

Housing Satisfaction and Aspirations of Householders in Salak Selatan Squatter Resettlement

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Key words: Housing satisfaction; aspirations of householders; Salak Selatan Resettlement; Malaysia.

RINGKASAN

Sejumlah 163 isirumah yang tinggal di projek perumahan penempatan semula setinggan Salak Selatan, Kuala Lumpur telah dipilih secara rawak dan ditemutunya berkaitan dengan kepuasan dan aspirasi terhadap keadaan perumahan mereka. Kebanyakan daripada keluarga ini (80%) telahpun memperbaiki dan memperbesarkan rumah mereka sebagaimana yang dicadangkan oleh Dewan Bandaraya tetapi tahap kepuasan terhadap perumahan didapati masih sederhana. Ketidak-puasan ini disebabkan oleh ruang rumah yang sempit, keperluan terhadap jenis bilik-bilik yang tertentu dan rekabentuk pelan rumah yang kurang sempurna.

Aspirasi terhadap perumahan didapati adalah realistik. Kebanyakan responden ini sedar akan kepentingan pertambahan bilik tidur apabila saiz keluarga bertambah besar. Walaupun mereka dapati rumah satu tingkat ini selesa untuk didiami tetapi mereka masih memerlukan beberapa jenis bilik yang tertentu. Kebanyakan responden menyatakan kawasan ini adalah baik untuk didiami dan sebahagian kecil sahaja yang bersungut tentang keadaan persekitarannya. Cadangan-cadangan untuk memperbaiki lagi keadaan projek perumahan pada masa hadapan telah dihasilkan berdasarkan kepada maklum balas yang diterima daripada responden-responden tersebut.

SUMMARY

A total of 163 householders in a squatter resettlement in Salak Selatan, Kuala Lumpur, were randomly selected and interviewed to assess their satisfaction and aspiration towards their houses. Most of the families (80%) had improved and enlarged the original units, as the City Hall had suggested, but the level of housing satisfaction was found to be moderate. Dissatisfaction was due to poorly designed floor plans, lack of space and specific types of rooms. The aspirations of the respondents appeared to be realistic. Many of them indicated an awareness of the importance of having more bedrooms as the size of the family increases. They found the single storey terrace housing suitable, but wanted additional types of rooms. Most of the respondents considered the area good for living and only a minority complained about environmental conditions. On the basis of the comments of the respondents suggestions are made for improving future housing projects.

INTRODUCTION

A descriptive and exploratory study was conducted to evaluate the current conditions and success of a housing project that had been occupied for three years. The government has carried out low cost housing projects to overcome the housing problems faced by the squatters and other people with low incomes. Because there is a continuous flow of families into squatter areas, the need for help with housing will probably continue. The information gathered in this study among the

householders in a Salak South resettlement near Kuala Lumpur could help housing planners in their efforts to attain even greater success in satisfying the needs of families who will be housed in future resettlement projects.

The four specific objectives were: to identify the socio-economic status of the selected householders; to examine the current conditions and aspirations of the householders toward their houses; to identify the level of housing satisfaction among the resettled squatters; and to examine

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the additions and alterations that have been made to the houses.

Squatters pose a serious problem in Malaysia not only in the big cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang and Ipoh, but also in small towns. Many individuals have settled on public or unoccupied land without title rights. Several factors have given rise to problems in squatter areas in big cities. The first factor has been the increase in Malaysia's population between 1947 and 1970. The increase was even greater than in other parts of Malaysia, where an increase of 6.5% was recorded. The 1977 census showed that 25% of the population in Kuala Lumpur live in squatter areas.

Migration from rural to urban areas is a second factor. Economic expansion and widespread development in urban areas have encouraged migration. Other urban attractions are good transportation, health and education facilities, and social amenities.

The expectations of migrants have not been met. Most migrants lack sufficient skill to get good jobs; and are consequently employed as non or semi-skilled workers with low monthly incomes. They normally begin with wages of less than M\$400 on which it is not possible to maintain a satisfactory standard of living for a family.

Most migrants settle in a squatter area because the cost of constructing a shelter or renting a house is low, allowing their limited income to be spent on essential needs such as food, clothing, and transportation.

Indiscriminate construction of shelters in squatter areas results in the absence of such facilities as water supply, electricity, sanitation and sewage systems and other essential needs. Studies which have been carried out in Western countries, in Hong Kong and Singapore show that adequate housing conditions are important for achieving a high status of mental and physical health (Foote *et al.*, 1970; Michelson, 1970; Mitchell, 1971; and Yeh 1972). Studies have also shown that inadequate housing conditions bring about negative results such as housing dissatisfaction, mental sickness, lack of self confidence, poor performance of children at school and other social disorders (Reimer, 1945; Ladd, 1972; Yeh 1972; Sen, 1975; Karl, 1977; Rudd and Coveney, 1978; and Nurizan, 1979). The Malaysian government has launched several low cost housing projects to overcome the housing problems faced by squatters and families with low incomes. In Kuala Lumpur especially, City Hall has launched several

large scale housing schemes to resettle squatter families in areas around the city. These housing projects have provided a healthier and better environment for a large number of families. Further projects are underway to completely solve the problem.

Description of the sample

Data were collected in April 1981 by personal interview. A total of 163 respondents from 280 households in the resettlement housing area of Salak Selatan was randomly selected for the survey. Nearly 94 percent of the householders were married couples, 3.7 percent were widows and rest were divorced or single individuals.

The periods of marriage were between one and 47 years, (mean: 15 years). Forty percent had been married for periods of between 11 and 30 years. The mean age of husbands was 41 years with a range of 24-67 years. Nearly 68 percent were between 31 and 50 years. The wives were between 21 and 67 years (mean: 36 years). Seventy percent were between 21 and 40 years. More than half the households had one to four children (mean 4.3); 34% had five to eight children.

Household membership took into account the husband, wife, children, and any others who were living in a house. Overall, households had between one to 14 members with a mean of 6.1 which tallied with the national average recorded in the Malaysian Population Census for the whole country (1970).

Most husbands were in the category of unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Forty percent were labourers or small businessmen while 30 percent were technicians. Twelve husbands were unemployed. Among those interviewed, 128 (78.5%) were housewives. Of this number 12% worked as labourers or were engaged in small businesses. Many of the households had small children or children of school-going age which required mothers to stay home.

The low level education of husbands and wives could be the cause of the low level jobs held. It was found that 67% of the husbands and 65% of the wives had completed primary school (Standard 6). Sixteen percent of husbands and 11% of wives had completed Form 3 (lower secondary) while 10% of husbands and 5% of wives had reached Form 5 (upper secondary). The percentage of wives who had no formal education at all (17%) was high compared to that attained by the husbands (3%).

HOUSING SATISFACTION AND ASPIRATIONS OF RESETTLED SQUATTERS

The monthly incomes of the husbands ranged from \$100 to \$1200 with a mean \$443. More than 80% earned less than \$600 per month. The incomes of the wives and other family members augmented the family income so that total family income was found to range from \$100 to \$4000 with a mean of \$528. Seventy-nine percent of total family income was less than \$600 per month.

The ethnic distribution of households in the sample was: 48% Chinese; 43% Malay; and 9% Indian.

Housing: Current conditions and aspirations of the householders

The second objective of the survey was to examine the current conditions and identify the aspirations and the expectations of the householders toward their houses. It is anticipated that nearly all householders (97%) will be permanent owners of their houses on completion of payments to the City Hall. It was found that four householders had been renting out their houses. Some families had moved in recently. The monthly payments towards ownership averaged \$67 (10%) of mean total family income. More than half (61%) pay between \$51 to \$100, while 25 per cent pay between \$46 to \$50. This is much below the rate of the United Nations world-wide survey which recommended that the total amount spent on housing should not exceed 25% of the family's total monthly income.

The purchase price per housing unit from the City Hall for the Salak Selatan project ranged

from \$6,000 to \$12,000 (mean \$7,632). Ninety-three households had opted for houses costing between \$6001 and \$8000. The total cost, however, depends on the scheduled payments and may take up to a maximum of 20 years. Householders varied in their responses as to the cost of their houses in relation to their family incomes; 46% said that the houses they had purchased were expensive and were beyond their means; 49% felt that the price was reasonable or moderate. Only 5% said the houses they bought were cheap.

The respondents were also asked to state their preferences as to the number of rooms each house should have. More than half of the respondents (51%) said that the single storey terraced houses that they were currently residing in were the most suitable. Slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (27.6%) preferred double-storey terrace houses while 18.4% preferred bungalows.

Respondents considered bedrooms to be important because as family size increased the number of bedrooms required would also increase. By United Nations standards a bedroom should not be shared by more than three persons. It was found that 28 families lived in one-bedroom houses. Only one family said that one bedroom was sufficient. In this survey the average number of bedrooms per house was 2.5. This is far short of the expectations of the majority of families who expressed their need to be a 3.3 rating. In the current study it was found that 62% of the households had three bedrooms; 53% of the respondents said that three bedrooms were necessary (Table 1.)

TABLE 1
Number of Bedrooms in Present House and Bedroom Needed by the Respondents

Number of bedroom	Present		Needed	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	28	17.2	1	0.6
2	30	18.4	27	16.6
3	101	62.0	87	53.4
4	2	1.2	27	16.6
5	1	0.6	12	7.4
6	—	—	7	4.3
7	—	—	—	—
8	—	—	2	1.2
Missing information	1	0.6	—	—
	163	100	163	100

Mean present number of bedroom 2.5
Mean needed number of bedroom 3.3

Bedroom deficits were calculated by subtracting the number of bedrooms owned from the number needed. The average bedroom deficit was 0.84. Only 44% of the families did not have a bedroom deficit. Thirty-three per cent of the households expressed the need for an extra bedroom and the rest required more than one bedroom. No family had too many bedrooms.

Questions were asked about other rooms besides the bedrooms. The original planning of houses provided for a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom. As the time of the survey, however, 64% of the respondents said that their houses had seven to eight rooms indicating that many had built additions and modified the structure of their houses to meet their needs. The average number of rooms in the households at the time of interview was six to eight (Table 2).

Despite having constructed more rooms in their houses, the respondents still felt that the number felt short of their aspirations which ranged from five to twenty-two rooms (mean 9.6). Apart from the need for more bedrooms, the householders also expressed the need for various types of rooms. They expressed the desire for a dining room as distinct from the kitchen – an aspiration held by 90% who felt that such a room was important. It was found that 70% of the families had since attained this aspiration. Householders (47%) also felt that there was a need for a family room which 25% of the households had since acquired. Fifty-one percent expressed the need for a storeroom but only 13% had one at the time of the interview. Thirty-five percent expressed the

wish to have a study room, but only 2.5% actually had one (Table 3).

When the respondents were asked about alternations that they wanted to make to their houses in the next five years, 42% said that they had plans to make changes to their houses. A high percentage had already modified their houses; in fact, all but 28 households (17%) had made improvements.

Housing Satisfaction

The third objective – to identify the level of housing satisfaction among the respondents – was done by questioning the respondents as to how satisfied they were with the space available, types of rooms, facilities and storage, design of the house, and the environment. Responses were scored on a three-point scale; 1 for 'dissatisfied', 2 for 'neutral', 3 for 'satisfied', and on the basis of responses to 18 questions, scores were summed and analysed. Respondents who obtained scores between 18 to 30 were considered to have "low satisfaction"; between 31 to 42 as being "moderately satisfied"; and those from 43 to 54 as being "satisfied". The mean of the scores 33.5 indicated that on the whole, the householders were "moderately satisfied"; however, a breakdown of the data showed that almost one half of the housewives (46%) was found to be "moderately satisfied". Thirty-seven percent indicated "low satisfaction", while 17% were "satisfied".

Table 4 shows that 95% of the respondents were satisfied with their neighbours, followed by 66% who were satisfied with the environmental

TABLE 2
Number of rooms in present house and rooms needed by the respondents

Number of rooms	Present		Needed	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
6	50	30.7	12	7.4
7 – 8	105	64.4	49	30.1
9 – 10	5	3.1	60	36.8
11 – 12	2	1.2	22	13.5
13 – 14	0	0.0	8	4.9
15 – 16	1	0.6	6	3.7
17 – 18	0	0.0	4	2.4
19 – 22	0	0.0	2	1.2
	163	100	163	100

Mean present number of rooms 6.8
Mean needed number of rooms 9.6

HOUSING SATISFACTION AND ASPIRATIONS OF RESETTLED SQUATTERS

TABLE 3
Type of Rooms in Present and Future Housing

Type of Rooms	Present		Needed	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Living room	115	70.6	106	65.5
Family room	42	25.8	69	42.3
Formal Dining room	117	71.8	148	90.8
Informal Dining room	44	27.0	36	22.1
Kitchen	163	100.0	163	100.0
Bathroom cum toilet	107	65.6	70	42.9
Toilet	70	42.9	96	58.9
Store	21	12.9	84	51.5
Study Room	4	2.5	58	35.6
Play Room	2	1.2	26	16.6

TABLE 4
Satisfaction Ratings for Specified Situation in Present Housing

	Satisfied		Neutral		Very Dissatisfied		Missing Information	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Space								
1. Amount of space	98	60.1	6	3.7	59	36.2		
2. Number of rooms	98	60.1	1	0.6	64	39.3		
3. Number of bedrooms	99	60.7	1	0.6	63	38.7		
4. Space in bedrooms	68	41.7	2	1.2	93	57.1		
5. Number of bathrooms	93	57.1	1	0.6	69	42.3		
6. Space in bathroom	52	31.9	4	2.5	107	66.6		
Facilities and Storage								
8. Cooking facilities	28	17.2	4	2.5	131	80.4		
9. Storage in kitchen	22	13.5	2	1.2	139	85.3		
Design								
10. Floor Plan	95	58.3	8	4.9	60	36.8		
11. Physical condition	100	61.3	7	4.3	56	34.4		
12. Image given to others	75	46.0	55	33.7	33	20.2		
Location of house from								
13. Employment	68	41.7	34	20.9	61	37.4		
14. Neighbours	156	95.7	4	2.5	3	1.8		
15. Relatives	64	39.3	33	20.2	66	40.5		
16. Shopping	85	52.1	9	5.5	69	42.3		
17. School	83	50.9	37	22.7	41	25.2	2	1.2
18. Surroundings	108	66.3	12	7.4	43	26.4		

conditions and 61% with the physical conditions of their houses.

The houses in this housing project were mainly single storey "linked"; hence extra space had been allocated to allow for extensions to the basic frames provided by City Hall to be made when the families were financially better off. Consequently there were some conditions which caused dissatisfaction, chief among these being the lack of space for storage in the kitchen (85%), cooking facilities (80%), and kitchen space (73%) (Table 4). Sixty-five percent of the respondents were dissatisfied with the limited space in the bathrooms, but the dissatisfaction with the lack of kitchen space was higher than for space in other parts of the house.

Relationships were expected to exist between the factors studied: satisfaction and duration of the marriage, total income, number of bedrooms, number of rooms, suitability of rooms and total monthly payments. When regression analyses were carried out, the only significant relationship was found to be between satisfaction and the suitability of the rooms.

Analyses of correlation coefficients showed that there was a low negative correlation between satisfaction with the housing and the number of bedrooms (-.49). There was also a low negative correlation between satisfaction and the total number of rooms (-.40).

Housing Additions and Alternations

The fourth objective was to study the additions and alterations that had been made to the houses. The Salak Selatan resettlement area is situated on former mining land about 13 km from

Kuala Lumpur. The houses in this area are typed as 'self-contained', single storey linked houses with 3.43 square meters (400 square feet) of floor area and are situated on a 9.46 square meters (1100 square feet) per housing unit. Initially, the houses consisted of a basic frame structure with the walls unlined with plaster or cement, and were without ceiling. The houses were not painted inside or outside. Every unit had a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom-cum-toilet. Other facilities provided were water, electricity, roads, sewage, and a sanitary system. The houses were considered cheap and were within the means of the low income group.

The most number of improvements made on the houses have been; improving the plaster and the concrete; painting the inside and the outside of the houses (Table 5). Nearly one third of the residents have improved the windows; 61.3% have improved the ceilings, and almost as many have repaired floors and doors. Of somewhat lower priority has been improvement to the electrical wiring (45.4%) and the water pipes (35%). Improvements to cupboards and cabinets had the lowest priority (27.6%) and perhaps because of that, the majority of wives aspired to improve them. It is logical to assume that aspirations for improvements were directed to those facilities that had lowest attention (water pipes, 65% and electrical wiring, 54.6%). When these functioned well, improvements were not needed. It appeared that the expectations of City Hall that the residents would improve the houses as they became financially able to do so, were gradually being met, but it was noted that the improvements are being made at a slower pace than was anticipated.

TABLE 5
Type of Repairs or Improvement made on the House

Items	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Inside Painting	115	70.6	48	29.4
Outside Painting	116	71.2	47	28.8
Plaster Repairs	120	73.6	43	26.4
Concrete Repairs	120	73.6	43	26.4
Roofing repairs	100	61.3	63	38.7
Window repairs	96	58.9	67	41.1
Door repairs	106	65.0	57	35.0
Pipe repairs	57	35.0	106	65.0
Electrical repairs	74	45.4	89	54.6
Adding Storage	45	27.6	118	72.4
Flooring repairs	97	59.5	66	40.5

HOUSING SATISFACTION AND ASPIRATIONS OF RESETTLED SQUATTERS

When asked about their future houses, only 29% of the families said they would move to alternative sites; 18% said that they would like to live in a suburb, while others would like to move to villages or town centres. The environmental conditions seemed satisfactory for more than half of the respondents because they did not consider noise, odours, dust, smoke, traffic and neglected areas, problems. Only a few complaints were voiced from a minority of the respondents. The area in general was healthy and was set in a good environment.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the families had improved and enlarged the original units, as the City Hall had intended them to, but the level of satisfaction was still moderate. Dissatisfaction seems to stem from a lack of space, the need for specific types of rooms and floor plans that did not allow for privacy. As a result the physical aspects of the houses were found to be moderate or low in satisfaction. Most of the respondents considered the area good for living and for bringing up children. The location of the housing project was not as convenient for commuting to work, shopping, or seeing relatives as their previous squatter housing area had been. The aspirations of the respondents seemed to be realistic. Many of them indicated an awareness of the importance of having more bedrooms as the size of the family increased. They found the type of housing suitable, but they wanted additional types of rooms. The respondents did not plan to move away from the area, and only a minority complained about environmental conditions.

The respondents made specific comments which, it is believed, would serve as a useful guideline for planners of future housing projects:

1. Consideration should be given to social and psychological needs as well as to the needs for the physical well-being of settlers as far as it is financially possible.
2. The floor plans need careful consideration. For example, currently too small a space is allocated in relation to the size of most families. Locations of doors and windows should be changed as, in fact, some families had done on their own initiative at great cost.
3. More space should be provided between the street and the entrance to the house. Such space could serve as a play area for children or for gardening.

4. Kitchens were far from satisfactory. Kitchens need to be more carefully planned so that they are adequate and more efficient.
5. Facilities for shopping, clinics, playgrounds, and recreation centres should be constructed at the same time that the housing units are built.

It is suggested that the householders on their own should also endeavour to improve their living conditions and attain satisfaction by:

1. Careful budgeting so that improvements by way of additions to their houses should be done as soon as possible. Planning ahead for the next five years would help families attain their aspirations faster.
2. As many improvements as possible that are within the financial means of settlers should be done before the family actually moves into the housing unit to avoid inconveniences and discomfort at a later stage.
3. Kitchen equipment and furniture should be carefully selected and arranged to fit into the small room. Cabinets could be fixed into walls or built-in to save floor space and provide extra storage space.
4. Furniture should be carefully selected to fit the layout of rooms. A few pieces should suffice to allow for maximum movement space for inmates.

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Y. NURIZAN

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