
EXAMINING HOUSING EXPERIENCES OF URBAN REFUGEES IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia has hosted refugees without a formal refugee policy or legal framework for many decades. The absence of adequate accommodation and reception facilities for refugees and asylum seekers, coupled with insufficient housing during their transitional period before resettlement, presents significant challenges. These "living in limbo" conditions exacerbate uncertainty, violence, and insecurity in refugees' lives. This paper aims to examine housing experiences of urban refugees in the Klang Valley. The research involved a survey of 196 refugees, predominantly from Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Myanmar residing in Klang Valley. The findings provide critical insights into the housing experiences of refugees in Malaysia. The findings found that Refugees are satisfied with the building services, unit design, provision of kitchen and laundry spaces, and basic facilities. Satisfaction level is also quite significant in terms of building cleanliness and maintenance. However, they indicated significant discrimination in securing rental accommodations, as landlords are reluctant to lease properties to refugees. Additionally, many refugees encounter difficulties due to frequent rent hikes. The insights gained from this study can assist stakeholders in addressing these challenges and enhancing the management and support provided to the refugee community, paving the way for further exploration and implementation of effective solutions.

Keywords: Housing, Housing Experiences, Refugee, Malaysia.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) estimated that around 86.5 million people had been displaced globally. Interestingly, among these forcibly displaced people, 20.4 million are categorized as refugees, along with asylum seekers and internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2020). As proof of evidence from the UNHCR report, these amounts of displaced people grew linearly from 43.3 to 70.8 million from 2009 to 2018 where a sharp increase was observed from 2012 to 2015 due to the impact of the Syrian conflict, and the number increased from 15.4 million to 21.3 million refugees (Organization, 2012; UNHCR, 2015b). Moreover, Yemen, South Sudan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and refugees from Myanmar who shifted to Bangladesh in 2017 also contributed to this rise considerably. Whatever reasons cited by previous researchers, in the last ten years' displacement increase rate observed by more than 60% a sharply rising trend (UNHCR, 2020).

Besides, there are internally displaced people (IDPs) and Stateless people who comprise vulnerable communities. As explained by (Jan, Mohamed, & Ahmad, 2018), forceful situations like widespread violence, disregard for human rights and armed conflict also fortified IDPs like refugees to escape from their homes. In contrast, most IDPs stayed inside country boundaries instead of crossing international borders to get security. Syria has nearly 7.6 million people categorized as the most IDP nation in the world. Columbia has 6 million, and Iraq with 3.6 million ranked in the following successive places of the world's most significant number of IDPs-contained nations (UNHCR, 2018a). Whatever definitions and terms proposed by previous studies or researchers, these groups of IDPs (internally displaced persons), FDPs (forcibly displaced persons), or vulnerable communities actively seek international protection to safeguard their safety and wellbeing. Lastly, a stateless person is all those who are not recognized as nationals by any State under the operation of its laws (Duraisingam, 2016).

Several correlated reasons such as climate change, urbanization, population growth, food insecurity, war, and violence that might interact as well as enhance each other are considered as the driving factor for fleeing from home reported by Scholars. Recently, Mende and Misra (2021) argued that natural disasters and climate change such as –but not limited to – hurricanes, earthquakes, storms, and sea-level rise also become important reasons for people fleeing from their countries. Munir-Asen (2018) explained further that in developing countries like Myanmar, Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, etc., most people fled from their countries due to local conflict or internal displacement.

While the number of displaced people is increasing worldwide, some countries can still accommodate and integrate them into society. Kobia and Cranfield (2009) reported a need to provide decent accommodation for vulnerable communities in the destination countries, such as refugees and asylum seekers groups. Generally, there are two types of destination countries for the forcibly displaced people: i) asylum first countries and ii) refugees' resettlement countries. According to UNHCR (2013), the refugee resettlement countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have a firm policy that allows refugees to reside long-term or permanently in the destination country. In countries where refugees are resettled, they may have the opportunity to obtain citizenship. Consequently, they are entitled to the right to utilise essential services such as education, healthcare, employment, and homeownership. However, there is also another destination which is called Transition countries where refugees tend to stay in between before going to resettlement countries.

Therefore, housing experiences in transition countries differ from refugee resettlement due to the legislative and administrative framework. They lack a specific mechanism to accommodate refugees in society, resulting in the refugees being scattered in the country without monitoring their settlement since most of them do not have camps. Regarding housing and accommodation specifically, scholars reported that some of the refugees in asylum seeker countries are facing difficulty in settling down in the destination country as they have different socio-economic statuses, cultural and belief systems (Council, 2013; Forrest, Hermes, Johnston, & Poulsen, 2013; Phillips, 2006, as cited in Ziersch & Due, 2018).

Zooming into Malaysia's context, 178,830 refugees was estimated by the UNHCR as of October 2021 (UNHCR, 2021a). Being a 'country of the first asylum', for the past four decades, refugees have sought protection either temporarily or permanently, where the majority of them are men, living in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia (UNHCR, 2020). Munir-Asen (2018) explained that no refugee camps were established in Malaysia, although an increasing number of refugees were living in low-income housing areas. Therefore, the refugees in Malaysia typically live scattered in urban areas without proper monitoring from relevant authorities. These people are living settlements and are named 'Urban refugees' (Kobia & Cranfield, 2009).

Malaysian law does not recognize the status of "refugee," as the country did not sign the 1951 Refugee Convention. UNHCR plays a crucial role in assisting refugees in finding long-term solutions that will enable them to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace through local integration, voluntary repatriation, or resettlement to Malaysia. This involves navigating Malaysia's convoluted, insensitive, and hostile asylum system while attempting to provide proper resettlement to refugees, who develop numerous coping mechanisms in response to the difficulties they encounter (UNHCR, 2013).

UNHCR Malaysia (2021) reported that as of the end of January 2021, Malaysia hosts around 178,920 refugees across its 13 states. Among these large populations, some 154,350 are from Myanmar, comprising some 102,560 Rohingyas, 22,430 Chins, and 29,350 other ethnic groups from conflict-affected areas or fleeing persecution in Myanmar. The remaining individuals are some 24,570 refugees from 50 countries fleeing war and persecution, including some 6,620 Pakistanis, 3,670 Yemenis, 3,270 Syrians, 3,230 Somalis, 2,640 Afghans, 1,710 Sri Lankans, 1,210 Iraqis, 750 Palestinians, and others. Some 68% of refugees are men, while 32% are women and some 45,870 children below 18 (UNHCR Malaysia, 2021b).

From arriving in Malaysia to finding living space for them, this total housing pathway for urban refugees is not conducted under any supervision of Local authorities or UNHCR or any respective authorities (Jacobsen, 2006). According to Khairi (2012), the majority of them reside in uncomfortable and unhygienic overcrowded housing units. However, not much research has been done on the housing experiences of refugees. Previous studies such as Hussain (2017) reported refugees' health, education, and financial literacy issues. Improving refugee housing and protection in Malaysia is not only a moral obligation but also a strategic necessity to meet the SDG 2030 goals. Therefore, this paper examines the housing experiences of urban refugees in Klang Valley Malaysia. Examining housing experience among refugees living in transition countries, such as Malaysia, will bridge the gap in the existing literature regarding housing production and pathways for refugees, particularly in the Southeast Asia region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Access to affordable and decent housing is an essential human right and need. Refugees move to host countries to seek an opportunity to find a living place and improve their lives, which are tied to finding an affordable, secure, and stable haven and play a vital role in the communities they settle in. However, they face many barriers and challenges in buying or renting houses in the host countries. People with refugee or asylum-seeking histories are likely to have different housing and accommodation experiences depending on their status regarding their refugee claims and the nation they presently reside in. Most obviously, refugees living in the middle- or high-income resettlement countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States (U.S.), or the United Kingdom (U.K.) live in the community and be required to access private or public accommodation following the practices and structures of that country (although some countries, such as Australia, do provide temporary accommodation to newly arrived refugees) (Bakker et al., 2016).

Refugees in resettlement nations, on the other hand, will face a variety of different practices, depending on the nation. Deterrence-related policies, for example, are implemented in countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, where access to support services and publicly supported housing is restricted to lessen the perceived appeal of such locations for refugees (Bakker et al., 2016). They may be compelled to reside in private houses, and their ability to work or get assistance may be limited in these circumstances. Similarly, the experiences of housing and lodgings in resettlement nations are likely to differ significantly depending on whether a person is a refugee or an asylum seeker.

2.1 Factors Affecting Refugee Housing in Resettlement Countries

Current research indicates that new migrants to resettlement nations experience various challenges in acquiring adequate housing or lodgings (Forrest et al., 2012; Phillips, 2006; Rose, 2001). Specifically, research from Australia and the United Kingdom has identified barriers to getting private rental accommodation, such as availability, a lack of references, and affordability, with other kinds of accommodation, are out of reach (Bakker et al., 2016; see also Forrest et al., 2012; Phillips, 2006; Rose, 2001; Ziersch et al., 2017). Similarly, research has discovered signs of prejudice against refugees in resettlement nations, limiting their capacity to get housing (Forrest et al., 2012). Overcrowding, language hurdles, and unfamiliarity with housing stock and locales are among the other difficulties noted in the research (Forrest et al., 2012). The research discussed below gives more evidence of these difficulties.

2.1.1 Affordable Housing

Within resettlement nations, the primary emergent housing challenges were cost, unstable tenure and mobility, discrimination and difficulty acquiring homes, overcrowding, and housing quality or condition. Additionally, affordable housing is also affected by limited supply of affordable housing in the market (Zyed et al., 2016). These are explored in turn below. In terms of affordability, studies found that refugees typically lived in a cheaper and smaller housing than the average in the specific resettlement country (Carter et al., 2009; Fennelly, 2006; Phillips, 2006), while other studies (Carter et al., 2009; Fennelly, 2006; Ziersch et al., 2017, 2018) identified affordability as a significant barrier to accessing housing. Remarkably, Carter et al. (2009) discovered that affordability rose during the three years of their longitudinal study, with access to social housing substantially making the cost of housing more accessible for immigrant groups.

However, this may be related to the smaller city where the refugees were housed (Winnipeg, Canada) and is unlikely to reflect larger cities. Research has found that the shortage of low-cost housing in many parts is a significant factor in housing stress among refugee and humanitarian entrants. For example, vacancy rates in the private rental market are generally low in Australia's south-eastern states. There is a shortage of affordable private rental accommodation for households with deficient to moderate incomes – categories into which many refugee families fall during the early years of settlement. Large refugee families in particular face challenges in securing accommodation that is both affordable and appropriately sized. Some large families may be forced to live in more than one property due to their inability to secure a single property suited to their needs.

2.1.2 Access to Rental Market

Besides, refugee and humanitarian entrants face serious difficulties when finding properties, inspecting properties, applying for properties, and maintaining leases. Berta (2012) outlines several challenges and requirements for accessing accommodation in the private rental market, including the need for more in-depth knowledge of tenants' rights and responsibilities; inequity in the selection process for tenancy; and refugees being unable to show stable and long employment history or a track record in the rental market.

2.1.3 Tenancy

Past studies discovered that refugee or asylum seeker populations were highly mobile in their search for housing, because of searching for better quality housing and general issues with the insecurity of their housing tenure (e.g., short term leases). There were also challenges with obtaining accommodation in the first place, notably in terms of prejudice. Fennelly (2006) and Ziersch et al. (2017, 2018) revealed that discrimination was a barrier to housing access and supporting this, Loehr (2016) reported that such discrimination harmed prominent families since they were viewed as destitute, having too many children, and causing property damage. Fozdar and Hartley (2014) also discovered discrimination as a significant concern in securing accommodation for Muslim migrants in Australia, whereas Warfa et al. (2006) emphasised housing prejudice for Somali immigrants in London. Finally, Ziersch et al. (2017) discovered that 5% of their sample faced housing discrimination. Additional challenges in acquiring accommodation were a lack of local references, difficulty navigating the private rental market, and access to public housing (Fennelly, 2006; Fozdar and Hartley, 2014; Ziersch et al., 2017, 2018). A study of housing experiences among African refugees in Western Sydney, for example, highlighted the system-wide discriminatory practice of real estate agents and housing providers using English when communicating with refugees who have limited English language skills, even when a telephone interpreting service is available for this purpose.

Overcrowding was observed as an issue in several studies (Carter et al., 2009; see also Fennelly, 2006; Loehr, 2016; Ziersch et al., 2017, 2018) share accommodations strangers or extended family members with varying health problems. In addition to overcrowding, Ziersch et al. (2017, 2018) highlighted other housing condition issues, such as mould and dampness (and a lack of heating and cooling), and other issues during tenancy, such as difficulties getting things repaired, communication problems in English, and legal aspects of their tenancy agreements. Research has found everyday experiences of discrimination and prejudice faced by refugees while navigating the housing market.

There is evidence that they need more time to find permanent housing, move more often, and face a higher risk of becoming homeless (Murdie, 2008; but see also Francis & Hiebert, 2014). These findings are based on studies from Canada, Australia, and the U.K.; the housing situation of refugees in Germany has only recently regained attention. Though some earlier studies refer to the general situation of refugees, a growing body of

literature on transitional accommodation is now available (BBSR, 2017b). However, little is known about refugees' integration into local housing markets (BBSR, 2017b). Given the many newly arrived refugees in Germany, there is an urgent need to understand refugees' paths out of transitional housing thoroughly.

2.1.4 Refugee Integration

Difficulties with housing have also been connected to other aspects of refugee integration or relocation. For example, Phillimore and Goodson's (2008) overview of various research on refugee integration discovered that housing influenced various aspects of integration, such as pursuing education and creating social relationships. In a 2010 study by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), it was found that many former refugees (and particularly young people) rely on other community members for housing advice or support, and those community members, sometimes newly arrived themselves, may lack knowledge of and connections to the housing sector. Literature also suggests that the breakdown of relationships among family members in Australia and family separation profoundly impacts securing appropriate accommodation. CMY also notes that refugee families may be more at risk of this family breakdown because of specific circumstances associated with the refugee experience: the impact of trauma and loss disrupted and re-configured family relations and overcrowded housing.

Planning for integration is most effective on the local level, where refugees live and interact with their local environments, and where the local host community and refugees would have the possibility to participate in planning and decision-making. Based on a complex set of spatial and temporal factors, some of which are general, and others are unique to specific cities and neighbourhoods, different combinations of institutional arrangements can produce different results in different contexts on the city and neighbourhood levels. They should, therefore, be considered in their respective contexts. Finally, decision-makers and planners on the city level should identify both short- and long-term solutions (Katz et al., 2016)—with well-considered institutional arrangements—to accommodate as refugees in a context that could facilitate integration, avoid segregation, and improve the resilience of urban cities (Baléo, 2017), in the face of future crisis.

3. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative approach was employed using structured, close-ended questionnaires. Given the participants' inability to access the internet, the surveys were conducted in person. Participation was voluntary, and refugees from diverse communities were invited to take part, with the option to decline at any time—a characteristic of a self-selected sample. Anonymity was ensured by not requiring participants to disclose their identities on the questionnaires.

The population of this research is 100,194 refugees residing in Klang Valley who are registered under UNHCR (UNHCR, 2021b). According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970) the sample size for the population of $N=100000$ should be around $S=384$. Therefore, The number of respondents has been identified according to this table. Ideally, 384 surveys using structured questionnaires was planned to be distributed to the refugees in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Considering refugees are a vulnerable demographic (UNHCR being hesitant to provide access to their clients due to their vulnerability), difficulty to locate them, around 196 surveys have been recorded at the end of the survey sessions. This sampling can be used for a population with no readily available demographic information (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019). The sample of this study are the refugees from Myanmar, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan communities who live in Klang Valley. To select the sample, this study has used snowball sampling. The selection criteria for the refugees are that they must be registered with UNHCR and be over 18 years of age and have experience in terms of obtaining housing services in Malaysia. The data were descriptive analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Background of Respondents

The socio-demographic study of total 196 respondents revealed that the majority of participants were comprised of Somalia nationality ($n=48$, 24.6%), followed by Myanmar ($n=47$, 24.1%), Afghanistan ($n=44$, 22.6%), Yemen ($n=32$, 16.4%) and Sudan ($n=24$, 12.4%). The majority of respondents were female ($n=132$, 69.6%) as compared to men ($n=64$, 30.4%), and more than half of them attended school ($n=120$, 61.5%), with

more than a quarter receiving at least five years of formal education (n=59, 30.3%). 27.7% were not receiving any formal education, whereas 18.5% had 5-10 years of formal education and 23.6% had more than 10 years of formal education. Moreover, more than a quarter of them are currently working in Malaysia (n=72, 36.9%) in various working sectors such as services and food and beverages. Of 76% of participants mentioned their monthly income is below RM 1000 whereas 22.4% stated the range between RM 1000-1500 and only 1.5% mentioned the range of RM 1500-2000 (refer Table 1).

Table 1: Household Income of Respondents

Economic Background		Per cent
Worked in the country of origin	Yes	47.8%
	No	52.2%
Currently working in Malaysia	Yes	40.2%
	No	59.8%
Income affected due to MCO?	Yes	69.0%
	No	31.0%
How was your income affected	Increased income	9.8%
	Decreased income	75.0%
	No change	14.7%
	Others	.5%
Approximate monthly income in Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)	Below 1000	50.0%
	1000- 1500	34.8%
	1501-2000	6.5%
	2001-2500	7.6%
	2501 and above	0%
Professions in the country of origin	Teacher	13.6%
	Cleaner	40.2%
	Mechanic	6.0%
	Doctor	3.8%
	Self-Employed	12.0%
	Coach	2.7%
	Tailor	4.9%
	Crafting	4.9%
	Farmer	3.3%
	Salesperson	7.6%
	Public Servant	1.1%

Table 2: Cross-Tabulation Data of Monthly Income with The Country of Origin

Income range (RM)	Somalia	Myanmar	Afghanistan	Sudan	Yemen	Total
Below 1000	14.2%	16 %	11.7%	14.7%	14.2%	63.7%
1000-1500	4.6%	2.5%	10.1%	8.1%	6.1%	30.3%
1501-2000	1.5%	1.0%	0%	0.5%	1.0%	4.0%
2500 above	0.5%	0%	0.5%	0%	1.4%	2.0%

It is shown in Table 2 that 63.7% of the participant's monthly income is below RM 1000 whereas 30.3% earn in between RM 1000-1500 per month. Only 4% manage to get income in between RM1500-2000 leaving the rest 2% earning above RM2500. This also represents that participants from Afghanistan have relatively more income in the range of RM 1000-1500 whereas Rohingyas have the poorest rate.

The educational background data (Table 3 and Table 4) shows that more than half of the population attended school as a child and achieved primary education. In terms of their language, 29.9% use Arabic, 27.7% use Burmese, 20.1% use Persian and 9.6 per cent use Somali.

Table 3: Educational Background of the Respondents

Educational Background		Per cent
Attended school as a child	Yes	66.3%
	No	33.7%
Formal education years	Less than 5 years	38.6%
	Between 5 to 10 years	27.7%
	Between 10 to 12 years	33.7%
Continued studying after leaving school	Yes	28.3%
	No	71.7%
Highest education level	No Education	40.2%
	Primary	12.5%
	High School	19.0%
	University	28.3%

This data indicates that the majority of the participants use their native language and therefore use of Malay or the English language is relatively low. This data also represents that the formal education at the primary level is relatively high in Afghanistan and Somalia whereas education between 10-12 years is highest among the refugees from Sudan.

Table 4: Table of Language Used Most Among the Refugees

Language	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Arabic	55	29.9	29.9
Burmese	51	27.7	57.6
Rohingya	5	2.7	60.3
Persian	37	20.1	80.4
Somali	36	19.6	100.0

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation Data of Formal Education with The Country of Origin

Years of education	Somalia	Myanmar	Afghanistan	Sudan	Yemen	Total
Less than 5 years	11.2%	16.7%	15.7%	10.7%	11.2%	65.5%
Between 5 to 10 years	7.6%	4.1%	3.1%	7.6%	8.6%	31%
Between 10 to 12 years	2.0%	1.0%	1.5%	5.0%	1.5%	11%

In terms of formal education, participants from Myanmar received more formal education at primary level, whereas Yemeni refugees are tend to have more ratio in receiving education up to secondary level. However, Sudanese refugees have the highest rate (5.0%) to receive education up to higher secondary level.

4.2 Housing Experiences of Urban Refugees

To examine the existing living conditions several questions were asked based on their housing profile, including building infrastructure, indoor space quality, external facilities, their satisfaction level with current living standards and lastly their behaviours and intentions to measure their satisfaction with their existing physical environment. Results show that 52% refugees reside in condominiums, 27.6% low-cost apartments and flats and 11.25% in medium-cost apartments. This is worth mentioning that, the survey findings reveal that many refugees refer to their residences as "condominiums" due to the use of the term in the names of these buildings. In reality, these are older apartment complexes that do not meet the standard definition of a condominium.

Table 6: Type of House to Currently Live In

Type of houses	Percentage
Single storey terrace	0.5%
Double storey terrace	1.0%
Low-cost apartment/ Flat	27.6%
Condominiums	52%
Medium cost apartment	11.2%
Shophouses	7.6%

The survey was conducted by participants from 5 countries; therefore, the location of these refugees is quite scattered throughout Klang Valley where the majority are from Ampang, Kajang and Cheras. The reason behind these specific areas is the availability of respective refugee community centres and their community people. They tend to live nearby their friends and family. Around 67.9% of participants mentioned that they have been living in their current place for below 5 years, 28.1% in between 6-10 years and only 3.6% live between 11-15 years.

Table 7: Cross Tabulation of Data of Country of Origin with The Current Condition of Living Place

The CURRENT condition of the place you live?	Country of origin							Total
	Somalia	Myanmar	Afghanistan	Sudan	Yemen	Ethiopia	Rohingya	
Very Poor	0	1	1	3	2	0	2	8
Poor	7	3	14	16	13	0	1	54
Moderate	23	11	18	20	21	1	0	94
Good	11	6	8	7	8	1	0	41

Table 7 presents the number of moderate conditions of current living among Somali refugees followed by Yemenis and Sudanese whereas the Rohingya refugees stated their very poor condition of current living place. The rate of current living conditions largely depends on the monthly income of the participants. The table below shows this relationship where it is presented that 38 participants mentioned their very poor condition and have marginalised monthly income below RM 1000. On the contrary, 62 participants stated their condition is moderate despite low income which indicates that even though the condition largely depends on the monthly income, it is not the sole factor that contributes towards their living and housing conditions.

In terms of neighbourhood facilities, the results indicate that the majority of the participants are satisfied with the provided facilities. 53.1% of refugee participants are satisfied with the accessibility to public transportation, 48% are satisfied with the provision of centres for community activities, 56% with shopping and groceries, 40.3% with educational institutions, 55.1% with the quality of roads, 48.5% with the distance travelled for work, shopping or medical centres, 47.4% with safety from accidents and 60.2% with low crime rates and percentage of the completely satisfied respondents are 9.7 per cent, 4.6 per cent, 6.6 per cent, 9.7 per cent, 18.9 per cent, 11.2 per cent, 4.1 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively.

4.3 Housing Availability and Affordability

While determining housing availability and affordability, this study analyses the rental condition of refugees. it is observed that around 65.3% of respondents are living as co-tenants which means they share their unit with others. 35.7% of them are renting on their own along with their families. For the co-tenants monthly rent ranges mostly between RM 500-1000 and for those who are renting the whole unit it ranges mostly from RM 1000-1500. The table below shows the monthly rental of refugees living in Klang Valley.

84.2% of participants stated that this rental is not inclusive of utilities and 38.3% usually pay around RM100 per month for service charges whereas 10.7% pay 21.1% pay within RM 100-150 and 14.8% pay around RM 200 per month. 83.7% of participants confirmed that they spend above 30% of their monthly income on rentals. The results also measure the relationship between the property owner with the refugee tenants. Only 34.2% agreed that they see their owner once a year or less and 41% claimed they never see them. Adding to this, 85.7% of respondents complain that the owner does not often tend to do property inspections and around 39.3% do not feel confident to

contact their owner when there is a problem in the house or flat.

In terms of accessing information, 68.4% of participants informed that they receive information about rental and accommodation facilities in their area through relatives and friends and only 6.1% mentioned that they receive information from local authorities which clearly shows the absence of any housing management from the local government.

On the contrary, they face acute problems to find new rentals since 68.4% feel that local property owners are not interested to give rentals to refugees. The data shows the reluctance of local landlords to accept refugee tenants. They often hesitate to do so and complaints while taking the interview came from the respondents. Some of them are like they raise the amount of rent when the refugee wants to rent. Also, some of the respondents faced clear rejection from their landlords.

Table 8: Rental Accessibility for refugees

Rental accessibility	Yes	No
Are refugees well accepted by existing local tenants of your property?	55.1%	44.9%
Did you face the difficulty of being tenants/ co-tenants with locals?	26.0%	74.0%
Do you feel that locals are interested in giving rent to refugees?	31.6%	68.4%

The Table 8 shows the percentage of acceptance from the local community towards refugees in terms of providing rentals. 55.1% reported that they feel well accepted by existing local tenants and 44.9% confirmed they do not face any difficulty from their local co-tenants. In contrast, 26.0% participants mentioned that they feel locals are not interested to give rent to refugees.

This study also reflects a strong connection between housing and social integration which has been measured through local perception in their neighborhood context. To assess the neighbourhood context and the local perception towards them, Figure 5.5 shows that the respondents were asked several questions. 57.7% of participants confirmed that they have so many people from their country of origin in their neighbourhood which proves the fact that they reside in groups in nearby areas. While measuring their relationship with neighbours 38.8% of respondents speak to them every week whereas 34.2% communicate once or twice a month. This refers to their communication with the neighbours from their community. On the contrary, 36.2% participants mentioned that they did not have any interaction with neighbours from different ethnic groups and locals for the past 12 months. 41.8% of participants declare that they feel not so much welcomed by the host community which is quite alarming in terms of their integration into society. Moreover, the majority of the respondents feel that the locals are not much sympathetic towards them compared to the migrant workers in Malaysia.

The survey also examined the respondent's satisfaction with their neighbourhood area along with the local community. Table 21 represents that around 54.6% of participants confirmed that they enjoy living in the current area and 43.9% declared they don't enjoy it. This clearly shows the availability of neighbourhood facilities and infrastructures.

4.4 Lack of Local perception and Integration

55.6% of them do not feel safe surrounded by the local community and 7.1% feel not at all safe whereas only 37.2% agree to it. In addition, 70.4% of refugee participants stated that they haven't faced any problem with living in a neighbourhood with a local community. However, 22.4% did face problems which were mentioned in the interviews that mostly indicate racial differences. In their current neighbourhood, around 34.7% of participants believe that the locals are not accepting refugees. More than 76% believe they do not feel part of the neighbourhood, and 41% did not receive any help from local neighbours. Around 56% experienced discrimination and only 33.6% feels welcome to participate in community activities. In addition, 64.8% of participants mentioned they are frequently asked to leave the neighbourhood. However, half of the participants confirm that there are no regular raids from immigration police or local authorities in their neighbourhood.

5. DISCUSSION

The UNHCR advocates for temporary protection as a viable measure during periods of large-scale refugee movements to facilitate swift admission to safe countries (UNHCR, 2005b:393). Globally, there is increasing favorability towards temporary protection (Gibney and Hansen, 2003), viewed by nation states to aid during crises without committing to long-term resettlement options (Koser and Black, 1999). However, a lot of refugee situations are long-term rather than short-term, resulting from years of continuous instability and lack of protection in their countries of origin. This protracted banishment may result in unfavorable resettlement encounters and restricted government assistance for refugees who are not anticipated to establish permanent residence (Vrečer, 2000).

Research indicates that temporary protection often results in social marginalization due to inadequate integration efforts. To foster positive living conditions and social inclusion, there is a pressing need to reconsider the effectiveness of temporary protection policies. Sustaining temporary protection poses longer-term challenges for nation states, limiting opportunities to address underlying issues effectively. Proposed reforms to temporary protection laws should include establishing uniform time limits, automatic conversion to permanent protection when conditions persist, and ensuring adequate support for resettlement efforts. These changes are crucial to addressing the evolving needs of refugees and promoting more sustainable solutions.

Increasing barriers to asylum and reductions in settlement services are significant issues that will profoundly impact refugee integration in the future. Globally, in response to heightened refugee movements, policies have tightened, restricting asylum provision to those deemed most deserving. Moreover, there has been a shift away from broad resettlement assistance towards targeted programs aimed at individuals deemed to be in greatest need (Bloch and Schuster, 2002; Gibney and Hansen, 2003).

In many resettlement host nations, the economic rationalist approach has resulted in a reclassification of refugees for admissions purposes. This shift has coincided with a reduction in support provided to sponsored refugees, highlighting potential future disparities among refugees in Malaysia. Research indicates that most refugees prefer to remain in their current neighborhoods and avoid isolation or segregation from the host society. Any further differentiation in the resettlement support system could have significant implications for refugee integration.

Therefore, the prospects for refugee integration and the trajectory of refugee resettlement policies are closely intertwined, emphasizing the importance of strategic policy direction in facilitating effective integration and societal cohesion.

6. CONCLUSION

Refugees are satisfied with the building services, unit design, provision of kitchen and laundry spaces, and basic facilities. Only when it comes to sharing common facilities like prayer rooms, they are quite unsatisfied due to sharing with locals. Satisfaction level is also quite significant in terms of building cleanliness and maintenance. However, they indicated significant discrimination in securing rental accommodations, as landlords are reluctant to lease properties to refugees. Additionally, many refugees encounter difficulties due to frequent rent hikes. Financial constraints further exacerbate refugee housing and living conditions, compounded by their inability to obtain work permits, thereby limiting their rental income. Without adequate support, refugees' risk marginal employment and reliance on external assistance. Moreover, poor economic integration represents a loss of human potential and missed opportunities within the refugee population. This study highlights that refugees possess diverse educational backgrounds and are eager to pursue further education to enhance their employment prospects. However, despite the existence of programs aimed at assisting refugees in having their skills recognized, finding employment, and pursuing education, significant obstacles remain. The initial resettlement phase is challenging for many newcomers, but prolonged exclusion from economic opportunities only exacerbates the difficulties refugees face in integrating into Malaysian society.

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