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STRATA LIVING IN TRANSITION: UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC COMPATIBILITY AND HOUSING PREFERENCES IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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Abstract

Strata living is an emerging residential concept in Brunei Darussalam, offering a shift from traditional housing models. Despite its potential benefits, public acceptance of strata housing remains limited. This study explores the transitional phase of strata living in Brunei Darussalam by examining public compatibility and housing preferences among potential homebuyers. Seven key factors were identified from existing literature and assessed through a structured questionnaire administered to 201 Bruneian respondents. Using inferential statistical analysis via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the study revealed that six of the seven factors significantly influenced respondents' compatibility with strata living. These findings suggest that public preferences are shaped by a combination of design, affordability, facilities, governance, and policy-related influences. As strata living continues to evolve in Brunei Darussalam, the identified factors provide valuable insights for policymakers and developers to enhance its appeal and promote wider acceptance.

Keywords: Evaluation, Strata Residential, housing, settlement, compatibility, Bruneian

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INTRODUCTION

This study contributes uniquely by contextualizing strata housing acceptance within Brunei's distinct socio-cultural and policy environment. Unlike previous studies in Malaysia or regional contexts, this research highlights how Brunei's small-scale housing market, strong state-led welfare model, and cultural preferences for landed homes shape the public's acceptance of strata living. Emphasizing these unique national conditions strengthens the paper's originality. Today, strata housing has emerged as a preferred choice for many homebuyers. The development of strata residences, whether high-rise or landed, offers several advantages. One notable benefit is the shared facilities within these residential areas, which help reduce management and maintenance costs. Additionally, the concept of gated and guarded communities commonly applied to strata housing has contributed to the increasing homeownership rate (Kathitasapathy et al., 2023). However, despite these benefits, strata housing remains relatively new in Brunei Darussalam, and its acceptance among residents is still moderate (Omar et al., 2024; Brudirect, 2016). Resident compatibility generally refers to the overall satisfaction and willingness of individuals to accept something positively (Bailey & Mullins, 2022). It can also be associated with the extent to which an innovation meets personal needs and aligns with cultural norms (Rogers et al., 2014; Omar & Ali, 2023). Therefore, examining the compatibility of Bruneian residents with the concept of strata housing must emphasize the key factors that influence their decision-making process (Omar & Ali, 2023). Thus, this study aims to identify the main factors that could attract potential homebuyers to purchase strata residential units in Brunei Darussalam. Ultimately, homebuyers' choices are influenced by a combination of factors, including the features of the housing itself and external influences that drive their purchasing decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In analyzing the factors that influence the acceptance of strata housing among the Bruneian population, seven key aspects have been identified as crucial. These include the availability of various facilities within the strata housing, cost savings for residents, housing design, legal regulations, government support, political stability, and the overall living environment. Furthermore, strata housing involves the provision of various facilities that contribute to residents' well-being (Abdullah et al., 2024). These facilities include gym services, swimming pools, attractive landscaped areas, open spaces, and parking facilities (Kleeman et al., 2022; Omar et al., 2023). The availability of such amenities allows for shared use among residents of strata units at a lower cost. This is attributable to the fact that the service and maintenance expenses are collectively borne by all occupants of the same building. Additionally, the strata management appointed by the

designated management body has the capacity to continuously improve the quality of life for the residents over time.

Strata housing also contributes to cost savings for its residents, as the management and maintenance costs of the housing and facilities are shared among the residents (Adzham, 2023; Shuhaimi et al., 2023; Susilawati & Yakobus, 2010; Abdullah et al., 2024), through a uniform service charge. This makes strata housing more affordable compared to other types of residences. In essence, this aligns with the current mission to enable every citizen to own a home according to their financial capability (Subramaniam & Kumar, 2023; Easthope & Randolph, 2018; Nethercote, 2020).

Strata developments offer a diverse range of housing designs. It includes high-rise apartments, townhouses and detached homes within gated communities, catering to various lifestyle preferences. Many contemporary strata projects integrate eco-friendly features such as rainwater harvesting systems, solar panels, and green spaces, contributing to a more sustainable built environment (Chuweni et al., 2024; Mahmoudi et al., 2021). In addition, building design and technology innovations have enabled the development of taller and more compact infill redevelopment projects. In particular, it incorporates smart and sustainable materials to address contemporary urban challenges, particularly climate change and population growth (Higgins, 2015; Leshinsky et al., 2018; Loonen et al., 2024). Moreover, these design elements have become key factors in attracting prospective homebuyers to invest in such residential units (Bramley & Power, 2009; Burton, 2000; Yang et al., 2022; Subramaniam & Kumar, 2023).

The strata community living system operates within a specific legal framework that clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of both residents and management bodies (Crommelin et al., 2020; Easthope et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2021; Kitsakis, 2020; Treffers & Lippert, 2020; Zainal et al., 2024). This legal structure plays a vital role in ensuring the smooth governance of strata communities by safeguarding residents' rights (Troy et al., 2017). A positive perception of legally owning strata property is, therefore, a significant factor influencing the acceptance of this housing model (Zainal et al., 2024). Building on this, residents' trust and confidence in the legal framework that governs strata property management is crucial for fostering broader acceptance of strata living (Mohit & Raja, 2014; Radha et al., 2023).

In addition, the overall environment of strata housing developments plays an essential role in shaping the quality of life for residents. Elements such as cleanliness, landscaping, noise levels, safety, and the general neighborhood atmosphere significantly impact residents' satisfaction with their living conditions (Dredge & Coiacetto, 2011). Hence, developers and strata managers carry a corporate social responsibility to proactively address these factors, ensuring that well-maintained and harmonious communities are created to

enhance residents' well-being (Leshinsky et al., 2018). Thus, the residential environment within strata developments has become one of the key factors in attracting potential homebuyers.

A stable political environment generally plays a crucial role in the successful development of strata residential properties (McCabe, 2016; Waldron, 2021). Such effective enforcement of citizen welfare protections within strata housing can enhance residents' confidence in choosing this type of home. Additionally, political stability supports both the financial capacity of individuals in acquiring such properties and the implementation of sustainable urban planning (Radha & Razali, 2023).

Government support is a crucial aspect in enhancing the status of strata housing. This support includes the provision of incentives to developers (Ebekozi et al., 2019; Shuid, 2016; Yap & Ng, 2018), subsidies for affordable housing units, tax reductions (Dredge & Coiacetto, 2011), and the improvement of services for strata housing. Considering this perspective, government support for strata housing development is believed to increase demand for this type of housing. This, ultimately, encourages property developers to invest in strata developments (McClure, 2019; Nethercote, 2020; Saiz, 2023; Yap & Ng, 2018; Ramli et al., 2024).

The seven factors mentioned above are considered key components in evaluating strata housing settlements in Brunei Darussalam. Therefore, these aspects are extensively studied to assess the extent of Bruneian citizens' acceptance of this type of housing.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes survey data collected through a structured questionnaire designed around seven key factors of strata housing, as explored in the literature review. The questionnaire was developed based on prior validated studies but adjusted to local context through expert consultation and pilot testing.

The questionnaire assesses respondents' perceptions and compatibility with this housing type. Accordingly, a total of 241 respondents, out of 1,000 registered prospective homebuyers in Brunei Darussalam, participated in the study. However, upon data screening and validation, only 201 responses met the criteria for inclusion in the statistical analysis conducted using SPSS software. The data was first analyzed using descriptive cross-tabulation (crosstab) to illustrate the distribution of respondent profiles alongside their compatibility scores for strata housing. This was followed by a correlation analysis to determine the significance of each factor in influencing respondents' compatibility with strata housing. Correspondingly, factors reported to be significant were further analyzed using regression analysis to assess their contribution to the acceptance

and compatibility of Bruneian residents with strata housing, as examined through the model summary and regression coefficients.

RESULT

Table 1: Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.595	.594	7

Table 1 presents the results of the reliability test conducted on the variables used in this study. All seven key factors examined recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.595, which is close to 0.6. According to Nunnally (1967), a value of 0.6 contributes to the reliability of variables, particularly when dealing with a small number of items. This aligns with the recommendations of George and Mallery (2003), who considered Cronbach's Alpha of 0.6 as the minimum threshold for reliability.

The study acknowledges several limitations, particularly the sampling method which relied on voluntary participation from registered homebuyers. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.595 indicates moderate internal consistency, which may affect reliability. Furthermore, as the sample size was limited to 201 respondents, the generalizability of findings should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 1. Respondents' compatibility scores regarding the strata housing

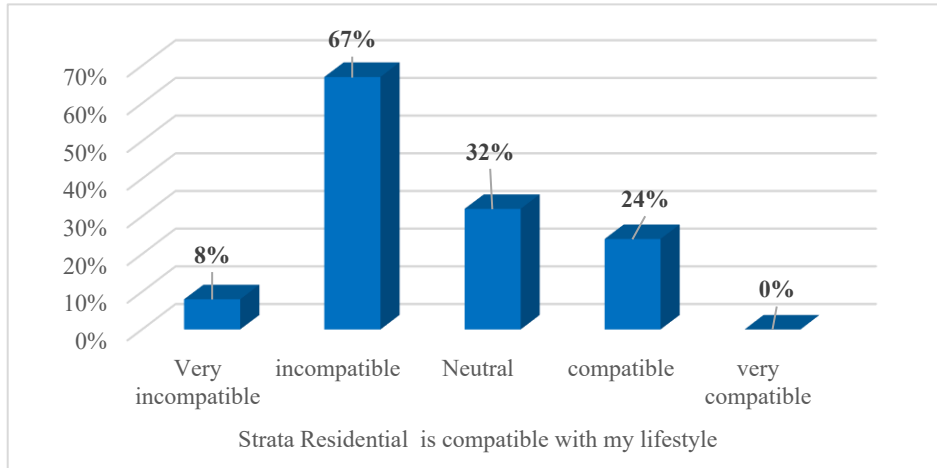


Figure 1 illustrates the respondents' compatibility scores regarding the strata housing with their current lifestyle. Notably, 67% of respondents were incompatible with strata housing, while only 32% were still uncertain about the feasibility of strata housing in their current lives. Meanwhile, only 24% of respondents were positively inclined towards accepting strata housing in Brunei Darussalam.

Table 2: Respondents' compatibility scores in different profiles

% Nationality		B8. Strata Title Living is compatible with my lifestyle					Total
		Very incompatible	incompatible	Neutral	compatible	very compatible	
Nationality	Non-Bruneian	0	1	1	3	0	6
	Bruneian	8	66	31	21	0	94
Age	50 and above	2	31	14	8	0	40
	Between 18-29	1	8	3	1	0	10
	Between 30-39	3	11	7	7	0	23
	Between 40-49	2	19	8	7	0	27
Marital Status	Single	2	10	8	5	0	21
	Divorced	0	2	0	1	0	3
	Married	6	57	23	17	0	75
	Others	0	0	0	0	0	0

% Occupation		B8. Strata Title Living is compatible with my lifestyle					Total
		Very incompatible	incompatible	Neutral	compatible	very compatible	
	Academic staff	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Others	1	7	7	3	0	15
	Student	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Government sector	6	36	14	13	0	51
	Private sector	1	25	10	7	0	31

The respondents' compatibility scores with strata housing were further analyzed using crosstab analysis to examine the distribution of compatibility scores according to their profiles. Among the four profile categories, 66% of Bruneians felt incompatible with strata housing, compared to only 21% who felt compatible. The incompatibility score was particularly high among respondents aged 40 and above (50%). Of these, 57% were married, and 36% were employed in the government sector. On the other hand, 43% of respondents who felt compatible with strata housing came from various age groups, with 20% of the total respondents who felt compatible working in both the government and private sectors. The results of this analysis indicate that while Bruneians have some knowledge of strata housing, their understanding is still relatively low across all age groups and both public and private sector employees. The compatibility score was then analyzed using Pearson correlation with the seven factors potentially influencing Bruneians' compatibility scores with strata housing (Table 2).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation's Result

		B8.	B4.	B13.	B18.	B19.	B20.	B21.	B23.
Pearson Correlation	B8. Compatibility	1.000	.279	.236	.220	.108	.285	.369	.059
	B4. Cost Saving	.279	1.000	.146	.092	.055	.265	.156	.133
	B13. Facilities Provided	.236	.146	1.000	.218	.046	.144	.179	.104
	B18. House Design	.220	.092	.218	1.000	.259	.341	.206	.125
	B19. Law & Regulation	.108	.055	.046	.259	1.000	.193	.122	.321
	B20. Housing Environment	.285	.265	.144	.341	.193	1.000	.457	.111
	B21. Political Will	.369	.156	.179	.206	.122	.457	1.000	.024
	B23. Government Support	.059	.133	.104	.125	.321	.111	.024	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	B8. Compatibility	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	.049	<.001	<.001	.181
	B4. Cost Saving	.000	.	.012	.078	.198	.000	.008	.020

	B8.	B4.	B13.	B18.	B19.	B20.	B21.	B23.
B13. Facilities Provided	.000	.012	.	.000	.241	.013	.003	.056
B18. House Design	.000	.078	.000	.	.000	.000	.001	.027
B19. Law & Regulation	.049	.198	.241	.000	.	.001	.030	.000
B20. Housing Environment	.000	.000	.013	.000	.001	.	.000	.044
B21. Political Will	.000	.008	.003	.001	.030	.000	.	.356
B23. Government Support	.181	.020	.056	.027	.000	.044	.356	.

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis. The normal distribution of the data set led to the use of Pearson correlation analysis to assess the significance of each factor studied. The analysis results reveal that six factors studied recorded values < 0.05 at a 1-tailed significance level. In particular, factors B4 (Cost Saving), B13 (Facilities Provided), B18 (House Design), B20 (Housing Environment), and B21 (Political Will) recorded a value of 0.000, which is highly significant and contributes to the compatibility scores being studied. Although only B19 (Law & Regulation) recorded a value of 0.049, it is still considered significant. Meanwhile, B23, referring to Government Support, was discovered to be completely insignificant and does not contribute to the respondents' compatibility scores. Meanwhile, the Pearson correlation coefficient values for these six factors ranged from 0.108 to 0.369, indicating that the influence of these factors is between 11% and 37%. The results indicate that cost-saving benefits, design quality, and housing environment were the strongest positive correlates with compatibility. These findings suggest that economic and lifestyle dimensions have greater influence than policy or legal factors.

Next, these six significant factors were further analyzed using regression to assess how much these factors contribute to the adoption of strata housing in Brunei Darussalam. According to Table 4: model summary, the analysis results indicate an adjusted R-squared value of 0.203, suggesting that these factors influence only 20% of the variation in the compatibility scores studied.

Table 4: The compatibility assessment model for strata housing with Bruneian residents.

Model Summary^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.473 ^a	.223	.203	1.516	.223	11.174	6	233	<.001	1.693
<i>a. Predictors: (Constant)</i>										
B4. Strata Title Living facilities are cheaper compared to conventional living										
B13. Strata Title Living facilities are safe to live in										
B18. Strata Title Living designs, facilities and costs motivate me to experience it										
B19. The laws, circulars and policies governing the Strata Title Living facilitate its effective usage										
B20. My surrounding environment motivates me to use Strata Title Living										
B21. The political conditions in Brunei Darussalam motivate me to use Strata Title Living										
<i>b. Dependent Variable:</i>										
B8 Strata Title Living is compatible with my lifestyle										

Nonetheless, the results still demonstrate that these six factors have their own influence. The low R-squared value may be attributed to the relatively low level of knowledge and awareness about strata housing, as reflected in the compatibility scores in relation to the respondents' profiles. This can be observed in the regression coefficients results in Table 5, where each of the six factors records its own standardized coefficient value, with Beta values ranging from 0.05 to 0.278. This indicates that these factors uniquely create compatibility between Bruneian residents' acceptance and strata housing. The regression analysis confirms that political will and cost-saving aspects exert the highest standardized effects on compatibility. This suggests that residents' acceptance is shaped by both perceived economic efficiency and trust in governance stability.

Table 5: Evaluation of Strata Residential Settlement Compatibility Among Bruneian Residents

Regression Coefficients^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	1.041	.321		3.240	.001				
	B4.	.198	.060	.198	3.286	.001	.282	.210	.190	.918 1.089
	B13.	.132	.065	.121	2.022	.044	.224	.131	.117	.926 1.080
	B20.	.051	.070	.050	.722	.471	.283	.047	.042	.687 1.456
	B21.	.274	.064	.278	4.249	<.001	.374	.268	.245	.779 1.284
	B18.	.097	.068	.092	1.441	.151	.217	.094	.083	.811 1.232

Regression Coefficients ^a										
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
B19.	.022	.066	.021	.342	.733	.105	.022	.020	.915	1.092

a. Dependent Variable: B8 Strata Title Living is compatible with my lifestyle

CONCLUSION

This study highlights Strata Title (ST) living as a promising housing model to support sustainable urban development in Brunei Darussalam. However, public acceptance remains limited despite its potential, primarily due to gaps in awareness and institutional readiness. Through our analysis, we have identified several key determinants, namely, legal and regulatory support, perceived benefits, and the quality of communal living, which play a central role in shaping public acceptance.

To address these challenges, the findings suggest that targeted policy interventions are essential. Furthermore, legal reforms, improved governance frameworks, and strategic public engagement are critical to facilitating wider acceptance of strata living. Although the overall compatibility scores were modest, segments with more positive responses offer valuable insights that can inform future policy and planning efforts. Accordingly, these insights lay the groundwork for aligning housing strategies with national development goals. This, in turn, will help meet public expectations and promote a transition towards more diversified and sustainable housing options in Brunei Darussalam.

The study also demonstrates that various factors significantly impact the compatibility scores of Bruneian residents with strata housing. These factors are crucial in shaping residents' views and acceptance of this housing model. While the descriptive results demonstrate relatively low scores across various profile categories, the profile cells that exhibit positive compatibility scores should receive further attention. Thus, these segments offer critical insights into the attributes that align with residents' needs. This underscores the significance of prioritizing these factors in future strata housing developments to better address the actual needs of Bruneian residents.

This study revisits ST living as a promising housing model that can offer residents a more comfortable lifestyle through the sustainable urban development framework proposed in Brunei Darussalam. Although public acceptance of this housing model remains relatively limited due to a lack of awareness and institutional support, identifying key factors influencing acceptance scores is vital in enhancing public receptivity.

To encourage greater public acceptance, the study's findings suggest that government intervention through targeted policy initiatives could

significantly increase residents' readiness to embrace strata housing. That is, legal reforms, improved governance frameworks, and strategic public engagement are essential in promoting this housing option. While the overall compatibility scores were moderate, the positive responses from residents regarding future policies and planning offer a strong foundation for aligning national housing strategies. This alignment could help promote strata living as a viable and sustainable residential choice for the public.

The study also reveals that various factors significantly impact Bruneian residents' compatibility scores with strata housing. These factors are instrumental in shaping public perceptions and acceptance of this housing model. Specifically, the findings confirm that aspects such as shared facilities (Kleeman et al., 2022), cost savings (Adzham, 2023; Shuhaimi et al., 2023), housing design (Yang et al., 2022), and political will (Waldron, 2021) all strongly influence acceptance levels. Moreover, accessibility and political support also contribute meaningfully to enhancing the appeal of strata living. These findings, in line with global research, affirm that universal factors continue to exert influence, even within emerging markets like Brunei Darussalam.

However, the study also highlights some notable differences, particularly in terms of government support. While government intervention is often perceived as a key enabler of housing development in other contexts, it was not reported to be a significant factor in Brunei Darussalam. This discrepancy could stem from low public awareness or a lack of transparency surrounding government initiatives. Similarly, although legal frameworks were highlighted to hold some statistical relevance, their overall influence was minimal compared to other factors. This may be due to the relative immaturity of strata developments in Brunei Darussalam and the general public's unfamiliarity with the legal and institutional structures that govern this model.

Moreover, the relatively low descriptive scores across resident profile categories warrant further investigation, with particular attention paid to attributes that align with residents' needs. Thus, emphasizing these key factors in future strata housing development will help address the actual housing needs of the Bruneian population.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on strata housing by offering empirical evidence from Brunei Darussalam. Hence, by providing a more profound understanding of the factors influencing compatibility among Bruneian residents, the study offers a dynamic and localized framework that could support the broader adoption of strata housing in Brunei Darussalam.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it involved voluntary and anonymous survey participation without any sensitive or personal data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data confidentiality was strictly maintained.

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