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USERS' PERSPECTIVES ON SPATIAL CONFIGURATION AND PRIVACY PROVISION OF HOUSES IN PRECINCT 9, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Built Environment

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ABSTRACT

One of the vital issues in housing satisfaction is regarding residents' privacy satisfaction with the provided privacy inside the house. However, contemporary houses in Malaysia are going through a series of changes in terms of planning and designs, resulted from the mass production of housing, modernization, and technological advancement. Apparently, it has also influence on how designers and users identify, interpret, and perceive privacy, thus causing in the manifestation of housing designs that are departing from what Islam and Malay's culture and tradition has recommended. This incoherency of human needs and preference of privacy with what were provided has caused dissatisfaction and had led to social problems and psychological distress. Therefore, this research proposes to assess residents' privacy satisfaction in contemporary housing and to study the influence of spatial configuration on the privacy provision of the residents in contemporary houses in Presint 9, Putrajaya, based on occupants' perspectives. This research covers a wide range of literature related to theoretical aspects and issues of privacy, including from the Islamic perspectives and inside the culture and tradition of the Malays. Quantitative and qualitative methodology of collecting and analysing data were employed in this research in order to achieve conclusive result. This study attempts at examining the level of privacy satisfaction using questionnaire survey. Then, case study and informal interview were carried out for the purpose of identification and verification of factors that influence privacy satisfaction, which would be used to recommend a proper spatial configuration, for better privacy management in the house. After the field work, all the collected data were analysed and discussed descriptively. The findings showed that space configuration and physical elements in housing design led to privacy dissatisfaction. In conclusion, this study has identified planning strategies and privacy regulation which are to be considered during the stage of planning and design of contemporary houses in Malaysia. The strategies involve in privacy management and provision, which may increase and satisfy residents' biological, physical, and psychological needs.

ملخص البحث

منالقضايا الحيوية اليوم في الرضا عن السكن هي مدى الرضا بالخصوصية لدى السكان من حيثتوفيرالخصوصيةفي المنزل. ومع ذلك، تسير إنشاء المنازل المعاصرةفي ماليزيا خلال سلسلة منالتغييرات منحيث التخطيطوالتصميم والتي هينتيجة لإنشاء كميات كبيرة من المساكنوالتحديث والتقدم التكنولوجي. ويبدو أنهذه التغيراتقد أثرتأيضا في طريقةالمصممينوالمستخدمين لتحديدوتفسير وإدراك الخصوصية، مما أدت إلى مظهر من مظاهرتصاميم المساكنالتي تعتبرخروجا عن الثقافة والتقاليدالإسلامية وتراث الملايو.وقد تسببالتفاوتبينالحاجة الإنسانيةوتفضيلالخصوصيةمع مايجري حاليا نوعا منالاستياء، مما أدت إلى مشاكل اجتماعيةعلاوة إلى الضيق النفسي. لذلك،يقترحهذا البحثتقييم رضا الخصوصية فيالسكنالمعاصر ، ودراسة تأثير التكوينالمكانيعلى توفيرالخصوصية للمقيمين فيالمنازلالمعاصرةفيالمخفر9،بوتراجايا، استنادا إلى وجهات نظر الشاغلين من هؤلاء السكان.
يحتويهذا البحث على مجموعة واسعة منأدب الإطار النظري للدراسة ، والمتعلقة بالجوانب والقضايا ذاتالخصوصية،ويتضمن ذلكوجهة النظر الإسلاميةوالثقافةوالتقاليد والعادات الماليزية. وقد استخدمت منهجياتنوعية وكميةلجمعالبيانات وتحليلهامن أجل تحقيقنتائج حاسمة. وتحاول الدراسة الحالية الوصول إلى مستوى رضاالخصوصيةباستخداماالاستبيان، حيث نفذت في وقت لاحق، دراسة الحالةوالمقابلات غير الرسميةلغرض الكشف والتحققمن العواملالتي تؤثر علىرضاالخصوصية، والتي سيتم استخدامها لتوصية تكوين المساحة المكانيةالمناسبة ، لإدارة أفضلالخصوصية فيالمنزل. وبعد الانتهاء منالعمل الميداني، تم تحليل جميعالبيانات التي تم جمعهاومناقشتهاوصفيا. وقد أظهرتالنتائج أنتكوينالفضاءوالعناصر المادية فيتصميم المساكنأدى إلىاستياء عدم الرضا بالخصوصية. وفيالختام،لقد حددتهذه الدراسةاستراتيجيات التخطيطوالأنظمةالخصوصيةالتي ينبغي النظر فيها ومراعاتها خلال مرحلةتخطيط وتصميمالمنازلالمعاصرةفي ماليزيا. وهذه الاستراتيجياتمشاركة فيإدارةوتوفيرالخصوصيةقد تكون قادرة علىالوفاءوتلبيةالاحتياجات البيولوجية، الجسدية، والنفسيةللسكان.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Sciences (Built Environment).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Fatin Zahida binti Abu Hassan

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The human being's first environmental problem is the search for shelter to protect himself and his family; biologically, physically and psychologically. People used to address this problem by finding a ready-made shelter or build a house according to their own design intention and available materials to provide physical protection, as well as privacy in the simplest manner. Over time, the house forms appear to develop meaningfully.

Apparently, mass production of housings and technological advancements have led to various design ideas and manifestation of housing designs which seems to be lacking in terms of psychological aspects, especially regarding the privacy provision, safety, and security. Any discrepancies on fulfilling these aspects may lead to many social problems and psychological distress. Therefore, this research will be discussing and focusing on the importance of privacy, how it is achieved and violated, and what can be done to regulate a better privacy management and privacy provision, which are in line with the Malay's and Islamic requirements.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

According to Omer (2008) and Mortada (2003), a house from the Islamic perspective is a private realm where its inhabitants are the ones who determine the functions of the house, both physically and spiritually. Entering and leaving the house are considered as a transition from two different worlds, the inside and outside domains. A house

thus, needs to be a safeguarded haven that protects the family's realm and privacy, which are well protected from the public interest as an absolute institution of self-development and societal integration.

Islam places a great emphasis on the complete protection of Muslims but greater emphasis has been placed upon women concerning their privacy and freedom, in comparison to men. The idea of privacy for women in Islam is the concealment and observation of their body parts, or '*aurah*' from the attention and interest of the non-*mahram*, public and unrelated acquaintances, who they cannot marry in their entire life (Qur'an, *an-Nur*, 31).

From the verse above, the veiling concept of women functions in two ways. Firstly, it is for the women who should prevent their eyes from looking at, seeking for or doing things that are forbidden in Islam, such as showing off their adornments to the non-*mahram* as recorded by an Islamic scholar; Abu Dawud in Book 32, Number 4090. The latter is for the women to observe their own *'aurah*, by veiling their bodies with appropriate clothing so that the shape and parts of the body that need to be covered are not seen by other people unlawfully, as well as observing their '*akhlaq'* or manners, as recorded by Ibn Mas'ud in his *tafseer* (Hamid, 2010). These Islamic values and beliefs are in line with the '*adat*' or the tradition of the traditional Malay, which have given the mnemonic cues on the dos and don'ts in protecting the individual and family privacy.

According to El-Agouri (2004), to regulate an adequate level of privacy for women, three mechanisms that can be applied; social, behavioural, and environmental mechanism. Social mechanism is primarily the cues for a human's psychological process that is governed by culture, religion, and social context of an individual. On the other hand, the behavioural mechanism is explained as the user's role in built

environment in the alteration and adjustments made to the physical environment, a person's quality of life (QL) and psychological standard and reference which manifests in spatial behaviour (overt or cognitive behaviour) (El-Agouri, 2004). Finally, it is the environmental mechanism, which consists of the deployment of physical components and devices in keeping people apart or keeping them together, physically or symbolically.

However, privacy may not be achieved and perceived exclusively only via the manipulation of a single mechanism. Justa and Golan in El-Agouri (2004) denoted that attempting to solve privacy-related problems exclusively through design elements seems to be insufficient (economy inability and space unavailability). The right and appropriate behaviour and social policy support may not also have been adequate to accommodate the particular level of privacy needed by all types of activities and time. Therefore, the lack of one mechanism in privacy regulation needs to be complemented by other mechanisms. Thus, privacy is achieved through the combined interaction and operationalization of the environmental, behavioural, and social mechanisms.

1.3 CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Housing designs are significantly and gradually changing due to the mass production, high demand for housing, modernization, and technological advancement. Recent studies conducted by scholars stated that contemporary houses across the globe nowadays are somehow environmentally and culturally irresponsive (Zohri, 2010; Salleh, 2008 Omer, 2008; Abdul Rahim, 2006; El-Agouri, 2004). Influences from foreign styles by the earlier conquest and migration from all over the world has largely been absorbed into the Malaysian housing designs. However, the quality of life and psychological needs of human have often been compromised and disregarded.

This has eventually contributed to a more diverse perception, interpretation, and definition of privacy among human, not excluding the Muslims and Malays, the largest group of people in Malaysia. The improper hierarchy of space and unclear division or delineation of spaces in contemporary housing nowadays has eventually led to unlimited and uncontrolled degree of access by any mean; the visual, aural and accessibility, which may cause social conflicts, crowding, and distress.

In Malaysia, privacy provision is one of the criteria of housing satisfaction, and is recognised as an important indicator of housing quality, which has a great impact on individuals' quality of life (Daneshpour et. al., 2012; Tan, 2011; Ariffin and Zahari, 2011; Hashim and Rahim, 2011; Hamid, 2010; Talib, 2009; Zohri, 2009; Salleh, 2008; Jaafar et. al., n.d.). More and more contemporary houses are produced with less consideration towards the space configuration of the house in fulfilling residents' psychological needs, especially Muslim residents that causes psychological distress and other social problems (Hashim and Rahim, 2008). Furthermore, Hashim and Rahim (2008) stated that the biggest problem contributing to these departing housing layouts from what is posited by the traditional Malay and Islamic guidelines is related to the unclear hierarchy and division of spaces inside the house.

Problems such as improper location of openings, undivided and unscreened spaces will allow for visual access and flow of information. It may decrease the control over level of accessibility between spaces and flow of information, therefore leads to privacy violation. As Islam places a great emphasis on the privacy protection, it is crucial that houses are to be designed and built with sufficient protection against external environment and other people's interest and attention, as well as providing an optimum level of privacy, security, and safety. Therefore, design strategies need to be implemented where the spatial layout needs to be responsive to not only the current

lifestyle, but most importantly, to satisfy the residents' biological, physical, and psychological needs.

Thus, from the issues discussed earlier, there are three major problems identified which are related to Malaysian's housing issues concerning privacy provision. These problems have contributed most to privacy issues in problem in Malaysian housing that will be further investigated by the researcher, which are as follows;

1. Hierarchy and Division of Space
2. Physical Elements (Placements and location of openings and staircase)
3. External Environment (Housing unit boundary, safety and security)

1.4 SUBJECT OF STUDY

This study was conducted by the perceptual approach; which is by considering individual variability, subjectivity as well as to recognize the influence of social, cultural, and religious background onto an individual's way of thinking and behaving. Apart from that, this approach of research enables the researcher to understand how influences from the surrounding interact and affect human senses and psychology. This research was carried out by examining the elements of space configuration and how do these elements affect the level of privacy provision for the residents. This study also focused on privacy regulatory mechanisms that have been employed by individuals in regulating privacy within the house.

1.4.1 Scope of Study

In this research, it is necessary to cast a glance at the traditional architecture of the Malays and the Islamic housing principles; as it is a wise step for both the academic

research and design practice to firstly understand, modify, and develop some of its principles. As literatures denote that privacy can be regulated in three ways, the researcher attempted to investigate on how the Malays used to regulate the privacy in the design and layout of modern and contemporary housing in Putrajaya. Literatures pertaining to factors that influence the perceived and expected privacy needs are essential in order to understand privacy, its theory, and its regulatory mechanisms.

As privacy is identified and interpreted differently by any individual, the study of the contextual patterns of Malaysia's traditional and contemporary residential architecture, lifestyle, and social-culture has essentially helped the researcher to establish a theoretical framework. This theoretical framework were adopted to enable the researcher to understand the relationship between space, culture, and human behaviour of Malaysians, particularly, the Malays and the Muslims, and to what extent the spatial configurations from the traditional houses and Islamic housing preference are facilitating the residents' privacy needs.

1.4.2 Site of Study

In this research, Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya was chosen as the site of study, specifically the Precinct 9 residential area. This is in accordance with the focus of this research as to select a well-planned city, which is considered as Malaysia's first Intelligent City, which incorporates a new 'progressive Muslim' identity (Moser, 2010; Talib, 2009 and Siong, 2006). Putrajaya city planning has adopted the Islamic city elements which follow the doctrine of Perancangan Bandar & Desa.

Furthermore, the city planning of Putrajaya stresses on the relationship between human with Allah, human with the other human, and lastly between human and the environment (Talib, 2009). This is ideally suitable for this research to study

housing issues in a well-planned residential area; which incorporates Islamic city, housing planning, and architectural elements, as well as on how planning affects the housing satisfaction.

1.4.3 Methodology of Research

Since this research uses the perceptual approach, which is to understand how factors influencing space configuration are affecting residents' level of privacy satisfaction, questionnaire surveys were used as the first instrument in attempts to obtain users' reactions, perception, and satisfaction of privacy provided in a current house. Theoretical perspectives on housing satisfaction usually consider the difference between the households' actual and desired housing and neighbourhood situations and satisfaction. Respondents who reside in Precinct 9, Putrajaya were chosen randomly to examine level of privacy satisfaction in the house. It was also carried out to investigate the residents' satisfaction in privacy provision based on the house's space configuration and physical components.

Three (3) selected high-rise housing unit, and three (3) landed housing units' plan layouts, which were identified from the questionnaire survey were analysed. The factors that facilitate or impede the level of privacy provision in the houses were identified. The hierarchy and configuration of the spaces were analysed through their arrangement of spaces, size, location, division, orientation, and shape of the house. The presence or absence of barriers and spatial boundaries used to regulate privacy were also identified. Informal interviews with the residents of selected houses were carried out to verify the factors that affect the privacy provision in terms of space configuration as well as to understand the complex psychological issues by not disregarding the individual variability (Marshall, 1966).

The questionnaire survey (quantitative data) was analysed statistically using univariate analysis, which will be presented with the frequency analysis of the respondents' socioeconomic and demographic background- gender, age, marital status, level of study, monthly income, and type of house. Frequency analysis is one of the descriptive statistical methods that reflect the number of occurrences of each of the case responded to (Sarantakos, 1998).

Qualitative data collected during the case study, which involves plans attainment from the developer will be descriptively analyzed using plan analysis. On the other hand, data collected from the observation, photograph, and informal interviews will be analyzed and interpreted using content analysis, which will be presented in the form of photographs and words.

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to study the influence of space configuration on the privacy provision of the residents in contemporary houses, in Precinct 9, Putrajaya. The objectives of this research are as follows;

1. To examine the levels of privacy satisfaction of the residents in contemporary houses in Precinct 9, Putrajaya;
2. To identify and verify the factors that are affecting (facilitate or inhibit) the level of privacy of a house;
3. To suggest design recommendations and strategies for the use of developers, designers, and clients that will help to improve the residents' privacy satisfaction.