

**6th UNDERGRADUATE  
SEMINAR ON BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT  
AND TECHNOLOGY  
(USBET) 2023**

**SUSTAINABLE BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT**

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# e-Proceeding

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# CRITICAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ABANDONED HERITAGE BUILDING IN PERSPECTIVE OF CONSERVATOR

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the main causes of heritage building abandonment in Malaysia. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data in this qualitative study. To understand heritage building abandonment, many case studies were carefully chosen. In particular, the Bangunan Istana Raja Muda in Teluk Intan, Perak, and the Balai Zaharah in Kebun Merah, Johor, were picked as examples. Interview data was analysed using Atlas.ti software to ensure rigour. The study identified and highlighted the main causes of heritage building abandonment by evaluating the data. Three experienced heritage conservators were interviewed. This study sheds light on why heritage buildings are abandoned. These findings help governments, heritage groups, and conservationists solve Malaysia's heritage building abandonment issues. Qualitative interviews and various case studies are included in this expanded abstract. It stresses Atlas.ti software's thorough analysis and the study findings' contribution to abandoned heritage building knowledge and comprehension.*

**Keywords:** *abandonment, heritage building, old building, conservator*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Heritage buildings are essential for preserving a nation's identity and cultural significance. Effective maintenance management practices are crucial for achieving this goal. Conservation involves preventing deterioration and extending the life of heritage buildings, while maintenance involves continuous care and protection through minor repairs. Neglecting maintenance can lead to the destruction of these buildings. Educating people about the importance of preserving heritage and exploring restoration and reuse is crucial for their long-term survival and contribution to cultural heritage (Shane,2012)

Local governments, preservation organizations, and community involvement play pivotal roles in revitalizing abandoned historic structures. Abandoning a heritage building involves neglecting to maintain, use, or care for a historically, architecturally, or culturally significant structure, leading to gradual deterioration and loss of tangible and intangible cultural value. Strategies such as restoration, adaptive reuse, community engagement, legislative protections, and public awareness campaigns can combat the abandonment of historic structures, ensuring their long-term survival for future generations (Arazi et al., 2009).

According to Ariffin et al. (2018), the construction industry faces a significant concern of increasing project delays and abandonment upon contract completion. Abandoned buildings negatively impact developers, contractors, consultants, and clients. Understanding the fundamental factors contributing to building abandonment is crucial to prevent the occurrence of building abandonment. This study aims to analyze the problem and present potential responses based on research, evaluation, and government practices.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The construction industry is one of the key contributors to employment and economic growth in Malaysia. However, a significant issue for the building sector is the pace of project delivery delays. In the worst circumstances, projects were shelved after the contract period because of a variety of factors. Construction work that has been consistently put off for six months or more, either within the project's completion term or after the projected completion date, is defined as an abandoned building. Abandoned projects have a negative impact on several stakeholders, including the client, contractor, and consultant (Ariffin, 2018).

Any country's economy would not function without the building industry. When the economy is doing well, construction activity typically increases, but when the economy is struggling, project abandonment is more common. Due to its detrimental

effects on the nation, the topic of abandoned buildings is now one that comes up frequently. Building abandonments had taken place in both public and private housing projects as well as commercial buildings (Jaafar, 2018). According to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 10,403 Malaysian homebuyers were impacted by 15,206 abandoned housing units across 53 housing projects as of June 2015 (Ariffin, 2018).

According to The Star (2016), the project is said to be late if its promised delivery date has been exceeded by 10%; if the delay exceeds 10% to 30%, it is regarded as "ill". Moreover, a project is considered abandoned if no work has been done on it or no staff have been present for up to six months. In terms of relationships, dependability, and reputation, project abandonment has negative repercussions on parties including the developer, contractor, consultant, and client. Building abandonment is caused by a variety of circumstances, including poor management by the corporation, money issues, governmental regulations, unskilled workers, insufficient planning, and corruption. In addition, issues may arise because of the actions or inaction of the owner, contractor, subcontractors, consultants, or the government. A building project that has been abandoned may have negative implications on the client, the developer, the contractor, and the consultant (Jaafar, 2018).

## **Heritage Building**

Heritage is a preserved piece of the past, connecting people to the past through old and historic buildings. Preserving these structures offers advantages like a sense of place, historical characteristics, and economic benefits. However, heritage structures face threats from urbanization and expansion. Financial support is crucial for upkeep, administration, and preservation, while authenticity, integrity, and interpretation are essential in managing heritage sites. In cities like Georgetown (Penang) and Malacca, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the old buildings showcase a blend of architectural styles influenced by various cultures that have shaped Malaysia's history. These structures serve as a reminder of the country's colonial past and the contributions of different communities (Harun, 2011).

## **Old Building**

Heritage buildings in Malaysia hold a significant place in the country's rich cultural tapestry. These old buildings embody the historical, architectural, and cultural legacy of Malaysia's diverse heritage. From colonial-era structures to traditional Malay houses and Chinese shop houses, these buildings provide a glimpse into the nation's past and serve as important cultural landmarks. The conservation of old buildings in Malaysia not only contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage but also supports tourism and boosts the local economy. Visitors are drawn to the charm and authenticity of these structures, providing opportunities for cultural tourism and heritage appreciation (Al-Jameel & Saffo, 2011).

## **Abandonment Of Heritage**

Heritage is a preserved past through historic buildings, providing economic benefits, historical significance, and a sense of place. However, threats from urbanization and expansion threaten these structures. Financial support is crucial for upkeep, administration, and preservation, while authenticity, integrity, and interpretation are essential for managing heritage sites (Shane, 2012).

Regarding project abandonment, it is a significant problem in the construction sector, causing negative impacts on various stakeholders. Delays and failures in project completion can be attributed to factors such as poor management, financial issues, government regulations, lack of skilled workers, insufficient planning, and corruption. Abandoned projects have detrimental effects on developers, contractors, consultants, and clients. The number of abandoned housing projects in Malaysia has been a cause for concern, impacting thousands of homebuyers. In terms of heritage buildings, they hold great cultural and historical value in Malaysia. These old structures, ranging from colonial-era buildings to traditional Malay and Chinese architecture, provide insights into the nation's past and serve as important landmarks. Preserving and maintaining heritage buildings requires financial support, authenticity, integrity, and effective interpretation. Such efforts not only safeguard cultural heritage but also contribute to tourism and the local economy. In summary, project abandonment is a pressing issue in Malaysia's construction industry, while the preservation of heritage buildings is crucial for cultural and economic reasons. Both areas require attention and appropriate strategies to ensure successful project completion and the conservation of Malaysia's rich heritage.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative data collection method was used in the first phase. This interview session is important in determining whether the professionals understand the topic well enough to read through the questionnaire and determine whether the questions effectively capture the topic under study. The qualitative survey method used in an interview session with conservator who involves in heritage building work in Malaysia. There are (2) section in this structured question consist of section A, and section B. The Interview session will conduct virtually, and the same structured question will be asked to all the respondents. For section A, the question is about the background of the respondents Section B is an investigation about the factors that contributing to abandoned heritage building in Malaysia. The objectives of the study are to determine the factors that contribute to abandonment heritage building in Malaysia. Qualitative research is a market research method focusing on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication. Through the utilization of the robust and



feature-rich software known as Atlas. Ti, researchers can harness its formidable capabilities to expedite and enrich their data analysis process.

## The Ethics and Practices

Three of conservator were chosen for interviews. The study conducted virtual interviews due to distance. Respondents were categorized based on their data. After interviewing the first participant, the second provided new data. The third participant had no new data, indicating the data is saturated.

## Case Study

The background of the case studies is summarized in table below.

**Table 1: Summarized Case Studies**

CASE STUDY	BANGUNAN ISTANA RAJA MUDA	ISTANA/BALAI ZAHARAH
LOCATION	TELUK INTAN, PERAK	KEBUN MERAH, JOHOR
YEAR BUILT	1992	1858
STATUS	ABANDONED	ABANDONED

**Table 2: Background of Respondents**

Participant A	
Name	Mohamad Shaiful
Age	51
Organization	Architect Conservator
Respondent's Experience	8 years
State	Selangor
Participant B	
Name	Siti Nur Ain
Age	36
Organization	Conservator (JWN)
Respondent's Experience	16 years
State	Johor
Participant C	
Name	Hasmah Ali
Age	30
Organization	Conservator (JWN)
Respondent's Experience	5 years
State	Johor

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 3: Result and Discussion**

Question	Answer
<p>B3 (a) may I know why this building was abandoned? Are there any specific reason?</p>	<p>R1:            From my point of view...the first one is the ownership issues...as how I said earlier...some heritage buildings in malaysia need to face a dispute of owners, which are not straight to the point...like the raja muda's palace at teluk intan, we don't know who's the land's owner now? even municipal councils are not sure who is managing this building now...under councils or jkr?            Secondly, I think hmmm...maybe because of financial issues...i believe a lot of heritage building which has been abandoned since there are not enough money to maintain them...they have no funds...when we have no funds, how can we maintain it? we need a source of income to preserve it...municipal councils need to take action if they want these heritage buildings to permanently stay...repair and maintain these types of buildings because of the importance of the building... malaysia's heritage...malays heritage.</p> <p>R2:            once the building became empty, that's the main reason why it deteriorated...ideally, we should have carried out maintenance, cleaning, and so on...but after the building was vacated, with no activities taking place, it was left unattended...that's why the building was abandoned...            Environmental issues like termites and humidity...the weather in johor fluctuates between cold and hot, and it affects not only the wood but also the paint on the buildings, which can start peeling...</p>

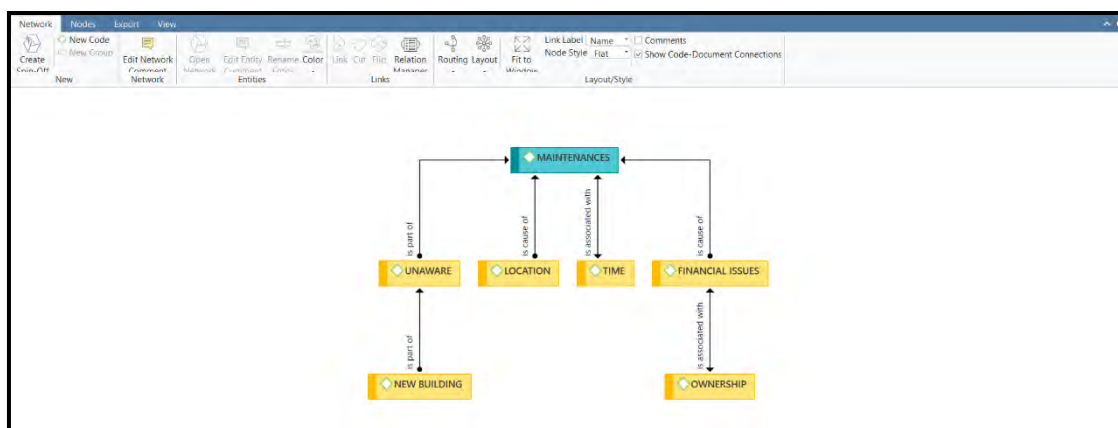
Due to costing, conserving, or maintaining old buildings, especially historical monuments like this, can be quite complicated...when we want to conserve old buildings or monuments, we need to adhere to certain methods or ethics prescribed by acts and regulations...

R3:

It's due to a lack of maintenance. ideally, the building could have been continuously used until now, preserving its historical significance and extending its usefulness...but because it wasn't maintained after the closure of the religious school, it was simply left in that state...

Another reason is the cost, as usual. the older the building, the more historical it is, and the more expensive it is to maintain...maintaining it is not as simple as just hiring someone to fix it...we still must follow processes, paperwork, and consider the environment, such as dealing with pests, animals, and weather...it's quite challenging to manage...

The process itself takes a considerable amount of time...



**Figure 1: Network diagrams between themes and sub-themes**

A national heritage building refers to a structure or building that holds significant historical, cultural, or architectural value to a nation or country. These buildings are recognized and designated as important cultural assets by the national government or relevant heritage authorities (Harun,2007). In this research, there were four vital factors that contributing to abandoned heritage building in Malaysia. This study was executed using one method to achieve its objective: a semi structured interview with a conservator from Jabatan Warisan Negara.

The participants' collective agreement on the prominence of financial issues as a major contributing factor underscores the urgency to address these challenges. Mitigating financial constraints through increased funding allocation, exploring alternative financing mechanisms, and raising awareness about the economic value of heritage buildings are crucial steps to prevent further abandonment.

Next is it becomes evident that a lack of awareness and a failure to prioritize maintenance and preservation efforts have contributed to the current state of heritage buildings in Malaysia. Addressing this issue requires raising public awareness, educating stakeholders about the historical significance and value of these structures, and encouraging a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards their maintenance.

The analysis of these statements suggests that time plays a significant role in the abandonment of heritage buildings. Restoration and maintenance activities are not quick-fix solutions but rather require a long-term commitment of resources and effort. The time-intensive nature of these processes can pose challenges, especially when there are limited resources, competing priorities, and a lack of awareness or understanding of the importance of timely intervention.

The last one is Ownership disputes. It can lead to a lack of clarity regarding responsibility and decision-making authority for the maintenance, preservation, and development of heritage buildings. When ownership is uncertain or disputed, it becomes challenging to allocate necessary resources, establish proper management structures, and execute effective preservation plans.

## **CONCLUSION**

The abandonment of heritage buildings in Malaysia is influenced by financial challenges, lack of awareness, inadequate government policies, property ownership disputes, and community involvement. To prevent abandonment, a multi-faceted approach is needed, including financial support, raising awareness, strengthening regulations, resolving property ownership issues, and promoting community involvement in conservation efforts. By addressing these factors, Malaysia can ensure the protection, revitalization, and long-term survival of its cultural heritage for future generations.

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