IV-DV: Positive relationship CF: Not significant
Ginzberg (1979)	Issue resolution by users and designers during 7-phase systems development process model	Success implementation	System complexity (i.e. amount of organizational change)	IV-DV: Overall strong positive relationship, stage by stage differences CF: Weak effect
Robey and Farrow (1982)	User participation, influence, conflict and conflict resolution in a model of conflict resolution.		Life cycle phases	Model interaction changed over life cycle phases
Franz and Robey (1986)	User involvement	Usefulness of IS	Nature of decision making, organizational characteristics, MIS department characteristics	IV-DV: Weak positive relationship CF: Decentralization of authority, level of MIS management, and scope of MIS department had moderating effects.
Kim and Lee (1986)	User participation	MIS system usage	Task complexity, top management support, type of initiator, stage of development	IV-DV: Positive relationship CF: Weak effects for complexity and stage of development.
Doll and Torkzadeh (1989)	End user involvement	End user satisfaction	Gap between desired involvement and actual involvement	IV-DV: Positive relationship CF: Involvement gap significantly affected the relationship
Robey et al. (1989)	User participation, influence, conflict and conflict resolution in a model of conflict resolution		Five periodic intervals	Model interactions remained relatively constant over the different time period.
Kappelman and McLean (1991)	User participation	User satisfaction	User involvement	IV-DV: Significant positive relationship CF: Significant user involvement interaction
King and Lee (1991)	End user participation	End user satisfaction	User involvement, fit between desired and actual participation	IV-DV: Significant but for general users only CF: All affected the relationship but for general users only.
Nour (2011)	User participation	Success implementation	-	IV-DV: Strong relationship. User participation is an important point of housing and urban development.
Carroll and Rosson (2007)	User participation	Success outcome	-	IV-DV: Positive relationship. Users participation develop successful outcome.

Source: Adopted and develop from MIS Quarterly/December, 1994

9. Conclusion

Housing projects is capital demanding. Despite the financial involving in the construction and execution of mass housing importantly by the Malaysia government for her citizens, it will be disheartening to record non-occupancy rate. The aforementioned literature have established that much of the non-occupancy and users dissatisfaction in community government project, particularly in housing provision are basically as a result of lack of adequate room for users needs and non-recognitions for users contributions. End users participation will reduce government expenses and the time wasted in ruminating about the possible users' characteristics and needs to be incorporated in public projects. With users' participation, users will be adequately informed on their project and their opinions and advice will be considered at the appropriate period towards better project successfulness. Hence, the sense of belonging, sharing and attachment will be develop among the project actors and the end-users while the end-users consider the participatory project as their products and develop strong affinity toward its successfulness. Therefore, the reluctance or rejection of project will be eradicated on the part of the end-users. As such, high projects acceptability will be achieved among the end users and housing non-occupancy will be minimised or eradicated as a result of end-users perceived attitude towards housing acceptance and satisfaction. Thus, introduction of end users participation approach in Malaysia housing delivery system will trigger adequate housing occupancy.

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