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ENHANCING COMMUNITY AWARENESS FOR EFFECTIVE COMBAT AGAINST ILLEGAL BUILDING RENOVATION IN KULIM, KEDAH

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ABSTRACT

This research employs a mixed methods approach to address the issue of illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. The study's objectives are twofold: firstly, to evaluate community awareness levels on the topic; secondly, to identify existing strategies against illegal renovation. Qualitative interviews reveal a lack of awareness among residents due to unfamiliarity with regulations, leading to unintentional violations. Quantitative survey results indicate a significant gap in understanding the consequences of illegal renovation. The integration of qualitative insights and quantitative data highlights the importance of targeted awareness campaigns and education initiatives. This study emphasizes the necessity of fostering community awareness to effectively combat illegal building renovation, ensuring informed and responsible urban development practices.

Keywords: *Illegal building, renovation, building plan approval, combatting illegal building renovation, community awareness*

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INTRODUCTION

Urban development is a dynamic process that drives progress and growth within communities. However, it also brings forth challenges, one of which is the issue of illegal building renovation. In Kulim, Kedah, like many other rapidly developing regions, illegal building renovation has become a pressing concern, posing risks to community safety and sustainability. Besides that, an illegal building renovation is a refurbishment or expansion of a structure which does not have renovation plans that have been authorized by the local council, or a renovation work that does not correspond to the permitted renovation plan for the building. It is essential to have construction plans that have been approved in order to ensure the public's and users' safety and health (Sarkom et al., 2018). The rise of illegal building renovation has become a pressing concern, punctuating the city's rapid growth with unauthorized alterations that carry profound consequences. These unapproved changes not only disrupt the visual harmony of neighborhoods but also usher in a host of complications that resonate throughout the community. One glaring consequence is the compromised structural integrity and heightened safety risks resulting from these unauthorized alterations. By sidestepping engineering standards and safety protocols, these renovations jeopardize the stability of buildings, increasing the potential for catastrophic collapses. This not only endangers occupants but also casts a shadow of danger over pedestrians and nearby properties. Moreover, the aesthetic degradation caused by these alterations extends to economic repercussions. The diminished appeal of neighborhoods due to unsanctioned changes hampers property values, discouraging potential buyers and tenants. This economic ripple effect stalls investment, potentially impeding the region's growth. Beyond the physical and economic sphere, illegal building renovation also fractures social cohesion. As tensions brew over the issue, community unity wanes. Disagreements among neighbors erode the bonds vital for collective well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Illegal Building Renovation

Illegal can be defined as contrary to or forbidden by the law. In terms of building renovation, illegal building renovation is a renovation or expansion of a building which do not have renovation plans which have been authorized by the local council, or it is renovation work that does not correspond to the permitted renovation plan for the building. Therefore, the breach in the construction industry should be regarded to be building that is against the law. Illegal building is the practice of constructing a building or parts of a building without obtaining the required regulatory

permissions in whole or in part. Aside from that, illegal building development occurs when works that include urban transformation or construction of land itself are begun without the appropriate authorization (De Biase & Losco, 2017). In a general sense, the illegality of building may be described as first kind of breach involves the construction of buildings on public property without first obtaining a legal claim to the property from the appropriate authority. Urban informal units and squatter buildings, both of which are becoming more common in the urban areas of the third world, are two examples of this sort of building illegality (Yau & Chiu, 2015).

Consequences of Illegal Building Renovation

Renovation works to buildings are often not carried out or there are shifts in time, which causes degradation of the building. Proper management of renovations of the building maintains its technical condition at an appropriate standard level. According to B. Nowogonska et. al. (2021), proper operation of buildings requires experience, interdisciplinary knowledge, and skills. Incorrectly made decisions on behalf of the building owners regarding redeployment during the implementation of renovation projects have a negative impact on the buildings. The consequences of wrong decisions concerning the renovation or maintenance failure of buildings lead to irreversible destruction processes. Neglecting renovation works can threaten the stability of a building's structure, endanger the lives of its users, and cause irreversible damage, making it crucial to consider the consequences of omission as a motivating factor for preliminary planning of renovations (B. Nowogonska et. al., 2021).

Strategies to Overcome Illegal Building Renovation

Merton (1940) made the claim, which was presented in Rooij (2006), that an organization may prioritize its contextual objective more than its primary goal, which is compliance. When it comes to the enforcement of construction laws in terraced homes, several local authorities place the collection of revenue higher on their list of priorities than the prevention of illegal renovations. This assertion was supported by the findings of Sarkheyli et al. (2012) and Zegarac (1999), which stated that local governments frequently make use of legal fines as a source of revenue. According to Sabri et al. (2017), the major statistic for measuring performance is revenue collection, which disregards job productivity and compliance rate as metrics of success (Sabri et al., 2017) Aside from that, it is very necessary for professionals such as the contractor and the architect to work together with members of the general public in order to promote the appropriate methods for the rehabilitation of buildings. The general public can better understand the laws and regulations that are in place thanks to the contribution of the professionals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed Method Research

In the field of research, there are various methods that can be employed to investigate a particular phenomenon or topic. One such method is mixed- method research, which involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Sugilar, 2020). Mixed-method research is a holistic approach that allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of a research question by combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Eriksson, 2021).

In mixed method research, qualitative methods focus on exploring subjective experiences, meanings, and social contexts through techniques such as interviews, observations, or focus groups. These methods aim to capture rich, in-depth data that can uncover nuanced insights and perspectives. On the other hand, quantitative methods employ statistical analysis and numerical data to examine patterns, relationships, and generalizability. Common quantitative techniques include surveys, experiments, or statistical modeling.

Research Stage and Strategy

In the course of carrying out this investigation on enhancing community awareness for effective combat against illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah, this research involves several stages include:

- Stage 1: Problem statement identification
- Stage 2: Literature review
- Stage 3: Data collection
- Stage 4: Data analysis
- Stage 5: Conclusion

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data collection method

The interviews with local authorities aimed to gather in-depth information about the existing strategies and initiatives to combat illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. The interviews explored their experiences, perspectives, and challenges

related to addressing this issue. The data obtained from these interviews provided insights into the legal and regulatory frameworks, enforcement procedures, resource allocation, and any barriers or limitations faced by the authorities in combating illegal building renovation

Table 1: Interviewees Information

Interviewee 1:	
Name	Encik Mohd Aliff Bin Abd Hamid
Position	Assistant Architectural Officer (Building Control Department)
Role in Majlis Perbandaran Kulim	The Assistant Architectural Officer examines and evaluates architectural plans submitted for building renovation projects. They assess the proposed changes, alterations, or additions to existing structures to ensure compliance with building codes, zoning regulations, and safety standards.
Interviewee 2:	
Name	Encik Munirul Hamdi bin Mahadzir
Position	Assistant Engineer (Building Control Department)
Role in Majlis Perbandaran Kulim	The Assistant Engineer reviews the architectural and engineering plans submitted by property owners or developers for building renovation projects. They carefully examine the proposed changes to ensure they comply with the applicable building codes, regulations, and safety standards.

Quantitative data collection method

To assess the level of community awareness on illegal building renovation, surveys or questionnaires were distributed among residents in Kulim, Kedah. These surveys aimed to collect quantitative data regarding residents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to illegal building renovation. The questionnaire items may have covered aspects such as awareness of the issue, reporting practices, and personal experiences or observations. The survey data provided quantitative insights into the overall level of awareness among residents, identifying gaps or areas where awareness could be enhanced. The data from the surveys allowed for statistical analysis to determine trends, correlations, and patterns in residents' responses.

Limitations of Research

The limitations in conducting this mixed-method research include:

- **Time Constraints:** Conducting a comprehensive mixed-method study requires significant time and resources. Limited time may restrict the researcher's ability to collect extensive qualitative and quantitative data, resulting in a narrower scope or reduced sample size.
- **Sampling Bias:** Bias can occur in both qualitative and quantitative sampling. If participants are self-selected or if the researcher selects specific groups, the findings may not represent the entire population accurately.
- **Subjectivity:** Mixed-method research involves subjective interpretation of data, particularly during qualitative analysis. Researchers' biases or preconceived notions may influence the interpretation of results, potentially leading to a lack of objectivity.
- **Generalizability:** Mixed-method studies often focus on specific contexts, such as a particular community or region. Consequently, generalizing the findings to other communities or regions may be limited due to the unique characteristics of the study area.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data Sources and Collection Methods

In the research study conducted in Kulim, Kedah, data was collected through interviews conducted with local authorities and questionnaires administered to residents.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data collection for this research involved interviews with two individuals from Majlis Perbandaran Kulim (Kulim Municipal Council), who provided valuable insights into the challenges and strategies related to combatting illegal building renovation in the area.

Encik Mohd Aliff Bin Abd Hamid, an Assistant of Architectural Officer from Majlis Perbandaran Kulim, emphasized the pivotal role of community awareness in addressing the issue of illegal building renovation. He highlighted the significant challenge posed by the lack of knowledge and awareness among the community members. Encik Mohd Aliff stated, "From our experience in dealing with illegal

building renovation cases, one of the major challenges we face is the lack of knowledge and awareness among the community. Many residents are unaware of the regulations and guidelines related to building construction and renovation, leading to unintentional violations.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the Building Control Department of Majlis Perbandaran Kulim has taken proactive measures to combat illegal building renovation. Encik Munirul Hamdi bin Mahadzir, an Assistant Engineer from the same council, shed light on the efforts being undertaken. He explained, "In our efforts to address illegal building renovation, we have implemented several reporting and surveillance mechanisms. This hotline is widely publicized through various channels, including our website, social media platforms, and community engagement program

These initiatives have yielded promising results, as evidenced by a significant increase in the submission and approval of building plan applications. Encik Munirul Hamdi emphasized, "In recent years, we have undertaken several initiatives aimed at enhancing community awareness for combatting illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. As a result of these efforts, we observed a notable shift in community behavior. More people began to understand the importance of building plan approvals and started applying for them proactively. This positive trend is reflected in the increasing number of building plan applications received and approved by our department.

In conclusion, the qualitative findings underscore the efficacy of initiatives aimed at enhancing community awareness in the fight against illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. The observed shift in community behavior towards proactively obtaining proper building plan approvals reflects a growing understanding among residents about the significance of adhering to regulations and guidelines. The collaborative efforts between the community and Majlis Perbandaran Kulim are yielding promising results in creating a safer and more compliant urban environment.

Quantitative Data Analysis

In the quest to combat illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah, a data analysis was conducted based on responses from 64 individuals residing in the region.

Section A: Demographic information

Table 2: Demographic Information

Questions	Multiple Choice Answer	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	55
	Male	45
Age	Under 21 years old	4.7
	22 – 30 years old	31.3
	31 – 40 years old	37.5
	40 years old or above	26.6
Possession of the Building	Owner	64
	Tenant	36
Residency Duration	Less than 1 year	4.7
	1 – 5 years	20.3
	6 – 10 years	26.6
	More than 10 years	48.4
Residential Building Types	Apartment	6
	Bungalow	8
	Semi-Detached	22
	Terrace	64

Section B: Awareness of illegal building renovation

Table 3: Awareness of Illegal Building Renovation

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of what constitutes illegal building renovation	20.3%	43.8%	4.7%	18.8%	12.5%
I understand the potential negative consequences of illegal building renovation	21.9%	45.3%	3.1%	14.1%	15.6%
I am knowledgeable about the legal procedures and permits required for building renovation	20.3%	43.8%	9.4%	17.2%	9.4%
I know how to report cases of illegal building renovation to the appropriate authorities	17.2%	43.8%	12.5%	17.2%	9.4%
I believe it is important for community members to play a role in combatting illegal building renovation	3.1%	7.8%	6.3%	39.1%	43.8%

The quantitative investigation delved into community awareness and perspectives regarding illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. The survey, encompassing five essential questions, illuminated prevailing viewpoints. Table two (2) shows an array of perspectives emerged on understanding illegal building renovation. A significant portion (64.1%) displayed limited awareness, while 31.3% exhibited familiarity. Regarding potential consequences, 67.2% lacked awareness, contrasting with 29.7% who recognized the negatives. When exploring knowledge of legal procedures, 64.1% confessed unfamiliarity, whereas 26.6% demonstrated awareness. Similarly, 61.0% indicated limited knowledge of reporting mechanisms, while 26.6% were informed. Importantly, there was a consensus on community involvement. An overwhelming 82.9% acknowledged its significance, with 43.8% strongly agreeing. In conclusion, the quantitative findings underline the need for bolstering community education on illegal building renovation.

Section C: Personal experience and perception

Table 4: Personal Experience and Perception

Questions	Multiple Choice Answer	Percentage (%)
Have you ever witnessed or suspected a case of illegal building renovation in your community?	YES	28
	NO	72
How serious do you consider the problem of illegal building renovation in your community?	Not serious at all	1.6
	Slightly serious	28.1
	Moderately serious	48.4
	Very serious	17.2
	Extremely serious	4.7
In your opinion, what are the main reasons behind illegal building renovation in your community?	Failure to obtain the necessary permits and approvals	37.5
	Obtaining permits and approvals can be time-consuming	28.1
	People may not be aware of the regulation and process	34.4

This section presents key insights from the quantitative survey regarding the community's views on illegal building renovation in Kulim, Kedah. The survey aimed to gauge the prevalence of such instances, assess perceived seriousness, and understand the reasons behind these activities. Among respondents, 28% reported witnessing or suspecting cases of illegal building renovation in their community, while 72% indicated no such incidents. In terms of seriousness, 65.6% perceived the problem as moderately to very serious, highlighting significant community concern. Regarding reasons for illegal building renovation, 37.5% attributed it to a failure to acquire necessary permits, 28.1% to time-consuming bureaucratic processes, and 34.4% to a lack of awareness about regulations. In conclusion, the quantitative findings reveal that illegal building renovation is noticed by a portion of the community, with a substantial level of concern about its seriousness. The perceived reasons point toward the need for improved awareness and streamlined procedures to tackle this issue effectively.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has contributed to understanding the effectiveness of the implemented initiative programs. By identifying the success of workshops, town hall meetings, and informational campaigns, this research emphasizes the importance of educational efforts in fostering compliance with building regulations. The simplified application process and collaboration with local leaders were found to be pivotal in encouraging community compliance and engagement in reporting illegal activities. These findings serve as crucial lessons for other localities facing similar challenges, offering insights into strategies that can be tailored to different contexts. The contributions of this study extend beyond Kulim, Kedah, as it sets a precedent for future research on enhancing community awareness and responsible urban development. The mixed-method approach adopted in this research, combining qualitative and quantitative data, serves as a valuable model for investigating multifaceted issues. Researchers and policymakers can replicate this methodology to gain a comprehensive understanding of other urban development challenges and design evidence-based interventions.

Thus, this research study has contributed to the body of knowledge on community awareness and strategies to combat illegal building renovation. By offering insights into the complexities of community engagement and the effectiveness of awareness initiatives, this research equips stakeholders with the knowledge needed to develop more targeted and sustainable approaches in promoting responsible urban development. As Kulim, Kedah, and other regions strive for safer and more compliant urban landscapes, the findings of this study serve as a guiding light towards a more sustainable and responsible future.

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