

Assessing The Public Library Therapeutic Landscape Quality and Satisfaction: A Conceptual Framework

Haslinda Husaini, Siti Arpah Noordin, Shamila Muhamad Shuhidan

Abstract— This paper aims at evaluating the library therapeutic landscape quality in public libraries in Malaysia by identifying and analysing the probable gap between the user's expected and perceived. In any business and service oriented to customer type of environment, satisfying a customer is the ultimate goal. This due to the fact that the public library is an organization which actively engaged in development of well-intentioned of the society. It is an essential element of community life. The new globalization, rapidity of socioeconomic development is becoming more challenging and a growing number of people exposed to social problems. The daily stresses of modern society and the worst is increasing number of mental illness. Although many researchers and studies were conducted on the library service quality, until today less study into the therapeutic landscape environment in the public library. Therefore, effective initiatives, library therapeutic landscape quality which may include initiatives and development may also improve the value and role of a public library. The purpose of this paper is to identify the dimensions of library therapeutic landscape quality and its impact on users' library therapeutic satisfaction. Library therapeutic landscape quality concepts and its purposes will be highlighted within the context of a public library. This paper will also propose a research conceptual framework of a potential research. The actual investigation will adopt a quantitative method approach. A questionnaire will be designed to assess the public library therapeutic landscape quality and satisfaction. The focus of the discussion will emphasize the scenery dimensions in the Malaysia public libraries.

Keywords— Public library, therapeutic landscape, library natural built environment, library social environment, library spiritual environment, library therapeutic satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC libraries are poised to play a leading role in helping many people not matters, individuals nor communities adapt to this challenging and modern world. Many libraries already are linking individuals to information and learning opportunities, driving development and innovation, and serving as community connectors. There are 1,089 library branches or rural libraries and outlets across the

country. There are already a significant physical presence and infrastructure to leverage for long-term success. Public libraries that are also under categories of state libraries and its branches and its rural libraries or community libraries have an administrative power under state government or local authority and the role of National Library Malaysia is to channel and monitor development and operational budget on behalf of the Federal government. Roles of libraries today are contrary to traditional public libraries as the primary of information, today public libraries as an organization which actively engaged with development of social well being of the society play a role to support the information, educational, culture and recreational needs of communities with quality library services to fulfill the needs of educational information and recreational needs of user [3] and with the allocation of the resources which is public libraries it is hope to reduce crime and social ill and be able to improve citizenship.

Previously, the quality and successor successor of the libraries measured through its collections and the sizes of the library. However, with the implementation of SERVQUAL which was developed by A.Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithmal and Leonard L.Berry in 1988 is a method of evaluation for quality of a library from the traditions of measuring collection size and counting incidents of its users, to begin exploring how the therapeutic landscape relates to the library users therapeutic landscape quality and satisfaction [3]. Therapeutic landscapes have been used in various service industries, including public libraries as non commercial community service has been identified as locations which can be restorative and relaxing [23]. Today libraries, have long been interested and implement library interior design to attract the users to the public library as a direct response to acute stressing situations, where the library as a place of safety and relaxation towards users. It is important for libraries to know how well their facilities, services and collection by getting feedback from users because it is a factor for libraries to succeed in therapeutic performance.

This study used the adapted version of SERVQUAL to examine the library therapeutic landscape quality of public libraries.

In this modern society, the hit of the changes in the development of economy and society, affect the young people who are exposed to the various types of maltreatment and traumatic events, normally these young people will experience more then one situation that put them as a victim [2]. The rapid changes of economic development and social changes may lead to many psychological problems especially in

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Malaysia. These negative influences may lead to various forms of social ills and unfortunately it is increasing among the young people who are requiring an attention from the guardian. Children today are citizens of tomorrow as they are the key players in the development of knowledge societies. As to fulfil the needs of our children it is important to monitor their development especially in this new era of digital and borderless environment. Children will go through different types of experiences and challenges as they grow [1]. At this point, public libraries as an essential element of community life has helped to transform and improve the quality of people lives with all the resources available.

II. THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES

The Idea of therapeutic landscape has been widely used to describe the relationship between place, environment and improvements in child well being [3]. This is due to reason that young people required a conducive environment for growth and learn and therapeutic landscape will be one of the important elements in developing their reading and intellectual interest and develop an appropriate well being [4]. According to Wilbert Gesler, the founder of the therapeutic landscape theory, therapeutic landscape means the spaces that have a positive impact on mental health and well being [5].

The concern of the Malaysian government to bring the nation towards inequities of socioeconomic development started since the 90's, has become the platform to improve the nation's knowledge social, cultural, education and economics. The public library is already known to the society and an essential element of community life. The study is highlighted on young person's social wellbeing which makes the public library roles as a therapeutic landscape and well being placed for the future. The research has been conducted on best practices for the public library as therapeutic landscape [3;7] and also employing and adopting the therapeutic landscape theory by Wilbert Gesler. The origins concept of therapeutic landscapes started in a health geographical thinking. However, has been used in various areas such as healthcare context, children summer camp, first nation culture, community gardens & elderly, park, yoga including academic, public and special libraries.

III. THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The study is started with exploring the literature review of the primary, secondary and tertiary sources. From the review, researchers found the potential theories and also a factor and significant dimensions that are available in the study of therapeutic landscape. It was first explored in the public library by Brewster, 2014 [3] by focusing towards the respondents' in the bibliotherapy programme. Results of the study found that the public library's role as the environment not as a service provider and how this aspect built up the library as empowering place. According to Brewster [3] from the study, the public library can be teamed up into their category which is:

- i. The library as familiar, open and welcoming
- ii. The library as comforting and calming
- iii. The library an empowering place

Previous study of library as therapeutic landscape shows how public library contributes to community development by providing types of social activities, free community space, technological resources, connections to the local economy and a high level of community trust [9;8]. The existence of characteristic of the therapeutic landscape element in the library environment helps in fostering imagination, creativity and personal development of communities especially the young people.

It can't be denied that there is a reciprocal relationship between therapeutic landscape, social, environmental setting and human restoration [7;10] be able to influence human well being. Most of the studies in the areas involved a qualitative study where the study aims to understand in depth about the area. Due to this, have started the early stage of the study with a preliminary study to help in the construct validation of the dimension. Few activities are done with the respective place. An activity such as a discussion of the management team to identify the cause of implementing such therapeutic landscape elements in the development of their community libraries.

The respective library also conducted a focus group activity with fewer types of users such as, library users, an academician in the library science area, practitioners and the staff in order to brainstorm the ideas and have a better opinion about the public library services and facilities and also to have a better view about the content validity. The final stage, the researcher will do a face validity with the respective users. The three processes of content validity, construct validity and face validity contribute a significant dimension to the proposed of the conceptual framework. The activities can be seen clearly in the phase 1 of operational framework below:

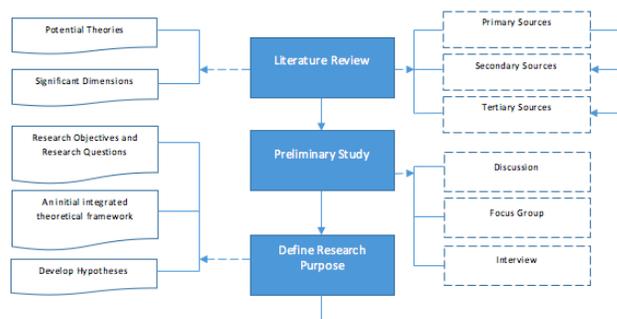


Fig. 1 Phase 1 of operational framework

IV. THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A library should be designed to reflect the different needs of diverse activities available in the public library. Thus, creating better learning spaces for the users. Indeed, design associated with space quality affects the satisfaction. The public library is as important as community assets. It should serve multiple-roles communities and society. The success of it will be achieved by the user's satisfaction on how they benefit the physical interior environments [11], the social environment and the spiritual environment influence their library therapeutic satisfaction towards the feeling of well being or stress reduction.

The framework is conceptualized based on previous studies. For independent variables it is adapted from model of

therapeutic landscapes model by Gesler, 1998 [6] that consists of three dimensions which are natural and built environment, social environment and spiritual environment and supported by empirical studies done by William, 1998; Palka, 1999; Thurber & Malinowski, 1999; Kearns & Barnet, 1999; Scarpaci, 1999; Kearns & Collins, 2000; Williams, 2002; Wilson, 2003; Miligian et.al., 2004; Martin et.al., 2005; Korpela and Ylean, 2007; Ravi, 2008; Brewster, 2014; Montealleh, 2015 [14;15;16;17;18;19;20;21;22;23;3;7]

The framework is also adapting SERVQUAL theory which was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988 [13]. While, LibQUAL survey evolved from a conceptual model based on the SERVQUAL instrument and offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries, Association of Research Libraries Statistics and Assessment Program, 2014 [12]. By using the techniques of SERVQUAL study, this study will be assessing the library therapeutic landscape quality.

As mentioned earlier in the conceptual framework is constructed based on previous studies and adopting the theories of therapeutic landscape by Gesler [6] and SERVQUAL by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry [13]. Results from the preliminary study also adapted into the construction of the dimension. Basically, three main elements are gathered together and rationalised in this study.

A. *Library Therapeutic Landscape Quality Dimensions*

Library therapeutic landscape as defined by Brewster [3] as the familiar and welcoming environment, quiet, calm atmosphere, the empowerment associated with being able to make non-commercial, unpressured decisions about what to read all contributed to the opportunity to conduct an act of self-care by withdrawing from stressful situations into the public library space. It is not only the service provided but also the spaces in the library that has a positive impact on mental health and well being. This is suitable for the role of the public library as a place for reflection, self realization and sanctuary [5].

According to therapeutic landscape by Gesler (1998), the dimension is divided into three main categories, as for this study it is still remaining the basic category. Library therapeutic landscape quality consists of:

i. *Library Natural and Built Environment*

Library natural and built environment being defined as landscape literally means a picture, of nature. Montealleh, P. 2015 [7] stated that nature comprises of the human environment and has an impact on the quality of life. It is an entrance of nature into people's lives. It's also show the landscape relationship between nature and both human and human communities.

ii. *Library Social Environment*

Aarts and Dijksterhuis , 2003 [26] discuss it as a process-oriented approach to investigate how situational norms guide social behavior. It was posited that situational norms can be seen as associations between environment and normative behavior in memory that is shaped by social influence.

iii. *Library Spiritual Environment*

Library spiritual environment is referring to the holistic approach has been evolving and practices in the library facilities, services and activities. It's to develop a positive mind and soul of the user and ambience. According to Patel [27] for many people, spiritual involves some degree of belief in a higher power that is labeled in many ways.

V. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research is to provide a conceptual understanding of the adoption of therapeutic landscape in the context of the public library in the development of society well being. For the research paradigm, the researcher subscribing the positivism research philosophy.

According to Cresswel [30], quantitative research needs, for a random selection of the sample of the study population. Statistical sampling relies on the study sample to develop general laws, which can be generalized to the larger population. The advantage of the results obtained from random sampling is that the findings have an increased likelihood of being a generalization.

For the purpose of this study, the research instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be distributed to targeted respondents from the Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Selangor (PPAS) and PUSTAKA Negeri Sarawak.

According to Cresswell [28], quantitative research demands for a random selection of the sample of the study population and random assignment of the sample to the various study groups. Statistical sampling relies on the study sample to develop general laws, which can be generalized to the larger population. The advantage of the results obtained from random sampling is that the findings have an increased likelihood of being a generalization. The disadvantage is that random selection is time consuming, with the result that many studies used the more easily obtained opportunities sample [29], this will inhibit the possibilities of generalization if the sample is too small.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the preliminary study, it revealed that the public library really puts the majority of their effort in ensuring the adoption of therapeutic landscape implementation in the public library. Despite that, the implementation and a measure of library therapeutic landscape quality are still at the beginning level. This is due to exposure of library therapeutic landscape in Malaysia practically is still new. Even the study is also aiming at evaluating the library therapeutic landscape quality in public libraries in Malaysia. The most objective of this paper is to identify the dimensions of a public library therapeutic landscape. With this finding, hopefully the public library will be able to expand the theory of therapeutic landscape in the public library setting Today, in the era of modern society, libraries need to have a high impact service and facilities to claim that is their contribution and role in the developing the knowledge society.

To see the public library as empowering place [3] in supporting community and society's development and well being as the biggest contribution of the libraries.

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