

**RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION OF
STUDENT HOUSING FACILITIES IN
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

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**RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION OF STUDENT HOUSING
FACILITIES IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Detail
ATMs	Automated Teller Machines
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
HEI/s	Higher Education Institution/s
HOMBSAT	Home-Buyer Satisfaction
HSI	Household Satisfaction Index
KKP	Kepuasan Kediaman Pelajar
MOE	Ministry of Education Malaysia
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah
POE	Post-Occupancy Evaluation
RESS	Residential Environmental Satisfaction Scale
RS	Residential Satisfaction
RSAT	Relative Satisfaction
RU/s	Research University/ies
SATIS	Satisfaction Neural Network Model
SERVQUAL	Service Quality
SHF/s	Student Housing Facility/ies
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SRS	Student Residential Satisfaction
SRS Index	Student Residential Satisfaction Index
STPM	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia
UK	United Kingdom

UM	Universiti Malaya
US	United States
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
i.e.	in example
e.g.	example given
etc.	etcetera

KEPUASAN KEDIAMAN TERHADAP KEMUDAHAN PERUMAHAN PELAJAR DI UNIVERSITI-UNIVERSITI AWAM DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Pada masa kini, kebanyakan daripada pelajar di institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia seperti tidak berpuas hati terhadap kemudahan perumahan pelajar yang disediakan oleh pihak universiti terutama sekali keluhan dibuat terhadap aspek-aspek keselamatan, kesejahteraan, kebersihan, dan rekabentuk rumah. Perumahan pelajar didefinisikan sebagai sebuah bangunan asrama yang disediakan dan diselenggarakan oleh pihak universiti, dibina sama ada di dalam atau di luar kawasan kampus, menyediakan penginapan dengan yuran yang murah serta disediakan untuk memenuhi keperluan prasarana penginapan kepada pelajar ijazah pertama atau ijazah lanjutan. Dalam perbincangan mengenai bagaimana untuk memastikan perkhidmatan perumahan pelajar yang berkualiti dan berjaya, kajian kepuasan kediaman telah dikenalpasti sebagai indikator terpenting bagi menilai kedua-dua kriteria tersebut. Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk mengenalpasti tahap kepuasan kediaman pelajar terhadap kemudahan asrama yang disediakan di dalam kawasan kampus khususnya di Universiti-universiti Penyelidikan di Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan model kepuasan kediaman pelajar (KKP) untuk menilai tahap kepuasan kediaman pelajar terhadap kemudahan asrama yang disediakan serta mengkaji faktor-faktor yang menentukan kepuasan perumahan dan kesetiaan para pelajar terhadap asrama mereka dengan mengambil kira faktor pengaruh pemboleh ubah fizikal dan sosial. Kaedah persampelan berkelompok dua tahap secara rawak mudah telah digunakan untuk memilih kelompok sasaran responden; selain itu juga, kajian telah dijalankan secara bertemu atau bersemuka dengan responden. Seterusnya, data yang telah dikumpul dianalisa dengan menggunakan statistik diskriptif, regresi logistik, ujian T, dan ujian ANOVA. Secara umumnya, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa rata-rata pelajar di Universiti-universiti Penyelidikan di Malaysia berpuas hati dengan kemudahan asrama mereka apabila Indeks KKP mencapai 2.96 atau 74% tahap kepuasan. Para pelajar

juga dilihat terdorong untuk melaksanakan kelakuan-kelakuan kesetiaan yang positif (menginap lebih lama, memilih untuk mendiami rumah yang sama seperti asrama mereka pada masa hadapan, dan mengesyorkan asrama tersebut kepada orang lain untuk didiami). Selain daripada itu, kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa bilik tidur, bilik televisyen, bilik mesyuarat serta lain-lain perkhidmatan sokongan merupakan faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan kediaman pelajar. Sehubungan dengan itu, kepelbagaian latar belakang sosio-fizikal pelajar-pelajar juga didapati mempengaruhi perbezaan tahap kepuasan mereka terhadap kemudahan asrama yang disediakan. Hasil kajian ini juga merumuskan bahawa kemudahan asrama yang berkualiti adalah penting sebagai salah satu medium yang amat berkesan dalam usaha untuk menarik minat lebih ramai pelajar tempatan dan antarabangsa untuk belajar di universiti-universiti yang terdapat di Malaysia.

RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION OF STUDENT HOUSING FACILITIES IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, a number of tertiary students in Malaysia were complaining about their dissatisfaction with the university-owned student housing, mostly regarding to the issues of safety, security, cleanliness, and house design aspects. Student housing is defined as a supervised shelter, built either on-campus or off-campus, to provide inexpensive lodging, and accommodate the undergraduate or postgraduate students. In a debate on how to ensure quality and successful services of student housing, residential satisfaction has been identified as the most important indicator to evaluate these criteria. This study aimed to investigate the residential satisfaction in housing facilities provided on-campus at Malaysian Research Universities (RUs). It utilised a student residential satisfaction (SRS) model to examine how satisfied students were with their living accommodation and to investigate the factors which could predict housing satisfaction and students' loyalty behaviours, taken into consideration the affect of physical and social variables. Simple random two-stage cluster sampling method was adopted to select the respondents and the survey was conducted face-to-face. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, logistic regression, T-test, and One-way ANOVA. The results show that generally RUs students were satisfied with their student housing facilities with the SRS Index of 2.96 or 74% of satisfaction level. The students tended to execute positive loyalty behaviours (longer staying, retention, and recommendation). Study-bedroom, television room, meeting room and support services were revealed to strongly influence the student residential satisfaction. Moreover, different students' socio-physical backgrounds were found to influence difference satisfactions level perceived in student housing facilities. The results imply the importance of quality in student housing facilities as an effective medium to attract more local and international students to enrol in Malaysian universities.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to discover the level of student residential satisfaction (SRS) in Malaysian Public Research Universities (RUs) rated by the students who stay in the on-campus student housing. This study also aims to introduce and establish an effective and more comprehensive model, namely, Student Residential Satisfaction Index (SRS Index), as a measuring instrument to evaluate SRS. This chapter presents the reasons for choosing this research topic. The first few sections of the chapter elaborate the discussions on the study background, research problems and research questions. Then, the following sections are on the explanations of the research objectives, research scope and finally the significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

These days, knowledge plays an important and major role to everyone in ensuring that he or she can live a comfortable and luxurious life in the future. According to Said (2001), education will always be an important catalyst in developing talented, pertinent, skilful and sufficient manpower to a nation in order to materialize the country's Vision 2020. Academic qualification in the highest level of education is no longer considered as an option but it is now a necessity to be employed. Accordingly, the government aims to have 50 percent of the population aged between 17-23 years old to enrol in tertiary education by the year 2020 (Tham, 2010). From the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), the education statistics show that the numbers of students who passed the Malaysian major exams (Ujian

Penilaian Sekolah Rendah, UPSR; Penilaian Menengah Rendah, PMR; Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, SPM; and Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia, STPM) have been increasing over the years (Jelas and Dahan, 2010). Obtaining good results in those exams can ensure that these prospective students will become part of the university communities soon. Universities or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the place where academic degrees in various fields are awarded.

Formerly, in typical British manner, Lord Robbins (chairman of Special Committee on Higher Education 1961) stated that the number of places in HEI had increased from 216,000 in 1963 to 390,000 by 1973 and to 560,000 by 1980 (Dober, 1966). At the end of 2007, Hubbard (2009) testified that the number of students in United Kingdom (UK) rose to 1,678,904 from 520,000 in 1997. There is a worldwide trend in increasing the opportunities for students to attend universities. The same trend also happens in Malaysia. Malaysia is now one of the countries that experience an encouraging trend where the number of students attending universities and colleges is on the increase year by year. As reported by Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) (2010), the number of students attending HEIs in 2007 was 358,053 while it was only 262,626 in 2002 (refer to Figure 1.1) and this figure continued increasing when it reached to 390,535 in 2010.

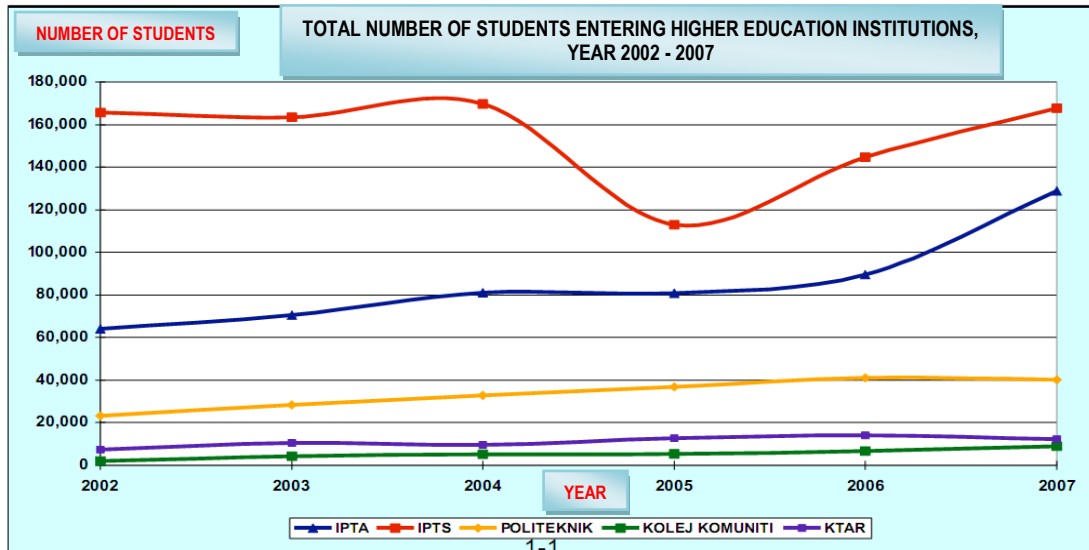


Figure 1.1: Total Number of Students Attending HEIs
Source: MOHE, (2010)

This scenario is due to the awareness of the students of the importance of education that has encouraged them to further their studies to a higher level. In addition, Malaysia targets to become a fully developed and industrialized country by the year 2020, so 40 percent of her population should enrol to tertiary education institutions to achieve her objective of having a competent workforce with knowledge and skills (Said, 2001; Mansur *et al.*, 2004; Keating, 2010). Statistics have also shown that the number of students either local or international attending HEIs in Malaysia is on the increase nowadays. This scenario is evidenced by the currently existence of 20 public HEIs (which include international universities), 33 private universities, 4 reputable foreign branch campus universities, more than 500 private colleges as well as various other HEIs from the UK, United States (US), Australia, Canada, French, Germany and New Zealand (Ahmed, 2007). Many of them offer twinning and franchised degree programmes through partnership with Malaysian colleges and universities (Huang, 2007; MOHE, 2010; Tham, 2010). As reported by MOHE (2010), at the end of the year 2009, stated that Malaysia had about 80,750 international students from

more than 100 countries (refer to Figure 1.2) and the number increased to 86,923 students by 2010.

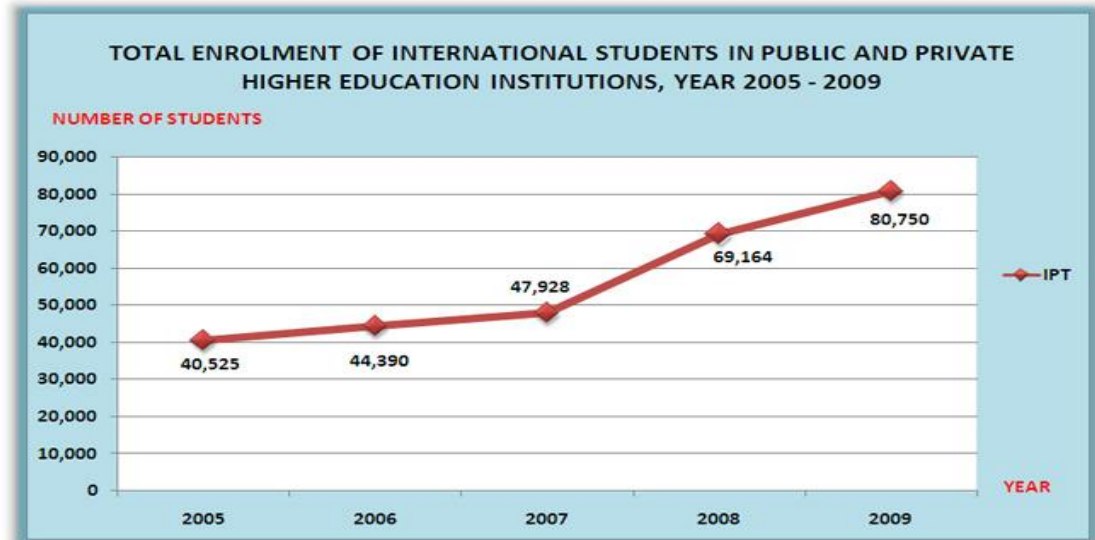


Figure 1.2: Total Enrolment of International Students at Malaysian HEIs
Source: MOHE, (2010)

The increase in the number of students enrolling in universities and colleges has triggered the increase in demands for on-campus student housing. Melnikas (1998: p.326) noted that *“A house is a concrete and relatively limited and close physical, biological and social space where individuals and groups can live their biosocial life taking on certain production, services, housekeeping and other biosocial activities”*. Proper housing is considered to be the basic requirement of modern day living. Moreover, Klis and Karsten (2008) asserted that our daily lives usually begin at home which is considered the base of all human needs. Hence, for HEI students, they experience their home living by staying in student housing or dormitories (buildings which consist of numbers of small unit of rooms) as well as reflecting the idea of encouraging a sense of belonging to the larger institutions (Dober, 1966). Student housing is also called hostel building. Bear in mind that student housing can be structured in dual-nature, either being built in the campus area which is more familiar

as on-campus student housing; or being built outside the campus area which is known as off-campus student housing (Cleave, 1996; Thomsen, 2007; Amole, 2009a; Hubbard, 2009). Thus, university housing administrations as well as government especially policy officials are responsible in ensuring good management to support the student need for comfortable and modern on-campus accommodation.

However, in much of the developing world, equipping student housing with most sophisticated facilities is believed would be prohibitively expensive which will incur higher expenditure or allocation from the government (Hubbard, 2009). This obstacle has prompted some researchers in the developing world to investigate the actual housing needs of the students. Malaysia is the perfect site for such study, given the Malaysian government's goal of providing world-class facilities. As reported by Bernama (2010), the government sought to attract 120,000 international students in 2015 to enrol at Malaysian HEIs and promote Malaysia as a regional centre of educational excellence. Edsir (2008) noted, however, that Malaysia has been maintaining an annual increase in the number of enrolling international students by 30 percent since 2006, as part of its strategy to become a new contender in global HEI. Providing high-quality living environments for these international students is an important inducement for them to live and study in Malaysia (Salleh, 2007).

1.3 Problem Statement

Student housing (also known as hostel in Malaysian term) is considered a central feature of Malaysian collegiate life. Successful student housing provision does not only depend on the number of buildings or hostels built or how much money spent on the facilities and services, but more importantly on how the facilities and services

can fulfil the student's housing needs and meet certain basic requirements which are practical and convenient for student daily life (Chi and Griffin, 1980; Torbica and Stroh, 2001). In today HEIs housing scenario, we can see the growth of demand for modern on-campus house is in line with the universities attendance trends (Pace, 2007; Martin and Allen, 2009; Radder and Han, 2009; Roche *et al.*, 2010). In depth, a contemporary on-campus student housing is a hostel accommodation which provides modern facilities and services to cater for students' housing needs in accomplishing academic, living and social goals (Devlin *et al.*, 2007; Hassanain, 2008).

With the expansion and globalisation of higher education in Malaysia, universities have faced the increasingly difficult problem of providing adequate and urbane residential accommodation for students living away from family home. University-owned housing supply has sometimes failed to keep pace with this demand growth (Hughes and Davis, 2001; Pace, 2007; Hubbard, 2009). This problem has been recognized as worldwide issues and is not a new one encountered in the higher education concern. Hubbard (2009) claimed that most students in UK moved to off-campus houses because of the desirability to fulfil new housing demands and lifestyles rather than living in a traditional shared on-campus style. In US, Tooley (1996) reported that Washington University at St. Louis likewise Brooks (2010) declared that University of Pittsburgh at Pittsburgh had urged their former students to move and reside in the off-campus house because their on-campus houses are only available for freshmen. Similarly in Thailand, Luckanavanich (2011) proclaimed that due to the limited dormitories provided by the universities, the students were forced to reside off-campus particularly in private residences. Otherwise in Malaysia, to

deal with the increasing housing demands, universities had established an initiative such as building ubiquitous on-campus high-rise residences (Dahlan *et al.*, 2011).

To add in other issues regarding university student housing, much of the existing on-campus student housing stock is old and the provided housing facilities and amenities are obsolete (i.e., lack of advanced or upgraded amenities with the latest technology including low-speed Wi-Fi, no air-conditioned rooms and unit design does not meet standards that satisfy student preferences) (Pace, 2007; Roche *et al.*, 2010). Students complained about the quality and the terrible conditions of the houses in which they stayed such as overcrowding in undersized rooms and bathroom-sharing for a big group of them (Jackson, 2007). For example, students at the Bangalore University in India have staged a protest complaining to their university administration that their rooms were too small and the basic amenities provided were inadequate (New Indian Express, 2009). Another example is at the Boston College in Massachusetts, US where their freshmen needed to share a double room with three persons at a time (Tooley, 1996). Alike in France, Shaikh and Deschamps (2006) reported that students did complain on the room size and impropriety of the furniture inside the room. Contrary in Malaysia, Mahmud *et al.* (2010) declared that students were dissatisfied about the cleanliness of the houses and poor conditions of the provided toilets.

There are also a few problems of inappropriate building designs. For instance in France, student housing was designed without having common rooms, restaurants, and sport equipments in the residential halls which supposedly can cater for students socializing and recreational needs (Shaikh and Deschamps, 2006). In Kuwait,

students demanded to have a computer lab equipped with enough computers and a good internet service for their academic and amusement purposes in their residential halls (Alkandari, 2007). In US, Brandon *et al.* (2008) encountered that suite-style house design could not promote social interactions vigorously as if in the traditional hall design because the chances to meet other people rather than faculty mates were higher in a traditional hall house style. Moreover in UK, Crook and Barrowcliff (2001) reported that study-bedroom should be designed in a notion of sedentary workplace (which will require less mobility to other places) equipped with personal computer applications suitable for academic activities (e.g., writing or research purposes) and recreational activities (e.g., games or chatting) used during their leisure time, so that the students would engage to more private academic and comprehensive living conditions. Nevertheless, a problem occurred at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in Malaysia involving a female student found dead at her college car park. Mokhtar (2009) reported that this student is believed to have fallen down through the window (casement type) from her room at the fourth floor of her student housing block. This case in Malaysia also triggered the questions on the safety and security at student housing. Besides that, Dahlan *et al.* (2011) criticized the room designs especially the designs of balconies, roofs and windows in Malaysian student housing in dealing with the indoor thermal comfort. Most of the aforementioned problems occurring in student housing implicate the incompatibility of the design criteria.

In addition, there were cases where conventional student housing buildings were converted to a contemporary housing style to satisfy the modern housing needs and transform the housing area to a more commercial neighbourhood (Devlin *et al.*,

2007). The problem of substandard student housing is compounded by the fact that most universities either in developed or developing countries received limited financial back-up from the government. For example, in the UK, the process of rebuilding and enhancing the current student accommodation building stocks, has involved developers from private sector (Hughes and Davis, 2001; Hubbard, 2009). However in the US, even though the majority of the cost to build new student housing is taken care of by the university, the cost still partially lies on private sector because the project always requires higher budget (Agron, 2006).

From the few mentioned cases, it can be concluded that appropriate amenities as well as suitable room conditions provided in student housing can ensure that the students perceive good quality of student life during their study periods. Foth (2004) proved the importance of having a high-tech housing facilities and amenities especially the wider internet access would act as the medium of social networking among the students in enhancing a sustainable neighbourhood in student housing areas. Otherwise, other alternative such as converting the existing student housing building to conventional apartments, the layout is not ideal and will incur expensive costs. Moreover, providing new student housing with most up-to-date facilities has been limited by strained university budgets because houses are expensive to build and funding capacity and subsidies from the public fund to the university have declined.

Furthermore, previous studies showed that the student academic performance is sensibly associated with SRS (Cleave, 1996; Amole, 2007; Sirgy *et al.*, 2007; Khozaei *et al.*, 2010b; Riley *et al.*, 2010). It is believed that students can perform well in their studies if they have good and comfortable living conditions in their

student housing (Amole, 2005; Hassanain, 2008; Radder and Han, 2009; Willoughby *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, past studies have also highlighted that there is a need to create a home-like environment in student housing because only in this environment students can enjoy more meanings in their daily lives (Pace, 2007; Thomsen, 2007; Schenke, 2008; Torres-Antonini and Park, 2008). This close relationship between student academic performance and housing satisfaction has prompted scholars to propose that residential satisfaction (RS) is the most important indicator when evaluating student housing to ensure that quality and satisfactory services are provided in this type of housing (Hassanain, 2008; Amole, 2009a; Riley *et al.*, 2010).

However, there is a very little research on factors that influence SRS. Among a few studies conducted, the one by Kaya and Erkip (2001) analysed the effects of floor height and room size in Turkey. They found that residents occupying the higher floors perceived their room as larger and less crowded. As such their satisfaction level is better. Akalin *et al.* (2009) also evaluated the student preferences in Turkey but they focused more on perceptions of house façades. They revealed that the most preferred house façades was the one with intermediate complexity which meant that the actual design of the façades had been slightly altered. Amole (2005; 2007; 2009a; 2009b) conducted a series of studies regarding student housing provided in Nigeria. In 2005, she analysed the adapting strategies taken by the students in defining their privacy and territories, and found that students had rearranged their room furniture and decorated their personal places to fulfil their territorial needs. In 2007, she evaluated the quality scores of the facilities provided in student housing, and discovered that socio-physical and bedroom attributes were the main factors that influenced the overall low quality scores in her study. In 2009, she analysed factors

to predict RS in student housing. She revealed that physical, social and management attributes of the student housing were significant in predicting SRS. Further in 2009, Amole studied the RS and levels of environment in student residences. The findings showed that students responded to RS through four levels of environment which were bedroom, floor, block and the whole hall of residence. Another study is undertaken in Saudi Arabia by Hassanain (2008). He studied the degree of satisfaction in terms of technical performance (i.e., thermal comfort) and functional performance (i.e., room layout and furniture quality) in sustainable student housing facilities (SHFs) and observed that both technical and functional performances involved sufficiently in interpreting student satisfaction in student housing.

In addition, there were studies in the housing literature emphasizing that social attributes were also important determinants of SRS and should not be neglected. For example, Frank and Enkawa (2009) revealed that the tenants' economic backgrounds would lead to overall housing satisfaction where a good economic status could lead someone to make the best and affordable choice of a house. The national culture is also as an important factor to predict RS. This was pointed out by Parkes *et al.* (2002) and Potter and Cantarero (2006) when they said that a socially mixed environments have both positive and negative effects to RS. There is also a different perception in conveying the SRS between genders which female students are mostly like to live in shared facilities while male students usually prefer to live in more private spaces (Amole, 2005). Consequently, Kaya and Erkip (2001) testified that SRS is also correlated with every individual's family home experience. Moreover, Foubert *et al.* (1998) conducted a study which examined the social factors that predicted SRS and they exemplified that the presence of positive relationships with

roommates and the floor communities had an influence on overall SRS. Nevertheless, it is still unclear as to what factors will significantly influence the SRS most.

Most studies on SRS has been conducted in the West and other developing countries, such as Turkey, Arab Saudi and Nigeria where the locations are distinct with respect to the cultures and climates found in developing countries in Southeast Asia; hence this study hopes to fill the research gap in this area in Malaysia. In Malaysian research, most studies related to students and university are more likely to be surveys on the reasons for students enrolment and teaching qualities (Sohail *et al.*, 2003); satisfaction on academic programs and other university facilities (Sapri *et al.*, 2009); the ideal instrument to measure service quality in HEI (Abdullah, 2005; 2006a; 2006b); the preferences of online products and services among students (Yeow *et al.*, 2008); the association between adjustment behaviour with students' achievement motivation and self-efficacy (Elias *et al.*, 2010); and the effectiveness of campus portal (Masrek, 2007). Works from these aforesaid researchers were too general on higher educational students and services; they did not underline much on the student housing RS survey.

In addition, the closest study related to Malaysian student housing RS survey was undertaken by Dahlan *et al.* (2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) who conducted a chain of studies on indoor comfort perceptions among the students living in non air-conditioned rooms. In 2008, they measured the indoor microclimate condition during the rainy and clear days and found that during rainy day students felt cool while in clear day students felt warm. In the early 2009, they studied the perceived visual

condition through daylight ratio and luminance level. They encountered that students responded to modify the visual comfort level through the use of curtains and artificial lighting. More in 2009, they analysed students' perception of indoor comfort by the assessment of thermal, visual, and noise conditions in the room and established that students cared more about thermal condition compared to acoustic and visual conditions. More recently in 2011, they examined the differences of indoor thermal condition in the rooms by switching on and off the ceiling fan and found that students adjusted the thermal discomfort by increasing the fan air speed. In overall, Dahlan *et al.* (2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) concluded that the ventilation and visual needs by students could be met by switching on fans, opening windows, having projected balconies, long roof overhang, and additional shading on the windows; and acoustics comfort could be achieved by providing a balcony outside the room which could screen the traffic noise from entering the room. However, their studies were narrow in their scopes because they only covered indoor thermal, visual, and noise comfort in students' room. Besides, Khozaei *et al.* (2010a; 2010b) conducted a sequence of studies regarding student housing provided in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). In the early 2010, they analyzed the factors that predict student housing satisfaction. As well in 2010, they scrutinized the association between student satisfaction and sense of attachment to particular student housing. Khozaei's *et al.* studies seemed to focus on student housing as a whole because they also included housing management, campus transport facilities and distance from student housing to the other university's facilities as their predictors (independent variables to measure SRS). Yet, in this present study, the unification of the physical attributes (rather than architectural design) of the SHFs with the social attributes of the students has been submitted as the most important factors that influence the SRS. This study

has distinguished the total SRS expressed by the students based on their degrees of satisfaction perceived in the whole hall or area of the student housing alone and thereafter execute a few loyalty behaviours. Besides that, this study also examined how satisfied students were with their environments (needs, wants, requirements and experiences); the output of factors that accounted for residential satisfaction or dissatisfaction; and also introduced the new model, namely, SRS Index which could constructively explain SRS.

The awareness of physical and social factors perhaps would help the university housing administrators to overcome their shortcomings. Since that, this study also tried closing the gap between students' expectations of facilities quality and their actually perceived experiences. The results would also help policy makers to develop more strategic policies in ensuring that Malaysian universities can provide world-class on-campus student housing, in keeping with the aforementioned HEI goals of the Malaysian government. Likewise, to achieve the vision and mission of globalising the higher education in Malaysia, the affective gap between the units (housing) preferred and those actually supplied should continuously be explored. Student enrollment continues to increase, thus proper and modern on-campus student housing scheme is very important to retain students from moving out to off-campus house.

1.4 Research Questions

Along these lines, this study is undertaken to obtain answers for the following research questions, which are:

- i. To what extent the students are satisfied with the provided SHFs in the universities?
- ii. Which one of the SHFs significantly influences the students' overall housing satisfaction and their loyalty behaviours?
- iii. Will the differences in the student's socio-physical background influence student satisfaction in SHFs?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to determine whether the students are satisfied or not with their living conditions in SHFs provided on-campus by the university's housing administration. To accomplish this main aim, three vital objectives have been structured out which are:

- i. To examine the level of SRS among the students in the universities.
- ii. To identify the factors influencing students' overall housing satisfaction and their loyalty behaviours.
- iii. To investigate whether differences in the student's socio-physical background will influence student satisfaction in SHFs.

1.6 Scope of the Study

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the targeted research objectives, the study area has been set up to focus on the Malaysian public universities which have been awarded with the RU title. Under the 9th and 10th

Malaysia Plan, there are five universities designated as the RUs, namely, USM, UKM, Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) (Su-Ann, 2006; MOHE, 2010; UTM News, 2010). RUs are the country's pledge university, expected to represent the country as the world-class leaders in innovation, design and research (Beerrens, 2010). These RUs were chosen as the study areas because of several reasons including that these universities' were well-established and among the pioneer universities in Malaysia (Balakrishnan, 2009; Zahrawi and Yahya, 2009); these universities were also highly ranked in Malaysian HEI lists (Balakrishnan, 2009; Evers *et al.*, 2010); and last but not least, these universities would be the centres of attention for youth and nation either local or international to decide on pursuing their studies (Ming, 2010).

Since Malaysia government has promoted Malaysia as a global education hub worldwide, there is a need to conduct this SRS evaluation study thoroughly. In complying with the country's vision, government has emphasised much on these Malaysian RUs especially in maintaining the RU title and upgrading the undertaken research (Beerrens, 2010). As few researchers have declared that students performance in academics is associated with SRS, so it is very imperative to ensure that those Malaysian RUs have provided the most sophisticated and well-equipped on-campus SHFs to the students compared to the other universities existing in Malaysia.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Studies on RS which examined the level of RS and factors affecting it tended to focus on either public or private housing estates. For example, Salleh (2008)

analyzed the impact of neighbourhood factors in private housing estates and more recently Mohit *et al.* (2010) assessed the RS in public low-cost housing. So far, the investigation on SRS is still rare. There seems to be very little research known about what predicts satisfaction in SHFs. This study is undertaken as intensification of the previous studies to investigate the experiences of the students living in their offered on-campus house and understand their well-defined housing needs.

The findings of this study would benefit the government in terms of policy recommendation to the existing guidelines for future development of student housing. This recommendation includes the proposal of building the most ideal rooms' occupancy and preferred design of high-rise student housing buildings. Furthermore, the findings would also help the universities' housing administration to improve their SHFs that should be provided in every student housing building. Modern and most up-to-date facilities and amenities should be taken into consideration, so that the students would be contented enough to stay again in the same rooms in their next semesters. Additionally, providing and serving the students with an acceptable standard of living condition, sequentially, would promote a good public image to the university as well. Finally, as mentioned earlier, the findings also would benefit the students where they will get the advantages from the improvements made by the university. In these circumstances, students deserve to have a good housing environment to ensure that they can happily study and enjoy their whole student or collegiate lives in the university.

1.8 Organisation of the Chapter

This thesis is organised in five chapters. Chapter 1 gives the introduction and overview of the study. The research questions, scope, and objectives are also explained in details in this chapter. Chapter 2 provides the literature review of student housing, SHFs, SRS and formation or establishment of SRS Index. This chapter also extensively discusses the factors affecting satisfaction. For this, research theoretical framework is presented in it. Then, Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, research design and method of analyses used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings and discusses the results in alignment to answer the research questions and harmonize to research objectives. Finally Chapter 5 highlights the core findings and concludes the thesis with some limitations and suggestions for future and further research.

CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptually and theoretically clarify the literature reviews of SHFs, RS, SRS and formation of SRS Index. This chapter starts with an explanation on the student housing and SHFs before it discusses the satisfaction of students with the provided accommodation. This chapter also reviews the factors that affect SRS and rationalize the conceptualization of SRS Index. Thereafter the research theoretical framework will be presented.

2.2 Student Housing

2.2.1 Definition of Student Housing

Student housing is defined as a building built with many rooms and each room consists of one or two beds providing sleeping and living quarters for large numbers of people, usually with or without private baths, furnished and rented by the bed (Susilawati, 2001; Khozaei *et al.* 2010a). Martin and Allen (2009) professed that student housing was a living-learning apartment structured in double-loaded corridor with the double rooms fixed to private or semi-private bathrooms. Like so, in explaining the meaning of student housing, Thomsen and Eikemo (2010) posited that student housing was a temporary home for students (young-adults) living away from their parental homes which connoted the expressions of identity. By modifying Huang and Clark (2002) housing concept, student housing could also be said as the university-owned accommodation, built for students to reside in an on-campus environment with some rental fees standardized by the university's housing

department. In addition, Willoughby *et al.* (2009) described student housing as a building that provided students with an option to stay on-campus if they had nowhere else to reside. In alignment of the arguments, student housing is also a house with the institutional characters where it accommodates students with less homey environment and regulates the students with certain housing rules (Thomsen, 2007).

Westerners tend to call this student housing as “halls of residence” (Amole, 2005; Wiens, 2010) but Malaysians refer to it as “hostel” (Sohail *et al.*, 2003; Dahlan *et al.*, 2009b; Khozaei *et al.*, 2010a; 2010b). Moreover, student housing also goes by many other names, such as student dormitory (Kaya and Erkip, 2001; Roche *et al.*, 2010), campus housing (Bachman, 2007), catered halls (Price *et al.*, 2003; Hubbard, 2009), university housing (Bland and Schoenauer, 1966), campus dormitories (Koch *et al.*, 1999), student accommodation units (Meir *et al.*, 2007), campus apartments (Martin and Allen, 2009) or college housing (Abramson, 2010).

In short, student housing is a supervised living-learning hostel consisting of shared housing facilities and amenities for the community of residents who use it that is built on-campus, owned by the university, provided for inexpensive chargeable rooms, and administered to accommodate the undergraduate or postgraduate students.

2.2.2 Student Housing as a Home

Traditionally, in the 1970s, Hayward (1975) described the concept of home in the psychological context as a physical structure; territory; locus in space; self and self identity; and home as a social and cultural unit to which a person felt some

attachment. For more extensive views on a house, Sixsmith (1986), Pattern and Williams (2008), and Thomsen and Eikemo (2010) advocated that home was not a single place for each person; but it could be a number of places simultaneously. Likewise, Thomsen (2007) and Klis and Karsten (2008) too argued that home could be a dual-residence situation, where one of the dwellings was near to the workplace and the other one at the hometown. This concept as referenced by Sixsmith (1986), Thomsen (2007), Klis and Karsten (2008), Pattern and Williams (2008), and Thomsen and Eikemo (2010) is comparable to a commuter residence. A student, for example, has both a student house close to the faculty and a home in his or her hometown. It explains that every student demands and acquires a second residence which is the university student housing to stay during workdays and this second residence is a temporary in nature.

Furthermore, Weidemann and Anderson (1985) proposed that a house was a product to represent the physical portion of the social-physical environment. Chi and Griffin (1980) regarded a house as a dwelling units consisting of floor area, bedrooms, kitchen facilities, etc.; place; public services; and neighbourhood. Similarly, Huang and Clark (2002) also said that a house was like a product or service provided by the government as a subsidized shelter for their employees to buy or rent. Thus, it is clear that student housing built in universities should be fully furnished to give students the opportunity to experience the home environment during their study period. In addition, Zepke and Leach (2005) and Price *et al.* (2003) postulated that student housing was one of the university's services and facilities; and providing such could facilitate positive students outcomes.

Then, Moore (2000) opined that home could be regarded as an elusive symbol of a place where individuals could do their responsibilities and instigate lots of meanings. Akalin *et al.* (2009) and Barnes *et al.* (2009) suggested that people attached a variety of connotations to their understandings of a house. In support of the arguments, Klis and Karsten (2008) noted that home was the combination of the physical unit (house) and the social unit (household), and it also created a socio-spatial system. As suggested by Dahlin-Ivanoff *et al.* (2007), a home is a central place which permits privacy, individuality and independence in one's life. Besides inspiring people to reminisce their past memories, a home also offers security, freedom, and a family meeting-place. Those systems as adopted to the student housing portray the approach of widening residential-academic communities (Li *et al.*, 2007; Martin and Allen, 2009). Besides living and doing own's activities in shared areas with others in the student housing, students can also enhance their social and academic communications because all of them are from different backgrounds.

2.2.3 The Speciality and Functionality of Student Housing

The idea of building the student housing draws upon the model of building the conventional family housing. However, there are several reasons for student housing to be represented as a special type of housing. According to Amole (2009a) and Willoughby *et al.* (2009), student housing is a special type of housing because it is the most important accommodation in the university provided for the students to live provisionally during their study period. Secondly, it has more occupants and typically offers communal facilities and operates in compliance with rules from the management (Pace, 2007; Thomsen, 2007). Lastly, student housing is said to be special because the setting is customized for campus environments rather than the