

HOUSE DESIGN PREFERENCES OF MALAY HOUSEWIVES
IN BANDAR TENGGARA, JOHOR

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To the Most Gracious and Merciful,
my beloved parents, parents-in-laws, family and friends,
especially my husband, Kharul Anuar for his never-ending support.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate and determine Malay housewives' house design preferences in the context of Malaysia. Malay housewives are married women regardless of their working status. They are overwhelmed by their roles and routine in taking care of their families and home. However, studies on housewives' design preference of housing in Malaysia are scarce. Three objectives were developed for this research i.e, to recognize Malay housewives' roles at home as the home manager and house design decision maker; to understand prominent patterns of Malay housewives' daily activities at home; and to identify the housing design attributes preferred by Malay housewives. The investigation employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. It used a single instrument of self-administered survey questionnaire consisting of structured and semi-structured questions. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling involving 135 respondents from a suburban terraced residential area in Taman Anggerik, Bandar Tenggara, Johor, Malaysia. Methods of analysis employed in this research were content analysis for qualitative data and simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies and cross tabulation for quantitative data. Both types of data were merged during the analysis and interpretation processes. The results suggest that both full-time and working housewives remain the home manager, and they are the main decision makers for house design, particularly on the interior. The significant difference between the two groups of housewives is that working housewives tend to have higher opportunity in selecting house type and its location. Their significant activities at home are influenced by their religious ritual and way of life such as praying and preparation of meals. House attributes preferred are related to enhancing their spiritual needs such as preferring a nature setting and respecting certain religious requirements. Preferred house images of the housewives are inclined more towards modern design. The research also found that the living area and kitchen are the two most important spaces for Malay housewives. In conclusion, Malay housewives should be given more opportunity to participate in house design development, mainly on house interior, because of their significant role in home managing and their concern with the design of their houses. This is to ensure their house design more relevant to their preferences. The study is potentially useful for participatory house design approaches in Malaysia, in order to accommodate the design expectation of Malay housewives.

ABSTRAK

Matlamat tesis bertujuan untuk menyiasat dan menentukan pilihan reka bentuk rumah oleh suri rumah Melayu, dalam konteks Malaysia. Suri rumah Melayu adalah merujuk kepada wanita yang sudah berkahwin tanpa mengira status pekerjaan. Mereka selalunya sibuk menjalankan peranan dan rutin menjaga keluarga dan rumah mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian mengenai keutamaan reka bentuk pilihan suri rumah adalah terhad. Tiga objektif telah dibangunkan untuk kajian ini iaitu, untuk mengenali peranan suri rumah Melayu di rumah sebagai pengurus rumah dan mampu membuat keputusan tentang reka bentuk rumah; untuk memahami bagaimana aktiviti utama harian suri rumah Melayu dijalankan di rumah; dan mengenal pasti ciri-ciri reka bentuk perumahan disukai oleh suri rumah Melayu. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan campuran kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Ia menggunakan satu instrumen soal-selidik yang ditadbir responden sendiri, yang terdiri daripada soalan yang berstruktur dan separa berstruktur. Teknik pensampelan yang digunakan ialah pensampelan rawak mudah yang melibatkan 135 responden daripada kawasan kediaman teres Taman Anggerik, Bandar Tenggara, Johor, Malaysia. Kaedah analisis yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah 'analisis kandungan' untuk data kualitatif dan statistik deskriptif mudah seperti kekerapan dan jadual silang untuk data kuantitatif. Kedua-dua jenis data telah digabungkan semasa proses menganalisis data dan interpretasi. Keputusan menunjukkan kedua-dua kumpulan suri rumah sepenuh masa dan bekerja kekal sebagai pengurus rumah dan mereka adalah pembuat keputusan reka bentuk utama bagi reka bentuk rumah terutamanya di bahagian dalaman rumah. Perbezaan ketara di antara kedua-dua kumpulan suri rumah ini ialah suri rumah bekerja mempunyai peluang yang lebih tinggi dalam memilih jenis rumah dan lokasi. Aktiviti mereka yang ketara di rumah adalah dipengaruhi oleh amalan agama dan cara hidup seperti solat dan penyediaan makanan. Atribut rumah yang menjadi keutamaan mereka adalah berkait dengan mempertingkatkan kehendak kerohanian seperti mengutamakan suasana alam semula jadi dan menghormati sesetengah keperluan agama mereka. Imej rumah yang menjadi keutamaan responden lebih cenderung kepada reka bentuk moden. Kajian juga mendapati bahawa ruang tamu dan dapur merupakan dua ruang yang paling penting untuk suri rumah Melayu. Kesimpulannya, suri rumah Melayu sepatutnya diberi lebih peluang dalam menyertai pembangunan reka bentuk rumah, terutamanya pada bahagian dalaman rumah, kerana peranan mereka yang penting dalam urusan rumah dan mengambil berat tentang gaya rumah mereka. Ini adalah untuk memastikan reka bentuk rumah mereka lebih bersesuaian dengan keutamaan mereka. Kajian ini adalah berpotensi untuk kegunaan pendekatan reka bentuk perumahan yang disertai oleh pengguna di Malaysia bagi memenuhi keinginan reka bentuk suri rumah Melayu.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FH	-	Full-time housewife (non-working housewives)
PH	-	Part-time housewife (working, studying or in business making wives)
CIDB	-	Construction Industry Development Board
JPBD	-	Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa
JPPH	-	Jabatan Penilaian Dan Perkhidmatan Harta (Malaysia Valuation and Properties Services Department)
JPM	-	Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia)
MEC	-	Means-End Chain
PEC	-	Person Environment Congruence
UBBL	-	Uniform Building By Laws (Malaysia)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

Previous studies on housing suggest that there exist gender-relation on various design aspects. However, research on this kind of relationship in the context of women as housewives is scarce. Housewives are regarded as home managers regardless of their working status. Therefore, studying routines of housewives, particularly at their homes, is vital in order to understand the content of house as a home. In other words, it is necessary to identify the behavioural, social, and psychological characteristics of a setting and the way in which these features relate to the cognitions of that place (Smith, 1994b).

A house is not necessarily a home. A house is more of a shelter that protects the inhabitants for basic needs such as sleeping, eating and cleaning one's self. Basically a house is just a building or dwelling without any attachment to the place (Saruwono, 2012), as though a building without a soul. In contrast, a home is a place that must be created by individuals by personalizing the house. It is done by exerting their own representation of their identities, to the extent the house communicates to the owner as a safe place, thus, defining the house as their territory (Fernandez, 2005). A respondent from Fernandez's (2005) study described, 'a house is a place where you put your stuff in, but a home is where you put your family in'. Studies by Rahim & Hashim (2012a) also reported a home grows as the family grows. This is strengthened by the relationship between behaviour and environment. Study of the likes of housewives will promote a sense of home to the home manager, thus will affect the whole household.

From an Al-Bukhari hadith, Jabir r.a said the Muslim Prophet once said, after performing the obligatory prayers at the mosque, the person then should pray the sunnah (bonus deeds) at their homes because Allah will grant happiness to their homes.

Offer some of your prayers (*Nawafil*) at home, and do not take your houses as graves.

(The Prophet p.b.u.h)

Another significance in accomplishing a home rather than a house is to achieve comfort. Comfort is a psychological entity that involves environmental satisfaction. If the optimal comfort is at peak performance, productivity will increase through a combination of three types of comfort level; physical comfort, functional comfort and psychological comfort (Vischer, 2007). Physical comfort is the basic element for comfort such as the need for space to be not too hot, too cold or too noisy. Functional comfort addresses how effective the workspace helps in performing tasks, focusing on the requirements for tools to perform specific tasks, such as the fluidity of tap water, the optimal size and shape of kitchen counter or the right dim lighting in the kitchen. The highest comfort level is the psychological comfort that embodies the territorial, privacy and control sense. Comfort is also an entity in one of the universal domains of human's fundamental needs, hedonism (Schwartz, 1994). Thus, home comfort is suggested to satisfy human needs.

The issues of adaptability were also found particularly in terrace house design where they are inconsistent with the Malay culture, diminishing the routines and beliefs such as having less time socializing with neighbours (Rahim & Hashim, 2012b). It is unfortunate because taking care of neighbours as their own families are stressed firmly within the Islamic practice that Malays hold onto. The adaptability concern also pertains to the potential to lack in other aspects, such as their routine in praying together at home or having a separate, private space for children of different genders. It is stressed that the design of a house affects the lifestyle of users.

Unfortunately, empirical research has shown that alterations have had impact towards house owners and neighbours (Isnin, Ramli, Hashim, & Ali, 2012). This decreases the sustainability of houses that are not designed according to the user's preferences.

Regardless of the various interpretations of homes, studies have shown that there are differences in preferences between men and women. For example, Smith (1994a) found that between genders, females interpret environment of home to a much deeper degree than males. Devlin (1994) stated there is some support revealing relationships exist between gender-role and housing preferences. Ahrentzen (1989) found that gender division of space within the microspace exists, such as women spent more time in the kitchen compared to men in the living area, if both have the same employment status. In this contemporary urbanization time, to what extent does contemporary housing cater appropriately to individual preferences, especially to women's ideal preferences?

The role of women in the house, especially for mothers and wives, were known to have the utmost responsibility to take care of their children, husband, home and sometimes the parents of their husbands' like in Japan (e.g Bih & Chen, 2011; Min, 2011; Ronald & Hinokidani, 2011; Wah, 2011). Majority of these families, especially eastern areas such as China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, no matter the religion and race, practice the patriarch system, where the male is seen as the head of family and the women manage the household.

Lemu (2007), described the women's responsibilities in the house as a home manager, especially in Islamic terms, whether the help given was by the women's own labour or from other help paid labour. The only condition was to make sure the household is taken care of. Nevertheless, there are no laws preventing women from taking responsibility to care for the household. Fadlallah (2013) described women's effort in the house as their finest contribution that complement men's finest contribution in being the breadwinner. This is to conclude that the role of a married woman, whether employed or not, is as the home manager of the house, which

includes taking care of the husband's and children's welfare, and sometimes the welfare of elderly parents.

Housewives today also have different roles as they are not full-time housewives but are part-time, either being employed or working from home. The present day role of women is changing with the labour contributed by both parents, which can be seen in Putrajaya, where the percentage of working men is 86.2% and women 78.6% (JPM, 2012b). The discourse on role changing have been of profound concern in Western and Eastern areas since World War 2 (e.g. Bih & Chen, 2011; Eastaway & Martinez, 2011). The role of housewives, working or not, still includes that of the home manager (Smith, 1994b). However, there would be differences in routines between full-time and part-time housewives due to the amount of time spent at work rather than at home.

Moreover, the decision making of housing preferences may not be solely the responsibility of men, but by both as partners, especially when modern day women are more confident as working housewives. A study by Ghomeshi & Jusan (2012) in Iran showed that decision making is participated in by the whole family rather than solely by the father.

Design is important to women's wellbeing and happiness (Roberts, 1991). Previous studies indicate that home and women's experience are an important subject for exploration (Roberts, 1991). Recent literature maintains that style is a concern of house owners and that women define housing style (Leslie, 2012; Omar et al., 2012b).

House design need to consider housewives preferences to achieve correspondence between a person and their environment. Research is lacking on the needs and wants of housewives for homes.

1.2 Research Agenda

This section summarizes the overall objectives that this study is trying to achieve.

1.2.1 Research Questions

Based on current issues, the following research questions were formed:

- i. What are Malay housewives' roles in the home?
- ii. How do Malay housewives' perform their daily activities in the home?
- iii. What are the preferred house design attributes of Malay housewives'?

1.2.2 Research Aim

The research aims to determine Malay housewives' house design preferences.

1.2.3 Research Objectives

To achieve the research aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- i. To recognize Malay housewives' roles at home as the home manager and house design decision maker
- ii. To understand prominent patterns of Malay housewives' daily activities at home
- iii. To identify the housing design attributes preferred by Malay housewives.

1.2.4 Assumptions

- i. Housewives' house design preferences promotes higher quality of life for the family
- ii. A user's daily activities give insight on housing design preferences
- iii. House design preferences are influenced by demographic background, social roles and daily activities at home.

1.3 Scope of Study

The study of preferences in this study is intended to discover choices for future housing. Respondents were Malay wives from a suburban residential area. This study emphasizes 2 dimensions developed from the research objectives, the roles and activity dimension as well as the physical dimension.

1.3.1 Scope of Housewives Roles at Home

Housewives have two significant roles at home, home manager and decision maker for housing design. Housewives as home manager care for the home and family. As a decision maker for housing design housewives are responsible for the type of house, renovations and space design.

1.3.2 Scope of Daily Activities at Home

Studying housewife behavior, social roles and psychology is important to understanding a user's home preferences. The research studies daily activities at home for both weekdays and weekends. Studied activities include "sleeping", "eating", "cooking", and "working". Activities outside the home are not covered by this study. Patterns of individual activities were analyzed to suggest the behavior, social roles and psychology of housewives.

1.3.3 Scope of House Design Preferences

House design includes spatial characteristics, environment, colours, style, and materials. General preferences for house types were studied to suggest overall tangible or intangible preferences. Housing preferences such as homeownership, affordability, service management, and neighbourhood environment are not covered by this study, but any respondents' answers are included. The physical-based dimension emphasizes spatial elements and housing type preference.

1.3.3.1 Spatial-preferences

Spatial-preferences are “essential” spaces and “special spaces”. “Essential” spaces suggested by Omar et.al. (2012a) are front porch, bedroom, dining area, kitchen and bathroom. Bedrooms are divided into the master bedroom and the children’s bedrooms to separate the different characters of both rooms. Respondents characterized “essential” spaces by “size”, “colour”, “materials”, “decorations”, “feelings”, and “ambience”. “Special spaces” include “guest room”, “study room”, “mini library”, and “children play room”. To limit the varied preferences of respondents, cost considerations were used to filter attributes by significance

The “essential” and “special” spaces in this research are assumed to be in a two-story terraced house. This type of house is chosen because:

- i. It has a more constant layout design than villas and bungalows.
- ii. Two-story linked houses are the most preferred type of housing in Selangor (Lee, 2006).
- iii. Terrace houses are the most preferred property type of Malaysians (IProperty.com, 2012).

1.3.3.2 Type of House-preference

The “type of house” that Malay housewives prefer was studied to identify the wants and needs of housewives. Studying housing types enable developers to predict suitable housing for potential buyers with similar backgrounds. “Bungalows”, “terrace houses”, and “condominiums” were studied.

1.3.4 Study Area

This study was carried out in Taman Anggerik, Bandar Tenggara, a small estate town of 90% Malay residents (J.P. Malaysia, 2010). The study area (Bandar Tenggara) is a developing small town of small and medium industries, with large oil palm estates. Types of residential buildings in Bandar Tenggara include one-story detached houses, kampong houses, flats, and one-story or two-story terrace houses. Respondents were suburban.

Taman Anggerik was selected in Bandar Tenggara because it was the only residential area with a terraced house scheme. This area was also selected because no housing preference studies have been conducted in this area.

1.4 Research Methodology in Brief

This study uses a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research. The research uses a “case study” strategy with both structured and semi-structured questions in a single self-administered questionnaire. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, it is possible to use triangulation to check data integrity and deepen the research.

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive, cross tabulations, and statistical method found in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis and compared with the quantitative data (structured questions) using ranking order to determine significant answers.

1.4.1 Literature Review

A literature review was performed to create a conceptual framework for house design preferences. The concept of Person-Environment Congruence (PEC) was also evaluated to rationalize the study of housewife housing preferences. A review of research methodology was also conducted to support the methods used in this study (Chapter 3).

1.4.2 Data Collection

The method of data collection used in this study was a self-administered questionnaire survey. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the questionnaire using structured and semi-structured questions.

1.4.3 Sampling

The sampling techniques used in this study were simple random sampling and the target population was wives or mothers of the owner or renter of an occupied house in Taman Anggerik, Bandar Tenggara, Johor, Malaysia. 135 samples were obtained out of 1515 houses (KEJORA).

1.4.4 Data Processing and Analysis

The survey consisted of structured and semi-structured questions. Semi-structured questions were processed and analyzed using content analysis. Qualitative data (semi-structured questions) from the survey were first translated into English, then coded and categorized by definition and significance for calculation. Significant data later was compared with structured questions from the survey. Analysis of the data was performed descriptively using frequency and cross tabulations. Both qualitative (semi-structured) and quantitative (structured) data was triangulated to construct valid data.

1.5 Relevance of Study

This study suggests that new design considerations achieved person-environment congruence (PEC) in housing for mothers and wives. The literature has presented differences in preferences based on gender and lifestyle. It is suggested if the home manager (mothers and wives) are comfortable in performing their tasks, it may satisfy them with their environment, help generate happier families, thus a better quality of living for the whole family. Considering the opinions of mothers and wives in housing design is a practical approach for sustainable housing in Malaysia.

The study also provides a structure for the activities and roles of mothers and wives at home to generate a framework for designers and policy makers for understanding their needs and wants. Findings of their daily activities and roles can also be interpreted into a generic pattern and manipulated for house design strategies and control measures. Identifying behavior, social roles, psychological attributes, and special perception is vital for comprehending satisfaction with a place. (Smith, 1994b).

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises five chapters that were organized in the following order:

Chapter 1 presents the background, issues, objectives, questions and limitations of this study. This chapter also presents the significance of this research and the overall methods it uses.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on house design preferences in both a general and local context based on a conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study in detail. It covers research design, instrumentation and procedures. The selection and character of the study area is also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4 discusses the finding for the first and second objective. It presents and discusses the roles and activities of the respondents.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the third research objective. It presents the house design preferences mentioned by respondents and how they impact the data covered in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion and discusses the research questions. This chapter states the significance of this study and provides recommendations for future research.

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