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## **SATISFACTION WITH KUALA LUMPUR CITY HALL SERVICES: A STUDY ON PUBLIC HOUSING SRI SABAH VIA CSMS MODEL**

**Hairunnisa Mohamad Ibrahim<sup>1</sup>, Malarvilly a/p Ramayah<sup>2</sup>, R. Usha Devi C. Rajaratnam<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>School of Pre-University Studies,  
TAYLOR'S COLLEGE, MALAYSIA*

*<sup>2</sup>School of Accounting and Finance, Faculty of Business and Law,  
TAYLOR'S UNIVERSITY, MALAYSIA*

*<sup>3</sup>School of Diploma and Professional Studies,  
TAYLOR'S COLLEGE, MALAYSIA*

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the factors influencing the satisfaction of public services offered by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Malaysia. The area of study is the public housing at Sri Sabah, which is located in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. This quantitative study is based on data collected from a survey involving 343 Malaysian citizens who are currently residing in the Sri Sabah neighbourhood. CSMS research framework was employed and analysed utilizing PLS-SEM statistical tool for data analysis purposes. The findings strongly support the attainment of all three objectives outlined in this study. The first finding indicates that the relationship between the KL City Hall and Sri Sabah citizens has a significant influence on the respective community's quality of life. The next outcome is that the Sri Sabah citizens' attachment to the neighbourhood affects their quality of life significantly. Finally, the relationship between the KL City Hall and citizens, quality of life, and attachment to the neighbourhood have a significant influence on the satisfaction with public services that are provided by the KL City Hall of the city.

**Keywords:** satisfaction with public services, neighbourhood attachment, quality of life, relationship with KL City Hall.

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author Email: [hairunnisa.mohamadibrahim@taylors.edu.my](mailto:hairunnisa.mohamadibrahim@taylors.edu.my)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The City Hall of a metropolitan is crucial in creating liveable neighbourhoods for its citizens. The characteristics of a city's neighbourhoods and the standard of living of its citizens heavily depend on how well the City Hall runs. Only when citizens and the City Hall collaborate will the city's future and the ability to be a safe and liveable place be possible. In urban public housing communities, the importance of the municipality is more obvious (Gendel-Guterman & Billig, 2021; Barreira et al., 2019). In this study Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KLCH), the local authority will fulfill the role of the municipality bearing in mind that Kuala Lumpur is a metropolitan city. In this discussion, KL City Hall will use the Malay abbreviation of Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL), and interchangeably the term municipality will be used to indicate that KL City Hall/DBKL is the local authority as per literature reviews that discuss municipal services (CSMS). Financial Stability Review (FSR) by Bank Negara Malaysia, which was released together with the 2021 annual report indicates that housing affordability is a significant concern for most Malaysians (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2021). The central bank's analysis reveals that many households perceive houses as "seriously unaffordable." This perception arises primarily due to inadequate income levels. Despite house prices growing at a moderate compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.1% between 2014 and 2020, the pace of income growth has not kept up with these rising prices. The report emphasises that the limited affordability of houses poses a substantial obstacle for households, and as a result, broader reforms are necessary to address this issue. The central bank believes that enhancing housing affordability is crucial to preventing households from becoming excessively burdened with debt, aligning their financial commitments with their realistic means, and mitigating the potential risks of future financial distress. In a specific geographic context, the report highlights the situation in the Klang Valley, where around 2.25 million households are situated. Among these households, only approximately 25.8% (equivalent to just over 580,000) have the financial capacity to afford the median house price recorded in 2020, which amounted to RM310,000 in 2021. Hence, in spite of the government undertaking various housing programmes and initiatives to assist low-income earners in owning houses, there seems to be a challenge in terms of ownership. This stark statistic underscores the severity of the affordability challenge in this area. Furthermore, the report highlights that even in Kuala Lumpur, which is the capital city of Malaysia, the number of households capable of affording the median house price is limited. Specifically, only around 129,000 households in Kuala Lumpur have the financial means to meet this affordability threshold. (Edge Markets, 2022). In conclusion, the 2021 Financial Stability Review and the Bank Negara Malaysia's annual report indicate that housing affordability is a pressing concern for Malaysians, with most finding houses seriously unaffordable due to income constraints. The report underscores the importance of comprehensive

reforms to enhance housing affordability, which in turn would help alleviate household debt burdens and minimize potential financial hardships in the future.

Anticipating population growth, projections indicate that Greater Kuala Lumpur's population will likely reach 11 million by 2050 and approximately 12 million by 2100, (Aziz, 2018). The Government of Malaysia defines houses priced under RM 300,000.00 as affordable housing. This perspective reflects the government's belief that such housing is within reach for a wider populace. This role becomes more prominent in the public housing neighbourhoods as these neighbourhoods were created by the government to support the urban poverty communities to have proper housing. The KL City Hall plays a vital role in ensuring that a city is liveable for all its inhabitants, regardless of their socio-economic status. In the case of the capital city Kuala Lumpur, KLCH plays an important role in creating liveable housing estates. In 2018, KLCH created the Department of Community Development and Urban Well-Being to provide more effective and efficient services to the citizens of Kuala Lumpur (DBKL, 2020). KLCH manages residential flats within 50 areas within the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur. These flats serve the B40 community, in elevating urban poor housing needs.

According to the OECD (2019) report, Malaysia must ensure public sector integrity in order to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and enhance overall well-being. This report emphasised the actions taken by the Malaysian government to address the issues of rising living costs, particularly for lower-income group households, and ways to reduce income disparity. These actions include direct cash transfers to households with monthly incomes of MYR4,000 and below, an affordable housing programme for low-income households, as well as the provision of subsidies and price controls for some essential goods. However, the report noted that these steps were not enough to make up for the B40 households' relatively low income and the higher prices of essential goods (OECD, 2019).

Moreover, on July 25th, 2023, the Director of the Department of Community Development and Urban Well-Being at KLCH shared in her discussion that, up to that point, the department has yet to conduct a survey to gather B40 communities' interpretations of their interactions with KLCH and how their services had impacted their sense of neighbourhood attachment and quality of life. This discussion was shared with the members of Taylor's University's Urban Liveable Communities Impact Lab. The Director highlighted that information gathered from surveys reflecting citizens' viewpoints will be vital in enhancing the liveability of public housing neighbourhoods and in line with "the Malaysia MADANI" concept. Hence, she proposed that Sri Sabah flats be the first public housing community to undergo this investigation. Following will be the research objectives of this study:

1. To examine the influence of the relationship between the KL City Hall and Sri Sabah citizens on the respective community's quality of life.
2. To investigate the effect of Sri Sabah citizens' attachment to neighbourhood on their quality of life.
3. To inspect the effect of the relationship between the KL City Hall and citizens, quality of life, and attachment to neighbourhood on the satisfaction with public services.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Citizens' satisfaction with municipal services (CSMS) model reflects city dwellers' overall perception of their city municipality (Gendel-Guterman & Billig, 2021). This model focuses on the general attitude of the city dwellers towards their municipality. The affiliation between relationship and quality of life (QoL). The extensive definition of QoL offered by the World Health Organisation is that it refers to "an individual's perception of his or her position in life in relation to goals, expectations, standards, and concerns within the context of the culture and value systems" (Gou et al., 2018). Marans (2015) further added that in terms of quality of life, it is crucial to incorporate residential environment from the perspective of satisfaction with the individual home or dwelling, satisfaction with the neighborhood where the home is situated and satisfaction with the community (city, town, village, or township) in which the neighborhood is placed. Rapid urbanisation has challenged city planners in providing investments in urban infrastructure, feasible businesses, and proper housing to improve the city dwellers living environment and enhance their quality of life (Turok, 2018; Hanlon & Miscio, 2017). Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) study revealed otherwise that absence of significant affiliation between relationships and quality of life. Therefore, this study assumed that citizens' relationships influence citizens' quality of life.

*H1: Citizens relationship with KL City Hall will affect the quality of life.*

Past studies revealed various factors that affect the citizens' overall satisfaction with municipality services. One of the crucial factors would be the relationship between citizens and municipality services (Gendel-Guterman & Billig, 2021; Barreira et al., 2019). The term "relationship" is used in this study in accordance with Belanche et al., (2016), whose work stated that relationship in the marketing perspective proposes that public managers must establish closer links between themselves and the citizens. Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) study revealed that there is a significant direct relationship between relationship and satisfaction with public services. Furthermore, Ochoa-Rico et al. (2024) found that following an experience with the service, the urban population's perception of the territorial planning and municipal service delivery quality is

improved. Additionally, Meirinhos et al. (2022) municipal executive recommendation is directly, favorably, and statistically significantly impacted by municipal satisfaction and loyalty dimensions. Thus, it is assumed that citizens' relationship with the KLCH is essential to enhance satisfaction with municipal services.

*H2: Citizens' relationship with KL City Hall/ DBKL will influence satisfaction with public services.*

The next factor influencing citizens overall satisfaction with municipality services will be quality of life (Westaway, 2009; Senasu & Singhapakdi, 2018; Gendel-Guterman & Billig, 2021). Quality of Life which reflects life satisfaction and feelings of fulfillment or contentment with one's experience of the world. An individual's and a society's efficient functioning depends on their subjective sense of satisfaction, which is a composite reflection of how people evaluate the many facets of their lives (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Gou et al., 2018). To enhance societal conditions and maximise the realisation of human potential, it is crucial to monitor citizens' subjective feelings of happiness and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2018). Moreover, the Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) study disclosed that quality of life has a positive direct effect on citizens' overall satisfaction. Thus, this study predicts positive relationships exist between these two variables.

*H3: Quality of life will influence satisfaction with public services.*

Another crucial determinant that influences citizens' overall satisfaction with a municipality would be neighbourhood attachment. (Zhang et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2018; Mouratidis, 2017). Neighbourhood attachment is developed based on the place attachment concept that was developed by Low & Altman (1992) utilising attachment theory which was established by Bowlby in 1969 (Bretherton, 1992). Neighbourhood attachment concept demonstrates the emotional bonding between the citizens and the place (Lewicka, 2010; Devine-Wright et al., 2020). Besides that, Kourtit et al., (2022) neighbourhood-specific analyses revealed that in a city the districts and neighbourhoods differ substantially in many physical and social-emotional aspects, and this proves the need for place-based policies and sub-local well-being initiatives.

*H4: Attachment to Neighbourhood will influence satisfaction with public services.*

Ramkissoon (2017) added that there is an affiliation between place attachment and quality of life. This has been concurred by Gendel-Guterman &

Billig (2021) study by incorporating city attachment and quality of life in the CSMS model. Similarly, Ng et al. (2022) concluded that people who have a stronger sense of place display greater emotional well-being. Such strong relationship between living environment / space and quality of life was exhibited in studies related to indigenous communities in Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2024) and campus community in Malaysia (Abdullah et al., 2024). Hence these people with stronger affective and behavioural sense of place demonstrate greater social and psychological well-being in urban neighbourhoods. Casakin et al., (2021) also revealed similar outcome expressing people who perceived their neighborhood as high quality showed higher levels of attachment and residential well-being, which affects the development of cognitive-emotional place attachment in a city. The study revealed that city attachment has a large positive direct effect on quality of life.

*H5: Attachment to Neighbourhood will affect quality of life.*

The CSMS model will be appropriate for studying the relationship between Sri Sabah citizens and KLCH based on application spotting research gaps. Advocates of application spotting frequently assert that a particular body of literature needs to be expanded upon or supplemented in some way. It primarily looks for a dearth of a particular theory or viewpoint in a particular field of study (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Application spotting due to lack of studies conducted from the perspective of public housing citizens and KLCH.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

It is a purposive sampling method as the investigation will be focused on Flat Sri Sabah citizens, and the subjects are Malaysian citizens of the same municipality. Purposive sampling is the method the researcher uses to choose the sample for this study (Campbell et al., 2020). Partial least squares structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the proposed relationship (PLS-SEM). This complete multivariate statistical analysis approach can simultaneously investigate all the interactions between variables in a conceptual model, including measurement and structural components. The "ten times rule" (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2011), which states that the minimum sample size must be 10 times the greatest number of routes in either the structural or formative measurement models, is another sampling guideline for PLS-SEM. Therefore, we can say with confidence that 343 was an appropriate sample size for this investigation.

### **Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire of this study was constructed from critically reviewed relevant literature. Numerous previous researchers exploited questionnaires as an

instrument in studying attachment to a place (Plunkett et al., 2019; Song & Soopramanien, 2019), place satisfaction (Low et al., 2018; Zhan et al., 2018; Robert W. Marans, 2015) and quality of life (Mcarthur & Robin, 2019; Joseph Sirgy, 2019). This study investigates satisfaction with public service relationships, neighborhood attachment, quality of life, and relationships, while also examining demographic aspects. The items in this study will be measured through 5-point Likert scales ranges from (1= strongly disagree) to (5 = strongly agree). The survey will be undertaken using both hardcopy and Google links depending on the convenience of the citizens.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Demographic Characteristics**

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. From the total collected valid sample size of 343 respondents, 109 (31.8%) were male and 234 (68.2%) were female. Most of the respondents are in the age group of 18-29 years old, comprising 114 respondents (33.2%), followed by the above 60 years old group with 66 (19.2%), whereas 65 (19%) respondents were aged between 40-49 years. These results show that people aged between 18-29 years were the most popular group in responding. 190 respondents (55.4%) had secondary education while a minority of the respondents (1.5%) had no formal education. The result also showed the duration of the survey respondents' stay at their current residence, 30.3% had been there for 17 years. More than half of the 343 respondents in the valid sample size have income of less than RM1000.

### **Model assessment using PLS-SEM**

Table 1 presents PLS-SEM analysis of measurement model, following Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, and Chong's (2017) guidelines, indicating reliability with indicators greater than 0.70 and convergent validity with those below 0.40. The analysis shows that RL2 and AT3 have the highest and lowest values, indicating construct validity. It's recommended that the composite reliability (CR) and AVE values be above 0.70 and 0.50, respectively.

**Table 1: Measurement Model**

Construct	Loading	Cronbach $\alpha$	CR	AVE
<b>Satisfaction with public services (S)</b>		0.811	0.888	0.730
S1. Overall satisfaction with the municipality and its services	0.924			
S2. Overall satisfaction with the mayor's performance	0.693			
S3. Satisfaction with the management operations in town	0.925			
<b>Quality of life (QoL)</b>		0.759	0.859	0.672
QoL1. Excellent quality of life in this place	0.907			
QoL2. The place is a good place to live.	0.705			
QoL3. A good feeling living in this place.	0.835			
<b>Attachment (AT)</b>		0.730	0.853	0.665
AT1. Proud to be a citizen in this neighborhood.	0.885			
AT2. The neighborhood is part of my identity.	0.906			
AT3. My roots are in this neighborhood.	0.624			
<b>Relationship (RL)</b>		0.924	0.952	0.869
RL1. A good general relationship with your municipality	0.911			
RL2. Getting all needed information from municipality	0.953			
RL3. Municipality pays attention to my views.	0.931			

### Discriminant validity

The study utilized Fornell-Larcker's criterion and HTMT criterion to ensure discriminant validity in cross-loading measurement as shown in table 2 and table 3. The square root of AVE for value-added was larger than correlations, and none of the values exceeded thresholds of 0.90 (Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2019).

**Table 2: Fornell-Larcker's criterion**

	(AT)	(QoL)	(RL)	(S)
Attachment (AT)	0.815			
Quality Of Life (QoL)	0.826	0.820		
Relationship (RL)	0.622	0.704	0.932	
Satisfaction (S)	0.744	0.761	0.733	0.854



**Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)**

	(AT)	(QoL)	(RL)	(S)
Attachment (AT)				
Quality Of Life (QoL)	0.883			
Relationship (RL)	0.758	0.824		
Satisfaction (S)	0.834	0.722	0.840	

### Structural Model Analysis

The path coefficients for the modelled relationships between the constructs are generated by PLS. The significance of these coefficients was determined using the bootstrap approach, which provided the t-values for each path estimate. The predictive power  $R^2$  and predictive relevance were used to evaluate the model's ability to predict the outcome variables (Hair et al., 2021). According to Hair et al. (2019), R-Square levels of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 are considered strong, moderate, and weak, respectively. The R-squared values of the endogenous latent variables Satisfaction (S) and Quality of Life (QoL) are 74.2% and 68.7%, respectively, indicating a strong level of model fitness. The effect size for each relationship is reported in Table 4 and the interpretation of the  $f^2$  is as follows: 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large).

As suggested by Hair et al. (2017), the problem of multicollinearity was assessed. All variance inflation factor (VIF) values for the two endogenous variables (Satisfaction and Quality of Life) were below the recommended value of 4, which does not indicate a collinearity problem. Next, model fit was assessed by evaluating the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Since the SRMR value for this research model was 0.07, which is below the threshold of 0.08, it can be concluded that the model is adequately fitted (Hair et al., 2021).

**Table 4 Hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	T-statistic	P-value	Decision	$f^2$
H1	RL -> QoL	0.309	6.971	0.000	Supported	0.227
H2	RL -> S	0.366	10.046	0.000	Supported	0.214
H3	QoL -> S	0.242	5.055	0.000	Supported	0.048
H4	AT -> S	0.316	14.753	0.000	Supported	0.900
H5	AT-> QoL	0.634	5.833	0.000	Supported	0.955

The structure model tested the hypotheses in the research framework via PLS regression analyses. Table 4 shows all path coefficients and explains variances for the model. Our analysis showed that Relationship presented a positive effect on Quality of Life ( $\beta=0.309$ ,  $t=6.971$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ) at significant level 0.05, and attachment showed a positive result on Quality of Life ( $\beta=0.634$ ,  $t=5.833$ ,  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ ), thus supported H1 and H5.

The results for Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 show that the path coefficients of Relationship (RL), Quality of Life (QoL) and Attachment on Satisfaction (S), are 0.366, 0.242 and 0.316, respectively. Therefore, the results of this study supported H2, H3 and H4.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study's first objective was to examine the influence of the relationship between KLCH and Sri Sabah residents on the respective community's quality of life. Thus, objective one was investigated under H<sub>1</sub>. The outcome of this study disclosed that the citizens' close relationship with KLCH staff significantly affects their quality of life in the Sri Sabah neighbourhood. This result is consistent with past studies which emphasized the important role played by city planners in providing investments in urban infrastructure, feasible businesses, and proper housing to improve the city dwellers living environment and enhance their quality of life (Turok, 2018; Hanlon & Miscio, 2017). On the other hand, the findings of this study differ from Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) study which revealed otherwise by disclosing the absence of significant affiliation between relationship and quality of life. In this study the first objective was met because of the continued community engagement activities teaming up with private sectors undertaken by KLCH in Sri Sabah such as space for urban farming, community room, community furniture projects and computer room to enhance the resident's quality of life.

The next aim of this study was to investigate the effect of Sri Sabah citizens' attachment to the neighbourhood on their quality of life. This aim was addressed by H<sub>5</sub> through assessing if neighbourhood attachment affects quality of life. The findings of the study suggested that there is a significant positive relationship between neighbourhood attachment and quality of life among citizens who are residing in Sri Sabah neighbourhood. The outcome of this study indicates the higher satisfaction towards being proud of the neighbourhood and Sri Sabah being the identity of the citizens contributes to greater attachment towards this neighbourhood. Such strong relationship between neighbourhood attachment and quality of life were also declared by Casakin et al., (2021), Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) and Ng et al. (2022). These past studies also concluded that neighbourhood attachment among citizens is essential to enhance the quality of life in a particular neighbourhood. Additionally, a study by Somasundram, S., Ramayah, M. & Abd Rahman, R. (2023) also concluded that place attachment in the form of place identity was socially empowered, and this is essential for quality-of-life betterment.

The final objective of this study was to inspect the effect of the relationship between the KLCH and citizens, quality of life, and attachment to neighbourhood on the satisfaction with public services. This objective was addressed by H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>. H<sub>2</sub> tested if the citizens' relationship with KLCH

will influence satisfaction with public services. The data collected revealed that this hypothesis was supported. Hence, the findings indicated that the citizens' relationship with KLCH has a significant positive influence on satisfaction with public services. The formation of a close relationship between KLCH and citizens of Sri Sabah was possible as some of the senior citizens are retirees from KLCH. Such an alliance had created a good avenue for the Sri Sabah citizens to build a good repo with the KLCH staff whom they dealt with. This is consistent with past studies which disclosed that urban population experience with the municipality public service improves the perception of the territorial planning and municipal service delivery quality (Ochoa-Rico et al. ,2024; Meirinhos et al.,2022). On the other hand, H<sub>3</sub> tested quality of life influence on the satisfaction with public services and the findings disclosed a significant positive relationship between these two variables. Thus, the study outcome proposed that Sri Sabah citizens who have a better quality of life in the neighbourhood were more satisfied with the public services that were provided by KLCH. In terms of quality of life among Sri Sabah citizens, a sense of a good place to live and having a good feeling living in this residence are crucial in forming satisfaction and thus played a crucial element in forming the satisfaction on public services that were provided by KLCH. The outcome of this study is consistent with Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) study which also related that quality of life has a positive direct effect on citizens' overall satisfaction. The last hypothesis under this research objective which is H<sub>4</sub> assessed neighbourhood attachment influence on the satisfaction with public services. The data analysed exposed the existence of a significant positive relationship between neighbourhood attachment and satisfaction with the public services provided by KLCH. The result concluded that the more Sri Sabah citizens are attached to their neighbourhood, the higher their satisfaction towards the public services that were provided by KLCH. This study's finding has similarity with Kourtit et al., (2022) study which revealed that city neighbourhood differs substantially in many physical and social-emotional aspects, and there is a need for place-based policies to enhance the citizens subjective well-being. This study has further enhanced the CSMS model by replacing attachment to city variable with neighbourhood attachment variable to narrow down the search to specific neighbourhood in the city. This is because the city is comprised of citizens from different socio-economic statuses. Hence, it is essential for KLCH, the local city authority to be aware of the needs of different groups of city dwellers who reside in different neighbourhood. Knowing the neighbourhood in the city will be a crucial element in creating place-based services which will enhance the respective city dwellers' quality of life. This study contrasted Gendel-Guterman & Billig (2021) discovery that attachment to a place doesn't affect directly CSMS. Hence, the modification of variables from attachment to city to neighbourhood attachment has significantly contributed to this model.

## CONCLUSION

Investigation at neighbourhood level to identify the needs from the perspective of citizens is essential. Knowing the citizens at neighbourhood level is important for the municipality staff. Such bonding will ensure city planning will be undertaken to align with the needs of city citizens. When municipality successfully tackles issues at neighbourhood level, it enhances the satisfaction towards municipality, neighbourhood attachment, and quality of life. This is very crucial, especially for low-income groups who are residing in low-income housing areas. Future researchers may incorporate a mediator and moderator to enhance this model further.

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## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT / ETHICAL STATEMENT

Taylor's University Human Ethics Committee concluded that this study poses no ethical issues of concern. This approval is valid until the project end date of December 2023.

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