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FACTORS INFLUENCING BRUNEIANS' ADOPTION OF STRATA TITLE LIVING

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Abstract

Strata ownership presents a promising housing option characterised by shared amenities within a single building or complex, offering diverse advantages to its residents. Despite its potential, the adoption of this housing concept in Brunei remains relatively novel, significantly influencing the acceptance of strata living. This paper aims to assess the extent of Bruneians' embrace of strata living and identify factors influencing their acceptance of Strata Title Living (STL) in Brunei. Seven factors related to strata living acceptability – including cost savings, provision of facilities, house design, legal framework, housing environment, political context, and government support – were examined to determine their impact on Bruneians' acceptability. Data were collected from 241 Brunei residents via surveys, and both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted to assess Bruneians' acceptance factors regarding strata title living. Results reveal a notably low level of acceptance among Bruneians toward STL and underscore the most influential factor shaping Bruneians' acceptability of STL within Brunei Darussalam.

Keywords: Acceptance, Strata Title Living, Bruneian, Strata concept

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INTRODUCTION

Strata title (ST) partitions common property into multiple units, allowing individuals to own a fraction of it with shared access and maintenance duties (Bailey and Robertson, 1997). This concept is gaining traction in real estate development, offering varied designs that enhance residents' quality of life (Dredge & Coiacetto, 2011). By providing shared amenities, strata residences reduce expenses and attract investors, capitalising on market trends (Dredge & Coiacetto, 2011). The adaptable nature of ST meets diverse societal needs, providing legal and economic opportunities for homeowners and investors alike (Troy et al., 2016). However, adoption remains uneven, with regions like Brunei still in the experimental phase despite clear demand (Brudirect, 2016). This study explores Bruneians' acceptance of strata living and identifies key factors influencing their decision-making.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Living under a strata title provides numerous benefits to residents, extending beyond high-rise buildings to include landed residential properties (Troy et al., 2017). This expansion reflects the global recognition of advantages such as shared facilities and effective management systems (Easthope & Randolph, 2009). Strata living encompasses cost savings, shared facilities, diverse housing options, legal protection, pleasant environments, political stability, and governmental support, appealing to individuals and families (Levin & Artherson, 2020; Altmann, 2016).

The definitions and perspectives of strata title (ST) vary by country, shaped by encrypted land and property laws to align with socioeconomic, cultural, and property market dynamics (NSW Fair Trading New South Wales Department of Fair Trading, 2009). However, a common feature of ST schemes is the shared facilities and responsibilities among ST owners (NSW Fair Trading New South Wales Department of Fair Trading, 2009). Generally, ST operates with owners purchasing units on land/buildings, accessing common facilities such as lifts, car parks, and recreational amenities, while sharing maintenance and management costs (Dredge and Coiacetto, 2011). Yet, legal, regulatory, and management issues have recently emerged, challenging the modern implementation of the ST concept (Hussain, 1994; Christudason, 2004).

The modern evolution of strata title (ST) signifies a significant transformation in the property market, driven by shifts in economic, social, lifestyle, and perceptual attitudes towards strata living (Leshinsky et al., 2018; Brugman, 2020). This evolution responds to increasing residential density globally and contemporary changes in modern living. Extensive literature emphasizes the intertwined nature of facilities, design, and underlying features of properties, influencing residents' perceptions and interactions (Burton, 2000; Bramley and Power, 2009). ST addresses demand and supply gaps, offering

economic opportunities for property ownership (Easthope, 2019), while responding to urbanisation and housing crises (Allatt, 2020). It supports metropolitan planning for sustainable development (Dredge and Coiacetto, 2011), ensuring enhanced living experiences through centralised governance (Liat Mehmood et al., 2022). Quality of life indicators now incorporate economic and social aspects (Kern, 2014; Said and Martin, 2013), recognizing houses as a blend of physical, economic, and social components (Hashim, 2003). Given this paradigm shift, understanding the motivating factors behind ST's living choices is paramount.

Normative studies suggest that geographic displacement often prompts consideration of relocating to strata-based housing for improved services, facilities, and economic, social, functional, and psychological opportunities (Kearns and Mason, 2013; Crommelin et al., 2020). Strata title (ST) homes ensure residents' health by providing essential facilities and community spaces, a crucial factor driving preference for ST living (Kim et al., 2005; Levin and Arthurson, 2020). In high-density environments, social interaction can be challenging, but amenities like sports facilities, parks, libraries, and cultural centres, along with involvement in governance, foster positive social interactions among ST residents (Thompson et al., 2022; Kathitasapathy et al., 2023). Furthermore, the legal ownership of valuable property in ST homes serves as a personal achievement, enhancing residents' perception and acceptance of ST living (Mohit and Raja, 2014; Troy et al., 2016).

Complexities in the structure, management, and maintenance of strata title (ST) properties can diminish residents' acceptance. Past studies link ineffective procedures and high maintenance costs to reduced acceptance (Sherwin, 2000; Vanier, 2001). Outdated maintenance strategies have led residents to seek alternative housing (Jones and Sharp, 2007), while a lack of clarity on responsibilities hampers understanding (Easthope et al., 2009). Safety and design issues, including non-compliance with regulations, pose barriers to acceptance (Yang et al., 2022). Concerns about management's approach to climate change also affect residents' perceptions (Guilding et al., 2015). Ethnic and social distribution strategies, residential disputes, neighbour attitudes, and vandalism are additional barriers noted in emerging studies (Web and Webber, 2017; Easthope et al., 2012; Buys et al., 2013; Shim and Kang, 1996; Kan et al., 2022).

Overall, the strata housing scheme offers appealing features that encourage acceptance of this innovative residential concept. However, Bruneians' inclination towards strata living is influenced by diverse factors, necessitating examination to identify predominant ones to reinforce and weaker ones to address, thereby fostering a favourable reception of the concept among the Bruneian populace.

1. Living Cost Saving

Strata living often yields cost-saving benefits compared to traditional housing setups, with shared expenses for maintenance, security, and amenities leading to lower overall living costs (Susilawati & Yakobus, 2010). However, challenges arise in establishing affordable strata title housing in prime locations due to factors like land availability, high construction costs, cultural barriers, and risks with lower returns (Susilawati & Yakobus, 2010). Similarly, in Malaysia, urban centres face a severe shortage of affordable housing, driven by population growth outpacing supply (Tan et al., 2017). Bakhtyar et al. (2012) found that increased density can benefit developers, allowing for the provision of affordable quality housing through projects like the Malaysian Smart Growth's Affordable Quality Housing initiative. Cyrus (2015) highlights affordability and the opportunity to own a quality house with complimentary facilities as primary motivational factors for accepting strata title homes.

2. Provision of Facilities

Strata living offers access to shared facilities such as swimming pools, gyms, and parking spaces, relieving residents of individual maintenance responsibilities and attracting investors (Dredge & Coiacetto, 201; Shuhaimi et al, 2024). However, residents often oppose commercialising these facilities due to security and privacy concerns, despite acknowledging the potential financial benefits (Samad et al., 2018). Multi-owned developments present shared ownership as both attractive and burdensome, with a study in New South Wales, Australia, highlighting the mismatch between owners' responsibilities and their awareness and acceptance of these obligations (Easthope et al., 2018).

3. House Design

Strata developments offer diverse housing designs, including high-rise apartments, townhouses, and detached homes within gated communities, catering to various preferences and lifestyles. Innovation in building design and technology, as highlighted by Higgins (2015), enables thinner and higher infill redevelopment, while Leshinsky et al. (2018) suggest that smart sustainable materials and design can mitigate urban stressors like climate change and population growth. Structural issues in the design and facilities of strata title (ST) properties, identified by Celine (2015), Sajan (2015), Sia et al. (2018), and Olanrewaju et al. (2021), impact ST planning and property market development. Burton (2000) and Bramley and Power (2009) emphasise the role of property features in shaping resident perceptions, while Yang et al. (2022) highlight safety and design as key barriers to ST acceptance due to non-compliance with regulatory requirements."

4. Law & Regulation

Strata living operates within a legal framework governed by specific laws and regulations, dictating rights and responsibilities for residents and management bodies (Troy et al., 2016). However, legal, regulatory, and governance complexities may hinder future growth and the creation of sustainable property markets (Christudason, 2008, 2009, 2010; Easthope and Randolph, 2009; Crommelin et al., 2020). Mohit and Raja (2014) highlight the positive perception of legally owning valuable property among residents, guiding acceptance of strata title (ST) homes. Governance and dispute resolution processes in Victoria's strata system have been criticized for lack of representation of resident needs, prompting reform proposals (Leshinsky et al., 2012). Strata title laws vary across jurisdictions, with reforms underway in regions like NSW, Western Australia, Ontario, and Vancouver, aimed at addressing governance issues and facilitating urban regeneration (Easthope, 2013). The legal framework creates enforceable rights, responsibilities, and restrictions between owners, with each state and territory in Australia having its own strata legislation (Weir, 2018; Sherry, 2009; Blandy, 2010; Everton-Moore et al, 2006). However, differences in property law between jurisdictions pose challenges for developers, impacting the morality and legitimacy of modern property law (Sherry, 2008; Radha & Razali (2023).

5. Housing Environment

The overall environment of a strata development significantly impacts residents' quality of life, with factors like cleanliness, landscaping, noise levels, safety, and community atmosphere playing crucial roles (Dredge & Coaicetto, 2011). Developers and strata managers have a corporate social responsibility to address these issues proactively, aiming to create vibrant and well-maintained neighbourhoods (Leshinsky et al., 2018). Strata living is positioned to be an effective planning and property tool, particularly in working with greyfields, to bring about real change (Leshinsky et al., 2018).

6. Political Situation

The political climate indirectly affects strata living through its influence on economic stability, property regulations, and infrastructure development, with a stable environment fostering confidence in the real estate market and encouraging investment in strata developments. Urban governance has garnered attention, reflecting changes in cities' roles in the global economy and political ideals (Easthope & Randolph, 2008). Malaysia's rapid growth is attributed to its long-standing social and political stability, enabling attention to various planning aspects and sustainability issues (Radha & Razali, 2023). The property's legal structure mirrors societal norms and values beyond market value considerations (Weir, 2018). Global urbanisation and the need for consolidation pose

multifaceted economic, political, environmental, and social challenges (Easthope & Randolph, 2008).

7. Government Support

Government policies and support initiatives are pivotal in promoting and regulating strata living, encompassing incentives for developers, subsidies for affordable housing projects, tax breaks, and legislative measures to enhance strata management practices and resident welfare (Dredge & Coiacetto, 2011). The shift in residents' perceptions towards viewing houses as a blend of physical, economic, and social components underscores the importance of government initiatives in fostering quality living conditions (Kern, 2014; Said & Martin, 2013; Hashim, 2003, Thompson et al, 2022). Studies have shown that geographic displacement can drive individuals towards strata-based housing for better services and economic opportunities (Kearns & Mason, 2013; Crommelin et al., 2020), with a focus on residents' health and provision of community spaces also influencing preferences for strata living (Kim et al., 2005; Levin & Arthurson, 2020). Recognizing legally owned valuable properties and the affordability of quality homes with complimentary facilities further motivate acceptance of strata living (Mohit and Raja, 2014; Troy et al., 2016; Cyrus, 2015). Conversely, challenges in structure, management, and maintenance, along with inadequate strategies for addressing climate change concerns and social issues, pose barriers to strata living acceptance (Sherwin, 2000; Vanier, 2001; Yang et al., 2022; Guilding et al., 2015; Web and Webber, 2017; Easthope et al., 2012; Buys et al., 2013; Shim & Kang, 1996; Kan et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The literature review of previous studies, as discussed earlier, has unveiled distinct characteristics typically observed in strata-concept dwellings. These characteristics have informed the construction of a questionnaire, serving as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire consists of two sections: one dedicated to gathering demographic profiles and the other focusing on the seven elements of Strata Title Living (STL). Thus, the theoretical framework illustrated in Figure 1 serves as a foundation for this research endeavour.

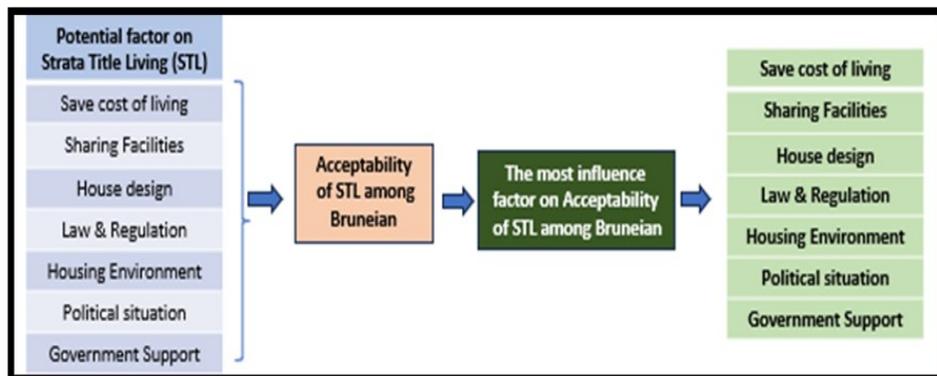


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

In this research endeavour, a meticulous approach was undertaken to gather insights into the acceptance and perceptions of Strata Title (ST) living among Bruneians. A sample of 241 individuals was meticulously drawn from a substantial pool of 22,000 applicants of the National Housing Scheme (NHS) in Brunei. These applicants were deemed an ideal population for examination, as they provided a diverse cross-section of the community, enabling a comprehensive assessment of expectations, preferences, and attitudes towards ST homes. The design of a psychometrically sound survey instrument was of paramount importance, ensuring the collection of reliable and valid data to meet the research objectives effectively.

Upon completion of data collection, sophisticated analytical techniques were employed to discern patterns and relationships within the dataset. Correlation analysis was utilized to explore the significance of various factors influencing Bruneians' acceptance of Strata Title Living (STL). Factors exhibiting a p-value below <0.05 were identified as pivotal contributors to the acceptability of STL among the populace. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient unveiled significant linear relationships between these factors and Bruneians' decision-making processes regarding STL adoption. Subsequent regression analysis was then conducted to construct an acceptance model elucidating the nuanced dynamics shaping Bruneians' attitudes towards ST homes. This comprehensive methodology aimed to provide valuable insights into the factors driving or impeding the embrace of ST living arrangements within the Bruneian context, thus informing future policy initiatives and urban development strategies.

RESULTS

Overall, the study findings underscore a limited understanding among Bruneians regarding strata housing. The analysis (Figure 2) suggests that merely 22.8%

perceive strata residences as a feasible alternative to their existing housing arrangements. Conversely, 39.4% strongly oppose the notion of strata housing as a viable option. Moreover, a substantial segment comprising 37.8% of respondents exhibits indifference towards strata housing as an alternative lifestyle choice.

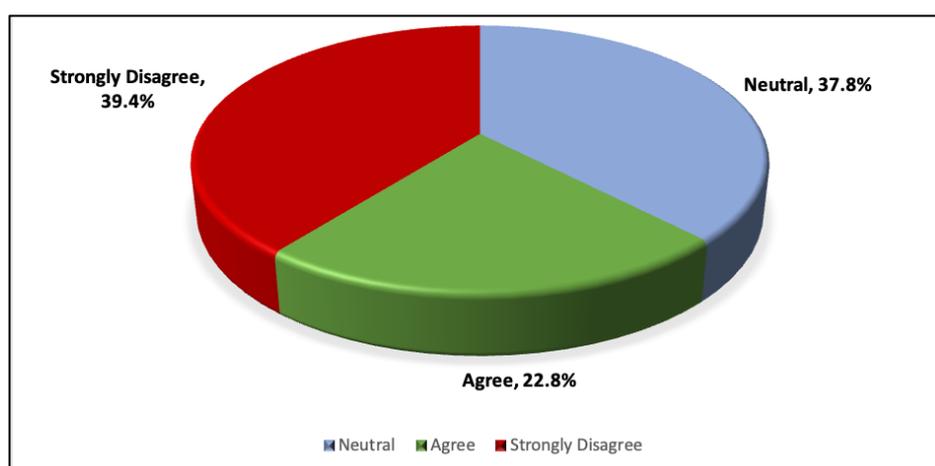


Figure 2: Acceptability score among Bruneians on Strata Title living as an alternative for current housing development

Table 1 presents a crosstab analysis examining the relationship between respondents' demographic profiles and their acceptance scores towards Strata Title Living (STL). Among the gender profiles, 20.7% of males expressed disagreement with the concept of strata, while 14.5% of females shared the same sentiment. In terms of age groups, 14.5% of Bruneians aged between 30-39 and those aged 50 years and above indicated agreement with the strata housing scheme. Additionally, 5% of individuals in the income group earning between 3,501 to 4,500 BND per month exhibited the highest rate of agreement with strata housing, compared to other income brackets ranging from 2,500 to 3,500 and incomes above 5,000 BND per month.

Table 1: Crosstab Analysis

Category	Demographic Profile	B7. / Strata Title Living fits well with the way I like to have my home			Total (%)	Total sample
		Strongly Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)		
Gender	Male	24.9	20.7	13.7	59.3	100
	Female	14.5	17	8.3	40.7	

Nationality	Non-Bruneian	1.7	1.7	2.5	5.8	100
	Bruneian	37.8	36.1	20.3	94.2	
Age	Between 18-29	4.1	4.1	2.9	11.2	100
	Between 30-39	8.3	6.6	7.5	22.4	
	Between 40-49	11.2	10	5.4	26.6	
	50 and above	15.8	17	7.1	39.8	
Marital Status	Single	6.6	9.1	6.6	22.4	100
	Divorced	1.2	0.4	1.2	2.9	
	Married	31.1	28.2	14.9	74.3	
	Others	0.4	0	0	0.4	
Monthly Income (BND)	Below 500	0.8	2.1	2.9	5.8	100
	500-1,500	3.3	5.8	2.5	11.6	
	1,501-2,500	7.1	4.6	2.5	14.1	
	2,501-3,500	7.1	7.1	4.6	18.7	
	3,501-4,500	8.3	5.8	5	18.7	
	4,501-5,500	5	5.8	2.1	12.9	
Total		39.4	37.8	22.8	100.0	

Table 2 presents five out of the seven factors studied that exhibited a significant status with a p-value below < 0.05 . Specifically, Facilities, Housing Environment, and Political Situation demonstrated a highly significant value of 0.00, while House Design and Cost of Living Savings indicated p-values of 0.012 and 0.008, respectively. These five significant factors were further subjected to correlation analysis to assess their impact on the acceptance score of Bruneians towards Strata Title Living (STL). The correlation coefficients for these factors ranged from 0.146 (Cost of Living Savings) to 0.259 (Housing Environment), indicating the extent to which each factor influences Bruneians' acceptance of STL.

Table 2: The significant status of potential factors influencing Bruneian's acceptability of STL

Influence Factor on STL Acceptability	P Value	Correlation Coefficient
B4. Save cost of living	0.012	0.146
B13. Facilities	0	0.253
B18. House design	0.008	0.156
B19. Law & Regulation	0.109	-
B20. Housing Environment	0	0.259
B21. Political situation	0	0.224
B23. Government support	0.167	-

Table 3 presents a summary model for Bruneians' acceptance of STL, derived from regression analysis involving the five significant factors. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.107 indicates that these factors collectively contribute to 10.7% of the variance in Bruneians' acceptance of STL. Each of the five factors exhibited contributions ranging from 0.034 to 0.206, demonstrating their impact on Bruneians' decision to embrace the concept of STL in their housing. Notably, the facility aspect within STL exerted the greatest influence on Bruneians' scores, with a standardised coefficient value of 0.185. Despite the influence of these factors, the overall acceptance rate remains relatively low, as indicated by the summary model.

Table 3: Model summary of Bruneian's Acceptability toward Strata Title Living

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change in R Square	Change in F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	0.355	0.126	0.107	1.644	0.126	6.774	5	235	<.001	1.861

a. Predictors: (Constant), B4. Save cost of living, B13. Facilities, B18. House design, B20. Housing Environment, B21. Political situation

b. Dependent Variable: B3. Bruneian Acceptability on Strata Title Living

Coefficients ^a											
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlation			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Zero-order	Partial	Partial	Tolerance
1	(Constant)	1.291	0.323		4.003	0.001					
	B4. Save cost of living	0.062	0.065	0.06	0.947	0.345	0.147	0.058	0.057	0.921	1.086
	B13. Facilities	0.206	0.071	0.185	2.918	0.004	0.243	0.187	0.178	0.926	1.08
	B18. House design	0.034	0.072	0.032	0.48	0.632	0.155	0.031	0.029	0.849	1.178
	B20. Housing Environment	0.158	0.076	0.153	2.084	0.038	0.26	0.135	0.127	0.692	1.445
	B21. Political situation	0.118	0.07	0.117	1.697	0.091	0.235	0.11	0.103	0.777	1.287
	(Constant)	1.291	0.323		4.003	0.001	0.147	0.058	0.057	0.921	1.086

b. Dependent Variable: B3. Bruneian Acceptability on Strata Title Living

CONCLUSION

ST living represents an innovative housing concept proposed as an integrated solution to address various social, economic, and developmental challenges impacting sustainable living. However, there remains a scarcity of information regarding the factors contributing to its acceptance, particularly in developing countries like Brunei. The findings suggest that different features and aspects of ST living can both positively and negatively influence residents' perceptions, thereby affecting its acceptance. Specifically, factors such as resource facilitation, including legal and regulatory support, alongside relative advantages in terms of economic, financial, and social benefits, may significantly impact the acceptance of ST living. Conversely, enhancing the simultaneous living experience could involve the integration of essential and complementary facilities, improved management, and governance, thereby fostering positive perceptions about ST living and ultimately enhancing its acceptance.

The study contributes to housing and sustainable living literature by presenting ST living as an innovative solution, highlighting seven influencing factors and enriching future research. It also aids Brunei's housing market transition, suggesting ST living as a dynamic option for property market development. The findings have practical implications for regulators, policymakers, practitioners, property consultants, and the public. Regulators should enhance legal infrastructure, policymakers can propose guidelines, practitioners address governance complexities, and property consultants recommend customer-oriented market strategies for ST developers.

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