

**WOMEN-FRIENDLY HOUSING: RETHINKING WOMEN'S SAFETY, WELFARE AND
SECURITY IN MEDIUM-COST HOUSING**

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DEDICATION

Specially dedicated to my dearest abah and mama, my family members and my best friends who always support me with love.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the importance of women's safety, welfare, and security in the development of medium-cost housing in Malaysia. The vast majority of women and girls face great anxiety and insecurity in an unsafe environment where women often being the targeted subject for harassment and violence, especially behind closed doors of a poor housing environment and condition. There is little emphasis on women's safety, welfare, and security planning and design in low-cost housing which is often overlooked by the authority. The lack of power, differences in lifestyle, and lack sense of understanding amongst the lower-income group also affect the security as the term 'neighborhood effect' is often used to describe the simultaneous presence of neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage with other social problems such as high rate of unemployment, and crime that consequently diminishes the security aspect in a low-cost housing complex. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to identify the needs for the emotional, social, and economic development of women in a medium-cost housing environment; to develop suitable program relating to the emotional, social and economic state of women in a medium-cost housing territory; and to propose a housing design that resolves the emotional, social and economic state of women in a medium-cost housing environment.

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini meneroka kepentingan keselamatan, kebajikan dan keselamatan wanita dalam pembangunan perumahan kos sederhana di Malaysia. Sebilangan besar wanita dan kanak-kanak perempuan menghadapi kebimbangan dan rasa tidak selamat dalam persekitaran yang tidak selamat di mana wanita sering menjadi sasaran gangguan dan keganasan, terutamanya di sebalik pintu tertutup persekitaran dan keadaan perumahan yang buruk. Terdapat sedikit penekanan terhadap perancangan dan reka bentuk keselamatan, kebajikan dan keselamatan wanita di perumahan kos rendah yang sering diabaikan oleh pihak berkuasa. Kekurangan kuasa, perbezaan gaya hidup, dan kekurangan persefahaman dalam kalangan golongan berpendapatan rendah turut menjejaskan keselamatan kerana istilah 'kesan kejiranan' sering digunakan untuk menggambarkan kehadiran serentak kelemahan sosioekonomi kejiranan dengan masalah sosial lain seperti tinggi. kadar pengangguran, dan jenayah yang seterusnya mengurangkan aspek keselamatan di kompleks perumahan kos rendah. Oleh itu, objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti keperluan bagi pembangunan emosi, sosial dan ekonomi wanita dalam persekitaran perumahan kos sederhana; untuk membangunkan program yang sesuai berkaitan dengan keadaan emosi, sosial dan ekonomi wanita di wilayah perumahan kos sederhana; dan untuk mencadangkan reka bentuk perumahan yang menyelesaikan keadaan emosi, sosial dan ekonomi wanita dalam persekitaran perumahan kos sederhana.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

Malaysia has adopted many housing initiatives for different groups over the years, according to their eligibility. Social housing was considered the most inexpensive because it was subsidized and primarily accessible to low-income residents who met specific government-defined criteria. Meanwhile, affordable housing usually tackles eligible residents of middle-income range in the sub urban city. Nevertheless, it is equally important to have a good quality stratified housing infrastructure as essential to achieve a livable and sustainable environment. However, the typical housing model does not primarily tackle the residents' safety, security, and welfare, especially women and their children, even though it meets the minimum standard requirements. High-rise residential buildings are prone to accidents as well as social issues that can affect the building image.

The design of middle-cost housing should be rethought as one of the key considerations to be considered in the housing territories is placing safety measures. Many issues in housing, typically in high-rise housing layout such as Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) restrains high-quality living and wellbeing for families. The quality of life affects the relationship within the family, as described in (Key Challenges Contributing to the Survival of Single Mothers, 2017). One of the aspects is emotional disruptions. Emotionally disruptions will create a hard time communicating and properly connecting with their children. Not only that, the absence of secure housing and security of tenure increases women's vulnerability and their when facing domestic violence and often times it results in them remaining with the violent partner or family member.

A sort of social responsibility in the hands of the government, developers, and municipal councils is a vital part of the strategy to create a more stable life for women, especially underprivileged group; women who have encountered domestic abuse or any form

of harassment and women who have limited resources to access the essentials of living by just surviving on the surface. Hence, the research aims to address the issue of housing in terms of women's well-being and proposing a new women-friendly housing schemes that are suited to women's need. Using an architectural approach, the concept of safe space is analysed and reflected in order to improve safety measures and protect low-income women in residential situations that may emphasise their positive self-development

1.2 Research Objectives and Aim

This research aims to explore the adaptation of the concept of Theory of Defensible Space towards the development of safe spaces concerning women's safety and welfare in the housing context that promote women empowerment through self-development and social entrepreneurship programs. Therefore, the research questions are :-

- i. To identify the needs for the emotional, social and economic development of women's welfare in a housing compound in a community
- ii. To establish suitable program relating to the emotional, social and economical state of women's welfare in a community within middle-cost housing
- iii. To propose a middle-cost housing design that resolves the emotional, social, and economic state of women's welfare in a community.

1.3 Research Questions

The development of women-friendly housing schemes is the main highlight of the research to figure out the solution of issues that are discussed related to the state of emotional, social and economic of underprivileged women.

- i. Socioeconomic issues of low-cost housing condition that affects women's welfare development state
- ii. Social entrepreneurship and self-development programs amongst dwellings to empower women in entrepreneurship
- iii. Architectural solution to housing schemes for underprivileged women

1.4 Issues and Problem Statement

1.4.1 Social Issues

Lack of middle-cost housing and abundance of low-cost housing often creates a concentration of poverty

According to Shlay. Et al. (2015) in the International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, concentrated poverty describes neighbourhoods of largely poor people devoid of income diversity. People living in concentrated poverty tend to remain in harmful lifestyles and behaviours that prolong their impoverishment. Living in such an area tends to create a negative and destructive lifestyle. The term 'neighbourhood effects' is used to describe the simultaneous presence of neighbourhood socioeconomic disadvantage with other social problems; high rates of unemployment, child maltreatment, crime, adolescent delinquency, single-parent households, social and physical disorder and poor developmental outcomes for children and adolescent (Coulton, Korbin, Su & Chow, 1995). This eventually creates a stigma amongst society towards the dwellings in this area. It is unfortunate for underprivileged women; single mothers, to live in such conditions while having

to nurture children's future as the quality of life affects children's development. Oftentimes, there is no social support and social stigma given by the society which in turn tend to be a negative impact on the social and economic adjustment (Key Challenges Contributing to the Survival of Single Mothers, 2017).

Unemployment and low-skilled jobs amongst underprivileged women are concerning especially for low-income family.

The one common issue related to underprivileged women in Malaysia is financial constraint. According to (Kotwal et. Al, 2009), meeting the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, school fees while maintaining the standard of living and personal expense are becoming difficult to adapt. Generally, inequality of treatment and discrimination affects heavily in all aspects of women's working lives, wages and employment opportunities. In addition, disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities (The Fifth Sustainable Goals of United Nations: Gender Equality). However, in this new era of globalisation, there are different kind of new employment, which in majority decided to start their businesses from home. Social entrepreneurship program could act as the primary platform for underprivileged women to boost and enhance the economy of their own.

1.4.2 Architectural Issues

Typical layout of high-rise housing particularly on low-middle cost housing restrains from high quality of living and family wellbeing

With many low-cost housings developed in the country, most of the housing schemes development has a certain requirement to meet in order to meet the budget reality of the property. A typical plan for low-cost development includes very limited common space, long and narrow corridors, poorly ventilated spaces in the housing units, and most importantly no security. The condition of low-cost housing creates a social stigma as the term 'the neighbourhood effect' comes into place in the area. Therefore, the implementation of Defensible Space Theory in the design proposal could hinder social problems, especially for women and children. According to Newman (1972),

Defensible Space theory explain how the theory shield and structure the social and aims to restructure the physical context that helps the residents gain control over their homes with established common values and lifestyles.

Inadequate spaces in relation to an appropriate program in low-cost housing have decreased residents' sense of belonging and satisfaction

Linear circulation is the typical low-cost housing layout. Compared to the standard linear form, the clustered arrangement is more community-friendly as the houses are clustered around small courtyards. This housing layout pattern creates a child-friendly pocket park which is more suitable for children and communal activities with great surveillance from the dwellings. Proposing a suitable program embedded with common spaces could promote a sense of community and sense of belonging. Providing functions in these spaces for activities that can be anticipated by the residents will encourage them to develop territorial attitudes.

Lack provision of upskill program spaces within housing compound that could establish entrepreneurship

According to (Alecia Houston, 2012), social relationships that has been developed from social networks is a successful result of social integration individually, varying different income levels whilst placed in the same housing environment. The provision of co-working spaces will enhance the engagement and participation activities, groups and businesses. Provision of public amenities is limited within low-cost housing territory which mostly include surau, child daycare, and community hall, and no organisational spaces that support creativity and innovation within an individual.

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