

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**A STUDY ON METAPHYSICS AND  
ITS INFLUENCE IN COMMERCIAL  
BUILDING DESIGN**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the findings of a study on functional performance of commercial buildings. Comparison between traditional and modern physical design and planning approaches and practices were carried out by reviewing and analysing selected buildings and premises. The main aim of the study is to gauge if the selected building designs are in compliance with any metaphysical theories. In order to achieve the main aim of the study, three major Asian cultures; the Chinese-Buddhist, Indian-Hindu, and Malay-Islam, are reviewed on metaphysical approaches in building design. It was found that there are similarities in principles towards achieving the occupants' well-being. Functionality is prioritised and rituals are performed at ensuring the well-being and prosperity of future occupants. The Chinese-Buddhist practice is based on *Feng Shui*, the Indian-Hindu tradition is based on *Vastu-Vidya* and the Malay-Islam exploits religious teachings written in a manuscript titled *Tajul Muluk*. Comparisons between traditional and modern physical design and planning approaches and practices were made by reviewing and analysing current and selected buildings or premises. A total number of 15 commercial premises were identified and these were categorized under the labels "performing", "non-performing" and "benchmark performance". An observational procedure was devised in the analysis process, which was based on technique done previously by others. The findings reveal some evidence that metaphysics had certain influence towards functional performance of the commercial buildings. The results seemly suggested that the metaphysical approach in planning and design could be considered to complement the modern design practices. However, further analysis needs to be carried out involving larger number of samples and area coverage to confirm the findings of the present study. The overall findings of the study allowed for an 'indicator' on the functional performance for building design been established. The 'indicator' can be used to assist the performance of different types of buildings together with other suggestions and recommendations. It is believed that the 'indicator' may be useful in enhancement of building functional performance as well as to improve the social environment of the community living in the built environment.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Architects and designers shoulder the responsibility for the buildings designed by them, and to meet expectations. Famous architects Le Corbusier and Van Doesburg in 1924 stressed the importance of functionality as “the ultimate goal of design”. A good design reflects the product that fits its purpose. If it works, then it automatically looks good, apart from performing and sustaining its function.

Surprisingly several buildings that were built did not even perform their intended functions at the very beginning or functionally deteriorated just a few years after completion. The Pruitt Igoe housing scheme in St Louis, USA is such an infamous example. The housing complex, designed by Minoru Yamasaki was initially planned as modern and ideal apartments for community living but later turned into a notorious place, which had to be torn down just after 25 years. Similarly, the Suleiman Courts in Kuala Lumpur was built under the direction of the First Prime Minister and supposedly symbolised the progress of an independent and modern Malaysia. Its however, experienced the same fate as Pruitt Igoe. Completed in 1957, the Suleiman Courts survived barely 20 years due to defective works.

A major shopping complex has been built on the site where Sulaiman Court stood, and at present is thriving. This shows that there are situations in which functionally non-performing buildings can be converted into performing ones, by way of appropriate planning and design. The question now is, whether the physical planning of buildings that relies on a modern approach is sufficient to predict the performance of a building once in operation. Are there other factors to be considered during the planning and design stages?

### 1.1 Research Background

The issues related to non-functional buildings are common, and they happen everywhere. Some buildings are considered functional when the building fits its purpose, whereas others are considered not functional if they fail to do so. Which