

Available online at https://jcrinn.com/

Journal of Computing Research and Innovation

Journal of Computing Research and Innovation 10(2) 2025

Youth Insights on Factors Influencing Housing Purchase and Rental Decisions

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history: Received 19 March 2025 Revised 23 April 2025 Accepted 23 April 2025 Online first Published 1 September 2025

Keywords: Housing Purchase Decisions Rental Decisions Mean Analysis

DOI: 10.24191/jcrinn.v10i2.518

ABSTRACT

Deciding on purchasing or renting a house are two significant financial decisions as it involves a large proportion of one's expenses, specifically to the youth. Although the property market price index in Malaysia statistically shows an increase every year as observed by the National Property Information Centre (NAPIC), demand for purchase still remains stagnant in the housing market. With inflation and the ringgit's depreciation, purchasing or renting a house possesses difficulties for youth to consider after they have been employed. Previous published literature on house decision is more focused on young professionals. investors and green homes, leaving a gap in the study of youth, where their perspectives are limited to assess. As it is prevalent to understand their perspectives, this research aims to fill a research gap by identifying the key factors that influence youth whether to purchase or rent in residential properties with. A quantitative approach was employed using a questionnaire for data collection. The results were obtained from mean analysis which indicated facilities and amenities and the country's economic stability attributes as highly influenced the decisions of house purchase or rental with 4.82 and 4.80 mean values respectively. The results contribute to the understanding of youth perspectives on housing and renting issues that might have an effect on the real estate market demand and supply policy and interventions, specifically on the residential real estate market signifying the present state of research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth in Malaysia face a tough housing market due to the constant challenges of purchasing a house. The National Youth Development Policy in Malaysia defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 40, but Malaysia will enforce a new age limit for youth on January 1, 2026 (The Star, 2023). For youth, it

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seems that the aspiration of owning a home appears unrealistic, as they think it's "significantly tougher" now compared to their parents' peak home-buying era. This is supported by a research conducted by the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES) that observed the majority of youth (84%) do not own a house (Siti Shazwani et al., 2022). The study involved 4,116 respondents aged between 18-40 years. The struggles of youth in the housing market could be related to the decision that youths need to make whether they want to rent or own a home based on factors considered such as long and short term plans, living needs, household income and housing market conditions (Luong et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2019). According to Hassan et al. (2022), the purchase decision on housing property is a conclusion after consideration of buying a house or real estate. With the current economic situation being less stable and the state of real estate market values increasing, it simultaneously heats up the real estate issue. Besides this, someone may need to consider many factors when deciding to buy a house because it is the most expensive expense for a household. This is because buying a house is a big decision that involves substantial financial commitment and long-term implications in life (Young, 2023). It is difficult for them to choose the right decision, and this is to ensure that new home owners do not have to bear their financial burden. Just as observed in the Malaysian House Price Index 2023 Report by the National Property Information Centre (NAPIC), the median house price in Malaysia for Q3 2023 is RM350,174 which is an increase from the median price of RM330,000 in 2022 (Valuation and Property Service Department, 2024). Likewise with the Housing Index in Q3 2023 which saw a small annual growth of 0.1% at 212.6 points (RM458,751 per unit). This is an increase from the Q3 2022 index point of 212.4. This shows that the increase in median property prices could be one of the factors in the perspectives of renting and owning houses in Malaysia. Because of that, renting is always assumed as an alternative to homeownership when the household lacks affordability to buy a house in the current market as the price skyrocketed. Several questions have arisen in this study, namely what are the factors that can influence the decision whether to rent or buy a house based on the current economic situation? The second question is what are the current youth perspectives to rent or purchase? Although some research has been done on the factors of renting or owning a house, the literature focused on green residential and employed respondents but is lacking on the youth's perspective. This research aims to fill the existing gap in the literature by specifically examining the perspectives of Malaysian youth regarding the decision to rent or buy a home in the context of rising house prices. By focusing on this demographic, the research will examine the unique factors influencing their housing decisions, which have been largely overlooked in previous research that primarily targeted employed individuals and green residential considerations. By analysing statistics, studies and the results of respondents' answers from questionnaire questions, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding the choice between renting or buying a home which in turn sets the stage for a detailed investigation of this critical decision in real estate today. The findings will also provide a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by young Malaysians in navigating the housing landscape especially in house ownership, thereby informing strategies that can better support their housing needs in the current housing market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The range of attributes served as a reference for this study, which aimed to identify the attributes on house purchases and rental decisions.

2.1 Location suitability

Youth takes into account multiple aspects when assessing housing choices, such as location and available amenities or facilities. The location of a residence and its proximity to local amenities and points of interest are important elements that can affect decisions regarding home purchases (Mang et al., 2020). Location is viewed as the proximity of the home to public amenities or facilities that young civil servants find important (Muhammad Zamri et al., 2021). Examples of these facilities include hospitals, educational

institutions, public transportation, grocery stores, schools, and several others (Mustapa & Razib, 2023). The short distance is significant because young people do not require much time to access the amenities and services. In general, this indicates that they take into account different important aspects like accessibility, safety, environmental standards, community, and financial affordability when assessing housing choices. In addition, an ideal site for housing includes the availability of public transport and near to the workplace. There is no doubt that accessibility and transportation are very related to the selection of the location of the house that will be rented or purchased by the buyers. It is due to many things that need to be considered such as the distance from home to the place of work or study, cost of transportation and accessibility facilities such as public vehicles. Urban-rural environments are also important to purchase-rental decisions. Cities can be appealing to youth because of their lively job opportunities, social events, and availability of services. Although city living offers unparalleled accessibility, convenience, and employment opportunities, it comes with higher property prices, smaller living spaces, and increased noise and pollution levels (Fezili, 2023). Next is the social atmosphere of a neighbourhood, one's local involvement and one's social relations with neighbours as well as one's sense of community, privacy and safety are all important elements that provide social satisfaction for residents (Aksel & İmamoğlu, 2020). The emphasis on the location of areas with a sense of safety, neighbourhood environment and community involvement emphasise the importance of these elements in shaping their preferences for renting and buying a home.

2.2 Housing preferences

Housing design and concept plays an important attribute in purchase-rental decisions especially the development of the housing scheme area. If the area is deemed unsafe or inappropriate for living, youth may opt not to rent or buy there and instead select rental choices in better and safer locations. An instance can be seen in Taman Sri Muda, Shah Alam, which illustrates the housing development environmental problems that arose during the flash flood disaster. As development in Kota Kemuning evolved, new developments tend to utilise the current drainage system in Taman Sri Muda to channel rainwater into the river instead of constructing a new system which can potentially lead to disasters for residents or prospective purchasers or tenants. Youth prioritize making a strong first impression so they want their house design to suit their taste so that they can give off a good first impression to other people (Mustapa & Razib, 2023). They frequently seek properties that align with their lifestyle by providing energy efficiency, natural light, and proper ventilation. House orientation is an important matter in the formation of the youth in home ownership and renting. In Indonesia, researchers found that natural resources, Qiblah, thermal comfort, and disaster prevention influence the decision of purchasing or renting among potential buyers (Hasan et al., 2022). Youth now prioritise locations with reliable internet infrastructure, as it significantly impacts their capacity to work remotely, continue their education, and sustain social connections. Whether they intend to rent or purchase a home, it is essential to support their everyday activities. According to the 2022 property market report, up to 83% of Malaysian homebuyers preferred to have a high-speed internet infrastructure access and the Internet of Things (IoT) as important fixtures for their homes (Property Guru, 2023).

2.3 Financial stability

When determining whether to rent or buy, young people weigh their work security and possibility for future income growth as well as the current economic condition. Several factors have to be considered in terms of financial capability, including ability to pay the down-payment, securing a housing loan, repaying the loan with interest, and meeting other commitments throughout the loan repayment duration (Muhammad Zamri et al., 2021). When renting, people determine whether their monthly income is sufficient to cover rent, utilities, and other living expenditures. Economic stability is also important to foster a conducive environment for property transactions that affect the value of the property market. This is due to the fact that economic stability can influence the housing market and an individual's capacity to make financial choices. An unstable economic situation in a country can influence home ownership because of fluctuating interest rates and inconsistent property market prices. In Malaysia, the affordability is affected

by the unstable economy in terms of a weak currency, the depreciated value of the Malaysian Ringgit, and inflation (Liu & Ong, 2021). Even with the government initiatives aimed at offering affordable housing, it continues to be a challenge for the youth since currently their incomes fall short of covering mortgage payments. The motivation for home ownership is steadily decreasing, largely because of escalating prices which results in them having to rent a house as an alternative (Baskaran et al., 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this exploratory research, which needed a quantitative metric to determine and rank the factors influencing the decision to purchase or rent, is achieved by using a quantitative method. A questionnaire was designed, and the validity and reliability have been tested with 22 pilot respondents. The questionnaire has been amended according to the academic responses for validity. A Cronbach alpha (α) analysis was used for the reliability of the questionnaire items. Joy (2007) states that the minimum number of respondents for a pilot test with a sample size not more than 300 is between 15 to 30. Thus, a reliability test was established using a pilot test of 22 pilot respondents not included in the actual respondents' sample. The data gathered from the pilot test was run in SPSS Version 25. The result of reliability shows a Cronbach Alpha (α) value of 0.754, which is interpreted as good reliability (Joy, 2007; Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Following this, the questionnaire was distributed to employed youth in Perak using simple random sampling. The estimated youth population in Perak is 10,574,000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). The sample required 112 respondents, which was calculated using Slovin's formula with assumptions of a 95% level of confidence and a 10% margin of error. Finally, the collected data was analyzed for descriptive statistics using SPSS Version 25, encompassing mean analysis presented and ranked in the form of tables.

4. ANALYSIS

This research focuses on employed youth respondents. This suggests that respondents in this survey possess the maturity to comprehend the questions, ensuring accurate and trustworthy results. The data collected were assessed using frequency and mean analysis based on the responses of employed youth in Perak, Malaysia. Out of 112 questionnaires, 103 responses (92%) were valid and accepted for analysis, while 9 responses (8%) were deemed invalid because the respondents were either unemployed or exceeded the age limit for youth. Research by Sataloff and Vontela (2021) suggests that a response rate above 50% is considered favorable for social science research. In addition, according to Fincham (2008), a response rate of 60% or higher is considered acceptable in most research survey areas.

Table 1. Demographics

Item	Questions	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	53	51.5%	
	Female	50	48.5%	
Education	Diploma	59	57.3%	
	Bachelor's Degree	26	25.2%	
	Master's Degree	18	17.5%	
Occupation	Public	46	44.6%	
	Private	17	16.5%	
	Others	40	38.9%	
Ownership status	Owned	37	35.9%	
	Rent	66	64.1%	
Salary	< RM4,849	78	75.7%	
	RM4,850 - RM10,959	23	22.3%	
	> RM10,960	2	1.9%	

Source: Authors' Work (2025)

The gender distribution of the respondent is 51.5% male and 48.5% female. Majority of the respondents' education level is diploma with 57.3%, bachelor's degree with 25.2% and master's degree 17.5%. Next is the occupation of the respondents. 44.6% of the respondents are public servants, 16.5% of the respondents are private and others with 38.9% respondents. Following this is the ownership status of the current residence. 64.1% of the respondents are tenants and the remaining owned the house. Last but not least, the majority of the respondents with a salary of less than RM4,849 (75.7%), while 22.3% of the respondents with RM4,850 - RM10,959 and the remaining 1.9% with a salary of more than RM10,960.

In order to clarify the data acquired for Part B of the questionnaire, the three factors influencing youth to purchase or rent a house have been incorporated in a matrix table at literature review to confirm all the elements indicated are accurate and relevant to the questions of possible attributes that could influence the intention of youth in buying or renting a house. For mean values interpretations, mean scores can be categorised into five levels of interpretation to help understand trends and perceptions in the data (Hadiyanto, 2019). Mean values of 4.51 to 5.00 are "very high," indicating strong positive perceptions, while values between 3.51 and 4.50 are considered "high," reflecting favorable perceptions. Mean scores from 2.51 to 3.50 represent a "moderate" view, suggesting mixed perceptions, whereas scores of 1.51 to 2.50 are labeled "low," indicating negative perceptions. Finally, a score of 1.00 to 1.50 is categorised as "very low," signifying strong negative influences among respondents.

Table 2. Mean analysis

Factor	Attributes	N	Mean value	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Location Suitability Average Mean Value: 4.456	To what extent do the available facilities and amenities influence your choice of rental or purchase property?	103	4.82	0.573	Very highly influence
	To what extent does the ease of access to workplaces influence your choice of rental or purchase property?	103	4.07	1.131	Highly influence
	To what extent does neighbourhood influence your choice of rental or purchase property?	103	4.62	0.794	Very highly influence
	To what extent does public transportation influence your choice of rental or purchase property?	103	4.66	0.635	Very highly influence
	When considering a house to rent or buy, to what extent does urban versus rural locations influence your choice?	103	4.11	0.569	Highly influence
Housing Preferences Average Mean Value: 4.313	Do housing developments like new construction and community amenities influence your decision to rent or buy a house?	103	3.43	1.193	Moderately influence
	Does the house design and concept influence your decision to rent or buy a house?	103	4.77	0.581	Very highly influence

	Is having high-speed internet a critical factor in your decision-making process for renting or buying a house?	103	4.74	0.626	Very highly influence
Financial Stability	How important is the financial commitment in influencing your decision to rent or buy a house?	103	4.21	1.160	Highly influence
Average Mean Value: 4.491	Does the economic stability of the country play a role in your decision to rent or buy a house?	103	4.80	0.566	Very highly influence
	To what extent does the house price influence your choice to rent or buy a house?	103	4.32	0.888	Highly influence
	How important are government initiatives on home ownership in influencing your decision to rent or buy a house?	103	4.63	0.592	Very highly influence

Source: Authors' Work (2025)

Factor 1 consists of locational suitability attributes. The attributes of facilities and amenities, neighborhood surroundings, and transportation networks are highly influential in housing rental and purchase decisions among youth, with mean values of 4.82, 4.62, and 4.66, respectively. The other two attributes that have a significant influence are workplace accessibility (4.07) and rural-urban locations (4.11). Factor 2 pertains to housing preferences. Findings show two attributes with very high mean values: house design (4.77) and concept, along with high-speed internet connection (4.74). The environment of the housing development is moderately influential, with a mean value of 3.43. The last factor is financial stability, as youth indicated that the country's economic stability (4.80) and government initiatives on home ownership (4.63) significantly influence their rental and purchase decisions. Financial commitment and housing prices also have a considerable impact, with mean values of 4.21 and 4.32, respectively. In the factor ranking, financial stability is ranked first with an average mean value of 4.49, followed by locational suitability with an average mean value of 4.46. The last factor, housing preferences, has an average mean value of 4.31.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, facilities and amenities and country's economic stability indicated highly influenced attributes that affect youth decision on renting and purchasing a house. Challenges faced by youth especially the millennials and Gen Z in buying a house are tough compared to previous generations. For youth, the motivation of owning a house appears unrealistic as they think it is significantly more difficult now compared to their parents' prime years for purchasing houses. Importantly from the findings, the renting or buying decision depends on the price of the property and whether youth have enough money to buy a home in their preferred location (Ismail et al., 2023). Although youth could look into some of the government initiatives for housing, this blanket subsidy only benefits established working adults and young professionals. It is important that the government provides a more targeted approach to benefit the lower-income groups, especially the youth and fresh graduates. This thought is supported by a recent survey conducted by the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia that found a majority of young people could not afford to purchase a house and were only able to rent (Sohaimi, 2021).

This struggle with affordability is not just perception; hard data and statistics support it too. It is prevalent in the property market report that there is an increase in the median price of a house in Malaysia which is reported at RM320,000 in 2022 and increased to RM350,000 in 2023 (PropertyGuru, 2023). The increase in housing prices in recent years has exceeded the growth in wages, making cost-effectiveness a crucial concern. Despite that, there is a lack of affordable houses available in the marketplace. These intertwined factors generate obstacles that render homeownership more difficult to attain for this youth generation. Supported by a study conducted by Mahazril et al. (2023) and Ismail et al. (2021) which indicate that Malaysian youth often consider housing prices, facilities and amenities, environment, and housing preferences when making their housing decisions, according to the variables examined in their research.

The factor ranking findings also indicate that financial stability is the most important factor in housing decisions. This suggests that youth prioritise affordability when selecting where to live or to rent, underscoring the need for affordable housing initiatives. Meanwhile, the lower ranking of housing preferences implies that these are less critical than financial and location factors, prompting further exploration of how consumer preferences evolve with economic conditions and trends, such as a shift towards sustainable housing or youth are now prioritising experiences and flexibility over property ownership in housing. At the end of the day, the decisions should be comforting. If youth are not comfortable in taking mortgages for house purchase, rent is the next alternative ownership. By examining external factors such as interest rates, government housing initiatives and current market trends, it will provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by youth in driving the housing market.

6. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings of the intention to purchase or rent a house attribute provide several contributions and implications, specifically to the research area related to the intention to purchase and rental of house. This study contributes to closing the literature gap on attributes of purchase-rental for youth. The groundwork for future research and informed decision-making in the field of purchase or rental decisions can be structured by bridging the knowledge gap. However, some limitations and recommendations could be highlighted. Although this study relies on quantitative data from distributed questionnaires, the incorporation of qualitative methods such as interviews with focused individuals can provide a broader view of their motivations and experiences regarding the choices they make whether to rent or buy a house. This approach can also provide a comprehensive picture of the dilemmas and situations of youth in facing these challenges. In addition, it is recommended to use a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In addition, the demographic scope must be expanded to diversify socio-economic backgrounds and geographical locations. The addition of this demographic scope can be beneficial in tracking changes in home ownership from the perspective of youth over time, especially in unstable economic conditions and policy changes. With the addition of this future study, it can contribute valuable insights and provide effective solutions based on the needs of youth demographics.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/FUNDING

The authors thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions that helped improve this manuscript.

8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

9. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Mohamad Haizam Mohamed Saraf: Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, validation, writing-original draft, writing-review and editing and supervision; Muhammad Eidlan Hakimi Radzi: Conceptualisation, investigation and writing-original draft; Syahmimi Ayuni Ramli: Data curation, writing-review and editing; Mohammad Fitry Md Wadzir: Visualisation and writing-review and editing.

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