

NATURAL VENTILATION PERFORMANCE OF AIR WELLED SINGLE
STOREY TERRACE HOUSE

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I dedicate this Thesis to God Almighty, who has been my eternal rock and source of refuge. The thesis is also dedicated to my country – Malaysia, and UTM, as well as my beloved family for being great pillars of support.

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ABSTRACT

Terraced housing in Malaysia hardly provides its occupants with thermal comfort. More often than not, the occupants need to rely on mechanical cooling, which contributes to outdoor heat dissipation that leads to urban heat island effect. Alternatively, encouraging natural ventilation can eliminate heat from indoor environment. Unfortunately, with static outdoor air condition and lack of windows at terraced houses, the conventional ventilation technique does not work well, even for houses with an air well. Hence, this research investigates ways to maximize natural ventilation in terraced housing by exploring the air well and louvre's passive design. By adopting an existing single storey house with air well in Kuching, Sarawak, the existing indoor environmental conditions and thermal performance was monitored using scientific equipment, namely HOBO U12 air temperature and air humidity, HOBO U12 anemometer and Delta Ohm HD32.3 Wet Bulb Globe Temperature meter for six-month duration. The collected data was used as background study and benchmark for simulation. In this case, a simulation software – DesignBuilder® was utilised. The field study illustrated that there is a need to improve indoor thermal environment. Thus, the study further proposed improvement strategies to the existing case study house. The proposition is to turn the existing air well into solar chimney to take advantages of constant and available solar radiation for stack ventilation. The study also considers the effect of louvre windows to further accelerate the wind movement. The results suggest that the enhanced air well with proposed louvres were able to improve the indoor room air velocity and reduce air temperature. The enhanced air well with 3.5m height, 1.0m air gap width, 2.0m length with 45° tilted room opening louvres with 167mm slate gap were able to induce higher air velocity. During the highest air temperature hour, the indoor air velocity in existing test room increased from 0.02m/s in the existing condition to the range of 0.15 to 0.40m/s in the hottest month while during the lowest temperature month, the air velocity could be increased to the range of 0.25 to 0.53m/s. Installation of louvres at test room with solar chimney increases the percentage average air velocity of 16.5% and reduce percentage average air temperature to 1.1% compared to test room with solar chimney only. For indoor room temperature, the greatest mean air temperature could be reduced by up to 1.8°C compared to the outdoor air temperature during the hottest day. The findings revealed that the proposed air well and louvres could enhance the thermal and ventilation performance under Malaysia tropical climate.

ABSTRAK

Rumah teres di Malaysia mengalami masalah keselesaan terma. Keadaan udara statik dalam rumah teres menyebabkan suhu udara dalaman meningkat. Dengan itu, penghuni perlu bergantung kepada penyejukan mekanikal untuk memberi keselesaan terma tetapi menyumbang kepada kesan pulau haba. Sebagai alternatif, penggunaan strategi pengudaraan semulajadi untuk menyingkirkan haba dalam perumahan adalah digalakkan. Disebabkan oleh keadaan udara statik di persekitaran luar, teknik pengudaraan konvensional tidak berkesan bagi bilik yang berventilasi tunggal walaupun wujudnya cerobong udara. Keadaan terma dalaman dan keselesaan terma telah dipantau dengan perakam suhu dan kelembapan udara HOBO U12, anemometer HOBO U12, Delta Ohm HD32.3 meter selama enam bulan di rumah kajian di Kuching, Sarawak. Keputusan kajian tapak menggambarkan keselesaan terma adalah penting untuk dalaman bangunan. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan strategi penambahbaikan ke atas rumah kajian bercerobong udara yang sedia ada kepada cerobong solar dengan memanfaatkan tenaga suria untuk mewujudkan kesan timbunan ventilasi. Kajian ini juga menilai kesan ram tingkap untuk mempercepatkan pergerakan angin. Selain itu, perisian simulasi komputer DesignBuilder® telah digunakan untuk mengkaji usul dan menilai beberapa pembolehubah reka bentuk berkenaan dengan cerobong solar dan reka bentuk tingkap ram. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pengudaraan dalaman dipertingkatkan dengan berkesan dengan cadangan pemasangan tingkap ram yang dapat meningkatkan halaju udara dalaman. Versi cerobong solar cadangan berukuran tinggi 3.5m, lebar 1.0 m, panjang 2.0m dan slat ram berjuring 167mm berkecondongan 45° dapat meningkatkan halaju udara dalam keadaan udara luar statik. Pada hari panas, halaju udara dalaman dipertingkatkan daripada 0.02m/s dalam keadaan normal kepada 0.15 hingga 0.40m/s manakala pada bulan yang bercuaca sejuk, halaju udara boleh dipertingkatkan kepada 0.25 hingga 0.53m /s. Pemasangan ram di bilik kajian dengan cerobong solar meningkatkan peratusan purata halaju udara sebanyak 16.5% dan mengurangkan peratusan purata suhu udara 1.1% berbanding dengan bilik ujian dengan cerobong solar sahaja. Untuk bilik tertutup, suhu udara minimum tertinggi dapat dikurangkan sebanyak 1.8 °C berbanding suhu luaran pada siang hari terpanas. Penemuan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengudaraan dalaman dapat dipertingkatkan dengan gabungan ram dan cerobong solar. Model tersebut dapat meningkatkan prestasi terma dan pengudaraan dalam iklim tropika Malaysia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	xix
	LIST OF FIGURES	xxii
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xxxv
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxxvii
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xxxix
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Problem Statements	1
	1.3 Research Statements	2
	1.4 Research Objectives	5
	1.5 Research Questions	6
	1.6 Scope of Research and limitation of Study	6
	1.7 Significance of Study	7
	1.8 Research Hypothesis	8
	1.9 Thesis Organisation	9

2	TROPICAL CLIMATE IN MALAYSIA CONTEXT COMFORT CONDITION	11
2.1	Introduction- The climate condition of Malaysia	11
2.1.1	Climatic condition of major cities in Malaysia	12
2.1.2	Wind climate condition	14
2.1.2.1	Terrain	15
2.1.2.2	Vegetation and urban proximity conditions	19
2.1.3	Solar radiation	21
2.1.3.1	Solar intensity	21
2.1.3.2	Solar position	22
2.1.3.3	Solar geometry	22
2.1.3.4	Solar times	23
2.1.3.5	Sky conditions	23
2.1.4	Air temperature and relative humidity	23
2.2	Climate condition of Malaysia	24
2.2.1	Wind condition	24
2.2.2	Solar radiation	26
2.2.3	Air temperature and relative humidity	27
2.3	Analysis of climatic data at Kuching, Sarawak, East Malaysia	29
2.3.1	Wind climate	30
2.3.2	Solar radiation	32
2.3.3	Air temperature and relative humidity data analysis	34
2.4	Thermal comfort	35
2.4.1	Definition of thermal comfort	37
2.4.2	Thermal comfort parameters	38
2.4.3	Thermal comfort approaches	40
2.4.3.1	Heat-balance approach	40
2.4.3.2	Adaptive approach	44
2.4.3.3	ASHRAE Standard 55-2004 and Thermal comfort model	45

2.5	Background study of thermal comfort in tropical hot-humid climate	47
2.6	Background study of thermal comfort in Malaysia tropics context	53
2.7	Types of thermal comfort index	58
2.7.1	Standard effective temperature (SET)	58
2.7.2	Effective Temperature (ET)	59
2.7.3	Corrected Effective Temperature (CET)	59
2.7.4	Operative Temperature (OT)	60
2.7.5	Mean Radiant Temperature (MRT)	61
2.8	Ventilation of comfort zone in Malaysia based on case study (Kuching meteorological data set)	62
2.9	Summary	66
3	NATURAL VENTILATION AND SOLAR CHIMNEY	68
3.1	Introduction	68
3.1.1	Sustainable Building Criteria and Natural Ventilation	70
3.1.2	Thermal comfort and natural ventilation	71
3.2	Natural ventilated building in Malaysia context	72
3.2.1	Mechanism driving forces of natural ventilation	73
3.2.1.1	Wind-driven natural ventilation	74
3.2.1.2	Buoyancy-driven (temperature differences) natural ventilation	77
3.2.2	Strategies and techniques in natural ventilation	77
3.2.2.1	Single sided ventilation	78
3.2.2.2	Cross ventilation	80
3.2.2.3	Stack ventilation	82
3.2.3	Review related to natural ventilation study on Malaysia terrace houses	84
3.2.3.1	Terrace house in Malaysia	84
3.2.3.1.1	The urbanisation factor	85
3.2.3.1.2	Background study of terraced house in Malaysia	88

	3.2.3.1.3	Classification of typical house plan in Malaysia	91
	3.2.3.1.4	Layout and fenestration study of terrace housing in Malaysia	92
	3.2.3.1.5	Common terrace housing materials in Malaysia	95
	3.2.3.1.6	Building regulation and standard	96
	3.2.3.1.7	Topography and terrain aspect	98
	3.2.3.1.8	Ventilation strategy	100
3.3		Solar chimney	101
	3.3.1	The brief history of solar chimney	102
	3.3.2	Solar chimney ventilation	103
	3.3.3	Recent research on solar chimney	106
	3.3.4	Generic forms of solar chimney	110
	3.3.4.1	Vertical solar chimney	113
	3.3.4.2	Roof solar chimney	115
	3.3.4.3	Wall solar chimney	117
	3.3.4.4	Integrated solar chimney	120
	3.3.5	Important parameters in solar chimney study	122
	3.3.5.1	Solar chimney height	122
	3.3.5.2	Solar chimney width gap	124
	3.3.5.3	Solar chimney material	125
	3.3.5.4	Solar chimney openings	126
	3.3.5.5	Solar chimney thickness	127
	3.3.6	Advantages and disadvantages of solar chimney	128
	3.3.7	Limitation of solar chimney	129
	3.3.8	Problems facing by solar chimney design in hot humid climate	130
	3.3.9	Examples of solar chimney building	131
	3.3.9.1	BCA Academy Building, Singapore	131

3.3.9.2	Solar chimney house in Penang, Malaysia	132
3.3.9.3	Solar chimney house in Malang, Indonesia	134
3.4	Louvres and natural ventilation	136
3.4.1	Type of louvres	137
3.4.1.1	Exterior Louvres	138
3.4.1.2	Interior Louvres	139
3.4.2	Previous research on air flow via louvres	140
3.5	Summary	142
4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	145
4.1	Introduction	145
4.2	Need of the experiment	146
4.3	Study methods of natural ventilation	148
4.3.1	Small-scale experimental model	148
4.3.2	Full-scale experimental model	149
4.3.3	Analytical study model	151
4.3.4	Empirical model	152
4.3.5	Multizone model	153
4.3.6	Zonal Model	154
4.3.7	Building simulation- Computational Fluid Dynamic (CFD) analytical model	155
4.3.7.1	Computational Fluid Dynamic (CFD) as methodology for natural ventilation study	156
4.3.7.2	Application of CFD in solar chimney thermal performance study	158
4.4	Selected software	161
4.4.1	Building Simulation (BS) Programme	164
4.4.1.1	EnergyPlus	164
4.4.1.2	Verification and validation of DesignBuilder	170
4.4.2	Software Validation and Field Measurement Setup	174
4.4.2.1	Field Measurement Setup for Validation	174

	4.4.2.2 CFD setup for validation	176
	4.4.2.3 CFD grid quality	177
	4.4.3 Results and discussion of validation	179
4.5	DesignBuilder modelling and calculations of simulation	183
	4.5.2 Limitation of DesignBuilder	185
	4.5.3 Model specifications	186
	4.5.3.1 Model geometry	186
	4.5.3.2 Field measurement	188
	4.5.3.3 Simulation modelling parameters	193
	4.5.3.4 Weather data	194
	4.5.3.5 Parameters in experiments – analysis of 10 years weather data in Kuching	194
	4.5.3.6 Parameters in experiments – comparison of the weather data year 2012 and 2013	197
	4.5.3.7 Boundary condition for optimisation of solar chimney	199
4.6	Development of solar chimney and window louvres model – simulations and parameters optimisation	206
4.7	Limitation of research	207
4.8	Summary	208
5	RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS: FIELD MEASUREMENT	210
	5.1 Introductions	210
	5.2 Performance of typical single storey terrace house in Malaysia: Field measurement at case study house in Kuching, Sarawak.	210
	5.2.1 Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data (Outdoor air temperature)	211
	5.2.2 Selected hot days (10-24 June 2014)	213
	5.2.3 Selected cold days (11-24 Jan 2014)	215
	5.2.4 Selected normal days (31 Jan- 13 Feb)	218
	5.2.5 Field study results: outdoor climate	221
	5.2.5.1 Daily max	221
	5.2.5.1.1 Air temperature	221

	5.2.5.1.2	Solar radiation	222
	5.2.5.1.3	Wind velocity	224
	5.2.5.1.4	Relative humidity	225
	5.2.5.2	Daily Mean	227
	5.2.5.2.1	Air temperature	227
	5.2.5.2.2	Relative humidity	228
	5.2.5.2.3	Wind velocity and wind direction	229
	5.2.5.2.4	Solar radiation	231
5.2.6		Field study results: comparative study of min, mean and max of thermal performance between air well, test room and outdoor climate condition	232
	5.2.6.1	Comparison of daily max air temperature and relative humidity for outdoor, test room and air well from 3 Jan to 29 June	233
	5.2.6.2	Comparison of daily mean air temperature and relative humidity for outdoor, test room and air well from 3 Jan to 29 June	235
	5.2.6.3	Comparison between max, mean and min for air temperature, relative humidity and air velocity	237
5.2.7		Comparative study of mean and max temperature difference between air well, test room and outdoor for selected period and selected day.	240
	5.2.7.1	Max and mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected hot days' period (10 June to 24 June) and selected hot day (19 June 2014)	240
	5.2.7.2	Max and mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected cold days' period (11 Jan to 24 Jan) and selected cold day (24 Jan 2014)	244
	5.2.7.3	Max and mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected normal days' period (31 Jan to 13 Feb) and selected normal day (2 Feb 2014)	248

5.2.8	Performance evaluation of mean daily radiant mean temperature, predicted mean vote (PMV) and predicted percentage of dissatisfaction (PPD) of the test room	251
5.2.8.1	PMV and PPD for selected hot, cold and normal day	255
5.2.9	Thermal Performance of Existing Single Storey Terraced House in Malaysia Context	257
5.2.10	Summary and highlight for improvement for current thermal performance of typical single storey terrace house	260
6	EXPLORATION OF CONFIGURATION FOR SOLAR CHIMNEY AND LOUVRES GEOMETRY IN SELECTED CLIMATIC CONDITION	261
6.1	Introduction	261
6.2	Configuration of louvres model in selected climatic condition	262
6.2.1	Comparison results for louvre's slate gap	263
6.2.2	Comparison results for louvre's angle	267
6.2.2.1	Air flow distribution in flow pattern and velocity aspects	267
6.2.2.2	V_i/V_e ratio as upstream air velocity at opening (inlet) velocity (V_i)	273
6.2.3	Comparison results before and after installation of louvres	277
6.2.4	Comparison between indoor thermal performance with and without louvres on design days (21 Mac, 21 June, 21 September and 21 December)	279
6.3	Modification of air well model in selected climatic condition	286
6.3.1	Extended air well height	288
6.3.2	Air well width gap	291
6.3.3	Air well length	296
6.4	Results for integrated louvres and air well geometry in design days (21 March, 21 June, 21 September and 21 December)	300
6.4.1	Optimized air well with clear opening	300

6.4.2	Optimized air well with louvres opening	305
6.5	Summary	310
7	CONCLUSION	314
7.1	Introduction	314
7.2	Thesis Summary	314
7.3	Research Conclusions	315
7.4	Research Contributions	317
7.5	Suggestions for further research	319
	REFERENCES	323
	APPENDICES	332
	Appendix A	332
	Appendix B	333
	Appendix C	334
	Appendix D	335
	Appendix E	336
	Appendix F	337
	Appendix G	337
	Appendix H	342
	Appendix I	343
	Appendix J	347
	Appendix K	348
	Appendix L	349
	Appendix M	350

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Typical values of Z_g , α , and Z_0 for urban condition ((ASCE), 1999; Ansley <i>et al.</i> , 1977; Cook, 1985; Givoni, 1998) as cited by (Sapian, 2004) and (Nugroho, 2007c)	17
2.2	Suggested values of Z_g and α for various categories of terrain conditions. (ASHRAE, 2005)	17
2.3	ABL characteristics for different types of terrain roughness (((ASCE), 1999) as cited by (Nugroho, 2007c))	18
2.4	Summary of wind effects on people based on the Beaufort Scale (adopted from(Penwarden AD and AFE, 1975) as cited in (Tahbaz, 2009)	20
2.5	Summary of wind flow over Malaysia based on (Ismail, 1996a) (Islam <i>et al.</i> , 2011; K.Sopian <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Malaysia, 2013b; Nugroho, 2007c)	26
2.6	ASHRAE seven point thermal sensation scale (Djongyang <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	42
2.7	Comparison of ASHRAE and Bedford scale (Auliciems and Szokolay, 2007)	43
2.8	Summary of review of thermal comfort studies in tropics. (Toe, 2013b)	51
2.9	Neutral temperature obtained from recent thermal comfort studies in countries with hot-humid climate (Kwong <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	52
2.10	Mean air speed for the residential building in Malaysia (Azni Z.A. <i>et al.</i> , 2005; C.H.Lim <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	55
2.11	Criteria for assessing wind-induced discomfort considering temperature effect (at 1.5m height) [<i>quoted from</i> (Murakami S and Y., 1985) <i>and cited by</i> (Kubota <i>et al.</i> , 2008)]	55
2.12	Thermal comfort studies in Malaysia [<i>quoted from</i> (Ali, 2004) <i>and cited by</i> (Al-Obaidi and Woods, 2006)]	57

2.13	Function of ventilation in building (Nugroho, 2007c)	62
3.1	Terrain factors for equation (2) (Awbi, 2010)	75
3.2	Common building materials for the existing terraced houses in Malaysia (Toe, 2013a)	95
3.3	Selected research on solar chimney – the summary (Khanal and Lei, 2011)	109
3.4	Solar heating and cooling methods in active and passive building designs (Chan <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	112
3.5	Exterior Louvres type of fenestration (Chandrashekar, 2010b)	138
3.6	Interior Louvres type of fenestration (Chandrashekar, 2010b)	139
4.1	DesignBuilder capabilities and features modified from (Attia, 2011b) by (Baharvand, 2014)	161
4.2	Results of the NZEB Tools Matrix (Attia, 2011a)	163
4.3	Capabilities of EnergyPlus in building simulation (U.S Department of Energy, 2011)	166
4.4	DesignBuilder Capabilities	168
4.5	The measurement instruments, parameters and time intervals	176
4.6	Field measurement input data for CFD simulation	176
4.7	Coordinate of monitoring points as shown in Figure 4-7	178
4.8	Grid Statistic from DesignBuilder. The refined grid with max aspect ratio 4 shows better agreement of grid resolution and total number of cells, which produced more accurate CFD results.	179
4.9	Description of measurement instruments used in field measurement	192
4.10	Construction materials, reference U-values and thermal conductivity of the base model	193
4.11	Summary of highest and lowest monthly mean air temperature and its monthly mean air speed for ten years data (2003-2013), year 2012 and year 2013 (Malaysia, 2013b)	199
4.12	ABL characteristics for different types of terrain roughness ((ASCE), 1999) as cited by (Nugroho, 2007c))	203
4.13	Boundary condition for simulation	206
5.1	Summary of field measurement – Outdoor weather data for selected days (hot, cold and normal days)	258

5.2	Summary of field measurement – thermal performance of test room for selected days (hot, cold and normal days)	258
5.3	Summary of field measurement – thermal performance of air well for selected days (hot, cold and normal days)	258
5.4	Summary of field measurement – Outdoor weather data for selected day (hot, cold and normal day)	259
5.5	Summary of field measurement – thermal performance of test room for selected day (hot, cold and normal day)	259
5.6	Summary of field measurement – thermal performance of air well for selected day (hot, cold and normal day)	259
6.1	Flow characteristics in the test room model determined by Reynolds number (where LF= laminar flow; TR= transitional flow and TB= turbulent flow)	271
6.2	Internal air temperature and air velocity at the test room with window louvres	285
6.3	Internal air temperature and air velocity at the test room with enhanced solar chimney	309

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO	TITLE	PAGE
1.1	Benefits of solar chimney application in residential building (Nugroho, 2006)	8
2.1	The gradient of boundary layer (Fazeli, 2014)	16
2.2	Solar Radiation Distribution in Malaysia (Ahmad <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	27
2.3	Dry bulb air temperature of Subang Airport from 1975-1995 (C.K.Tang, 2012)	28
2.4	Relative humidity of Subang Airport from 1975 to 1995 (C.K.Tang, 2012)	29
2.5	The frequency of wind direction and monthly mean wind speed of year 2013 in Kuching, Sarawak. (Source: Kuching meteorological station)	30
2.6	Wind rose in Kuching, Sarawak for year 2013 (Source: Kuching meteorological station)	31
2.7	Comparison of the monthly wind speed year 2013 (Source: Kuching meteorological station)	32
2.8	Comparison of monthly mean and max solar radiation (2013) (Source: Kuching meteorological station)	33
2.9	Average daily sunshine hour by month for selected cities in Sarawak. (Sarawak Energy, 2013)	34
2.10	Thermal comfort factors (Auliciems and Szokolay, 2007)	39
2.11	Insulation of clothing in clo units (INNOVA,1997)	40
2.12	Relationship between PMV and PPD (Djongyang et al., 2010)	43
2.13	Required air speed to offset increased air temperature (ASHRAE, 2004)	46
2.14	Proposed operative temperatures in naturally ventilated spaces by ASHRAE Standard 55 2004 (ASHRAE, 2004)	47
2.15	Modified Olgay's bioclimatic chart for warm climates region (Szokolay, 2008)	48

2.16	Modified psychometric chart for naturally ventilated building for Malaysia hot humid climate. The extended air velocity of 1m/s and 1.5m/s increase the comfort zone for indoor environment in tropical climate with high humidity and temperature. (Abdul Rahman, 1999)	49
2.17	Monthly dry-bulb air temperature on the respective days	64
2.18	The comfort zone for Kuching climate data 2013 based on dry bulb temperature. (The shaded area within two vertical thick green line indicated as the ventilation comfort zone suggested by ASHRAE 55-2004)	65
3.1	Wind induced natural ventilation in building and among buildings. (Quoted from (Jones, 2001) by (Angelis, 2005))	76
3.2	Schematic diagrams show (a) single-sided single opening and (b) single-sided double opening (KJ, 2007)	79
3.3	Schematic diagrams shows the cross ventilation mechanism and its effective depth (KJ, 2007)	81
3.4	Stack ventilation via (a) solar chimney and via (b) atrium (Tong Yang and J.Clements-Croome, 2012)	82
3.5	Rate of urbanisation in Malaysia by (Malaysia, 2010) cited from (Borhanazad <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	85
3.6	Urban housing units distribution and percentage in each states of Malaysia in 2010 by (Malaysia, 2012), cited from (Toe, 2013b)	86
3.7	Percentage of total housing unit type in Malaysia urban area of year 2010. (Malaysia, 2012)	87
3.8	Percentage of total housing unit by construction material of outer walls for terraced houses in urban areas in Malaysia of year 2010. (Malaysia, 2012)	88
3.9	The image shows the range of houses land plot for high end terraced housing, typical terraced house, low cost plus and low cost terraced house. (Malaysia, 2013a)	90
3.10	Typical building height of single storey terrace house in Malaysia	90
3.11	Classification of typical Malaysian terraced houses by internal layout. (Toe, 2008)	91
3.12	Typical internal layout of single storey terraced housing	92
3.13	Possible position of air-well of single storey terrace house (Nugroho, 2007c)	93
3.14	Possible typical window sizes and position of typical single storey terrace house	94
3.15	The percentage of solar chimney study approaches based on literature review by (Khanal and Lei, 2011)	108

3.16	Opaque solar facades classification (Quesada <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	111
3.17	Vertical Solar Chimney house by (Agung Murti Nugroho and Ahmad, 2014)	114
3.18	Vertical solar chimney in Institution, Singapore by (Wong <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	114
3.19	Roof solar chimney developed by (Hirunlabh <i>et al.</i> , 2001)	115
3.20	Experimental set up for roof solar chimney by (Mathur <i>et al.</i> , 2006b)	115
3.21	Schematic drawings of three types of roof solar chimney and two types of typical house roofing by (J.Khedari <i>et al.</i> , 2011)	117
3.22	Different types of wall mounted solar chimney (a) solar wall without ventilation vent, (b) solar wall with winter mode (air-thermo circulation vent), (c) solar wall with cross ventilation mode (summer mode) (Stazi <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	118
3.23	Schematic diagram shows the incorporated solar chimney with evaporative system (Maerefat and Haghighi, 2010a)	120
3.24	Schematic diagram shows displacement ventilation generated by solar chimney and fan.(Duan <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	121
3.25	Schematic diagram shows the experimental set-up for light pipe chimney. (Taengchum <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	121
3.26	Important parameters of solar chimney (Khanal and Lei, 2014)	122
3.27	Solar Chimney at BCA building (Wittkopf, 2015)	132
3.28	Floor plan of the Penang house with solar chimney	133
3.29	Section of the Penang solar chimney house	133
3.30	The solar chimney openings (left) and the exterior look of the terrace house in Penang (right)	134
3.31	Solar Chimney House at Malang, Indonesia (Agung Murti Nugroho and Ahmad, 2014)	135
3.32	Floor plan (top) and Section (bottom) of the solar chimney house (Agung Murti Nugroho and Ahmad, 2014)	135
3.33	Horizontal fixed louvres by (Datta, 2001) (I = louvre slate length; s = vertical distance between slate)	141
4.1	Summary of the methodology used in investigating the effective solar chimney cum louvres geometry for buoyancy induced natural ventilation in terrace house	147
4.2	Conceptual drawing of the steady ventilation patterns in test room heated up by the distributed source and ventilated with stack effect via two openings. (Fitzgerald and Woods, 2008)	151

4.3	The statistic chart of ventilation performance study in buildings by (Chen, 2009b). Application of CFD in the ventilation study in buildings increase significantly compared to the others.	157
4.4	Numbers of paper published from 2002 to 2007 in journal papers which applied CFD as prediction tool for ventilation performance in domestic buildings (Chen, 2009b)	157
4.5	Overall EnergyPlus Structure (Drury B. Crawleya <i>et al.</i> , 2001)	167
4.6	The positions of HOBO U30 outdoor weather data logger (o) as well as HOBO U12 data logger (X) and test room position (hatched area)	175
4.7	Monitoring points of test room and solar chimney in CFD model	178
4.8	Grid resolution from DesignBuilder CFD simulation. Key areas are refined with fine resolution grid to speed up the CFD simulation speed and obtain accurate result for monitoring points.	179
4.9	Measured outdoor relative humidity and air temperature	181
4.10	Measured outdoor air velocity and solar radiation	181
4.11	Measured outdoor air velocity, measured test room air velocity and simulated test room air velocity	182
4.12	Measured outdoor air temperature, measured test room air temperature and simulated test room air temperature	182
4.13	The example of converged residuals of CFD simulation. The convergence represents the steady state of CFD analysis, which means the analysis has reached its solutions in the numerical calculations.	185
4.14	Types of CFD modelling approach (coupled and decoupled) in studying natural ventilation in building. (Ramponi and Blocken, 2012b)	186
4.15	The brief research framework and stages involved in this study (Leng <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	187
4.16	Field measurement/ case study house floor plan (top) and section (bottom). The hatched areas indicate the focus area in this research study (simulation)	187
4.17	The highlighted area indicated the location of case study house – Taman Yen Yen, Jalan Matang, Kuching, which is 5.65km away from Kuching city. (Image courtesy from Google Map)	188
4.18	The Occupied Zone – Plan View (Chilled Beams and Ceilings Association, 2013)	189

4.19	The Occupied Zone: Sitting or Standing (Chilled Beams and Ceilings Association, 2013)	190
4.20	Outdoor field measurement setup (HOBO U30 outdoor weather data logger)	191
4.21	HOBO U12 Data logger to measure the air temperature and air humidity	191
4.22	HOBO U12 air velocity unit to measure the indoor air speed.	191
4.23	DELTA OHM HD32.3 PMV en PPD unit to measure indoor air temperature, humidity, air velocity and globe temperature	192
4.24	Mean Air Temperature of Kuching from 2003 to 2013	195
4.25	Average of monthly mean max air temperature in Kuching from 2003 to 2013	196
4.26	Average of monthly mean air velocity in Kuching from 2003 to 2013	196
4.27	Daily average and diurnal average Dry bulb air temperature and relative humidity of Kuching year 2012 and 2013	198
4.28	Monthly mean, diurnal daily mean and monthly mode wind speed in Kuching year 2012 and 2013	198
4.29	Monthly max, mean and min of air temperature 2013 in Kuching. Optimisation of solar chimney configurations' parameter would be based on the mean max air temperature. 34°C happened to be the mean max temperature of 2013	200
4.30	Frequency of monthly mean max air temperature of year 2013, Kuching would determine the specific month for boundary condition day. September 2013 appeared to be the month with most frequent numbers of mean max air temperature (34°C)	200
4.31	Solar radiation gives direct effect to air temperature. The monthly max, mean and min of the solar radiation would be compared with air temperature to determine the boundary condition day	201
4.32	Frequency of monthly mean max solar radiation of year 2013, Kuching would determine the specific month for boundary condition day. September 2013 appeared to be the month with most frequent numbers of mean max solar radiation (988W/m ²)	201
4.33	Monthly mean, max, mode and min air velocity in Kuching were figured out to understand the wind climate of the selected field study site. Wind velocity of 1.2m/s appeared to be the most frequent air velocity at 12.2m height (Kuching meteorological department)	202

4.34	Schematic sections of case study house with research sequences (A to D)	206
4.35	Modelling and optimisation sequences with tested parameters in this study	207
5.1	Comparison between overall mean measured air temperature and mean weather data throughout field measurement period (3 Jan to 27 June 2014)	212
5.2	Comparison of overall max measured and max weather data air temperature and relative humidity throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 27 June 2014)	212
5.3	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected hot days (10 June to 24 June 2014) throughout the study period.	214
5.4	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected hot day (19 June 2014) throughout the study period.	214
5.5	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected cold days (11 Jan to 24 Jan 2014) throughout the study period.	217
5.6	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected cold day (24 Feb 2014) throughout the study period.	217
5.7	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected normal days (31 Jan to 13 Feb 2014) throughout the study period.	218
5.8	Comparative study of field measurement and meteorological data for selected normal day (2 Feb 2014) throughout the study period.	219
5.9	Daily max outdoor air temperature throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	222
5.10	Daily max solar radiation throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	224
5.11	Daily max solar radiation throughout the field measurement period (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	225
5.12	Daily max solar radiation throughout the field measurement period(3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	226
5.13	Daily mean air temperature throughout the field experiment period(3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	228
5.14	Daily mean relative humidity throughout the field measurement period(3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	229
5.15	Daily mean wind direction and wind velocity throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	230

5.16	Daily mean solar radiation throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	231
5.17	Regression for solar radiation and air temperature throughout field experiment	232
5.18	Daily max air temperature for outdoor, test room and air well throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	233
5.19	Daily max relative humidity for outdoor, test room and air well throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	234
5.20	Daily mean air temperature for outdoor, test room and air well from 3 Jan to 29 June 2014	235
5.21	Daily mean relative humidity for outdoor, test room and air well from 3 Jan to 29 June 2014	236
5.22	The comparison between max, mean and min of air temperature taken in field measurement for outdoor, test room and air well	237
5.23	The comparison between max, mean and min of relative humidity taken in field measurement for outdoor, test room and air well	237
5.24	The comparison between max, mean and min of air velocity taken in field measurement for outdoor and test room	238
5.25	Max air temperature and relative humidity for selected hot days throughout field measurement days (10 June to 24 June 2014)	240
5.26	Max air temperature and relative humidity for selected hot day (19 June 2014)	241
5.27	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected hot days throughout the field measurement (10 June to 24 June 2014)	241
5.28	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected hot day (19 June 2014)	242
5.29	Max air temperature and relative humidity for selected cold days (31 Jan to 13 Feb 2014)	245
5.30	Max air temperature and relative humidity for selected cold day (24 Jan 2014)	245
5.31	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected cold days throughout field measurement period (31 Jan to 13 Feb 2014)	246
5.32	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected cold day (24 Jan 2014)	247

5.33	Max air temperature and relative humidity for selected normal days (31 Jan to 13 Feb 2014)	248
5.34	Max air temperature for selected normal day (2 Feb 2014)	249
5.35	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected normal days throughout field measurement period (31 Jan to 13 Feb 2014)	250
5.36	Mean air temperature and relative humidity for selected normal day (2 Feb 2014)	250
5.37	Overall mean radiant temperature and air temperature of test room	252
5.38	Comparison between mean, max and min for test room air temperature and mean radiant air temperature throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	253
5.39	Comparison between mean, max and min for test room PMV and PPD throughout the field measurement (3 Jan to 29 June 2014)	254
5.40	Predicted Percentage of Dissatisfaction (PPD) and Predicted Mean Vote (PMV) for selected hot, normal and cold day throughout field experiment	255
5.41	Mean radiant temperature and air temperature for selected hot, normal and cold day throughout field measurement	256
6.1	Monitoring points A represent outdoor, point B, C and D represents the test room while point E represents the air well space.	263
6.2	Louvres gap configuration	264
6.3	Comparison of air flow velocity between 8 types of slate gap	264
6.4	Jet flow via the louvres slate (left) and Venturi effect between louvre slate where $V_1 < V_2 > V_3$ (right) (Chandrashekar, 2010b)	266
6.5	Air flow pattern induced by different air gap width. (green line=0.54m/s; dark brown line= 0.75m/s)	267
6.6	Laminar flow, turbulent flow and separation flow around the sharp edges of slates (Hepperle, 2006)	269
6.7	Types of flow characteristics (Chandrashekar, 2010b)	270
6.8	Comparison of indoor airflow pattern between four types of louvres angle	272
6.9	Static regain by duct velocity profiles (Meyer, 2005)	273
6.10	Comparison of internal (V_i) and external air velocity (V_e) ratio for different types of louvres	274
6.11	location of V_i (interior air velocity) and V_e (exterior air velocity)	274

6.12	Air speed required to offset increases air temperature to achieve thermal comfort (Fountain and Arens, 1993)	276
6.13	Air speed between monitoring point caused by different louvres angle	276
6.14	Air flow pattern for test room (before and after installation of louvres)	277
6.15	Air velocity for test room before installation of louvres angle 45 degree	278
6.16	Air velocity for test room after installation of louvres angle 45 degree	279
6.17	Comparison between indoor thermal performance with and without louvres on 21 March	280
6.18	Comparison between indoor thermal performance with and without louvres on 21 June	282
6.19	Comparison between indoor thermal performance with and without louvres on 21 September	283
6.20	Comparison between indoor thermal performance with and without louvres on 21 December	284
6.21	Ventilation performance of existing room	285
6.22	Ventilation performance of the test room with louvres	285
6.23	Monitoring point for air well/ solar chimney model in selected climatic condition	286
6.24	Monitoring point stated in DesignBuilder for air well	287
6.25	Optimization of solar chimney in relation to air velocity and air temperature	288
6.26	Comparison of air flow pattern between different solar chimney height	290
6.27	Optimization of solar chimney width gap in relation to air velocity and air temperature.	292
6.28	Comparison of air flow pattern between different solar chimney width gap	295
6.29	Optimization of solar chimney length in relation to air velocity and air temperature	297
6.30	Comparison of air flow pattern between different solar chimney length	298
6.31	Air temperature and air velocity results of optimised air well with clear opening	301
6.32	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with clear opening (21 March)	302
6.33	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with clear opening (21 June)	302

6.34	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with clear opening (21 Sept)	303
6.35	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with clear opening (21 Dec)	303
6.36	Air temperature and air velocity of optimised air well with optimised louvered opening	305
6.37	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with optimized louvres ‘opening (21 March)	306
6.38	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with optimized louvres ‘opening (21 June)	307
6.39	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with optimized louvres ‘opening (21 Sept)	308
6.40	Air temperature and air velocity for optimized air well/ solar chimney with optimized louvres ‘opening (21 Dec)	308
6.41	Ventilation performance of test room with enhanced solar chimney	309
6.42	The comparison of max, min and mean of air temperature and air velocity between test room with solar chimney as well as louvres cum solar chimney (<i>SC+L indicates as test room model with both solar chimney cum louvres model; SC means test room with solar chimney and clear opening</i>)	311
6.43	The Illustrated perspective shows the butterfly capping of solar chimney which could improve the updrafted air speed (Nugroho, 2006)	312
6.44	The Illustrated perspective shows the neighbourhood with enhanced version of solar chimney	313
7.1	Proposed position of solar chimney cum louvres in terraced house	318

LIST OF SYMBOLS

V_z	-	Mean wind velocity at height z (gradient wind)
V_g	-	Height where the gradient wind starts
V_{ref}	-	Mean wind velocity at reference height Z_{ref}
Z_{ref}	-	Reference Height
Z	-	Height for which the wind velocity V_z is calculated
Z_g	-	Height at which the “gradient wind” (V_g) is observed
Z_0	-	Roughness length or log layer constant
I	-	Solar intensity
Iu	-	Turbulence intensity
I_{sc}	-	Solar constant
I_o	-	Solar radiation
T_{sol}	-	Local solar time
T_{std}	-	Local standard time
E_t	-	The equation of time
L	-	Length/ gap size
α	-	An empirical exponent that depends on the surface roughness, stability and temperature gradient
\uparrow	-	Increase/ high
\downarrow	-	Decrease/ low
t_r	-	Total heat loss from skin surface of an imaginary occupants who has 1.0 met activity and 0.6 clo of clothing level
t_a	-	Real-time occupants in actual environment with actual clothing and real activity
t_o	-	Operative temperature
t_a	-	Air temperature
t_{mr}	-	Mean radiant temperature
h_r	-	Linear radiative heat transfer coefficient

h_c	-	Convective heat transfer coefficient
F_{p-i}	-	Angle factor between the person and surface
t_i	-	surface temperature
T_n	-	neutral temperature with +/-2°K range
T_{amt}	-	Annual mean air temperature of the month
C_p	-	Pressure coefficient
V	-	wind velocity/ upstream velocity
ρ	-	Air density
P_w	-	Wind pressure
P_o	-	Static Pressure of free stream P_α
$K-\epsilon$	-	K-epsilon Turbulence Model
T_{Alo}	-	Lower air well mean air temperature
T_{Aup}	-	Upper air well mean air temperature
T_t	-	Test room mean air temperature
T_o	-	Outdoor mean air temperature
RH_{Alo}	-	Lower air well mean relative humidity
RH_{Aup}	-	Upper air well mean relative humidity
RH_t	-	Test room mean relative humidity
RH_o	-	Outdoor mean relative humidity
P_{total}	-	Total pressure
P_{static}	-	Static Pressure
$P_{dynamic}$	-	Dynamic Pressure
μ	-	Viscosity of air
Re	-	Reynolds Number
V_i	-	Air velocity of inlet
V_e	-	Air velocity of outlet

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	-	Atmospheric Boundary Layer
AC	-	Air conditioned
ACH	-	Air Change Rate
ACS	-	Adaptive Comfort Standard
AIAA	-	American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
AR	-	Aspect Ratio
ASHRAE	-	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating And Air Conditioning Engineers
BBCC	-	Building Bio Climatic Chart
BCA	-	Building Construction Authority
BIM	-	Building Information Modelling
BRI	-	Building Related Illness
BS	-	Building Simulation
CET	-	Corrected Effective Temperature
CFD	-	Computational Fluid Dynamics
CO ₂	-	Carbon Dioxide
DEM	-	Digital Elevation Model
EMPD	-	Effective Moisture Penetration Depth
EPA	-	Environmental Protection Agency
EPBD	-	European Parliament Board of Directive
ET	-	Effective Temperature
HVAC	-	Heating, Ventilating Air Conditioning
IES-VE	-	Integrated Environment Solution – Virtual Environment
IPCC	-	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LF	-	Laminar Flow
MCS	-	Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
MRT	-	Mean Radiant Temperature

MS	-	Malaysia Standard
N.A.	-	Not Applicable
NV	-	Natural Ventilated
NZEB	-	Net Zero Energy Buildings
OT	-	Operative Temperature
PCM	-	Phase Change Material
PMV	-	Predicted Mean Vote
PPD	-	Predicted Percentage of Dissatisfied
PVC	-	Polyvinyl Chloride
RANS	-	Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes Turbulence Model
RH	-	Relative Humidity
RMS	-	Average Root Mean Square
RNG	-	Renormalization K- ϵ Turbulence Model
RSC	-	Roof Solar Chimney
SBS	-	Sick Building Syndrome
SC	-	Solar Chimney
SET	-	Standard Effective Temperature
SP	-	Static Pressure
TB	-	Turbulent Flow
TR	-	Transitional Flow
UBBL	-	Uniform Building By Law
VP	-	Velocity Pressure
WWR	-	Window to Wall Ratio

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	Information for the basic findings of solar chimney parameters	332
B	This study explore on the possibility to induce indoor air flow assisted by pressure gradient and temperature gradient between indoor and outdoor environment through louvres and solar chimney	333
C	Inspiration of the research gap from previous research study on solar induced ventilation tools and external louvres	334
D	Problem statements summarized in diagram – The dilemma of thermal comfort in Malaysia terraced houses The insulating value for cloth elements (Auliciems and Szokolay, 2007)	335
E	Chart showing classification of passive cooling approaches in energy-efficient building (N.B.Geetha and Velraj, 2012)	336
F	The possible factors affecting the performance of indoor thermal performance in a typical terrace houses with air well or solar chimney.	337
G	Climatic data for main cities in Malaysia	337
H	The Insulating Value for Cloth Elements (Auliciems and Szokolay, 2007)	342
I	NZEB tools mechanics	343
J	Comparison of General Features and Capabilities of Selected Simulation Programme: DOE-2, BLAST, IBLAST and EnergyPlus (Drury B. Crawleya et al., 2001)	347

K	Comparison of Load Features and Capabilities of Selected Simulation Programme: DOE-2, BLAST, IBLAST and EnergyPlus (Drury B. Crawleya et al., 2001)	348
L	Comparison of HVAC Features and Capabilities of Selected Simulation Programme: DOE-2, BLAST, IBLAST and EnergyPlus (Drury B. Crawleya et al., 2001)	349
M	List of Popular and Prevalent Turbulence Models for Predicting Airflows in Enclosed Environments (Zhai et al., 2007)	350

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research studies natural ventilation through the louvres window and solar chimney (enhanced air well on existing case study house) to improve thermal performance in typical Malaysian single storey terrace housing. In this study, the air well in an existing single storey terraced house were modified towards solar chimney configuration to enhance the natural ventilation performance. The first chapter introduces the research background, significance, objectives, research questions, research scope and framework of research methodology.

1.2 Problem Statement

Energy consumption has been a critical and sensitive global issue for a few decades now. The building industry has been considered to be a high energy consumption industry where huge amount of fuel and energy are consumed throughout the building life span. In order to reduce the energy consumption along the building operational period especially for the tropic countries, passive cooling design plays an important role. Most buildings are designed with air-conditioning system in mind, thus the passive cooling design solution has been eliminated in order to prevent cold air leakage which would then lead to high costs of energy consumption. However, most

users and occupants do not realize that thermal comfort generated by effective passive cooling system is closely related to the energy consumption cost. With effective passive cooling system, they can cut down their monthly electricity bill.

Climatic thermal comfort can be achieved via effective ventilation system in order to achieve biological comfort of occupants. There are two types of ventilation system; natural ventilation system and mechanical ventilation system. The cooling effect generated by the natural ventilation system can be achieved via the pre-construction design for the building by taking the advantages of the wind forces or the air pressure difference, as well as the temperature difference between indoor and outdoor of the building. The main aim to achieve good ventilation for indoor environment is to provide fresh air in order to prevent carbon dioxide (CO₂) from exceeding the unacceptable level by occupants (Awbi, 1998). According to Bansal (1992), solar chimney is one of the alternatives for a building to achieve passive cooling. In Malaysia, air well is believed to fulfil the same function. However, many fail to work.

According to previous researchers, the properties of the solar chimney can be identified via the length, the material, the thickness of material, the air gap width, the optimum aperture type and so forth. The parameters of the solar chimney play an important role in giving the effect on the result of performance of solar chimney. Appendix A summarizes the parameters suggested by the previous researchers. However, the indication is not finalized and only presented as reference. Appendix B shows the problem statements summarized in diagram form which is the dilemma of thermal comfort in Malaysia terraced houses.

1.3 Research Statements

Ventilation plays an important role in providing fresh air and healthy room environment for human habitat. Without the consistent ventilation and air circulation, the indoor environment becomes suffocating, stifling hot, stuffy and leads to sick building syndrome. According to Laumbach (2008), sick building syndrome is mainly

caused by indoor environmental problems and individual risk aspects. The indoor environmental aspects include air pollutants, poor ventilation, poor indoor air quality, temperature, relative humidity and so forth. Thus, the performance of the building thermal envelope and configuration system become important. Thermal performance in the building directly regulates the behavioural and comfort of users of the building. Local climate conditions, such as annual ambient temperature, relative humidity, intensity of solar radiation, wind velocity and direction, would give the impact to the thermal comfort of occupants. In Malaysia, due to the high intensity of solar radiation, the direct penetration of sunlight leads to the heat transfer from the glazing to the internal of the building (Nugroho,2014). However, the high intensity of the sunlight could be a benefit by modifying the configuration of the building system in order to achieve the thermal comfort for occupants.

The hot and humid condition in Malaysia is the main dilemma and issue for the occupants is thermal comfort. In addition, the configuration of the terrace house, which is the most common residential type occupied by citizens does not consider the problem of single sided ventilation. Single sided ventilation could not provide effective ventilation (Nugroho et al., 2006). Under the circumstances of the limited layout design, the alternative of passive cooling- solar chimney and louvre window would be the way to increase the ventilation rate and air velocity in the room in order to achieve the energy saving purpose. Thus, to propose a passive cooling system which could complement the single opening of the terrace house in order to create cross-ventilation is important. It is possible to achieve the thermal comfort via low indoor air temperature and high air velocity.

Air well stated in Uniform Building By Law 1984 as basic ventilation requirement for utility, mechanical room and washroom with stated sizes and dimension. Designers tend to fulfil requirements by providing the minimum dimension, which does not achieve the effectiveness and function of air well. Thus, the configuration of provided air well does not take into consideration for the effectiveness measure. Developer and designer tend to ignore the potential of air well because enclosed spaces are taken into consideration of usable nett floor area. As a result, the measure of natural daylighting and natural ventilation of modern terraced

housing are not addressed properly, and lead to the needs of mechanical ventilation system. This has increased the energy consumption. The application of air well is not widely promoted since the wide exposed opening invites the security issues. In the end, occupants tend to seal it up to avoid problems.

There are various kinds of passive cooling approaches to achieve energy efficiency for building. According to N.B.Geetha and Velraj (2012) (Appendix E), there are three types of passive cooling methods, which are solar heat protection, heat modulation or amortization technique and heat dissipation technique. Solar chimney falls under the category of dissipation technique without thermal energy. Natural ventilation happens with the assistance of solar chimney by uplifting the hot air via temperature gradient. Other than that, the application of external louvres at window (inlet) could increase the Bernoulli Effect of air flow when uplifting happened via solar chimney. The combination of these building components has high potential to improve ventilation performance in the terrace houses. Diagram in Appendix A indicates the research gap of this study and diagram in Appendix D indicates the summary of problem statement. Thus, this study deduces that indoor ventilation could be enhanced with combination of both pressure gradients via Venturi effect as well as indoor and outdoor temperature gradient caused by solar induced stack ventilation. Another than that, Diagram in Appendix B elaborate Appendix C with previous research categories, in order to benchmarking the current study in natural ventilation field. The possibility to improve natural ventilation in terraced house is summarized in Appendix F.

In this study, a single storey terraced house located at Kuching Sarawak was selected as case study building. The house is designed with 2m length x 1m width air well to ventilate bedroom and bathroom. However due to the limited of space in the terraced house, air well was designed with minimal cost and dimension according to Uniform Building By Law requirement. The window of the bedroom is typical wide aperture which unable to induce ventilation. The study started with measurement of the thermal performance for existing bedroom with single-sided ventilation. The thermal performance of existing air well was studied as well. The modification of the air well into solar chimney and window louvres were carried out with Computational Fluid Dynamic (CFD) software in referred to the measurement result.

Furthermore, the research study the thermal performance of the existing building which applied single-sided ventilation. The effectiveness of the single-sided ventilation was analysed based on the field measurement data. Similar to air well of the existing case study building, the collected data were analysed in order to examine the potential of air well to be applied in tropical climate. Via the field measurement, the research background were verified and the objective of the study were outlined .

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research is to study natural ventilation by evaluating and investigating the effectiveness of external louvres and enhanced air well that act as solar chimney to improve the natural ventilation in a Malaysian single storey terrace house. The term solar chimney applied to indicate enhanced air well in this study. Since the wind velocity of outdoor and indoor is not significant in Malaysia tropical context compared to the temperate country, the stack ventilation might be a better alternative. Solar chimney and louvre window geometry could improve the stack ventilation for the low air movement residential building, which in turn, give better thermal comfort for occupants.

Other specific objectives:

1. To study the thermal performance of typical existing single storey terrace house with air well in Malaysia via field measurement.
2. To explore the configuration of louvre window in relation to enhancing the airflow speed
3. To explore the configuration of existing air well to solar chimney with respect to improve stack ventilation

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the current thermal performance of the typical existing single storey house with air well in Malaysia?
2. What is the appropriate configuration of the air well geometry that can enhance the ventilation by increasing the air movement to improve indoor thermal environment?
3. What is the appropriate louvres configuration that can enhance the air flow speed in an indoor environment?

1.6 Scope of Research and Limitation of Study

The scope of the research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed solar chimney and louvre window configuration in single storey terrace house in Malaysia. There are numbers of research papers on the geometry of solar chimney (Nugroho, 2007d; Sakonidou et al., 2008; Zhai et al., 2011; Z.D.Chen, 2003). However, the relationship between the louvres window (inlet) and solar chimney has not been studied especially in Malaysia terrace house context. Terrace house in Malaysia has limited external facing walls which allow cross ventilation to happen especially for the middle room. The limitation leads to the problem of insufficient ventilation and air change which can cause sick building syndrome to the occupants.

Thermal comfort in relation to air flow speed is the main target and objective for this research study. The building with good ventilation performance is considered as effective and functional building design. There are few parameters regulating the occupant's thermal comfort: the air temperature, metabolic rate of human body, clothing, relative humidity, air speed, and others (Givoni.B., 1981; Abdul Razak, 2004; Nugroho, 2007d). In this research study, the scope of is on the air temperature and air velocity. Average air velocity in Malaysia indoor environment is within the range of 0.04 to 0.47m/s (Hui, 1998c; Nugroho, 2007d). In order to achieve the thermal comfort range, the required air velocity for indoor environment has to be within 0.2 to 0.8m/s according to Shafizal Maarof and Jones (2009) and Nugroho (2007d) in the condition of ambient temperature range between 28°C to 32°C and relative humidity lower than

70%. In order to determine the air velocity and room air temperature as the variable, the other affecting parameters such as relative humidity, activities, clothing factor and so forth would set as assumption value and not considered in the experiment. The relative humidity will be set at dry bulb temperature value which considered as fall in between the conducive range for living environment (Nugroho, 2007d).

For the research to be carried out, a typical bedroom with single-sided exposed fenestration in a single storey terrace house which is attached to a 2m x 1m air well is selected for the field measurement and research study. Hence, the measurement result and analysis will be applied as the base case study model. The modifying and improving the configuration would be based on the base case model results. The method has been used by previous researchers as the research method in order to compare the findings results with the real-life experimental result (Ossen, 2005b, Nugroho, 2007d).

After determining the setting for base case study, the study is going to carried out using the computer simulation program - DesignBuilder. The use of software involved the limitation and fixed parameters. In general, the limitation of the software includes the cost for the software, the unintuitive interface, as well as other setting which could be the technical issues. The details of the limitation will be discussed further.

The setting for the weather data in the simulation software is performed under Kuching climatic data 2013 (air temperature, air velocity and solar radiation). The accuracy of the software results is examined via process of verification and validation, which is discussed in the following chapter.

1.7 Significance of Study

The outcome of the research is expected to emphasise on the effectiveness of the proposed solar chimney (enhanced air well) and external louvre window system in promoting the thermal and ventilation performance in single storey terrace houses in

Malaysian context. It will enhance thermal and ventilation condition of building by inducing air velocity via stack effect as well as Venturi effect. The study suggests and recommends the appropriate solar chimney and louvre configurations on passive ventilation system. Hence, it can further reduce the indoor temperature and increase air velocity in a typical terrace house in Malaysia. Other than the stated advantages as above, the application of solar chimney has other advantages on various aspects as indicated in Figure 1.1. The most significant aspect is thermal comfort and energy efficiency. Therefore, the findings of the study are believed to be able to enhance the designer options and act as reference to design a functional solar induced ventilation tool in building, in order to improve the thermal comfort and energy efficiency.

Furthermore, in this research, the research method was initiated with background study and proceed with exploration via design. Field measurement for the existing case study building was carried out in first place to identify the dilemma of tropical houses discomfort issue and follow with the solutions by proposing the enhanced air well and external louvres design. The progression study strengthens the research aim, supported with background data.

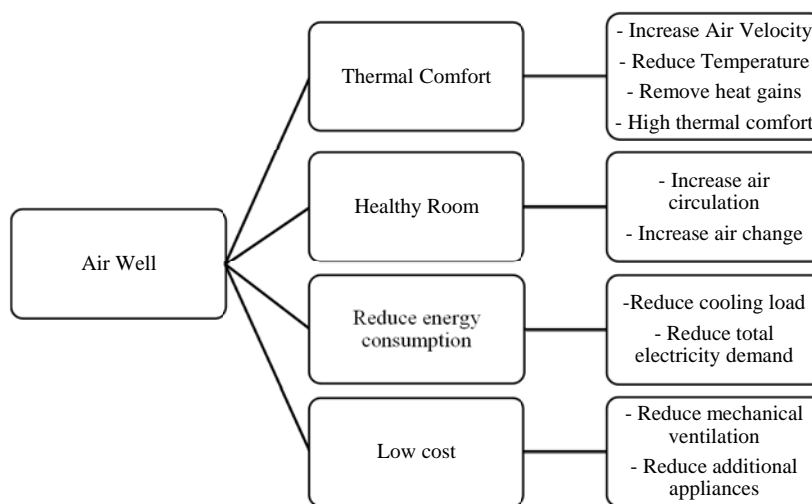


Figure 1.1: Benefits of solar chimney application in residential building (Nugroho, 2006)

1.8 Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis for the research study is that “enhanced air well and louvre window” design will achieve the following:

1. Improved air velocity in the indoor building environment.
2. Enhanced of thermal performance of indoor environment

1.9 Thesis Organisation

This thesis is divided into six chapters, beginning with the introduction to the study and wrapping up with the conclusion of the findings in the study.

Chapter 1 reviews the general perspectives of the research and clarifies the aims of the research. Other than that, Chapter 1 listed down the research objectives, hypothesis of study, research questions, significance of study, and summary of the research scope and limitation. The overall framework of the research was stated in the first chapter to project the overall process of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review and analysis of climate and comfort condition for Malaysia and Kuching city (1.5600° N, 110.3450° E, Time zone: +8). Chapter 2 reviews on climatic factors which directly influence the thermal comfort such as wind, solar radiation, air velocity, air humidity and air temperature in respect to the research intention, concept, and analysis of climatic data. The understanding on the climatic data is important in order to carry out the study, since it directly gives impact to the thermal comfort of occupants and building design. In the last section of this chapter, review on thermal comfort definition, thermal comfort in tropics as well as ventilation requirement under Malaysian tropical climate are discussed. ASHRAE rating index in Malaysia's climatic context was used to determine and define the comfort zone under natural ventilation condition in the end of this chapter.

Chapter 3 is divided into two sections. Section one reviewed the natural ventilation of buildings in Malaysia climatic context. The mechanism, strategies and techniques of natural ventilation were described in this chapter as well. This chapter also covers the study of terrace houses in Malaysia, which includes the regulations of terrace houses, classification, building material, topography and ventilation factors,

layout study and urbanization factors which affect the design of terrace houses. Section two gives a review of solar chimneys, which includes the history, the generic form, and ventilation of solar chimneys, important parameters, limitations and problems of air well in tropical context, and examples of buildings with air well or solar chimneys.

Chapter 4 reviews the methodology of the research implemented in this study. Various kind of research method in natural ventilation were reviewed. The justification of research tools selection, the procedure in carrying out the field measurement and optimization, verification and validation of selected CFD, and details of final model are also described in this chapter.

Chapter 5 covers the findings and analysis of the field measurement results. The case study house thermal performance was measured with experimental instruments, in order to obtain the real time indoor and outdoor air temperature, relative humidity, and air velocity. In this chapter, the air well thermal performance, the single-sided room thermal performance as well as outdoor weather were measured and discussed. The impact of the existing thermal performance summarizes up the Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 discusses about the alternative measures proposed for poor existing thermal indoor environment performance in terraced house. Exploration on the external louvres and enhanced air well (solar chimney) configurations were carried out. The parameters for louvres and air well were explored and discussed in this chapter. The chapter will be ended up with discussion on simulation for the louvres and solar chimney model on design days.

Chapter 7 describes the research summary, final conclusion with respect to the results of the research study. Contributions discussed in architectural perspective other than technical way. In the last part of the chapter, future research recommendations were identified.

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