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Email: oliverling.my@gmail.com
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Public Perception on Affordable Housing for Middle-Income Group. Case Study: Perumahan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (PR1MA), Precinct 11, Putrajaya

Mohamad Faizulfaiz Bin Khairuddin1 and Habsah Hashim1,2*
1Center of Town and Regional Planning Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 42300 Puncak Alam, Selangor
2Responsive Environmental Development Research Group, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: drkamarul09@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Abstract: Housing is a basic need that ensures the wellbeing of the people, especially in the urban areas. Through the process of urbanisation driven by the rapid development of the Malaysian economy, many people settled in urban areas throughout the country. The rapid growth of the urban population causes inadequacy of affordable houses, especially for the middle-income (M40) group. Developers tend to build high-cost houses rather than affordable houses. Hence, the middle-income group cannot afford the houses that are currently in the market. The Malaysian government, through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (RMK11), has focused on providing adequate and quality affordable housing. Among the strategies is the Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA) program which offers quality and affordable housing. PR1MA houses were only eligible to be bought by buyers in the M40 group i.e. households with monthly household income within RM2500-RM15000. This study aims to examine the perception of residents living in PR1MA housing in Precinct 11, Putrajaya. The research was conducted by observation of the housing units and neighbourhood environment and a residents’ perception survey. Through the findings, this study proposed several solutions to increase the opportunity for the middle-income group to own homes and to improve comfort in affordable housing projects.

Keywords: Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA), affordable housing, middle-income, homeownership

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INTRODUCTION

In many cities in Malaysia, affordable housing is still insufficient, especially for low-income and middle-income households. The ability to own a home is a major concern because the expenditure on housing is the third largest of most households as reported by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU). Housing capability index indicates that house prices in major cities in Malaysia exceeded three times the median annual household income. The existing home prices in the low and medium price segments continued to rise (EPU, 2015).

Perbadanan PR1MA Malaysia (PR1MA) was established as a corporate body in 2011. PR1MA was created on the basis of helping middle-income groups to own homes in major urban centres. PR1MA is also inspired to contribute to the comfort and well-being of the community living in the new millennium. Each PR1MA housing project has basic community needs like surau, nursery, recreational park, clinic, grocery store, multipurpose hall and nearby public transport facilities (PR1MA Annual Report, 2014).

The scope of the study covers government policies and strategies, socioeconomic characteristics and homeownership among the residents and their perception and opinion on the provision of affordable housing in the study area. The aim of this study was to examine the resident’s perception of affordable housing provision and affordability for the middle-income group. The research objectives were as follows:

i. To understand the government's policies and strategies on affordable housing.
ii. To study homeownership characteristics among middle-income groups.
iii. To evaluate the perceptions and opinion of the middle-income groups on the provision of affordable housing.
CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The study area covers the Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PR1MA) housing project in Precinct 11 Putrajaya, Malaysia’s administrative capital. It is located in the Northwest of Putrajaya, covering a total area of 588.52 hectares (1454.52 acres). Precinct 11 is a suburban residential area for the residents in Putrajaya. It is one of the 20 precincts in Putrajaya and has the largest residential area. There are 3,500 housing units in the central part and 3,100 housing units in the peripheral surroundings. Each neighbourhood unit contains several types of houses and was planned to promote social integration between multi-racial populations and every community group (Perbadanan Putrajaya, 2012).

Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project has been occupied by residents since early 2015. The government's initiative to reduce the burden of the middle-income group to own a house was achieved through this effort, in line with the government's strategy in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. The 7.5 acres (1.9 hectares) PR1MA housing area has offered 560 affordable housing units. Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project has three blocks of residential buildings namely Block A (11 floors), Block B and Block C (13 floors each). There are 16 units in each level of a housing block.

The method of data collection for this study was observation and residents’ perception survey. Observation involves assessing the site features and conditions of the affordable housing and neighbourhood in the study area. During site appraisal, a checklist was used to assess elements such as the environment, safety and comfort as well as the physical properties of the home and neighbourhood. The residential environment was assessed based on the type of public facilities provision and the distance to the public facilities. In addition, safety and comfort were assessed through observing the provision of guard posts, CCTVs and residential fences as well as physical properties related to the housing quality and design aspects.

The residents’ survey involves interviews with the residents by approaching the selected houses. Selection of housing units as the sample for this study was done using systematic sampling. In this method, the first unit is selected with the help of a random number table and the subsequent units were systematically selected according to the predefined order. The house level is chosen randomly and the home unit starts with the first home at the chosen level. The next house is systematically chosen by skipping 3 units of houses. A total of 85 samples were successfully gathered during the ten days field work. The survey aimed at obtaining the general perception and opinion of the residents. The questionnaire has 4 sections and a total of 24 questions which covers respondents’ profile, home characteristics, homeownership characteristics and perceptions and opinion of the residents in PR1MA Precinct 11 Putrajaya.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Housing Condition

Among the elements involved in site appraisal were the environment, safety and comfort and home physical properties. According to Wurtzebach and Miles (1994), housing dwellers not only expect a good home, but also a safe, comfortable, enjoyable environment, complete with facilities. It means neighbourhoods should have a system of public facilities and infrastructure that is planned to meet the requirements of the potential buyers. In Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project, facilities that have been provided are a kindergarten, a surau, playgrounds, retail stores, parking lots (basement and uncovered) and a multipurpose hall.

Further analysis showed that Block A and Block C has an advantage in terms of location whereby it is nearer to the multipurpose hall, commercial area, the surau, kindergarten and the playground. Block B, on the other hand is located further from the facilities especially the commercial area. In general, the Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project is very suitable in terms of distance to public facilities, as most units are located at a distance of less than 0.4 km which fulfils the criteria set by PlanMalaysia in MURNInets (JPBDSM, 2017). This study found that the provision of public facilities in the Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project is sufficient and met the needs of the population. Thus, government policies and strategies through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, the National Physical Plan 3 and the National Housing Policy are achieved as summarized in the table below.
Table 1: The achievement of policies and strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh Malaysian Plan (RMK11)</td>
<td>Promoting the provision of eco-friendly facilities to create affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third National Physical Plan (NPP3)</td>
<td>Improving access to quality community amenities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Housing Policy (NHP)</td>
<td>Improving level of social facilities, basic services and a habitable environment (liveable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EPU (2015), JPBSDM (2016) and JPN (2011)

In terms of safety and comfort, this study found that the provision of fences, security patrolling and the installation of CCTVs did not exist in the Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project. As for the physical and design aspects, the housing blocks are attractive with suitable wall paint colours and modern design features that provide the good appearance and enhance the physical quality. In terms of the housing units’ floor space, it is directly related to the price of the units; whereby the larger the size, the higher the house price. Units in Block B and C which has 815 sq. ft. was sold at RM120,000 while the bigger units in Block A (1006 sq. ft.) were sold at RM150,000.
Residents’ Perception Survey

There were 85 respondents in the sample for the residents’ perception survey. From the total, 85 percent of the respondents are married and 53.1 percent are between 30 to 39 years of age. In terms of ethnicity, 80 percent are Malays, 12 percent are Indians and 5 percent are Chinese. The residents are well educated whereby 75 percent had earned a Diploma or higher and almost 40 percent are in the managerial and professional jobs. In terms of income, 51.8 percent of the respondents reported their monthly household income of between RM 5,000 - RM 7,500.

In terms of household characteristics, the majority of the respondents (93 percent) are nuclear families with only 7 percent of the households consists of extended families. The average household size from the sample is 3.94. Even though PR1MA houses cannot be rented out, the study found that 13 percent of the 85 respondents are renting and the rental rates exceeded RM1000 per month to as high as RM1500 in one of the respondents. However, the majority of the sample (87 percent) stayed in the PR1MA homes that they had bought. The study also found that 81 percent of the respondents utilized their government financing scheme to purchase the PR1MA houses.

The respondents were asked about the factors they consider when buying a house. As shown in Table 2, the price of the house or the rental rate is the most important factor and the second factor is location and accessibility. In Table 3, 58.3 percent of the respondents indicated that they are satisfied and very satisfied with the various characteristics of the PR1MA houses. From eight characteristics being analysed, respondents are satisfied with three factors which are affordable house price or rental rate, strategic home location and provision of adequate facilities. Respondents are least satisfied with the level of safety and comfort of the Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project and the number of rooms in the PR1MA homes.

<p>| Table 2: Factors considered when buying a home |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House price or rental rate</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and comfort</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and accessibility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing design</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor space</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rooms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Table 3: Respondents’ satisfaction by housing characteristics |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Scale 1</th>
<th>Scale 2</th>
<th>Scale 3</th>
<th>Scale 4</th>
<th>Scale 5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable house price or rental rate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic home location</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of adequate facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

There are several issues based on the analysis. Firstly, there are PR1MA homes that were rented out and this contradicts the terms of purchasing affordable houses whereby the PR1MA houses should be owned and occupied by homeowners themselves. The lack of safety features in the Precinct 11 PR1MA housing project is another issue that needs to be solved to ensure the safety of the residents and enhance neighbourhood liveability. As house price is the most important factors when buying a house, the government needs to review the price of affordable housing and improve the efficiency of construction as well as increasing the provision of affordable housing to the people.

The affordable housing programs need to be expanded and extended to ensure that more people in the middle-income group is eligible to own a home. Owning a comfortable home is a basic need of every citizen and the PR1MA housing program is a good strategy towards this aim and proper implementation of this program could ensure a more comfortable quality of living in the future.

REFERENCES

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