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# STUDENTIFICATION : STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON HOUSES' PHYSICAL CONDITION

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## Abstract

This paper presents analyses of the student's housing condition in Seri Iskandar, Perak. The discussion and results provide the information on the factors that influences the student's choices and also perceptions on the current house's condition. In this study, data were collected through a quantitative survey. At the end of the study, shows a contradicting result in terms of students' perception and their current houses condition. This shows that most students chose rent affordability over comfortable living. This research adds to the housing market knowledge from the aspects of student's housing.

**Keywords:** Perceptions, students housing, house condition

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## 1. Introduction

The rising numbers of students in higher education give the impact to the development of local property. Due to the need of student's accommodations, the demand of local housing market increase. The influence of student demands also effect the physical development of the towns and cities. This scenario is called 'studentification' as introduced by Smith, (2000). He explained the term by referring to the British university-town processes of urban change and the places so-called 'student-areas'. Studentification defined in four characteristic: economic, social, cultural and physical transformation (Smith, 2000).

The private local housing covers most of the part of student demand for rental accommodations (Barttbakk and Medby, 2004). Thomsen and Eikomo (2010) highlighted that there are high pressure on the private housing market, which is the outcome of high rent paid, low-standard of accommodation and problems between students and other residents in certain areas of the towns and cities.

Universiti Teknologi MARA (Perak) is located in Bandar Seri Iskandar and has approximately 12,000 students. About 2,000 students were living off-campus known as non-resident. This study focuses on housing preferences and rental as an economic transformation due to the studentification in Seri Iskandar. The aspects of student's perception on the current accommodation in the local housing market with regards to the future planning in providing better housing for students.

### 1.1 The student housing

The term housing generally refers to the human basic needs. Adesoji (2009) explain the housing as one of the best indicators of a person's standard of living and place in the society. The evaluation of housing satisfaction is by comparing preferences of residents to their actual housing situation (Judith, 2010). Students relatively as a young-adult, they live the way of young people live, without established families and in pursuit of ideals, friendship and new experiences (Frønes and Brusdal, 2000). Thomsen and Eikomo (2010) stated that every individual do not necessarily compare their own situation to the average standard in society but refer to the standard of the group that they belong to.

According to the Student Housing Market Analysis 2011 conducted by the University of Maryland, College Park indicates one of the top reason why students choose off campus was more living space. Demand for institutional to provide accommodation for students are high as the number of students increase. Nowadays, students have developed and established clear expectation of how and where they wish to live (Thomsen and Eikomo, 2010). For instance, they do not want to share a bathroom with other students, and they are willing to pay more for a better location near campus.

### 1.1. Housing condition

The concepts of housing satisfaction have been widely debated in housing research. According to Vera-Toscano and Ateca-Amestoy (2007), the level of satisfaction in housing is influenced by the housing situation which is being an important determinant of individual well-being. Housing satisfactions are influenced by such personal factors as much as different phases of life (Clapham, 2005). He introduced the term of 'housing pathways' as which focused on the perception and attitudes of the individual according to phases of life. Housing pathways by Clapman, defines as 'the social practices of a household relating to housing over time and space.'

According to Lawrence (2006), housing condition is one of the important determinants of quality of life and human well being. It's referred to the various aspects of housing including internal and external conditions. From Jiboye (2009) study found that the tenants' satisfaction level is within the dwelling, environment and management components of public housing. A satisfaction towards housing is related to dwelling units is apparent from the building condition (Ukoha and Beamish, 1997).

## 2. Methods and limitations of data

This research is conducted to study housing condition rented by students around Seri Iskandar area based on 10 main criteria's of housing qualities which includes External quality, Internal quality, Wiring and Electrical quality, Number of Sockets provided, Housing Security, Housing Space, Roof quality, Ventilation and air quality, Sanitary Facilities and Water Supply quality. The operational framework of this study is divided by three approaches which are site observation, secondary data and questionnaire. In site observation, the researcher have done formal and informal interview with the students, owner of the house and selected developer to get their point of view regarding this issues. Secondary data have been collected from various working papers, journals, books and etc. Primary data were collected by using questionnaires and through interviews to evaluate student's perspective regarding to the condition of the house they currently occupied and their understanding regarding to the quality of housing condition in general.

The respondents comprised different gender, age, education level and faculty from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). The reason for this strategy was to acquire different opinion regarding housing condition they currently occupied within Seri Iskandar. Yamane Formula (1973) was used to calculate the sample for the analysis. In this calculation the degree of confidence is at 90 percent of the total estimation non-resident of 2000. This means that the minimum respondents needed is 95. However, 150 set of questionnaires were distributed and only 101 were returned.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample Size  
N = Population  
e = Degree of confidence

The researchers used Statistical Package for Social Science software (SPSS) to analyse the obtained data. Frequency analysis, Likert scaling and Cross tabulation analysis were used for the purpose. Data was analysed by using descriptive statistics. A frequency table was created and analysed through quantitative content by the researcher to aim of quantifying emerging characteristics and concepts. Furthermore, Likert Scale analysis also will be used in this part in order to know the respondents specifying their level of agreement to a statement. On the other hand, in order to study people preferences towards their housing condition they currently occupied, a Cross tabulation Analysis is carried out in this research. According to Michael (1995), a Cross tabulation Analysis is a joint frequency distribution of cases based on two or more categorical variables. This approach is used in order to measures whether or not, and how strongly, two variables are related.

The questionnaires survey was divided into 3 parts (Section A: respondent background, Section B: property background and Section C: perceptions on housing quality) and analyzed using the above mentioned approaches. Analysis is done based on the opinion of 101 respondents to get the average monthly house rental imposed to students and to investigate the condition of the houses that are being rented out to them.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Factors in Choosing House to Rent

The results of factors in choosing house to rent are tabulated in the following table:

Table 1: Factors In Choosing House To Rent

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Size Of Household Currently Occupied	16	15.8
Amount Rental Paid	24	23.8
Distance From University	26	25.7
Quality Of Houses	24	23.8
Extra Features e.g. Fully Or Semi Furnishes	2	2.0
Type Of Houses	9	8.9
Total	101	100.0

From the table it is found that, distance from university is the most important factor for them to choose out of six other factors. Around 75% of the respondents stay less than 1 km away from the University. This is mainly because of the facilities offered and due to transportation constraint.

Second most important factor is the quality of houses and the amount of rent that are imposed to the respondents. These factors indicates that the students are aware about this criteria before they decided to rent the unit and will only rent it if the amenities are worth with the rental paid. The quality of houses includes the internal and external quality, electrical, security, space, etc. These elements will be further discussed in the next section.

Next important factors are the number of people whom will occupy the house followed by type of houses. These 2 factors are important as to evaluate the quality of 'housing space'. The least factor that is taken into consideration is the added features of the house, as such the existence of furniture, whether the house is fully or semi furnished.

Meanwhile in Table 2, shows the different amount of rental paid by the students indicates difference in preferences in choosing houses to be rent. Students who pay between RM 401 to RM 600 are the group of students who chooses house quality as the most important factors. This group of students do not have any specific type of dwelling as long as the condition is mint and the distance are not so far from the University. Result also indicates that the groups of students who pay rental between RM801 to RM 1000 prefer houses with good and satisfactory condition and also taken into consideration is the number of people living in the same unit. It shows that these groups are willing to pay more for monthly rental, as long as the house is within acceptable distance from the university and also the 'size' of the unit can accommodate for them to have their own 'space' and live in comfortably.

Table 2: Cross tabulation of Rental Paid and Factors in Choosing House to Rent

Amount Rental Paid Per Month	Size of household currently occupied	Amount of rental paid	Distance from university	Quality of houses	Extra features like fully or semi furnishes	Type of houses	Total
RM400 and less	1	4	2	3	1	1	12
RM401-RM600	2	6	9	12	1	0	30
RM601-RM800	9	13	10	5	0	6	43
RM801-RM1000	4	1	5	4	0	2	16
Total respondents	16	24	26	24	2	9	101

As tabulated in Table 3, 55% of students agree that the amount of rental paid is worth compared to their current houses' condition and only 45% of them think oppositely. This result shows that not all students are satisfied with their houses' condition but they do not have any option left due to their transportation constraints and the utmost reason is that the area is within walking distance from their University.

Table 3: Rental paid versus house condition

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	56	55.4	55.4
	no	45	44.6	44.6
Total		101	100.0	100.0

### 3.2 House Conditions

Table 4 show the result of analysis on student's perception on the houses' conditions that they currently occupied. It is found that the lowest mean score value was the quality of the houses' space (3.21) followed by number of sockets (3.26) and quality of sanitary facilities (3.29).

In term of houses' space, the result shows that students are not satisfied. The main criteria of houses' space are the size and function of that particular unit is comfortable enough to accommodate a certain number of people at one time. From the observation by using formal and informal interview, it is found that most of the 3 bedrooms houses are occupied between 4-6 students. There are also houses that accommodate up to 8 students. This situation will create uncomfortable living for the students as they are lacking in terms of personal space to study and also they need to share the facilities with other housemates.

Number of sockets that are readily supplied are considered as insufficient to cater to the usage and this makes the students having difficulties in using their electrical appliances as over-used or illegal connection (using extension or adaptors) can result into fatal consequences.

The quality of sanitary facilities comprises of toilet, wash basin and shower are also rated as unsatisfactory. Bathrooms are often poor in ventilation which results in uncomfortable condition for the students to perform personal hygiene activities.

These findings further enforced the researcher's opinion who found that owners of houses overlooked on these matters such as the house's space, number of sockets and sanitary facilities before they rent out to students. The only highlighted points are in terms of the external and internal appearance of the house. Most students fail to notice these matters, but even after realizing the problems, they choose not to complaint as their utmost consideration is that the house is within their affordability range and also the distance is near to their University. They compromise on the issue of comfortability and trade it with the issue of affordability.

Table 4: Perception On The House Conditions Currently Occupied

Items	Sample	1	2	3	4	5	Mean Score
External quality	101	0	15	36	34	16	3.51
Internal quality	101	2	15	35	36	13	3.43
Wiring and electrical quality	101	2	12	31	49	7	3.47
Number of sockets	101	0	24	33	38	6	3.26
Housing security	101	1	13	44	31	12	3.40
Housing space	101	1	23	41	26	10	3.21
Roof quality	101	2	16	35	34	14	3.42
Ventilation and air quality	101	4	13	39	37	8	3.32
Sanitary facilities	101	1	18	41	33	8	3.29
Water supply quality	101	0	11	45	34	11	3.45

From the result, it shows that the students have no problem with the external quality which indicate mean score at 3.51. External quality includes the exterior structure and paints is in a satisfactory condition and is do not have any serious defects such as severe bulging or leaning, holes, dampness, or other serious damage. The respondents also

agree that electrical system, including lighting and wiring is in good working order and free of hazardous conditions (3.47). Lastly the third highest mean score from this study is water supply facilities (3.45) where the respondents agree that the dwelling unit they currently occupied is served by an approved water supply that is sanitary and free from contamination, leaks and threats to health and safety.

### 3.3 *Opinion On House Quality*

However when the respondents were asked generally on their opinions regarding determination of houses' qualities in terms of building condition, the result shows difference. Most of the students agree that internal qualities are the main factor for them to choose before they decided to rent the house with mean score of 4.33. They prefer to have a house with good internal qualities including all appliances, fixtures, wall, etc to be in safe, clean and good working condition. Apart from that, house's space and sanitary facilities being the second and third choice of students in determining housing quality with mean score at 4.28 and 4.25 respectively. It shows that students are really concern about the sanitary facilities and the space that the house may provide. This results contradicts with their current houses' condition.

On the other hand, roof quality is the lowest factors chosen by the students in determining housing qualities among the other 10 factors with the lowest mean score at 4.09. This may be because of the roofs position are not readily accessed. Roof quality such as effective waterproofing ,weather protection, well-maintained roof without dampness or leaking problems are not being the main factors for them choose a house to rent. Table 4 below shows the result on student's perception in housing qualities, listing out 10 factors.

Table 4: Perception On Determination of House Quality

Items quality	Sample	1	2	3	4	5	Mean Score
External Quality	101	1	0	11	55	34	4.20
Internal Quality	101	0	0	9	50	42	4.33
Wiring And Electrical Quality	101	0	0	13	53	35	4.22
Number Of Sockets	101	0	2	20	37	42	4.18
Housing Security	101	0	3	18	42	38	4.14
Housing Space	101	0	1	12	46	42	4.28
Roof Quality	101	0	4	15	50	32	4.09
Ventilation And Air Quality	101	0	4	15	43	39	4.16
Sanitary Facilities	101	0	1	12	49	39	4.25
Water Supply Quality	101	0	0	19	43	40	4.21

In a nutshell, this study has found that houses' conditions which are rented out to students in Seri Iskandar are of average quality. In terms of houses' space and sanitary facilities, these factors are not up to the students' expectation whereby they have no choice but to rent out the unit because of affordability issue. According to the analysis, average rental paid by students in Seri Iskandar is between RM401 to RM 600 per house per month. Results also found that the students can only afford to pay between RM101 to RM150 per person per month for their rental expenditure. They also preferred to stay at single storey terrace house where the main criteria are fulfilled according to their affordability.

## CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be concluded that some students trade the comfortability issue with affordability. Houses which are near to the university area, has high chances to be rented out to students, eventhough the facilities are not in good working condition. The only advantages of these houses are because they are strategically located within walking distance from the University. Students who mainly cannot afford to own a transport, will choose to rent these houses despite the high rent imposed. As affordability is the main issue, the students will tend to share the

dwelling with more people so that they are paying within their affordable range which is between RM101-RM150 per month. Students housing issues must be given serious consideration as Seri Iskandar town is developing and in particular UiTM is expanding.

According to Buckenberger (2011), each individuals' perceptions of their housing environment can add insights valuable to planning and design efforts which are aimed at providing good 'quality' and need to be taken into account in concepts of housing quality. From this study, the students perceived their current accommodation as being at par. The houses' do not provide them with the level of comfort that they expected but they have to compromise as they have to take affordability issues into account.

Further study can be done on analyzing students satisfaction on the current houses' conditions as this can serve as a guide for future investors or developers to provide a housing area that can fulfill students' needs.

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