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School Location and Factors Affecting Parents’ Mode Choice to School

N Nasrudin*, S Alimudin
Centre of Studies for Town and Regional Planning, Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 42300 Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
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Abstract: Encouraging active transportation to school deals with existing circumstances, where the children live and where the schools are located. Research to date shows that distance is one of the strongest predictors of walking and cycling to school. This paper examines the influences of the built environment (distance between home and school) on the journey to school as a measure to promote active transportation to school. Data were collected through a survey of 150 parents to represent Section 7 residents of Shah Alam, Selangor. This study shows that there is an insignificant relationship between school location and parents’ transportation mode choice. The most popular mode of transport chosen by parents was their private car compared to non-motorized transport such as walking and cycling even though the distance from home to school was less than 800 meters. Results also suggested that the majority of the respondents choose to send their children to school using their private vehicles because of a safety factor.

Keywords: school travel, active transportation, school location, safety.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: N Nasrudin and S Alimudin, School Location and Factors Affecting Parents’ Mode Choice to School, Malaysia, in Issues in Urban, Rural and Regional Planning in Malaysia edited by Hashim, H, Nurul Najwa, M., and Ling, O.H.L, Center of Studies in Town and Regional Planning, UiTM Selangor, Puncak Alam campus, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The number of children walking and cycling to school becomes even lesser than previous time in Malaysia. Most of the parents choose to send their children with motorised vehicles such as school buses or parents’ vehicles, hence causes traffic congestion near the school. Like other countries, school areas congested with vehicles is also a common scenario in the Malaysian urban areas. This usually occurs at peak times during the start and end of a school day. This scenario would constrain the success in realizing a sustainable transportation development system in Malaysia. Driving children to school can deprive them of an opportunity for daily physical activity while generating 20% to 30% of the morning traffic in some places (Safe Routes to School National Partnership & Hubsmith, 2006, 2007).

CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Seksyen 7, Shah Alam was chosen as a case study because it is located in the urban area, which deals with high traffic volume on a daily basis. A total of 150 respondents were selected for this survey using the convenience sampling method. The respondents were provided with a survey form with several sub-items that required parental responses. The home address, distance to school, and mode of transport used by children were some of the information required in the questionnaire. This study also asked respondents to provide reasons for their decision in choosing the mode of transportation, as factors that influence their mode selection. Respondents were also asked to assess the pedestrian facilities, security level, and surrounding traffic along the way to school, to compare the level of satisfaction towards public facilities and the vehicle mode selection. The results from the questionnaire survey were analysed to check the distance from the respondents’ house to school, with the proposed buffer zone. The buffering tool was used to create a buffer for the neighbourhood area accordingly in finding out the school’s coverage area. This process was performed to see the distribution of neighbourhoods within the buffer area to identify whether the distance between the neighbourhood and the school is within walking and cyclable distance.
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Fig. 1 shows the zoning location of neighbourhood areas in Section 7, Shah Alam. Each zoning area represents a different location of a neighbourhood area. Section 7 was divided into 5 zoning area in order to facilitate the location analysis process. As we can see in Fig. 1, the division of zones has been made according to the road name of the neighbourhood area. There are two types of respondents who participated in the survey which are Section 7 residents and Section 7 nonresidents (of which their children goes to Section 7 Primary School). According to Planning Guidelines for Educational Facilities (2012), the standard distance between neighbourhood area and primary school is less than 800m. Based on Table 1, the majority of the respondents who live in Zone 1 and 2 travel less 800m to the school. Whereas the majority of the respondents who live in Zone 3, 4, 5 and section 7 nonresidents travel more than 800m to the school.

Table 1 shows the relationship between the mode of transport and travel time to school in Section 7. Based on the travel time at Zone 1, the distance from the neighbourhood area to the school takes between 10 to 15 minutes, depending upon the types of vehicle used. At Zone 1, motorized transportation is frequently used by the respondents with the highest type of transportation mode is the parents’ private vehicles.

At Zone 2, the highest type of transportation mode is also the parents’ private vehicles, but walking and cycling also are among the favourite mode choice selected by respondents. This is due to the placements of the school which is within the neighbourhood area and this minimizes the travel distance to the school. In Zone 2, the travel distance from the Jalan Plumbum neighbourhood to school area takes less than 5 minutes.

For Zone 3, Zone 4 and Zone 5, the majority of the respondents takes more than 10 minutes to send their children to school. Most of the respondents are using their private vehicles with 8.6% at Zone 3, and 10.6% at Zone 4. In addition, at Zone 5, most of the respondents prefer to use school buses with the highest percentage of 5.3%.

Finally, the majority of Section 7 nonresidents prefer to use their own private vehicle to send their children to school. This is because the school is located near to parents’ workplace and its easier for parents to send and fetch their children. Based on travel time, Section 7 nonresident respondents took more than 10 minutes travelling time to school.
### TABLE 1: The relationship between mode of transport and travel time to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Travel time by foot (minute)</th>
<th>Mode of transport %</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>Car Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 1</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 2</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 3</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 4</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone 5</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of Section 7</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 5 to 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CONCLUSION

This study shows there is an insignificant relationship between school location and parent’s transportation mode choice as the most common mode of transport has been chosen to school were vehicles driven by parents. Percentage of respondents who chose motor vehicle is higher compared to those who chose the non-motorized mode such as walking and cycling even though the distance from home to school is less than 800 meters. The study found that the majority of the parents who used private vehicles to send their children to school were primarily influenced by the level of safety (crime and traffic). Parents also chose to use personal vehicles to send their children to school because of the convenience and quickness. The results of this study gave the true picture of the urban lifestyle in terms of school transportation. In addition, parental views and concerns about safety showed the need for the improvement of public security, which was the main factor that encourages parents to let their children walk or cycle to school. Security problems caused parents to be less interested in the campaign for active travel transportation. Therefore, safety issues must be resolved first and efforts to improve the physical design of pedestrian walkways and bicycle track should be implemented to support the relationship between planning and physical activity. This can positively influence the development of a healthier society, especially among school children. This study proved that integrated urban development planning in terms of efficiency and safety was one of the factors that will encourage non-motorized travel.
REFERENCES


Weigand, L. (2008). The Effectiveness of Safe Routes to School and Other Programs to Promote Active Transportation to School. Portland State University.
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