

Impact of Having an Early Briefing among Residents/Owners in Reducing Strata Disputes in Malaysia

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Abstract

Strata living is now a trend of community life in urban areas. With the limited use of land as a residential area, strata development has become the main agenda of developers to meet the demand for housing needs. Nevertheless, the notion of living close to each other and shared facilities induced inevitable strata disputes among strata dwellers and relevant authorities alike in the past. It was so prevalent that it compelled the government to enact a new and more comprehensive Strata Management Act in 2015. This research aims to identify common strata disputes that arise, and whether an early briefing can help to reduce strata disputes in Malaysia. The researchers adopted quantitative methods using descriptive analysis from 56 respondents to achieve the objectives. The findings from this research demonstrate that those residents are keen to participate in an early briefing, and have demonstrated the importance of early briefings to residents in order to minimise disputes. Thus, early briefings can address residents' concerns at an early stage, and this can reduce strata disputes in the future. It is hoped that this research can give insight into strata management and prove that early briefing can be adopted as a standard practice to lessen strata disputes in strata development and management in the country.

Keywords: Strata in Malaysia, shared living, strata disputes, early briefing

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Strata developments which started as a necessity for those who live in ever-expensive metropolitans have evolved, and has now become a lifestyle trend among the urban professional community in Malaysia (Che-Ani et al., 2010). The uniqueness of strata living is that it has facilities and common areas, which may encompass multi-purpose hall, playground, lift, corridors, etc. These facilities and common areas are shared among the residents (Ismail, 2014). The pull factors resulted in many strata buildings being built in the country, especially in major cities. The high number of strata units with many occupants who stay close to each other has resulted in many disputes among strata dwellers, which always involve by-law breaches, inappropriate use of common property, issues with repairs and maintenance, and concerns about the strata managing agent. The government was aware of this and had tried to address the problems. Although a few Acts were introduced, there were still many reported disputes among strata residents. According to the Annual Report 2016 by KPKT, a total of 2,642 cases were reported to Strata Management Tribunal (SMT), and 1,758 out of the cases reported have been successfully solved, while 34% are still in progress.

This research analysed whether an early form of communication to buyers at an early stage will help to educate, and hence reduce strata disputes in Malaysia. There have been numerous studies on types of disputes and causes of disputes. Previous research only pointed out and categorised strata disputes in their studies, however, there was no in-depth study on what type of disputes can be tackled at the very beginning, before the strata or shared living begins. Previous research often only considers solutions and the best steps to be taken to address the disputes when they happen, and not on how to prevent the disputes from happening.

There have been numerous studies on types of disputes and causes of disputes (de Cruz, 2013; Mohamad et al., 2015). Past research has pointed out and categorised strata disputes in their studies, however, there was no in-depth study on what type of disputes can be tackled at the very beginning before the strata living begins. Besides, they only consider solutions and the best steps to be taken to address the disputes when they happen, and not on how to prevent the disputes from happening. Another issue pertaining to the possibility of strata disputes is confined to the communication between resident/owners as well as property managers. Communication, as we know, plays a key role in guiding public expectations that influence whether the tensions behind the violent conflict are heightened or ameliorated (Hoffmann & Hawkins, 2015). This statement explained that by communication, it steers public expectations towards an amicable solution. The briefing, one of the tools of communication, can be used as a platform to educate buyers. The briefing can be an early intervention in managing conflicts, however, the organisation of the briefing and its details are crucial to ensure its effectiveness to fulfil

the primary objectives of the briefing, which is communicating the idea in the first place. In a normal practice, residents/owners are not well-informed by the property developers on strata living elements. Dissemination of information is important so that owners understand their rights and obligations. This educational component prevents the occurrence of disputes, according to Bugden (2005).

Craddock (2013) opined that the importance of educating people to live in proximity is always overlooked, and therefore will bring a negative impact to all concerned. Past studies collectively agreed that education is an important aspect in reducing strata disputes, however, there was not much mention on how to educate the strata dwellers, and more importantly, when should one be educated on strata living. This research tries to complement the Strata Management Act 2013 (SMA) (Act 757) and looks forward to preparing an education tool to brief all - future strata owners before they start their strata living. Early dissemination of essential and relevant information to the dwellers will reduce strata disputes and enhance strata living quality in Malaysia. Strata development stakeholders, namely developers, property managers, and residents/owners, must embrace the strata living problems to unlock the unprecedented demand for strata disputes. Therefore, the early briefing by the strata stakeholders need to prepare the resident/owners for the strata living that is yet to be embraced and strata disputes that are yet to arise, and to find solutions to strata dispute problems that are yet to be encountered. In preparing for the future, there is still a gap of knowledge on how the strata stakeholders should create the right balance in respondents with the right knowledge, education, attitude, and values.

By using strata disputes that arise as the context and residents/owners of Atlantis Residence Condominium (hereinafter referred to as respondents) as the unit of study, this study will fill the gap in exploring the need for an early briefing for strata living. This study will offer a new perspective on the best delivery mechanism to produce an effective briefing guideline in preparing the residents/owners on any strata disputes in the future. It can be used to benefit many parties such as developers, managing agents, house owners' association, local authorities, and the public. Therefore, this research aims to study whether an early form of communication to buyers at an early stage will help to educate, and hence reduce strata disputes in Malaysia. Based on the argument above, this paper seeks to (1) highlight common strata disputes in Malaysia that can be prevented through early intervention, and (2) to formulate a briefing content that can be used to address strata disputes at an early stage.

This paper will begin by reviewing the context of study – identifying the problems for strata living and strata disputes. Subsequently, we will present the research method and tabulate the respondents' demographic information. We will then present the data analysis and findings concerning the respondents' understanding of strata living, and how to manage the strata disputes is then discussed. The paper concludes by presenting contributions and conclusions before addressing the limitations of the findings and avenues for future research.

■ 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Strata Living and Causes for Strata Disputes

The types and causes of strata disputes are reviewed to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of strata disputes. Apart from the types and causes of strata disputes, dispute resolution processes are emphasised in the local context to provide the best practices for resolving strata disputes in Malaysia. Disputes will inevitably arise in strata living. In Malaysia, the major complaints about strata properties have been mainly reported on the management issues (Mohamad, 2015b). The administration and management issues are the most common types of disputes to arise in strata living. Apart from the issues relating to financial matters, conflicts usually occur because the strata owners are unaware of the procedures and restrictions before performing renovation works for their units (Fortino, 2017). Based on a study done by Mohamad (2015b), it revealed that the disputes in strata living revolved around several issues such as security, pets, noise, and garbage as well as attitude. Hence, the strata disputes can be categorised into six types of strata disputes, which are financial issues, renovation issues, personal issues, security issues, maintenance issues, and management issues.

According to a study of problems faced by property management in managing the high-rise condominiums in Malaysia, Azmi (2006) indicated that high maintenance costs are required to maintain the common facilities, such as lifts, swimming pool, gymnasium, landscaped garden, and security services, in strata buildings. A lack of transparency in the management of sinking fund was often complained by the strata residents in Malaysia (Mohd-Noor et al., 2011). Thus, the disputes over financial issues are one of the frequent complaints received by the Malaysian Commissioner of Buildings (COB) (KPKT, 2016). The common problem faced by JMB/MC is poor collection of maintenance fee (Musa et al., 2015; Tawil et al., 2012). On the other hand, Tiun (2009) stated that there is a lack of proper financial planning practised in the Malaysian management system. Mohamad (2015b) summarised that the complaints related to financial matters are breach of trust and misuse of money. Thus, poor financial management may lead to the disputes among the unit owners and strata managers.

In strata living, there are restrictions on renovations of private units. All the renovations of strata units must be approved by the management and comply with the by-laws. However, there were still illegal renovation works carried out by the unit owners or residents of private units (Mohamad, 2015a). Renovation issues are frequent conflicts between unit owners and the management arising in strata buildings (Fortino, 2017). It can be summarised that noise caused by renovations and rubbish or debris not being cleared up are the most common disputes over renovation issues.

The residents from different backgrounds living in close proximity within a densely populated building can cause issues related to personal behavior such as dissents, stresses, and nuisance (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2018). Owing to the behaviour and attitude of residents, living in close proximity may give rise to conflicts over personal issues, including noises, pets, and parking (Douglas et al., 2016). Parking issues are also a concern in resolving the personal disputes. Mohamad (2015b) discovered that there are common complaints about the residents not parking their vehicles at the designated car parking bays.

The safety and security of the strata buildings are important to create a harmonious and peaceful neighbourhood. Hence, security elements, such as fire safety package and close circuit television services, are provided to ensure the safety and security of residents in strata buildings (Sufian & Mohamad, 2009). But there are crimes occurring in strata neighborhood such as break-in, assault, and theft (Lash, 2015). These conflicts generally arise between the management and the security company. In fulfilling the increasing demand for security services, many security companies employ untrained and unqualified security guards to solve the lack of manpower problems. Thus, the number of complaints related to security issues is increasing over time (Mohamad, 2015a).

Nowadays, property management and maintenance are part and parcel of strata living. Therefore, property management is demanding to encompass a variety of services, from cleaning and security services to comprehensive maintenance (Omar et al., 2015). For the health and safety of strata residents, routine inspections and preventive maintenance should be conducted from time to time (Salleh et al., 2011). These maintenance issues may happen often, which normally involves the maintenance of the common property, including lifts, pipes, pumps, gym equipment and sport facilities, grass cutting or tree trimming, and pest control (Liew, 2018). Other common complaints are the appointed service providers do not provide a good service in maintaining the strata buildings such as lift maintenance and electrical maintenance. It can be concluded that the most common disputes over maintenance issues are not being solved within the specific time, poor workmanship as well as facilities and amenities not being in good condition.

The disputes over management issues that usually occur are the election of committee members, passing of resolutions, holding of general meetings, and record keeping. In 2016, the annual report of the Commissioner of Buildings (COB) obtained from the Department of Strata Management, Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT) in Malaysia shows that the matters related to the administration and management still contribute to the number of complaints received (KPKT, 2016). There are many cases involving management issues in Malaysia. Disputes over management matters, such as AGMs and financial statements, are the most common in strata living. These disputes normally arise between unit owners and the JMB. Owing to a lack of experience and expertise in property management, the property managers and management teams may lack confidence in resolving the strata disputes (Mohamad, 2015a). Therefore, a lack of experience and expertise in property management of the strata buildings may contribute to disputes over management issues in strata living.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods are the methods of resolving disputes in a simple way with minimal cost (Mohamad & Sufian, 2013). For example, face-to-face talk and mediation are the best ways of resolving disputes among the residents of strata neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, there are still dissatisfactions on the management and maintenance of common property performed by the property managers (Mohamad et al., 2015). There are five components in the proposed dispute resolution model for strata schemes, which comprises internal dispute resolution processes, conciliation by the COB, negotiation or adjudication by the Tribunal, court litigation or appeal, and post-dispute resolution. In the proposed model for dispute resolution, primary prevention through education can prevent the root cause of dispute from occurring, and also avoid future disputes (Kamarudin, 2014). According to Mohamad and Sufian (2013), the dispute avoidance process begins with education. Hence, the disputes could be avoided from the beginning of strata living.

Kamarudin (2014) suggested that various primary preventative strategies, apart from the educative approach, can be implemented in preventing strata disputes from occurring. This gives the idea that an early briefing should be implemented to provide information on various matters of strata living. Further discussion on the early briefing will be provided in the following sub-section. Dispute for strata living can be avoided by implementing early briefing in the first place from the beginning of strata living. The early briefing will give an introduction to strata living. The residents and the management can have a better understanding of how to manage and stay in strata living. In simple terms, briefing is a meeting among stakeholders so that information can be delivered, questions can be answered, and feedback can be collected (University of Limerick, 2011). Briefing is an ideal way to deliver important information to public, especially residents of the strata buildings. Based on a report for Victorian public sector leaders, briefings are recommended to raise awareness and understanding of organisation procedures and processes. Having an early briefing is vital to the success of strata dispute prevention. Therefore, conducting an early briefing on strata living can be an effective way to prevent and avoid future disputes.

■ 3.0 METHODOLOGY

To assess the practicability of early briefing in reducing strata disputes among strata residents/owners, a quantitative research methodology was adopted. A face-to-face survey was conducted at Atlantis Residence Condominium Malacca. The vacant possession (VP) was carried out in stages. Purposive sampling is adopted where the respondents were selected among the residents who obtained their keys after one to two months after VP of each condominium tower. The data was collected through the distributed survey by the researcher, who was appointed by the developer to manage the property during the town hall meeting with the residents. Based on the purposive sampling technique that has been conducted, a total of 56 residents/respondents have been successfully obtained, covering four town hall meetings.

The research data were then analysed using measures of central tendency, which is mean under the descriptive statistics, to present quantitative descriptions in a manageable form. This descriptive statistic was conducted using SPSS software. Through this descriptive statistic, it can describe the basic features of the data in this study in more detail. This analysis was divided into three parts, namely demographics, strata issues/disputes, and early briefing. In terms of demographics, descriptive statistics have helped to give a clearer picture of the composition and background of the respondents. Issues and disputes over strata have also been identified in terms of priorities that occur in the study area. The last part, the importance of early briefing has been identified through the views and experiences of the respondents in this study.

In view of the nature of this study, the researcher believes that the study on the need for early briefing among the strata residents will path the way for more studies on this topic and hopefully it will be a norm for all new strata developments to have an early briefing for the purchasers in the future. This approach is based on seeking information from the parties with interest.

■4.0 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For this questionnaire survey, the respondents were selected from the strata living residents. Hence, the findings obtained were discussed according to the sections of the questionnaire as follows:

- Section A: Demography
- Section B: Strata issues/disputes
- Section C: Early briefing

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Section A: Demography

The finding of section A solely focused on respondent demography. A majority of the respondents who participated in this study are condo owners with a percentage of 71.4%. More than half of the respondents are male respondents (62.5%), and the rest of the respondents are female (37.5%). The respondents from the age groups of 31 to 40-years-old, 41 to 50-years-old, and 51-60-years-old. 41 to 50-years-old have recorded the highest percentage at 41.1% whereby the age groups of 31 to 40-years-old have the 32.2% whereas the age group of 51 to 60-years-old has the percentage of 26.7%. A majority of them are Chinese respondents, contributing 85.7% in this questionnaire survey. It is followed by the Malay respondents with a percentage of 12.5%. The demographic information is as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Demography of respondents

Variable	n	Percentage
<i>Resident Group</i>		
Condo Owners	40	71.4%
Condo Owners – Committee (MC)	5	8.9%
Owner’s Relative/Friend	4	7.2%
Property Agents/Developer	5	8.9%
Prospective Condo Buyers	2	3.6%
<i>Gender Distribution</i>		
Male	35	62.5%
Female	21	37.5%
<i>Age</i>		
31-40	18	32.2%
41-50	23	41.1%
51-60	15	26.7%
<i>Race</i>		
Chinese	48	85.7%
Malay	7	12.5%
Others	1	1.8%
<i>Main reasons for a buyer to purchase a strata property*</i>		
Security	18	32.1%
Privacy	5	8.9%
Facilities and amenities	14	25.0%
Luxurious lifestyle	7	12.5%
Location	2	3.6%
Prestige	3	5.4%
Good for investment	6	10.7%
Others	1	1.8%
<i>Number of strata properties</i>		
1	28	50.0%
2-3	18	32.1%
4-5	10	17.9%
<i>Main use of strata property</i>		
Stay in/ Long term rent	34	60.7%
Airbnb/homestay	13	23.2%
Holiday homes	9	16.1%

Strata living community

Very aware	13	23.2%
Fairly aware	24	42.9%
Not aware	19	33.9%

*Respondents have given more than 1 answer

Based on their feedback regarding strata property (Table 1), they chose the security (32.1%) and facilities and amenities (25.0%) as the main reasons for a buyer to purchase a strata property. However, some of the respondents chose privacy, luxurious lifestyle, and location as the main reasons for a buyer to purchase a strata property. Overall, 28 respondents were first time strata property owners. 32.1% of the respondents have 2 to 3 strata properties before, whereas only 17.9% of them have 4 to 5 strata properties.

More than half of the respondents chose to live in their strata properties on rent them out (60.7%). On the other hand, some respondents make their strata properties for Airbnb/homestay with a percentage of 23.2% and others use the properties as their holiday homes (16.1%). 66.1% of the respondents are either very aware or fairly aware of the strata living community. Interestingly 33.9% of respondents are not aware of strata living community.

4.1.2 Section B: Strata Dispute Issues

In section B, the questionnaire focuses on strata conflict issues based on two parts. The first is through the building occupants' own experiences of strata disputes, and the second is through the occupants' perceptions of the causes of these strata disputes. Table 2 shows the Likert scale results of the findings obtained as follows.

Table 2 Strata dispute issues

Variable	Mean
<i>The most serious strata issues/disputes that you have personally experienced/encountered</i>	
Facilities and amenities	4.57
Security issues	4.50
Residents' attitude	4.28
Property managers who are not well-informed	4.24
Renovation issues	4.21
Management	3.95
Account related	3.80
<i>Main cause of the strata issues</i>	
Enforcement by the strata managers	4.26
Residents' attitude	4.20
The property was not properly maintained	4.18
Lack of response in managing security issues	4.10
Lack of legislation on strata management	3.95
Property Managers who are not well-informed	3.84
Lack of rules in strata living	3.80
Too many rules in strata living	3.76

Based on Table 2, the highest mean related to strata disputes ever experienced by building occupants involves facilities and amenities, which is 4.57. Followed by security issues of 4.50. This clearly shows that the level of service provided by the management to the occupants of the building is very important, and it can contribute to disputes if this matter is ignored. Meanwhile, residents' attitudes, property managers who are not well-informed, and renovation issues obtained a mean of 4.28, 4.24, and 4.21, respectively. This clearly shows the attitude of the occupants themselves, and the management play a role in contributing to the strata disputes that have occurred. Management and related accounts obtained a mean below 4 which are 3.95 and 3.80, respectively. Based on the observations carried out, this often happens, but it can be controlled through proper management.

The results also show that the main cause of this strata dispute is due to 'enforcement by the strata managers' which is a mean of 4.26. Followed by the second cause of the dispute, residents' attitude, which is a mean of 4.20. Both are the main sources of disputes if there is no good understanding between the management and occupants of the building. The enforcement implemented by the management should be appropriate and acceptable to occupants. Building occupants also have the right to understand and obtain accurate information from the management. On the other hand, the property was not properly maintained and the lack of response in managing security issues obtained a mean of 4.18 and 4.10, respectively. These things are also capable of being the sources of this strata dispute as they involve issues of comfort and safety of the building occupants. In terms of legislation, lack of legislation on strata management, property managers who are not well-informed, lack of rules in strata living, and too many rules in strata living have obtained a mean below 3 which are 3.95, 3.84,

3.80, and 3.76, respectively. This clearly shows that knowledge of the Strata Management Act is very important to both parties. Through adequate knowledge of this matter, these strata dispute issues can be reduced in the future.

4.1.3 Section C: Early Briefing

Almost 84.0% of the respondents think that having an early briefing session is very important to residents/buyers, and at the same time, 16.1% of them think that early briefing session is quite important. More than 50% of the respondents think that the best time to have a briefing on strata living is before S&P. It is followed by after formation of Joint Management Committee (Developer still part of the committee) (17.9%), then upon vacant possession (VP) (16.0%) and upon signing of S&P (12.5%). The briefing should be held weekly (7.1%), monthly (12.5%) or bi-monthly (16.1%) and yearly 14.3%. Half of the respondents felt the briefing should be held quarterly.

The topics that need to be included in the briefing are SOP (64.3%), facilities information (67.9%), billing information (60.7%), management information (64.3%), and Strata Management Act (55.4%). 80.4% of the respondents think that a briefing will help to reduce strata disputes while the rest of them think that a briefing will not help to reduce strata disputes. This can be seen as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Early briefing

Variable	n	Percentage
<i>Interested in having an early briefing</i>	56	100%
<i>Importance of having an early briefing</i>		
Very important	47	83.9%
Quite important	9	16.1%
<i>Best time to have a briefing on strata living</i>		
Before S&P	30	53.6%
After formation of Joint Management Committee	10	17.9%
Upon Vacant Possession (VP)	9	16.0%
Upon signing of S&P	7	12.5%
<i>How often the briefing should be held</i>		
Weekly	4	7.1%
Monthly	7	12.5%
Bi-monthly	9	16.1%
Quarterly	28	50.0%
Yearly	8	14.3%
<i>Topics*</i>		
SOP	36	64.3%
Facilities information	38	67.9%
Billing information	34	60.7%
Management information	36	64.3%
Strata Management Act	31	55.4%
<i>Can early briefing reduce strata disputes?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	45	80.4%
<i>No</i>	11	19.6%

*Respondents have given more than 1 answer

4.2 Discussions

The survey found that 71.1% are condo owners, which is good for our study as their input is very relevant to this research. Having replies from the developer and the members of MC are equally important as they will provide a view from a different perspective (The Edge Property, 2017). Such information is not vital, but will come in handy in the future if a further in-depth study is carried out to see if there is any difference of view between males and females in responding to questions of strata disputes in Malaysia (PropertyGuru, 2019). Based on the survey, it was found that 73.3% of respondents were in the age bracket of 31 to 50, which was not surprising as that was the most productive age of working adults. The other 26.7% either took part in the survey on behalf of their children or stayed there themselves during their retirement.

The survey showed that the majority of the respondents were from the Chinese ethnic group, most probably because the location where the survey was carried out was predominantly Chinese. Respondents from other ethnicities took part too, albeit in small numbers. The ethnicity was a factor, but will not play a major part as most respondents gave their view from the owners' perspective. Three main reasons given for a buyer to purchase strata properties were due to facilities and amenities availability, security, and investment reasons. To know the reasons why the respondents purchased the strata properties was important because it may help the researcher to understand the perspective of the respondents better (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Among the respondents, half of them were first-time buyers of strata properties. This information is important as it relates to the understanding of the Strata Management Act among new buyers. A very significant 50% of respondents have experience with strata living, so their feedbacks will be equally important and interesting to see if there is any difference in expectation and perception of a new buyer against an experienced strata buyer (Bella-Omunagbe, 2015).

This research also revealed that more than half of the respondents purchased the strata units for their stay, while 23.2% purchased the strata units for investment purposes. This question was asked to see whether two groups of people who purchased the property for different reasons have different views on early briefing and strata disputes (Mohamad & Sufian, 2013).

66.1% of respondents were either very aware or fairly aware of the strata living community. We can assume that they are aware of the Act and what was expected of them. Anyway, it is important to note that a significant 33.9% of the respondents had no idea about strata living (Samad et al., 2018). One of the significant findings through question 11 (on strata disputes) was almost all respondents have knowledge of strata disputes in Malaysia. Granted that some disputes are more prevalent than others, but knowing that respondents are aware of strata disputes, in general, showed that the survey was on the right path with the right group of respondents (Survey Planet, 2020). They have regarded disputes on security and facilities/amenities as the two most serious strata disputes (Kamarudin, 2014). Enforcement, or more accurately, the lack of it seems to be the main cause of disputes according to the respondents. The attitude of residents is also the main factor. These findings are very similar to actual disputes experienced by most strata developments (Tiun, 2009). The strata disputes can be resolved by introducing tougher laws, having stricter enforcement, or educating strata owners. It is good to know that respondents felt that strata disputes can be resolved by educating the strata owners (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2018). This is in line with our objective that early briefing can resolve disputes. The management office seems to be the destination of choice for strata residents when there is a dispute (Ng, 2018). This information tells us the importance of having well-trained management staff at the office. If things are handled properly, many disputes can be resolved at the management office at an early stage.

75.5% of respondents are aware of the Act and this is important to reduce the strata disputes in the country. Anyway, the depth of awareness among the respondents might differ from each other (Mohamad et al., 2015). The finding indicates that respondents felt the Act is best to resolve disputes between owners and the management, which they had earlier said was the hardest to resolve (Mohamad & Sufian, 2013).

In section C, it could be summarised that no respondent disagreed that having an early briefing is indeed beneficial for them as strata dwellers showed keen interest to participate in the early briefing (Keeley, 2015). The respondents' comment might not be 100% in agreement, but from the findings, it is almost unanimously agreed that an early briefing is the right way to go (Wong, 2019). The findings show that many respondents want to know the rules of staying in strata property before they move in. Besides, having a monthly briefing at an early stage might be welcomed by all parties, but when things get more stable, the frequency can be reduced. If the briefing is held monthly, the duration of one hour for every briefing seems to be reasonable and doable (Heathfield, 2021).

The success of a briefing will very much depend on the owner turnout. If owners are committed to attending the briefing, many issues can be resolved. The briefing content should touch on all issues related to strata living which affect all owners (Wahab, 2020). Any channel or ways that can be used to reduce strata disputes should be explored and implemented (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2018). The management needs to prepare printed material with useful information to be distributed during the briefing, so that the owners can refer to it after the briefing. This will make the briefing more effective in achieving the desired result. If owners feel that briefings can help to reduce disputes and all relevant parties concurred, many managements will adopt and implement it voluntarily (Groton & Rubin, 2007).

■ 5.0 CONCLUSION

This research aimed to study the impact of having an early briefing in solving strata disputes in Malaysia. The first objective of this study was to identify the common types and causes of strata disputes in Malaysia. The researcher used a quantitative analysis approach via content analysis in order to achieve the objective. Common strata disputes can be divided into six sections, which are financial issues, renovation issues, personal issues, security issues, maintenance issues, and management issues. The information gathered also helped to establish the relevant questions used in the questionnaire survey conducted to achieve the Objective 2 of this research.

The second finding through the questionnaire survey managed to establish the content of an early briefing and what is the appropriate procedure to carry it out. It was interesting to note that 100% of the respondents surveyed informed that they would be interested to join the early briefing if it was conducted. Respondents are interested in joining the early briefing. They felt it was important to have such briefing, and will make time to attend it. Besides, they opined it should be done even before the S&P is signed. Respondents also strongly felt that such briefing will help to reduce strata disputes, especially concerning house rules matters. Among the topics they wish to be briefed on are Facilities, SOPs, Management Matters, Billing Information, and the Strata Management Act. An overwhelming majority also felt that early briefings should be made mandatory to all future strata developments buyers. A majority felt that such briefing can really help to reduce and resolve strata disputes. The above findings are crucial as they help to answer What, Who, When, and How to conduct early briefings that can help reduce strata disputes in the country. This is the foundation and essence of an early briefing that can

easily be duplicate and practised anywhere in the country. The final finding of the survey helped to achieve the second research objective, which was to determine and establish content and SOP of an early briefing.

The idea of having early briefings for strata owners is practical as well as easy to adopt and be implemented by anyone in the property management industry. This research has shown that respondents and stakeholders like and appreciate the idea. This research is significant as it opens up countless possibilities and ways to conduct the early briefing in order to reduce strata disputes in Malaysia and beyond. There are limitations identified from this study which involved a small sample of respondents, small number of stakeholders, and the location selected is limited to Malacca only. Moving forward, future research should consider and involve bigger respondent samples, and expand the research to nationwide to see if there is any difference in perspective and views among strata owners in different cities. It is also interesting to know whether such briefing would work in low-cost strata development.

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