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MAINTENANCE ISSUES OF LOW-COST FLATS IN SEBERANG PERAI SELATAN

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the building maintenance issue involving low-cost flats in Seberang Perai Selatan, Pulau Pinang. Maintenance services must provide the best management services for the residents. It is also essential to ensure that every occupant is always protected as best as possible from any risk involving the maintenance issue. However, low-cost housing is always related to maintenance services issues. Thus, this study aims to identify the factors contributing to the maintenance issue in low-cost flats in Seberang Perai Selatan. The study employs primary and secondary data to identify the issues and factors of maintenance services. Using a purposive sampling technique, structured interview questions were distributed to all the Chairmen of the Joint Management Body (JMB) or Management Corporation (MC) of 9 low-cost flats in Seberang Perai Selatan, Pulau Pinang. The data was analysed using NVIVO Software. The findings show that all JMB and MC are related to the management, technical, human resources, financial, and behavioural factors contributing to the maintenance issue.

Keywords: maintenance services factors, issue, low-cost flats

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INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of the most critical assets every person wants to fulfil their needs as human beings, regardless of whether they rent or buy a property. Low-cost housing is one of the most critical housing types and has the highest demand in Malaysia. The term "affordable housing" refers to low-cost housing, which has become more necessary in response to the rapid urbanization occurring worldwide to satisfy human needs and wants. (Zehadul Karim, 2013).

However, many issues are involved with maintenance services for low-cost flat units. Building maintenance is vital for all buildings to ensure they function and operate well. It ensures that the building can operate at its highest possible level and supports its fundamental operations (Zulkarnain et al., 2011). However, a few researchers have discovered that after a few years of low-cost housing construction, most of the houses are in deteriorated condition, either obsolete or affected due to vandalism (Hashim et al., 2015).

It is crucial to have access to high-quality, suitable, and secure housing because it significantly affects our health and well-being and, thus, our quality of life. According to Yusof et al. (2012), ensuring a safe community and a healthy social life should begin with high-quality housing. Low-cost flats are always associated with a lack of maintenance services. Proper maintenance services are essential for avoiding building defects and extending the lifespan of the building. Some cases involve low-cost flats due to the lack of maintenance services. Bernama (2020) reported that the unfortunate situation faced by residents of Pangsapuri Taman Sri Sentosa, Jalan Klang Lama, Kuala Lumpur, is suffering from elevator problems that are always broken and do not function well. They are also not safe to use. Based on Wahid (2019) reports, a total of 50 occupants of low-cost flats held a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (Malaysia) to express their difficulties, and one of the residents hoped that they would investigate tax and maintenance fees, which are too expensive for them to pay since most of them are in the B40 group. Thus, this research aims to identify the factors contributing to the maintenance issue in low-cost flats in Seberang Perai, Penang, Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management Factor

Top Management

The top management is the maintenance department's head, responsible for setting up maintenance rules and standards, allocating sufficient resources, and overseeing maintenance at the highest level. Proper maintenance guidelines are provided by the

top management to ensure a long-term investment, which also serves as a supporting function in company continuity to reach an authoritative goal (Ali et al., 2016). The public claimed that poor maintenance practices were caused by the weak leadership of the local authority (Hauashdh et al., 2020). Other than that, maintenance management's slow response to carry out the maintenance tasks will slow down the process of carrying out the repair work.

Procurement Management

In most cases, the procurement system for government projects requires three distinct quotations to be submitted by three different contractors or suppliers. The maintenance management prefers to award contracts to the lowest bidder rather than to a qualified contractor (Ali et al., 2016). As a result, low-priced contractors frequently employ unskilled labourers, which significantly impacts the success of building maintenance projects. Due to their lack of expertise, the unskilled labourers will conduct ineffective work. This will contribute to the maintenance problem because the maintenance work is poorly performed.

Poor Management of Maintenance Team

A high quality of maintenance work can be attained with the help of maintenance management. The most worrying issue in Malaysian maintenance is a lack of supervision in maintenance operations (Dzulkifli et al., 2021). Lack of such management and leadership among employees will result in time-consuming and almost certainly unsuccessful maintenance projects (Alshehri et al., 2015). When maintenance is not properly overseen, time and money are lost, job quality decreases, and the safety of the building's residents is threatened (Ali et al., 2016).

Technical Factor

Lack of Preventive Maintenance Approach

Preventive maintenance is planned maintenance that will be performed by building maintenance organizations which it is the regular and routine repair of equipment and assets. However, corrective maintenance is still the main method that maintenance organizations in Malaysia use to preserve the building. Maintenance organizations that fail to adopt preventive maintenance will face a lot of maintenance problems, and the building's performance will be low (Hauashdh et al., 2020). A building that lacks preventive maintenance will result in unbudgeted expenses that affect the maintenance budget. A proper preventive maintenance plan can reduce the risk of breakdowns, especially for low-cost housing that always faces maintenance problems.

Shortage of Spare Parts

Building maintenance quality can be measured by how well maintenance work is done and how well spare parts that have been replaced or fixed work (Hauashdh et al., 2020). The people in charge of building maintenance decide which maintenance strategies to use in a building based on what maintenance resources are available (Ali et al., 2016). Furthermore, spare parts and tools are hard to find on the Malaysian market contributes to poor maintenance practices. Moreover, finding appropriate replacement parts for an old machine or system in the local market is challenging (Alshehri et al., 2015). The worst-case scenario is that maintenance and building operations are completely halted because necessary spare parts are unavailable.

Lack of Technology

Maintenance organisations must modernise their information and communications technology (ICT) systems with the advancement of current technology to support the maintenance decision-making, productivity, and problem-solving processes and the suggested solution (Ali et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the government and private sector of Malaysia did not use maintenance software very often (Dzul kifli et al., 2021). They still using conventional method which is inefficient and time-consuming due to the possibility of data loss or manipulation errors during the recording process. Lack of software tools and communication technologies in building maintenance procedures may affect the maintenance process to fail or cause maintenance work to be delayed (Ali et al., 2016).

Human Resources Factor

Lack of Institutional Training

One major factor contributing to Malaysia's poor building maintenance standards is the lack of institutions that offer the necessary training for maintenance employees (Hauashdh et al., 2020). The number of institutions and training programs relevant to maintenance in general needs to be increased (Alshehri et al., 2015). Even though new maintenance staff members need training before the work begins, maintenance organizations usually do not provide it. Few trainings and courses are provided for the current maintenance personnel to develop their abilities (Ali et al., 2016). In order to enhance skills and perform jobs successfully, there is a need to enhance the number of institutions that provide comprehensive and relevant building maintenance training for the maintenance workers (Hauashdh et al., 2020).

Lack of Expert Building Maintenance Professionals

There is currently a shortage of Malaysian experts capable of handling building maintenance issues. The activities are challenging and sometimes include new technologies, necessitating the expertise of building maintenance specialists (Ali et al., 2016). Consequently, building maintenance tasks could be completed more quickly and expertly if local building maintenance experts were available through maintenance organizations (Hauashdh et al., 2020). However, many operations in building maintenance work are affected by a lack of expert building maintenance professionals such as many operations in building maintenance work, particularly those connected to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, are not finished on time (Au-Yong et al., 2014).

Financial Factor

Unpaid and Accumulation Arrears of Maintenance Fees

One of the main problems when managing a residential building, the management body must deal with either unpaid maintenance fees or an accumulation of arrears in the maintenance fund (Azian et al., 2020). Maintenance work was delayed due to the difficulty in collecting maintenance fees, resulting in resident dissatisfaction.

Insufficient Budget

One of the most prevalent problems with system maintenance is the constrained budget for repair work (Alshehri et al., 2015). An adequate budget is necessary to ensure that the maintenance work can be performed efficiently. However, an efficient and systematic approach to budget allocation has not yet been adopted by most building maintenance organizations in Malaysia, resulting in budget overruns or deficits (Che-Ghani et al., 2016).

Behaviour Factor

Low Level of Maintenance Awareness

In Malaysia, people are unaware of the need to maintain their buildings because maintenance awareness is still at a low level (Au-Yong et al., 2018). One of the most prevalent problems with system maintenance is the constrained budget for repair work (Alshehri et al., 2015). Bakar (2020) reported that vandalism is the primary cause of elevator breakdowns, particularly in low-cost residential housing. Occupants always use the lift for heavy items that contribute to the lift failing. So, the lack of awareness by the residents regarding how to take care of the building will contribute to a lot of issues with the property.

Lack of Awareness Involved in an Organization's Activities

The other issue that contributes to maintenance services is residents lack of awareness about getting involved in an organization's activities on their property (Abd-Wahab et al., 2015). Residents need to be involved in the organization to make sure that the maintenance is done well. A lack of awareness of participating in the organization's activities will result in a diminished understanding of the essential issues discussed with the building's management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study will be collected using a qualitative approach, which is an interview question that will be answered by the chairman of the Joint Management Body or Management Corporation that handles low-cost flats in Seberang Perai Selatan, Pulau Pinang. A structured interview will be conducted among informants to collect the primary data for this study. There are two types of sources of data. Primary data involves face-to-face interaction between researcher and informant, while secondary data is gathered from sources like journals, articles, and other publications. The researcher has chosen a study area that focuses on Seberang Perai Selatan, which is one of the districts in the state of Pulau Pinang. The district consists of 12 low-cost flats, including Flat Mutiara Jaya, Flat Taman Murai Jaya, Flat Taman Bistari, Flat Taman Idaman, Flat Taman Bakap Indah, Flat Taman Nibong Tebal Jaya, Flat Taman Sungai Jawi, Flat Taman Seruling Emas, Flat Taman Merak Jaya, Flat Taman Bukit Panchor Indah, Flat Taman Belibis, and Flat Taman Sintar Indah. For the data analysis method, the researcher uses NVivo Software version 12, which is one of the tools that is very helpful in analysing data. The type of query NVivo uses is a matrix-coding query that enables the researcher to see coding intersections between two lists of items.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Management Factor

Most of the informants believe that if the weakness comes from top management, it will contribute to the ineffective performance of maintenance work. The informants also do not have any procurement management issues in obtaining contractors or suppliers because it is easy to get contractor in the market. Mostly, the informants have good management of maintenance teams because there is cooperation among the chairman and committee members.

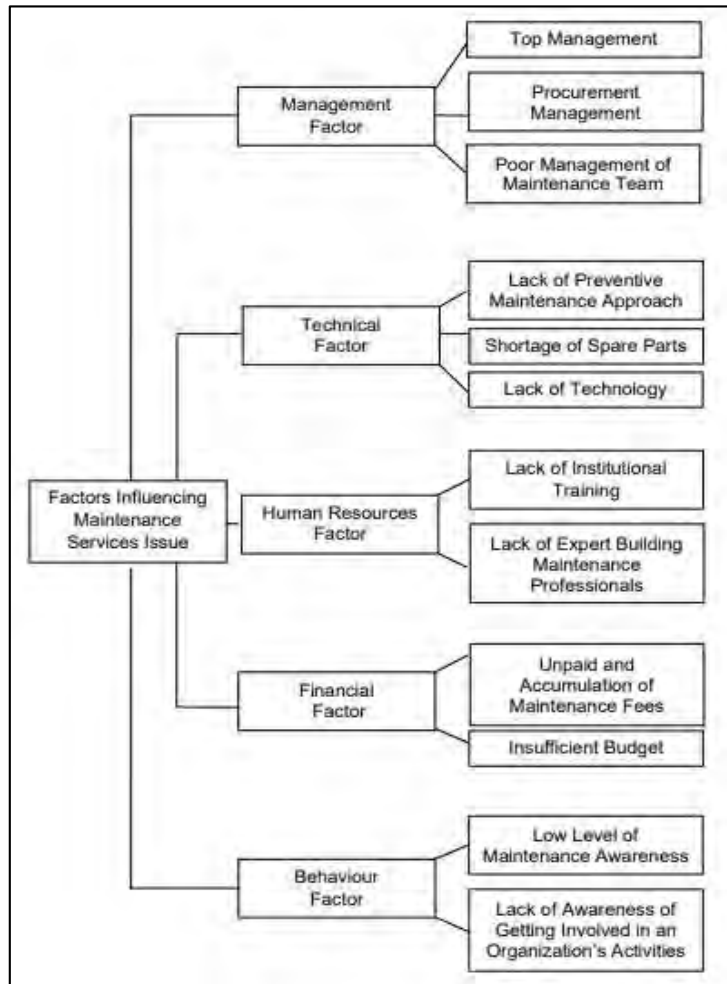


Figure 1: Factors influencing maintenance service issue

Technical Factor

Most of the informants are applying preventive maintenance, which is very helpful in maintenance work and thus increases the lifespan of the building. The informants say it is easy to get spare parts in the Malaysian market, and the maintenance work can be solved in a short time. Some of the informants consider technology helpful in maintenance work, and some only use traditional methods, which are done manually.

Human Resources Factor

Most of the informants have had institutional training, which is very helpful in adding knowledge and improving the skills of the management teams. But most of the informants lack the expertise to handle the flats because they only know the basics of maintenance. So, this training will compensate for the lack of experts because at least the JMB and MC will get the proper knowledge about maintenance.

Financial Factor

Most of the residents in low-cost flats find it difficult to pay the maintenance fees due to their income and rising costs. The maintenance fees are important to pay. so JMB and MC need to have a strategy to ensure this problem can be solved. Thus, these unpaid maintenance fees will lead to ineffective maintenance work. Most of the informants do not apply for the government budget because it has a process and the income that they have can still support the maintenance work.

Behaviour Factor

Most of the residents in low-cost flats have a high level of maintenance awareness, and vandalism cases are not serious. Also, the residents are aware of getting involved in the organisation's activities that are provided by JMB and MC. This activity will ensure the residents are up to date with the current condition of the building maintenance.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, two research objectives were successfully obtained from reliable resources and completed. The findings show that every chairman of the Joint Management Body (JMB) and Management Corporation (MC) has faced factors that contribute to the maintenance issue. The interior and exterior of low-cost flats seem bad because of the effectiveness of the management body. A function-management body will create a good appearance for the flats. The maintenance must be carried out regularly because most of the flats are almost 10 years old or older, so more attention is needed by JMB and MC. So this study clearly shows that all the factors are present in all chairmanships of JMB or MCs of low-cost flats in Seberang Perai Selatan, Pulau Pinang.

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