

Phenomenon Living in Off-Campus Accommodation among UiTM Students

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Abstract

Living in accommodation provided by the university will make life easier for the students to attend classes and to be actively involved in the university's activities. University Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in Malaysia have been providing accommodation within its campus for the students. Despite these facilities, there are students who stay in private accommodation. A study has been conducted among UiTM students who stay off-campus to determine the reasons for living in private accommodation. Data was collected from online questionnaires to students of UiTM who live off-campus in the areas of Penang, Tapah, Seremban, Kuala Pilah, Segamat, Samarahan and Kota Kinabalu. Findings shown that in terms of the type of private accommodation, most of the students prefer rented houses more than rented rooms and family houses. Race and distance from the university greatly influence the students to stay off-campus during studies since they can enjoy cheaper rental, free from university rules and regulations and having choices to stay in one house with their friends. This study recommends that UiTM collaborates with private developers to provide a near off-campus accommodation which is more relaxed in regulations yet fulfilling the needs of the students.

Keywords: UiTM students, off-campus, private accommodation

1.0 Introduction

University will normally provide accommodation particularly to students whose hometowns are far from the university. Every facility such as café, reading space, fast-internet, transportation, sports center, and et cetera is provided to help the students to live comfortably. Normally, each room is equipped with a single bed, study table, and closet. Students can easily attend classes without having problems of transportation and they can be actively involved in activities

organised by the university. Being residents in university accommodation, they are expected to adhere to all the rules and regulations.

To some students, they opt to rent rooms or living off-campus which meet up their comfort level, privacy and convenience without having to comply with the rules and regulations set by the university's management. Some universities can no longer provide enough accommodation due to the increasing number of students' enrolment. This has resulted in only the first and final year students, those physically challenged and the students who involved in sports activities will be provided with accommodation (Matthew, 2014). Insufficient accommodation within the university campus may lead the students to rent houses or rooms that are near the university, giving rise to the "studentification" phenomena of an influx of students within privately rented accommodation in particular neighbourhood (Smith, 2005) as stated by Stevenson & Askham (2011). Studentification is the process that caused from a residential concentration of higher education students and goes along with spatial structure alterations which has social, economic, cultural and physical impacts in locality cluster of higher education institutes (Smith & Denholm, 2006) as stated by Muslim, Karim, Abdullah, & Ahmad (2013). Muslim et-al (2013) contended that that the process is supposed to have density pressures and can stimulate social isolation and the widening socio-spatial polarization of different social groups, which indirectly would impact the students' quality of life.

2.0 Literature Review

Students have options to choose either university accommodation (some referred to as residential accommodation) or off-campus private accommodation (non-residential accommodation). A good housing and decent accommodation play a significant role in healthy living and lead to improved productivity especially those in tertiary institutions, who require good accommodation in a serene environment for proper assimilation of what they have been taught and when students are satisfied with the facilities provided in their residence halls, it will lead to enhancement in the academic excellence of the students (Azeez et-al, 2016).

2.1 Facilities, Safety, and Accessibilities

A study found that those facilities such as provisions of light, distance to lectures, overall quality of accommodation and how students' tenants enjoyed their accommodation, as well as water supply, bedroom facility, rules and regulations, and physical environment of accommodation, received good ratings from the students (Nimako & Bondinuba, 2013). However, the same study's results indicated that residential and non-residential university accommodation quality did not differ in many areas such as provisions of electricity/light, rules and regulations, physical environment, access to transport, security, kitchen facility, reading room facility, garage facility, accommodation fees, and searching cost.

UiTM, as much as possible will try to accommodate their students' needs by providing a sufficient number of places for accommodation within its campus. Studies by Kolawole & Boluwatife (2016) revealed that proximity to campus, the rental value of the property, types of

dwelling and the level of facilities provided are the four most important factors that influence the decision making. Ciaramella & Del Gatto (2012) found that there are two determining aspects regarding the feasibility of university accommodation initiatives in the large cities i.e. high rents in the private market and high demand for student accommodation. Students in off-campus accommodation faced challenges such as distance is too far from campus, lack of basic facilities, and lack of security, neighbourhood dispute, access to transport and landlord/landlady problems (Odugbesan, 2015).

2.2 Freedom and Satisfaction

Among the requirements for university accommodation is that the students are expected to be actively participating in the university activities. Lee as cited in Jimenez (2016) stated that power and decision making at college campuses across the country tended to work unilaterally and usually without question, and housing for these students tended to work within the same power structure with colleges instilling “restriction rather than freedom” and “residence with appointed bounds”. Thus, it can be said that many students preferred off-campus accommodation since they are free to have their own activities. Apart from that, students staying in off-campus accommodation normally feel comfort in staying at their rented house based on their previous experience. The longer the students stay in their residences, the more they are satisfied with their housing. Basically, if students are satisfied with their housing, the students will continue to reside in the same house in the following semester. Strange and Banning cited in Crimmin (2008) proposed three conditions that help to make a student’s living environment productive, namely: a sense of security and attachment; process for involvement, and an experience of the neighbourhood. Thomsen & Eikemo (2010) view that in general, housing satisfaction depends on personal factors such as different phases of life, social and cultural background, financial situation, and expectations as well as architectural characteristics of a building or a dwelling. They also stated that students have a clear expectation of how and where they wish to live. For instance, students prefer not to share the bathroom with multiple occupants due to hygienic issue. Amole (2009) also argued that besides bathroom, students consider laundry and kitchenette as very important in achieving optimal satisfaction. Thomsen as cited in Muslim, Karim, Abdullah & Ahmad (2012) viewed that students greater living satisfaction can be attained through a homelike environment which at the same time will contribute to overall life satisfaction. They can live comfortably and happily although they have to focus on their studies even without established families.

2.3 Rental cost and living with friends

Residence area nearby campus that offer reasonable and affordable rental price do attract students since they can afford to pay for the cost. According to Mohd, Saraf, Jumadi & Bazlin (2014), students have limited option on private housing rental due to limited sources of income. This was supported by Norasikin, Norailis, Nurazalia & Siti Nurulhuda (2013) that the limited sources of income derived from the educational loan i.e Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN), savings, money obtained from guardians as well as earnings from a part-time job. Nonetheless, there are students who know how to deal with the situation by

residing with a high number of occupants to minimize the cost of rental per person. At the same time, by doing these, students learned about managing the sources of limited income by taking into consideration of student affordability to pay the rental expenses (Curtis & Klapper, 2005).

According to Somen & Somen (2013) rental expenses plays a vital point among students when choosing to reside off the campus. Muslim, Karim & Abdullah (2012) believe that the majority of the students' population rent accommodation on the private housing market. Off-campus living opportunities that are closer to campus generally are more expensive (Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005). According to Jabar, Yahya, Isnani, & Abu (2012) for those who are non-resident they need to rent a house and look for housemates in order to save cost. Salleh, Yusof, Saleh, & Johari (2011) proposed that the payment of rent should be done in accordance with the tenancy agreement signed. Non-residence students will have a lack of advantages as they need to share with other colleagues and stay at inconvenient places (Jabar et al, 2012). Muslim et al (2012) believe that by living off-campus, students are required to live in a family housing such as apartment, condominium, terrace, semi-detached and detached-house.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study used online questionnaires to obtain data from students of UiTM in campuses of Penang, Tapah, Seremban, Kuala Pilah, Segamat, Samarahan and Kota Kinabalu who stay off-campus to determine the reasons for choosing private accommodation compared to university accommodation.

3.1 Design

The research described here reflects an exploratory and explanatory research because the problem analysed in this paper has not been clearly defined yet. The results from this preliminary survey have shown some conceptual distinction in positing an explanatory relationship. In achieving the objective of determining the reasons for students' selection of private accommodation as compared to university accommodation, a statistical tool of questionnaires was chosen. This is because it is the most efficient way of collecting students' responses to the written questions which reflect their own perceptions.

The questionnaire was designed into two separate sections. The first section was designed with the aim of obtaining the demographic information of the respondents. It was decided that the significance of factors other than gender, race, age, current program, type of accommodation and distance of selected accommodation were beyond the scope of this study and of lesser interest. The second section focused more on the students' responses towards 13 statements describing the reasons for them to choose private accommodation based on five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1="Strongly Disagree" to 5="Strongly Agree".

3.2 Sample

A total of 305 students is randomly selected from students of UiTM. The data for this study was collected from the students of UiTM by distributing online questionnaires to students who live in private accommodation in the areas of Penang, Tapah, Seremban, Kuala Pilah, Segamat, Samarahan and Kota Kinabalu.

3.3 Procedure

A simple demographic analysis was done with the aim of understanding the segmentation of the respondents based on their individual characteristics. Hence, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted in order to determine which demographic factors are directly influenced students' selection in the type of accommodation throughout their study period. For this study, the factor analysis was done in order to reduce the 13 statements into different groups which at the end will be identified as non-demographic factors influencing students' selection of their accommodation. The main applications of factor analysis are to reduce the number of variables and to detect structure in the relationships between variables.

4.0 Findings and Analysis

The findings are as discussed below.

4.1 Demographic Analysis

The students in this study formed a diverse group in terms of their demographic factors as seen in Table 1 to Table 5 below. The respondents were segmented into 76 males and 229 females with age above 18. Most of them were currently pursuing their bachelor degree (214 respondents) and prefer rented house (276 respondents) more than rented room and family house regardless of their gender. By looking at the cross-tabulation table of each demographic factors versus the dependent variable which is accommodation during their period of study in UiTM, an in-depth pattern can be abstracted as seen in Table 1. Those who rented house prefer the distance to be less than 1 km, while those who stayed at family house prefer to do so even if their family house is more than 10 km.

Table 1. Accommodation versus Distance

		Distance of rented house/room from the university					Total
		Less than 1 km	Between 1-3 km	Between 3-5 km	Between 5-10 km	More than 10 km	
Accommodation during period of study in UiTM	Rented House	106	79	47	35	9	276
	Rented Room	4	1	1	0	0	6
	Family/Parents/Own House	2	1	4	3	13	23
Total		112	81	52	38	22	305

Table 2. Accommodation versus Gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Accommodation during period of study in UiTM	Rented House	65	211	276
	Rented Room	1	5	6
	Family/Parents/Own House	10	13	23
Total		76	229	305

Table 3. Accommodation versus Race

		Race			Total
		Bumiputera	Bumiputera Sabah	Bumiputera Sarawak	
Accommodation during period of study in UiTM	Rented House	210	22	44	276
	Rented Room	2	0	4	6
	Family/Parents/Own House	4	1	18	23
Total		216	23	66	305

Table 4. Accommodation versus Age

		Age				Total
		18-20 years	21-23 years	24-26 years	27 years and above	
Accommodation during period of study in UiTM	Rented House	67	193	14	2	276
	Rented Room	0	5	1	0	6
	Family/Parents/Own House	6	14	3	0	23
Total		73	212	18	2	305

Table 5. Accommodation versus Current Program

		Program Currently Attended			Total
		Diploma	Bachelor Degree	Master Degree	
Accommodation during period of study in UiTM	Rented House	74	198	4	276
	Rented Room	2	4	0	6
	Family/Parents/Own House	11	12	0	23
Total		87	214	4	305

4.2 One-way ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted in order to determine which demographic factors are directly influenced the students' selection in the type of accommodation throughout their study period. The one-way ANOVA is usually used in order to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three or more independent (unrelated) group. The Table 6 below shows the results of one-way ANOVA in testing the null hypothesis that the means of each factor are statistically same from each other. Bear in mind that the main purpose is for the null hypothesis to be rejected when alpha is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis is needed to be rejected for the group means to be significantly different in order to eliminate correlation. From the table below, it can be seen that Race and Distance are

the only factors that rejected the null hypothesis as both p-values are less than 0.05. This means that the means of both factors are significantly different. Thus, both factors can be said to influence the students more when they decide on the type of accommodation during their study in UiTM.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	.885	2	.442	2.378	.094
	Within Groups	56.178	302	.186		
	Total	57.062	304			
Race	Between Groups	35.258	2	17.629	30.780	.000
	Within Groups	172.971	302	.573		
	Total	208.230	304			
Age	Between Groups	.729	2	.365	1.227	.295
	Within Groups	89.743	392	.297		
	Total	90.472	304			
Program currently attended	Between Groups	1.094	2	.547	2.455	.088
	Within Groups	67.319	302	.223		
	Total	68.413	304			
Distance of rented house/ room from the university	Between Groups	80.729	2	40.365	29.644	.000
	Within Groups	411.225	302	1.362		
	Total	491.954	304			

4.3 Factor Analysis

The analysis was done in order to reduce the 13 statements into different groups which at the end will be identified as factors influencing the students' selection on the type of accommodation throughout their study in UiTM. The 13 statement can be seen in Table 8. The first thing to do when conducting factor analysis is to look at the inter-correlation between variables by determining the value of determinant. The determinant for these data is 0.001 which is greater than the necessary value of 0.00001, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem for these data, hence there is no elimination of any questions at this stage. Based on Table 7, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value for these data is 0.772 which indicates the patterns of correlations are relatively compact, thus factor analysis should yield distinct and reliable factor.

Table 8 below shows the results of factor analysis. By using Principal Component Analysis extraction method, three distinctive components were successfully extracted. Each statement was then rearranged into their respective groups as seen in Table 9 where each group representing one newly defined factor.

Table 7. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.772
Bartlett Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	871.665
	df	78
	Sig.	.000

Table 8. Components Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
"I rented because I did not manage to get in the university accommodation"	-.170	.648	.025
"House/ room rental is cheaper than the university accommodation"	.324	-.591	.038
"I take into account the distance of house/ room from the campus"	.182	.465	.641
"I rented after taking into account the safety of rented house/ room"	.407	.302	.613
"I can easily buy all my necessities because it is near to the shop(s)"	.583	-.238	.005
"I have my own transport whereby the university accommodation officers do not allow students to use their own transport"	.441	-.422	.239
"I can easily access the transport facilities available to the campus"	.324	-.229	.304
"I am not bound to the rules and regulations in the university accommodation when staying at rented house/ room"	.663	.289	-.343
"I am not bound to attend activities held by the university accommodation management to secure a place in the university accommodation"	.661	.461	-.211
"I am not bound to any curfew set by the university"	.739	.266	-.382
"I can easily do part-time job(s) to support my studies"	.659	-.112	-.100
"I was advised by my parents to stay in rented house/ room to make it easier for them to visit me"	.586	-.355	.115
"I choose to stay in one house with my best friends"	.500	.165	.134

Table 9. Extracted Factors

Factor 1	Factor2	Factor3
"House/ room rental is cheaper than the university accommodation"	"I rented because I did not manage to get in the university accommodation"	"I take into account the distance of house/ room from the campus"
"I can easily buy all my necessities because it is near to the shop(s)"		"I rented after taking into account the safety of rented house/ room"
"I have my own transport whereby the university accommodation officers do not allow students to use their own transport"		
"I can easily access the transport facilities available to the campus"		
"I am not bound to the rules and regulations in the university accommodation when staying at rented house/ room"		
"I am not bound to attend activities held by the university accommodation management to secure a place in the university accommodation"		
"I am not bound to any curfew set by the university"		
"I can easily do part-time job(s) to support my studies"		
"I was advised by my parents to stay in rented house/ room to make it easier for them to visit me"		
"I choose to stay in one house with my best friends"		

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5 Conclusion

This study investigates the reasons for UiTM students in Penang, Tapah, Seremban, Kuala Pilah, Segamat, Samarahan and Kota Kinabalu for choosing private accommodation compared to university accommodation. Based on the analysis, it showed that most of the students prefer rented house more than rented room and family house. Race and distance from the university greatly influenced the type of accommodation during the studies. In fact, the analysis also showed that the students prefer private accommodation to be less than 1 km from the university campus whilst at the same time enjoying cheaper rental, free from university rules and regulations and having choices to stay in one house with their best friends. These are reflected in Factor 1 as tabulated in Table 9 which is more on the facilities, accessibilities, freedom, and satisfaction, preferences and lifestyles as well as living with friends. Inability to secure a place in university accommodation seems to an isolation factor as reflected in Factor 2 in Table 9. As for Factor 3 in Table 9, distance from the university and the rental cost will both be considered when choosing private accommodation.

Since the findings are based on the questionnaires posed to the respondents, the factors may be limited and can be expanded. The results from the findings cannot be generalised since it only concentrate on seven towns. There are other areas to be explored and addressed for future research such as more samples and the total number of rooms provided by UiTM for the students to be considered during analysis. Based on the above discussion, this study recommends that UiTM collaborates with private developers to provide a near off-campus accommodation which are more relaxed in regulations yet fulfilling the needs of the students.

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