



VISUAL PRIVACY FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF
MALAY FAMILY LIVING IN TERRACE HOUSING IN
SELANGOR

BY

AZHANI BINTI ABD. MANAF

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Built Environment)

Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design
International Islamic University Malaysia

NOVEMBER 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the issue of visual privacy of a house from the Islamic perspective. Notably, the review of literature indicates that there is a lack of visual privacy in the design of terrace housing in Malaysia, especially for Malay families who have particular regulations and principles governing the modesty of self, family and house. An incongruence between religious and cultural needs, and house design pertaining to visual privacy, may lead to negative changes in lifestyle and discomfort—such as neglect of religious requirements and the sacrifice of freedom of visual access and openness. Despite the importance, previous studies did not specifically define Muslim Visual Privacy (MVP) from the perspective of Malay families, nor did they elaborate on the characteristics of the physical elements affecting MVP in terrace housing designs. Accordingly, findings for this thesis have been based on a mixed-method approach, i.e. a combination of quantitative research method—through a survey that has been administered through a questionnaire, and qualitative methods such as an in-depth interview, observation and space-syntax analysis. 441 respondents have been involved in the questionnaire survey and 10 respondents for the in-depth interview, both have been chosen from the two locations of study which are Bandar Baru Bangi and Bandar Seri Putra, in the state of Selangor. The findings indicate that the protection of *awrat* and security are the most important factors affecting visual privacy among the Malays who are living in terrace housing. However, in the process of achieving optimum visual privacy, hospitality to guests and community intimacy, two values integral in Islamic teaching and Malay culture have been compromised due to the constraint of the terrace housing environment. Respondents have raised issues regarding the porch area of the house and how activities such as hanging out the laundry to dry, washing the car and standing in the doorway of the main entrance are affected by the lack of visual privacy. The study has also highlighted issues regarding the lack of MVP in the interior and exterior spaces of terrace housing, which result in visual intrusion on the family and neighbouring houses. This implies that the design of terrace housing lacked sensitivity to MVP requirements. Environmental and behavioural mechanisms are important in maintaining MVP of the respondents, where Malay families are found to employ a varied combination of behavioural and environmental mechanisms based on the needs of the family. Housing modification trends that have been made by respondents focus on functionality and practicality, as a majority of them have prioritised modifications to their wet kitchen area, despite being the least satisfied with the external elements of the house (gate and side boundary wall), in terms of providing MVP for the family. Therefore, this study suggests that more consideration and care need to be given in designing the physical elements and external areas of a terrace house, due to the importance in protecting the visual privacy for the Malay family. Furthermore, findings from this study have suggested a path for further studies that necessitates a more flexible house-modification system which allows for the adaptations of terrace housing designs in Malaysia.

مُلخَص البحث

يركز البحث على مسألة الخصوصية البصرية للمنزل من منظور إسلامي؛ إذ تشير الدراسات السابقة إلى أن لا خصوصية بصرية في تصميم منازل "التراس" في ماليزيا، ولا سيما للأسرة الملايوية التي لديها مبادئ خاصة في منازلها، وقد يؤدي التعارض بين الاحتياجات الدينية والثقافية وتصميم المنزل فيما يتعلق بالخصوصية البصرية؛ إلى تغييرات سلبية في نمط الحياة وفقد الراحة، من مثل إهمال المتطلبات الدينية والتفريط بحرية الوصول والانفتاح البصري، وذا ما لم تتناوله الدراسات السابقة على الرغم من أهميتها، وقد اعتمد البحث المزج بين النهج الكمي من خلال الاستبانة، والنهج الكيفي من خلال المقابلة، وشارك في الاستبانة 441 مجيباً، وفي المقابلة 10 مجيبين؛ اختيروا جميعاً من موقعين هما: بندر بارو بانجي، وبندر سيرى بوترا، في ولاية سلانجور، وقد أشارت النتائج إلى أن تحقيق الخصوصية البصرية المثلى، وكرم الضيافة، والعلاقات الاجتماعية؛ في التعليم الإسلامي والثقافة الملايوية، تختل بفقد عاملين مهمين هما درء العورة والأمن؛ بسبب قيود بيئة السكن في التراس، كما أثار المجيبون قضايا تتعلق بموقع شرفة المنزل وتأثيره في نشاطات من مثل الغسيل ونشره ليجف، وأخرى تتعلق بمدخل المنزل وتأثيره في نشاطات من مثل غسل السيارة أو ركن السيارة، وغيرها مما سببه فقد الخصوصية البصرية، فضلاً عن مشاكله في المساحات الداخلية والخارجية لمنازل التراس؛ أي إن تصميم التراس يفتقر إلى متطلبات الخصوصية البصرية للسكان المسلمين، كما أن الآليات البيئية والسلوكية مهمة جداً لدى المجيبين؛ إذ أظهرت النتائج أن كثيرين عدّلوا في منازلهم، ولا سيما موقع المطبخ، وأظهروا أنهم غير راضين عن العناصر الخارجية للمنزل (البوابة والسور)، وعليه؛ يوصي البحث بضرورة إيلاء مزيد من الاهتمام بتصميم العناصر المادية والمناطق الخارجية لمنازل التراس؛ نظراً إلى أهميته في حماية الخصوصية البصرية للأسرة الملايوية، ويقترح إجراء مزيد من الدراسات لوضع نظام أكثر مرونة من حيث إجراء تعديلات على تصميمات منازل التراس في ماليزيا.

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Azhani Binti Abd. Manaf has been approved by the following:

Noor Hanita Abdul Majid
Chairman of the Supervisory Committee

Zaiton Abdul Rahim
Supervisor of the Supervisory Committee

Spahic Omer
Co of the Supervisory Committee

Norwina Mohd Nawawi
Internal Examiner

Mahmud Bin Jusan
External Examiner

Masran Saruwono
External Examiner

Ismail Hassanien Ahmed
Chairman

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.

Azhani Binti Abd. Manaf

Signature

Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF
FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

**VISUAL PRIVACY FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF MALAY
FAMILY LIVING IN TERRACE HOUSING IN SELANGOR**

I declare that the copyright holder of this thesis is Azhani Binti Abd. Manaf

Copyright © 2019 Azhani Binti Abd. Manaf. All rights reserved.

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

By signing this form, I acknowledged that I have read and understood the IIUM Intellectual Property Right and Commercialization policy.

Affirmed by Azhani Binti Abd. Manaf

.....
Signature

.....
Date

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents for instilling in me this deep love of knowledge,
and for their continuous encouragement when it was needed the most.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory is due to Allah, the Almighty, whose Grace and Mercies have been with me throughout the duration of my study. Although it has been laborious, His Mercies and Blessings on me has eased the herculean task of completing this thesis.

I am most indebted and grateful to my main supervisor, Assnt. Prof Dr. Zaiton Abdul Rahim, whose support, kindness, guidance, promptness and thoroughness have facilitated the successful completion of my work. I appreciated all our discussions, your useful comments, insightful suggestions and inspiring queries which have undoubtedly improved this thesis. Thank you for believing in me and being a supportive friend at times of need. Your words of encouragement and moral support have helped me more than you know. I am also grateful to my co-supervisors, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noor Hanita Abdul Majid and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spahic Omer, whose insightful comments and guidance have tremendously contributed to the outcome of this work. In addition I am also indebted and grateful to KAED lecturers and fellow academic friends especially Dr. Syakir Amir and Dr. Anita Adnan, and statistician Ahmad Shokri Hj. Othman. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, expertise and comments on the work.

I am most grateful to USIM and the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia for the financial support and this wonderful opportunity.

My gratitude goes to my father, Hj. Abd. Manaf Mohamed for editing and proofreading my work. Your wisdom and discipline in working has both awed and inspired me. My gratitude goes to my parents, for their never ending support, sound advice and helping in matters both big and small. Thank you to my mother, Siti Petimah Hj. Hassan for always standing behind me and helping in any way you can to enable me to complete and carry out my research work. My deepest gratitude to both of you for your patience and endurance through my worst and best times and for being the best grandparents to my children when we were away on work or research duties.

A very special gratitude goes to my husband, Ahmad Shah Rashdan Shahrudin for providing me his emotional and moral support. Thank you for allowing me to take on this great opportunity and for being a strong pillar for me to lean on when the journey gets tough. Thank you to my children, Alisya Raihana and Muhammad Rhafa, for being so patient and understanding through the duration of my study. Lastly, thank you to my parents in law, siblings, family members and close friends for the words of encouragements and for believing in me.

Once again, we glorify Allah for His endless mercy on us one of which is enabling us to successfully round off the efforts in writing this thesis. Alhamdulillah.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright Declaration.....	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures.....	xvii
List of Abbreviations.....	xx
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background.....	4
1.3 Research Issues.....	6
1.4 Research Problem Statement	8
1.5 Research Aim	8
1.6 Research Objectives	9
1.7 Research Questions	9
1.8 Significance of Research	10
1.9 Research Scope.....	11
1.10 Thesis Report Structure	12
CHAPTER TWO: THEORIES AND CONCEPTS ON VISUAL PRIVACY.....	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Concept of Privacy	15
2.3 Visual Privacy and Culture	18
2.4 Visual Privacy and Local customs (<i>urf</i>)	21
2.5 Concept of Visual Privacy Of the House	24
2.6 Visual Privacy of A Home from Islamic Perspective	25
2.7 Visual Exposure and Visual Access As Factors Affecting Visual Privacy of A Home	29
2.8 Visual Privacy Regulation.....	31
2.9 House Modifications	34
2.10 Proposed Conceptual Framework	36
2.10.1 Proposed definition of Visual Privacy from Islamic Perspective	37

2.10.2	Optimum level of Visual Privacy from Islamic Perspective	39
2.11	Summary	43
CHAPTER THREE: VISUAL PRIVACY OF THE HOUSE.....		44
3.1	Introduction	44
3.2	Visual Privacy of the House From Islamic Perspective	44
3.2.1	Definition of Visual Privacy from Islamic Perspective.....	45
3.2.2	Functions of Visual Privacy from Islamic Perspective	46
3.2.3	Visual Privacy Regulation.....	47
3.2.4	House Modifications	48
3.2.5	Visual Exposure and Visual Access	50
3.2.6	Translation of Visual Privacy in Muslim Houses	52
3.2.7	Elements of the House Affecting Visual Privacy from Islamic perspective.....	62
3.3	Visual Privacy of the House in The Traditional Malay Culture	73
3.3.1	Visual Privacy concept of the Traditional Malays	73
3.3.2	The Planning and Design Elements Affecting Visual Privacy.....	74
3.3.3	Visual Exposure and Visual Access in Traditional Malay house .	81
3.3.4	Traditional Malay House MVP Elements	84
3.4	Housing in Malaysia	90
3.4.1	Terrace Housing in Malaysia.....	93
3.4.2	Requirements (Building By-Laws) on Openings for Terrace Housing Affecting Visual Privacy	98
3.4.3	Visual Access in Malaysian Terrace Housing.....	101
3.4.4	Privacy Regulations Mechanisms	103
3.4.5	Terrace House Modifications	105
3.5	Summary	111
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY		113
4.1	Introduction	113
4.2	Methodology in Studies on Visual Privacy	113
4.3	Research Methods and Strategies	119
4.4	Research Design and Sampling Strategy	121
4.4.1	Review of Literature and Document Sources	124
4.4.2	Questionnaire Survey	141
4.4.3	In-depth Interview	151
4.4.4	Analysis of Data	157
4.4.5	Ethics	161

4.5	Summary	163
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION		164
5.1	Introduction	164
5.2	General Background of Respondents	164
5.2.1	Differences in Characteristics of Respondents	166
5.2.2	Summary of Characteristics	167
5.3	Perception on Muslim Visual Privacy (MVP).....	169
5.3.1	Definition of MVP	170
5.3.2	Importance of MVP	177
5.3.3	Prioritization on Factors Affecting MVP	180
5.3.4	Summary of Findings on Perception of Malay Family on MVP ...	186
5.4	Visual Privacy Regulating Mechanisms.....	187
5.4.1	Activities and Areas in the House Affected by Lack of MVP.....	187
5.4.2	Visual Privacy Regulating Mechanisms Used to Maintain MVP...190	
5.4.3	<i>Urf</i> (Customs)	197
5.5	Terrace House Design Before and After House Modification	199
5.5.1	House Design Before House Modification (Existing) and MVP	201
5.5.2	House Modification and MVP	221
5.5.3	Summary of Findings on House Modifications In Relation to MVP	235
5.6	Conceptual Framework in Relation to Findings	237
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		242
6.1	Introduction	242
6.2	Conclusion	246
6.2.1	Research Objective 1 - Perception on MVP By Malay Muslim Family Living In Terrace Housing.....	246
6.2.2	Research Objective 2 - Visual Privacy Regulation	247
6.2.3	Research Objective 3 - Level of MVP in Terrace Housing Design Before and After House Modification.....	248
6.3	Recommendations	250
6.4	Research Limitations and Assumptions	254
6.5	Suggestions for Future Study	255
BIBLIOGRAPHY		256
APPENDIX A: INFO. ON TERRACE HOUSING (MPKJ).....		268
APPENDIX B: PILOT TEST – INTERVIEW SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE		269

APPENDIX C: ACTUAL – QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR SURVEY	276
APPENDIX D: LIST OF ENUMARATORS.....	280
APPENDIX E: INFORMATION SHEET TO ENUMARATORS	282
APPENDIX F: FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW.....	286
APPENDIX G : QUESTION LIST FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW.....	287
APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS.....	290
APPENDIX I : TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW OF ALL CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS.....	291
APPENDIX J : FULL ISOVIST ANALYSIS (ALL CASE STUDIES).....	385
GLOSSARY.....	407

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Analysis on variables of visual privacy of the home	28
Table 3.1a	Characteristics of entrance with regards to visual privacy from Islamic perspective	68
Table 3.1b	Characteristics of window with regards to visual privacy from Islamic perspective	69
Table 3.1c	Characteristics of height and projections with regards to visual privacy from Islamic perspective	70
Table 3.1d	Characteristics of internal elements with regards to visual privacy from Islamic perspective	71
Table 3.2a	Traditional Malay house Visual Privacy Elements – Entrance	86
Table 3.2b	Traditional Malay house Visual Privacy Elements – Windows and Height	87
Table 3.2c	Traditional Malay house Visual Privacy Elements – Space Organisation (Internal Element)	88
Table 3.2d	Traditional Malay house Visual Privacy Elements – External Elements	89
Table 4.1	Research Design - Problems, objectives and corresponding chosen research method for the study	122
Table 4.2	Summary of MVP Elements and respective sources	124
Table 4.3	2-Storey Terrace Housing Stock in Study Area	128
Table 4.4	Selected location of study and housing schemes	129
Table 4.5	Number of existing terrace housing stock in selected sections in Bandar Baru Bangi	131
Table 4.6	Selected sections in Bandar Seri Putra	138
Table 4.7	Cronbach's α analysis results of the questions in the survey	143

Table 4.8	Number of samples in Bandar Baru Bangi & Bandar Seri Putra	149
Table 4.9	Number of samples collected by design type	150
Table 4.10	Survey questions based on research objectives	158
Table 5.1	Summary of Demographic Profile	167
Table 5.2	Correlation matrix between respondent backgrounds	168
Table 5.3	Result on the definition of visual privacy	171
Table 5.4	Relationship between respondents background and Definition 1 and 2	171
Table 5.5	Cross-tabulation for respondent's background and response for Definition 2	172
Table 5.6	Definition of MVP by In-depth Interview Participants	174
Table 5.7	Privacy types in relation to MVP	176
Table 5.8	Perception on Importance of visual privacy	177
Table 5.9	Relationship between background of respondents and Importance of MVP	178
Table 5.10	Factors Influencing Perception on Importance of MVP, Visual Access and House Design	181
Table 5.11	Relationship Between Respondent Background and Factors Influencing MVP	181
Table 5.12	Factors Influencing Perception on Importance of MVP	183
Table 5.13	Perception on prioritisation of factors affecting MVP	185
Table 5.14	Activities Affected by Lack of MVP	189
Table 5.15	One-way ANOVA analysis on Activities Affected by Lack of MVP	189
Table 5.16	Areas Affected by Lack of MVP	190
Table 5.17	One-way ANOVA analysis on Areas Affected by Lack of MVP	190

Table 5.18	Privacy regulating mechanisms most used by respondents	192
Table 5.19	Relationship between privacy mechanisms used by respondents To perception of importance of MVP	193
Table 5.20	Physical elements and areas frequency of use by respondents	194
Table 5.21	Privacy regulation mechanism practiced by In-depth interview respondents	195
Table 5.22	Satisfaction of existing terrace housing design	201
Table 5.23	Relationship between background of respondents and Satisfaction with Existing design	204
Table 5.24	Summary of MVP Type and Elements	211
Table 5.25	Satisfaction on Physical elements	212
Table 5.26	Relationship between Physical Elements and Satisfaction of MVP in Existing Design	213
Table 5.27	Relationship between respondent background and Satisfaction of Physical Elements of the house	214
Table 5.28	Satisfaction on Physical Elements of the house in protecting MVP	215
Table 5.29a	Characteristics of MVP Elements for Terrace Housing -Elevation element	219
Table 5.29b	Characteristics of MVP Elements for Terrace Housing – Internal Elements	219
Table 5.29c	Characteristics of MVP Elements for Terrace Housing –External Elements	220
Table 5.30	Respondent’s house modification history	221
Table 5.31	Respondent’s house modification history based on age and period of residency	221
Table 5.32	Frequency Analysis of Reasons for House Modification	223
Table 5.33	Relationship between background of respondents and reason of modifications	224

Table 5.34	Frequency of House Modification by Area	225
Table 5.35	Analysis of Terrace House Modifications for respondents of In-depth Interview	225
Table 5.36	Comparison of internal isovist area before and after house modifications	226
Table 5.37	House Modification Trend in Relation to MVP and Areas Affected Based on In-depth Interview Cases	233
Table 5.37	House Modification Trend in Relation to MVP and Areas Affected Based on In-depth Interview Cases	233
Table 6.1a	Guideline for MVP Elevation Elements for Terrace Housing	253
Table 6.1b	Guideline for MVP Internal Elements for Terrace Housing	253
Table 6.1c	Guideline for MVP External Elements for Terrace Housing	254

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Thesis Structure	14
Figure 2.1	Expansion of privacy types	17
Figure 2.2	Privacy types	18
Figure 2.3	Factors influencing house form from Islamic perspective	20
Figure 2.4	<i>Urf</i> 's contribution as unifying and diversifying factors in the built environment of the traditional Islamic	24
Figure 2.5	Privacy regulators as proposed by Altman (1975)	32
Figure 2.6	Altman's framework of privacy regulation in relationship to culture	33
Figure 2.7	Besim's (1986) model on selected factors shaping the traditional Arabic-Islamic cities	36
Figure 2.8	MVP of current Malay housing and its two main variables	38
Figure 2.9	Elements of MVP regulating mechanisms	39
Figure 2.10	Proposed conceptual framework of this thesis	42
Figure 3.1	Example of traditional <i>masyrabiyyah</i> , in Amman and Egypt	51
Figure 3.2	Plan of a typical traditional homestead in Bangladesh	54
Figure 3.3	Traditional desert settlements of the city of Ghadames, Libya	56
Figure 3.4	Plan of women's passageway on rooftop level, section diagram of the houses indicating position of women's private circulation route	57
Figure 3.5	Position of entrances along a closed street, examples of entrances	58
Figure 3.6	Example of a courtyard house	59
Figure 3.7	Example of a traditional <i>Mashrabiyyah</i>	61

Figure 3.8	Design of the main entrance in the Al-Suhaimy house, Cairo, 1648	64
Figure 3.9	Conception of visual privacy for the traditional Malay community	74
Figure 3.10	The open compound of the traditional Malay house	76
Figure 3.11	Traditional Malay house's window	82
Figure 3.12	Typical plan of the traditional Malay house	83
Figure 3.13	Plan of long-roofed traditional Malay house	85
Figure 3.14	Typical layout of terrace house in Selangor, Malaysia	94
Figure 3.15	Evolution of façade treatment of terrace houses	98
Figure 4.1	Example of space and their corresponding space syntax graph	117
Figure 4.2	Isovist area	117
Figure 4.3	Process of research methods employed in this study	121
Figure 4.4	Research design	122
Figure 4.5	Population distribution by race according to local council	127
Figure 4.6	Map of Bandar Baru Bangi highlighting residential area	130
Figure 4.7	Terrace housing neighbourhood in the selected section in Bandar Baru Bangi	133
Figure 4.8	Photo of front and rear facades of terrace housings in Bandar Baru Bangi	134
Figure 4.9	Location of terrace housing sections in Bandar Seri Putra	135
Figure 4.10	Example of terrace house neighbourhood in Bandar Seri Putra area	136
Figure 4.11	Example of terrace house design in Bandar Seri Putra area	136
Figure 4.12	Location map of Bangi Avenue 2 within Bandar Seri Putra	137
Figure 4.13	Neighbourhood area in Bangi Avenue 2	138

Figure 4.14	Example of terrace housing, unit in Bangi Avenue 2	138
Figure 4.15	Front and back elevations of recent terrace housing design	143
Figure 5.1	Urf practiced by house owners with regards to house modifications to increase MVP level	198
Figure 5.2	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Case A3	205
Figure 5.3	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Case A4	206
Figure 5.4	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Case B3	206
Figure 5.5	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Case B4	207
Figure 5.6	Isovist field on external area of Case A1	209
Figure 5.7	Isovist field on external area of Case B2	209
Figure 5.8	Isovist field on external area of Case B3	210
Figure 5.9	Isovist field on external area of Case B4	210
Figure 5.10	Difference in isovist fields for side-facing and front-facing main doors	215
Figure 5.11	Visual intrusion from frontage due to mirror-planning of housing rows and lack of visual barrier (Case B4 & B5)	217
Figure 5.12	Visual intrusion from frontage due to mirror-planning of housing rows and lack of visual barrier (Case B4 & B5)	217
Figure 5.13	Recent terrace housing design favouring open-plan concepts	217
Figure 5.14	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Respondent A2	229
Figure 5.15	Isovist field on ground floor plan of Respondent B2	229
Figure 5.16	Isovist area before and after modification	231
Figure 5.17	Example of Isovist areas of houses that modified side boundary wall / fencing	234
Figure 6.1	MVP elements for terrace housing	252

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

M.V.P	Muslim Visual Privacy
M.P.Kj	Majlis Perbandaran Kajang (Kajang City Council)
P.D.T.H.L	Pejabat Daerah / Tanah Hulu Langat
N.E.P	New Economic Policy
P.B.U.H	Peace Be Upon Him

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Visual privacy is an aspect of privacy considered most important in the design of houses particularly Muslim houses. Its definition, regulation and needs influenced the specifics of the house form. Besim (1986) stressed that a context which allows overlooking is considered harmful and is an offence in Muslim law. Past studies emphasized culture as an important factor which determines how privacy is defined (Rapoport, 1969) and regulated (Altman, 1977; Kupritz, 2000; Reis & Lay, 2004).

Visual privacy is highly influenced by culture (Rapoport, 1969; Shach-Pinsly, Fisher-Gewirtzman, & Burt, 2011). Numerous studies have attempted to define visual privacy in the context of housing particularly from Western perspectives (Alkhazmi & Esin, 2017; Besim, 1986; Hisham, 2003; Reis & Lay, 2004). Review of literature indicated that visual privacy defined by past Islamic scholars mainly centred on the act of visual intrusion into the domain of the house from outside, with a focus on female family members. The definition which mainly focused on the aspect of exposure from outside has influenced the traditional Muslim house form as discussed by Besim (1986) and Hisham (2003). The definition of visual privacy in general, revolved around the idea of visual connection, prohibition of visual exposure and visual protection of the family from the eyes of outsiders. Visual exposure and visual access are both important factors affecting visual privacy level of the house. Therefore despite the many

definitions proposed, a definition of privacy needs to be specific within a cultural milieu.

Privacy has been seen as one of the most important consideration in the Muslim houses (Besim, 1986; Spahic, 2010a). The primary function of the house; as in the revelation of the holy Qur'an (Al-Nahl, 80), "*It is Allah who made your homes of rest and quiet for you...*" is to provide a sanctuary and haven for the true believers, and is Allah's will as a physical and mental refuge from the outside world. The revelation emphasises the importance of the house as a primary setting for privacy. A house is more than just a structural shelter, instead it is an institution of great significance to cultural and family development (Rapoport, 1969; Spahic, 2010a). The importance of visual privacy is highlighted in the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.). Islam considers all types of privacy in its jurisprudence, however visual privacy takes precedence when it comes to build environment (Besim, 1986). Besim (1986), Asiah (2008), Hisham (2003), Spahic (2010) and Zulkeplee, Buys, & Aird (2014) emphasize the importance of visual privacy in the design of Muslim housing. Given its importance, prioritisation for visual privacy in the house design according to Islamic principle and culture is important to provide the optimum level of visual privacy for the family. In the context of the Muslims, visual privacy is influenced by both cultural and religious requirements (Besim, 1986; Hisham, 2003; Zaiton, 2015).

The design of houses plays an important role in providing visual privacy to the occupants. The lack of consideration for visual privacy and other housing needs in the design will result in the inability to achieve the level of visual privacy needed and cause behavioural adaptation which may have negative consequences on the life of the occupants. Privacy as a whole is one of the most important characteristics of a Muslim's

house and plays a dominant role in establishing the form, layout and functioning of the house (Asiah, 2008; Besim, 1986; Hisham, 2003; Spahic, 2010a; Zulkeplee et al., 2014). The need for visual privacy also resulted in the hierarchy of spaces and design of entrances and openings such as seen in the traditional Muslim houses (Abdel-moniem, 2010; Spahic, 2011a).

Regulation of visual privacy both through environmental and behavioural mechanism as noted by Altman (1977) is important in providing optimum level of visual privacy. The needs and regulation of privacy are universal across all cultures, nevertheless, they are a culturally specific phenomenon (Irwin Altman, 1977; Zaiton & Ahmad Hariza, 2008; Zulkeplee et al., 2014). Altman (1975) as cited in Noorul Huda & Anuar (2013a) suggested that privacy regulation is a dynamic process that is highly dependent on behavioural norms, needs and values of the culture. Even within a culture itself, the house form can phase and change in tandem with changes in the environment and progress (Rapoport, 1969). Newell's (1995) study highlighted the dynamic nature of privacy that evolves with the development of the person and his or her specific context. Consideration for visual privacy within a specific cultural and housing context is important to ensure successful regulation of visual privacy by the occupants.

Modification is visual communication of the occupant's personality, tastes, interests, lifestyle, values and social status (Rapoport, 1969). House modification is a "*change to physical elements of the house to meet the needs of their families*" by the occupants themselves (Farah, 2010). Personal modifications by owners and citizens are also termed by Besim (1986) as decisions made on micro scale by citizens that affect the design language and urban environment of the traditional Arabic-Islamic cities. Although with less profound effect compared to the macro level decisions by rulers, its impression on the city is actually greater. Spahic (2010b) on the other hand sees house

modification as “corrective measures” to solve issues with housing that do not meet the needs of the occupants, as in the case of terraced houses in Malaysia. He also added the roles of house modifications based on Islamic values can only be properly carried out with increased awareness and education to builders and owners, in order to avoid the same faults from recurring. House modification plays an integral role in helping occupants achieve optimum visual privacy levels as required by cultural and religious requirements.

1.2 BACKGROUND

There is no word(s) to describe visual privacy in the traditional Malay society. The whole idea of privacy was influenced by Islamic principles and traditional Malay culture which governed the behavioural norms of the society, subsequently translated into the houses and settlement. The idea of privacy was balanced between the need to provide privacy for the family and community ties. The strong emphasis on community orientation can be viewed by provision of external spaces for entertaining guests and loose territorial boundaries between houses that ease interaction within the community (Zaiton & Ahmad Hariza, 2008). However, Ahmad Hariza and Zaiton (2008) and Harlina (2007) assert that even with the lack of permanent visual boundaries, visual privacy is still maintained and regulated through design of the house itself that ensures segregation of male and female, as well as shared societal values that hinder behaviours such as looking into someone else’s house. The influence of Islam on housing in Malaysia is rooted in the traditional Malay houses and the traditional Malay society. The traditional Malay vernacular architecture reflects the dominant values of Islam and the socio-cultural values of traditional Malay culture (Asiah, 2008; Farah, 2010; Zaiton & Ahmad Hariza, 2008), which recognizes the importance of local customs and