

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG
RESIDENTS. CASE STUDY: USJ,
SUBANG JAYA, SELANGOR,
MALAYSIA**

**SITI NUR AFIQAH BINTI MOHAMED
MUSTHAFA**

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ABSTRACT

Neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood environment, while interconnected, focus on distinct aspects of urban development and living spaces. Neighbourhood planning concepts have evolved significantly over time, reflecting shifts in urban design priorities and the socio-economic needs of communities. Neighborhood environment on the other hand has been associated with better or worse health status for mental and physical health outcomes resulting from the perspectives of housing quality, area deprivation, safety / crime, industrial pollutants and other factors. This study discusses the association between the USJ residents' perception of their neighborhood's (outdoor) environment and their physical activity involvement. The neighborhood environment and physical activity involvement were identified through a questionnaire survey. A stratified random sampling technique was used with 385 respondents from a total of 156,011 numbers of the population in Subang Jaya. The data were analyzed using frequency and regression analysis and it showed that the neighborhood's environment has no significant effect on the involvement of physical activity among the residents in USJ (respondents). The result was the opposite of the other researchers who have found links between the neighborhood's built-environment characteristics and physical activity (such as mixed land use, which indicates having destinations such as restaurants and shops nearby). This may be because the respondents were exposed to the neighborhood's environment more frequently when engaging in physical activity, which increased their unhappiness with the neighborhood's quality. There are some of the factors in the built environment discourage active living include a lack of quality lighting; a lack of access to open spaces and to sports and recreation facilities; rundown houses and neighborhoods; poor aesthetics; and locked stairwells in workplaces and public buildings. Furthermore, the majority of respondents indicated that they typically engaged in indoor physical exercise. Leisure-time physical activity may be important in fulfilling recommended physical activity levels. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce morbidity and mortality by decreasing heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, feelings of depression/anxiety, and weight (non-communicable diseases, NCD). Human health and well-being have the potential to be improved through contact with nature and green exercise or outdoor activity. Thus, one of the important contributions of built environment which comprises of neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood environment to human well-being lies in the provision of safe resources (water, air, food) and a safe environment (home/neighborhood, work, leisure) within which society and individuals can thrive. It is hoped that through this study, park managers and developers may come out with more exciting features or concepts in their future development to help encourage more physical activity involvement among the residents toward better health.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Environmental health comprises aspects of human health and diseases that are determined by factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory and practice of assessing and controlling factors in the environment that can potentially affect health (WHO European Region, 2007). As stated by World Health Organization (1992), a healthy environment is not only a need, but also a right. It is the right to live and work in an environment conducive to physical and mental health.

Rapid urbanization poses significant challenges and opportunities for creating healthy built environments that promote community well-being. As urban areas expand, the integration of health considerations into urban planning becomes increasingly critical. The built environment, encompassing infrastructure, housing, public spaces, and transportation systems, plays a vital role in shaping health outcomes and overall quality of life for urban residents.

One of the key aspects of fostering a healthy built environment is the promotion of mixed-use developments. Mixed-use neighbourhoods, which combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, have been shown to enhance urban vibrancy and community engagement. Research indicates that such developments can lead to increased social interactions, reduced reliance on automobiles, and improved physical health outcomes by encouraging walking and cycling (Gao et al., 2024; Yue et al., 2017). There is strong scientific evidence that healthy diet and adequate physical activity (i.e. ≥ 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, ≥ 5 days per week) play an important role in the prevention of the non-communicable diseases (NCD) (World Health Organization, 2008). The five major NCD are heart disease cardiovascular disease (CVD), stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes. In 2005, NCD accounted for 60% of all projected deaths worldwide, that is an estimated 35 million people died of NCD (World Health Organization, 2008).

The principles of New Urbanism and sustainable development advocate for these mixed-use strategies, emphasizing their potential to revitalize urban areas while addressing social equity and environmental sustainability (Gao et al., 2024; Yue et al.,