

Tenancy Management: Tenant perceptions of the pre-tenancy and tenancy execution phases

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the tenant perception towards tenancy management of the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL). A questionnaire was designed based on a breakdown of several attributes during the pre-tenancy and tenancy execution phases and distributed among the tenants. A descriptive analysis was conducted, and the findings show that the areas that the management could focus on to improve the tenancy management are the tenancy advertisement requirements; vacant possession and complaints handling process; facilities and amenities; simplified contract renewal process; interview sessions; and appropriate approach to solve rent arrears.

Keywords: Tenancy management; Tenant perception

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/aje-bs.v8i26.434>

1.0 Introduction

Tenant perception is a significant indicator that contributes to the successful operation and performance of tenancy management by balancing the property management services provided with the expenses incurred in managing the buildings according to the requirements of the owners and tenants. Tenants are clients who like to enjoy additional services for the cost of the rent that they pay (Ummu Sholehah et al., 2020). Satisfied tenants are usually less interested in changing their property on the condition that the rented property and service charges provide value for money, there is a convenient tenancy process, and they have a good relationship with the property manager and owner (Sanderson & Edwards, 2016; Gibler et al., 2014).

By providing tenants with excellent customer service, property managers can significantly increase the value of real estate portfolios (Sanderson & Read, 2020). Therefore, proper tenancy management must be implemented in all types of properties, including those owned by the government, to ensure that the properties reach a minimum standard of living and are socially acceptable. It includes the implementation of the best practice model of the tenancy management in both government and private sectors.

Nevertheless, society often has a poor perception of properties that are managed by the government or authorities due to various issues, such as poor maintenance, high vandalism rate, and high rent arrears. The most common maintenance problems include lift services for the residents, utilities, cleaning, and sanitation. Although they are the largest local authority in Malaysia, the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) is not exempted from dealing with such issues. For instance, public rental housing, which comes complete with basic facilities and utilities provided by the DBKL, is aimed at helping the lower-income group and ensuring that they can live comfortably. However, the low rental fee that the tenants are charged makes it difficult for the local authority to efficiently maintain the provided services (Firdaus, Ramly, & Ely, 2016). Apart from that, the issue of accumulated and current rental arrears disrupts the collection of rentals each year (Mona Isa et al., 2022) and gives rise to difficulties in managing and maintaining the property. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the perception of tenants of tenancy management, particularly the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur by the DBKL, to improve the operation and performance of their tenancy management continuously.

Generally, assessing tenant perception and satisfaction significantly helps property managers and owners obtain feedback from their tenants to improve their properties, ultimately increasing tenant satisfaction and retention. According to Gayani, Dimuthu, and Harsha (2018), tenant satisfaction is defined as the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions generated from an evaluative response, where both intellectual and emotional aspects are considered together. Hence, tenant satisfaction can be evaluated once tenant perception has been identified together with the expectations.

Most studies on tenant perceptions of property focus on design principles, urban policy and planning, social milieu, and residents' attributes (Kleeman et al., 2022). However, studies on the perceptions of property management services, particularly on the tenancy management process are still lacking. Couey (2020) has stated that the main factors

contributing to good perceptions of property management services are completing maintenance requests, property conditions, and customer services. Besides that, satisfaction with the property management team, quick response by management staff, cooperation, and friendliness are important predictors of tenants' satisfaction (Bo Li et al., 2021). Therefore, Bo Li et al. (2021) have added "landlord services and responsibilities" as part of their determinants of residential satisfaction in their study, which includes signing a written contract, timely repairs, maintaining a hazard-free and pest-free environment, and giving notice before entering the rental units.

In this study, tenant perceptions of the tenancy management of the DBKL were identified and, at the same time, overviews and recommendations were obtained from the tenants to improve the overall tenancy management process. Tenant recommendations were crucial as they would recommend the best and most convenient solutions for them, and therefore, would match their expectations. The findings of this study will help the DBKL manage its rental properties in a better, more systematic, prudent, proactive, efficient, and orderly manner in accordance with the law, which will help prevent future rent arrears and maintenance issues.

2.0 Literature Review

The issues and problems of tenancy management in Malaysia can be divided into two (2) main factors, namely, internal factors and external factors. The internal factors include financial problems (Kwok et al., 2008; Salleh, 2011; Akanvose, 2018), administrative issues (Salleh, 2011; Omar et al., 2015), problems with the services provided (Omar et al., 2015), and enforcement of the laws (Seman, 2007) while the external factors include the satisfaction level of the tenants (Salleh, 2011) and the attitudes of the tenants (Mat Isa, 2018).

Tenancy management is a part of the scope of work of property management, which covers the aspects of billing, rental collection, rental disbursement, liaising with tenants, coordination with contractors, management of utilities and services, and monitoring the reinstatement of premises upon termination or expiry of the tenancy or lease. As with the other areas of management, tenancy management also includes managerial activities; such as planning, decision-making, leading and controlling people, and organization of financial, physical, and information resources. Effective and efficient tenancy management significantly affects the satisfaction level of tenants or occupants and gives a good perception of the management. As there is no specific Act or standardized tenancy management process in Malaysia, Mona Isa et al. (2022) developed a best practice model of tenancy management by adapting the basic management process (Figure 1).

The model was developed based on three different tenancy phases; namely, (i) pre-tenancy, (ii) tenancy execution, and (iii) post-tenancy, with a breakdown of the attributes and sub-attributes of every phase. However, in this study, only phases 1 and 2 were examined as most of the tenants had experienced only these two phases and not the third phase, which is the process of terminating a contract.

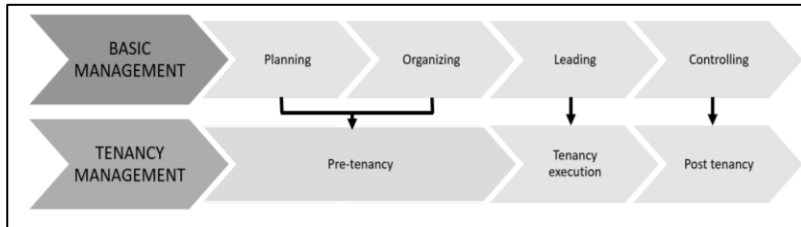


Figure 1: Adaptation of the basic management processes in tenancy management.
(Source: Authors, 2023)

In the **pre-tenancy phase**, the organisation needs to plan how potential tenants will be selected and what strategies and documents are required to commence the tenancy. This phase consists of determining the rental value, advertising, the tenancy application process, preparation of the agreement, and vacant possession (Mona Isa et al., 2022). From the owner's perspective, the selection of tenants should be emphasised to avoid any issues in the future. According to Iruobe (2020), tenant selection is the most successful part of property management. Most mistakes can be corrected, but choosing the wrong tenants may not only cost lots of money but also endless frustrations. The selection criteria for property tenants are important in gaining consistent returns on investment and are necessary for the long-term loyalty of tenants. Therefore, property owners must have a comprehensive procedure to ensure that tenant selection is conducted efficiently and enable potential tenants to apply and provide complete documents. Apart from that, the tenant's understanding of the tenancy agreement is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and breaches of the tenancy agreement. Therefore, based on the findings of Mona et al. (2022), the tenant needs to attend the pre-tenancy training to clarify the legal aspects involved during the tenancy period in accordance with the clauses and subject to the tenancy agreement.

The process of vacant possession or handing over of the keys also needs to be done in a systematic manner by conducting an inventory inspection. The tenant should also sign a record of handing over the keys as proof that the process has been conducted fairly between the tenant and owner. During the inspection, tenants are advised to take photos of every defect present in the property to avoid being charged for damages that they did not cause (Reeda, 2022). Meanwhile, move-in or move-out inspections are vital for the owners as they ensure that they can keep track of the maintenance needs of the property. This process is important for noting damages to the property, the repairs needed, the cost of repairs, and to avoid any disputes with the tenants when the time comes to refund their security deposit (Chanahra, 2020).

During the **tenancy execution phase**, a tenancy agreement has been signed between the owner and the tenant and both parties will fulfil their obligations as outlined in the agreement. The responsibilities of the tenant and the owner are among the criteria emphasized in this phase. The right to occupy the property as a tenant is accompanied by the responsibilities to be borne by the tenant; namely, rental payments and other obligations

specified under the clauses in the tenancy agreement. As the owner, issues concerning rent arrears and delays in paying rent should be overcome or minimized. Therefore, a comprehensive system for monitoring rent payments is required. An online payment record is strongly encouraged for monitoring rent payments by tenants (Mona Isa et al., 2022; Fitzhugh et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, if the damage is not caused by the tenant, the owner is responsible for making repairs or paying for replacements when something breaks down. Keeping the rental property maintained helps the owner preserve and increase its value. It also helps retain good tenants and attract new ones. In a commercial environment, for example, service orders and repair works, cleaning and garbage collection, security and safety services, car parks and vehicle management, access control, and building services and amenities are among the services that help in tenant retention and should be considered by property owners (Gayani et al., 2018). A study on industrial buildings by Arumugam et al. (2017) found a direct correlation between overall tenant satisfaction and satisfaction with the way owners manage a property. Therefore, keeping a tenant satisfied is as good as keeping the building occupied for business revenue.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a “mixed-method” research, which draws on the potential strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to allow the authors to explore various angles of the research. Figure 2 shows the flowchart of the research methodology employed in this study.

In the initial stage of the study, a more in-depth analysis of the literature review was conducted to develop the theoretical framework. This analysis consisted of a summary of the reading materials from journals, books, and other sources of information that have been published on tenancy management. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) Quality Procedures that the DBKL uses were thoroughly examined and compared with the SOPs and guidelines that other organizations use to determine the preliminary criteria and attributes of the tenancy management practice. This is in line with Gayani et al. (2018), where the degree of service quality is conceived by the collective perception of numerous service encounters.

The attributes and sub-attributes of tenancy management identified from the literature review were then used to develop a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections; Section A: Demographic Profile; Section B: Evaluation of Tenant Perception During Pre-Tenancy Phase; Section C: Evaluation of Tenant Perception During Tenancy Execution Phase; and Section D: Suggestions for Improvement. A Likert scale was used to design the closed-ended questions in Sections B and C while open-ended questions were used in Section D to allow the respondents to answer based on their complete knowledge, feelings, and understanding. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted using 30 DBKL and non-DBKL staff who were renting the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur. A Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability test was used to determine the reliability of the

questionnaire, where an α of more than 0.7 is considered reliable. The α of all the Likert scale variables in Sections B and C were 0.915 and 0.925, respectively, which indicated that the variables in the questionnaire were reliable and could be used for the main data collection.

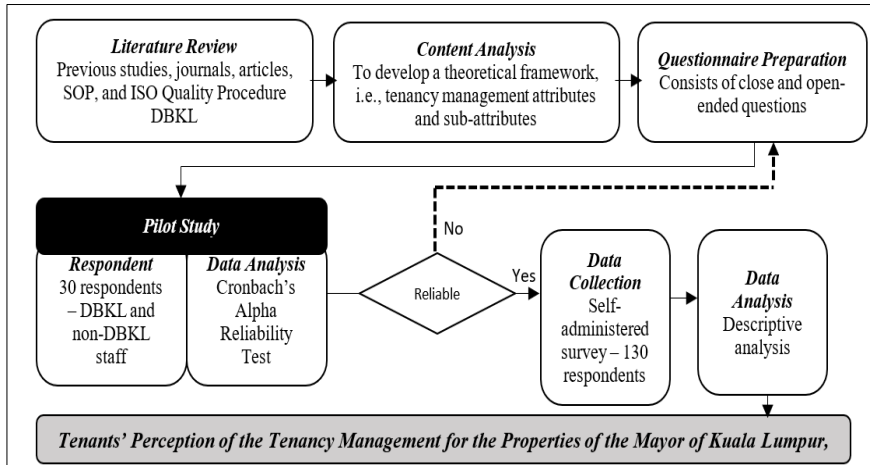


Figure 2: Research Methodology Flowchart
(Source: Authors, 2023)

The questionnaire was distributed to the tenants of the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, DBKL, which comprised 251 residential tenants as well as 111 commercial and industrial tenants. The potential respondents were contacted via phone and WhatsApp, and the link to the questionnaire was sent via WhatsApp or e-mail, depending on the respondent's preference. However, of the 362 potential respondents, only 130 were willing to participate in this study. The collected data were then analysed using a descriptive analysis (frequency and mean analysis) to determine the perception of the tenants of the tenancy management services provided by the DBKL during the pre-tenancy and tenancy execution phases. A high mean value would indicate that the respondents were satisfied and that they agreed with the current practices of the DBKL. For this study, if the mean value of an attribute exceeded 4.00, it was considered to have "good" attributes in terms of process and execution while a mean value of below 4.0 indicated that it was "moderately good".

4.0 Results

Of the 15 questions, 11 were closed-ended and four were open-ended questions on the demographic profile of the respondents. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the

closed-ended questions while Table 2 shows the additional information of commercial and industrial tenants who own companies.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the demographic profile

Demographic Profile			
Description	n=130	Description	n=130
<u>Premise Type</u>		<u>Employment Sector</u>	
Residential	93.1%	Government	64.6%
Commercial	6.2%	Private	13.8%
Industrial	0.8%	Self-employed	12.3%
<u>Contract Status</u>		<u>Household Monthly Income</u>	
Existing tenant	65.4%	Less than RM4,000	57.7%
Existing tenant who renewed contract	34.6%	RM4,001 – RM8,000	35.4%
		RM8,001 and above	6.9%
<u>Category</u>		<u>Number of Household Dependents</u>	
Individual	93.1%	1-3	56.2%
Company	6.9%	4-6	39.2%
		7-9	4.6%
<u>Age</u>		<u>Tenancy Period</u>	
21-29	12.3%	1-3 years	46.2%
30-39	50.8%	4-5 years	9.2%
40-49	23.1%	5 years and above	44.6%
50-59	10.0%		
60 and above	3.8%		
<u>Gender</u>		<u>Rental Payment Method</u>	
Male	58.5%	Online payment	10.0%
Female	41.5%	Payment counter	25.4%
<u>Race</u>		Salary deduction	60.0%
Malay	92.3%	Others	4.6%
Chinese	0.8%		
India	4.6%		
Others	2.3%		

(Source: Authors, 2023)

Table 2: Additional information of commercial and industrial tenants who own companies.

Respondent	Business Type	Company Establishment Period (Year)	Monthly Income (RM)
Respondent 1	Commercial (Al-Quran academy)	3	2,000
Respondent 2	Commercial (Printing)	25	40,000
Respondent 3	Commercial (Tailor shop)	28	6,000
Respondent 4	Commercial (Clinic)	23	8,000
Respondent 5	Commercial (NIL)	NIL	1,200
Respondent 6	Commercial (Air-conditioning maintenance)	3	10,000
Respondent 7	Commercial (Retail)	25	3,000
Respondent 8	Commercial (Food flavouring)	2	5,000
Respondent 9	Industrial (Car beauty centre)	6	35,000

(Source: Authors, 2023)

Based on the demographic analysis seen in Table 1, the largest group of respondents were Malays with a monthly household income of less than RM4,000. Of the commercial and industrial tenants, most of them rented commercial properties for various types of businesses and earned a monthly income of RM1,200 to RM40,000.

Tables 3 and 4 show the tenant perceptions of the tenancy management of the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur during the pre-tenancy and tenancy execution phases.

Table 3: Tenant perception during the pre-tenancy phase.

Attribute	Sub-attribute	Sub-mean	Mean	Hierarchy
TYPES OF RENTAL PREMISES	The rental value of the premise is reasonable.	4.10	4.10	4
ADVERTISEMENT	The rental information advertised is clear and detailed.	3.98	3.98	6
DOCUMENTS	The application form is easy to understand.	4.25	4.19	2
	Tenants do not face any problems filling and completing the application form.	4.24		
	The application method is simple and easy.	4.08		
OFFER LETTER	The information specified in the offer letter is clear and easy to understand.	4.28	4.28	1
TENANCY/LEASE AGREEMENT	Tenants understand the basic details of the agreement.	4.25	4.18	3
	Tenants understand the legal aspects of the agreement.	4.14		
	Tenants understand the social aspects of the agreement (house rules).	4.15		
	Tenants understand all the clauses in the agreement.	4.18		
VACANT POSSESSION	An inventory check is made during vacant possession.	3.94	4.00	5
	The premise handover form is completed and signed by the tenant.	4.17		
	The DBKL makes repairs if there are damage complaints or other issues.	3.74		
	The vacant possession process is smooth.	4.16		

(Source: Authors, 2023)

Most of the respondents agreed that the information in the offer letter was clear (M=4.28). They also had no issues with the method used during the tenancy application process and were able to complete the tenancy application documents properly (M=4.19). In terms of the lease or tenancy agreement, most of the respondents understood the basic details, legal aspects, social aspects, and all the clauses specified in the agreement (M=4.18). The rental value set by the DBKL was also reasonable (M=4.10).

For the vacant possession attribute, the respondents felt that the vacant possession process was smooth (M=4.00). However, not all the respondents were satisfied or agreed with some of the sub-attributes of the vacant possession process. This included the

"inventory check during vacant possession" (M=3.94) and "executing repairs when there were complaints of damage" (M=3.74) sub-attributes. This was probably because each respondent may have had a different good or bad experience during the vacant possession process. Lastly, the last attribute; advertisement; was rated as moderately good (M=3.98).

Table 4: Tenant perception during the tenancy execution phase.

Attribute	Sub-attribute	Sub-mean	Mean	Hierarchy
RENTAL PAYMENT	The rental payment method set by the DBKL is effective and convenient.	4.32	4.16	1
	The DBKL sends a friendly reminder.	4.03		
	In the event of arrears, the DBKL gives clear notice.	4.12		
MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT	Tenants are aware of the appropriate channel to file a complaint of damage.	3.57	3.39	4
	The DBKL responds quickly and efficiently if there is a damage complaint.	3.20		
	The DBKL always provides good maintenance services.	3.40		
FACILITIES AND AMENITIES	The DBKL provides adequate basic facilities; such as electricity, water, sewage system, and others.	4.04	3.69	3
	The DBKL always monitors facility complaints.	3.42		
	Building services; such as elevators, fire detectors, parking, complaint counters, and others; are well provided.	3.76		
	The DBKL always conducts repairs whenever they receive complaints from occupants.	3.53		
CONTRACT RENEWAL	The DBKL promptly responds to the request of an existing tenant to extend the rental period.	3.87	3.90	2
	The procedure to extend the rental period is simple and efficient.	3.92		

(Source: Authors, 2023)

During the tenancy execution phase, most of the respondents felt that the rent payment method set by the DBKL was effective and convenient; and in order to avoid rent arrears, friendly reminders would be sent, and the DBKL would give clear notice to defaulters (M=4.16). For the contract renewal attribute (M=3.90), the respondents felt that the response given by the DBKL to a request to extend the rental period and the procedure to extend the rental period was moderately good. In terms of the provision of facilities and amenities, the complaints monitoring and response were moderately good (M=3.69). The maintenance and repair attribute ranked last and had the lowest mean value (M=3.39). Therefore, this attribute was also at a moderately good level as not all the respondents were aware of the appropriate channel to file a damage complaint. They also felt that the

response of the DBKL to damage complaints and maintenance requests was at a moderate level only.

Dichotomous questions and open-ended questions were also prepared in the questionnaire to enable the respondents to provide suggestions for improving the processes and services provided by the DBKL. Table 5 presents the opinions obtained from the respondents.

Table 5: Respondents' suggestions for improving the tenancy management process.

No.	Question	Answer	Reasons for the Answer
1.	An interview should be conducted during the tenant selection process.	Yes (65%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More accurate, transparent, and easy to understand. • Greater scrutiny of a person's qualifications, abilities, finances, and personality. • Creates an opportunity for discussions between potential tenants and panels (the DBKL). • Prevents sub-letting.
		No (35%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays the tenant selection process. • Avoids biases and evaluates tenants according to qualification scores. • Conduct interviews for non-DBKL staff only. • A disadvantage to those who applied early.
2.	A briefing session is required before the tenancy or lease agreement is signed.	Yes (75%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question-and-answer (Q&A) session can be held by both parties. • More effective, transparent, understandable, and simplifies matters. • Able to get the latest information on rental conditions. • Avoids rental issues in the future.
		No (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tenancy or lease agreement is clear enough and easy to understand. • It is adequate to notify by letter, brochure, or website and provide the number of the officer in charge for any queries. • Necessary for new tenants only.
3.	Respondent intends to renew the tenancy or lease agreement.	Yes (97%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location is strategic and convenient and the facilities are good. • Cannot afford to buy a house. • Reasonable rental rates. • Have been renting for a long time. • The tenant's status is guaranteed and less risk of breach of contract.
		No (3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretion for residence ownership/to own the rented property.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to obtain approval to renovate the premises.
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(Source: Authors, 2023)

As seen in Table 5, most of the respondents agreed that an interview should be conducted during the tenant selection process to ensure accuracy and transparency during the selection process and to select qualified tenants to minimize issues of rent arrears. They also agreed that a briefing session was required before the tenancy or lease agreement was signed to ensure that potential tenants understand the contents of the agreement and avoid rental issues in the future. Overall, although some of the sub-attributes were only ranked moderately good as not all respondents had similar experiences with the process, most of the respondents agreed and were satisfied with the tenancy management process implemented by the DBKL. Apparently, 97% of the respondents intend to renew their tenancy or lease agreement for various reasons.

The respondents were also asked about the appropriate method of solving the rent arrears problem. As most of the respondents were DBKL employees, they reported that salary deductions, auto-debit, and credit cards were the most effective methods of dealing with this issue. Table 6 shows the opinions of the respondents on the appropriate methods of solving the rent arrears issue.

Table 6: Respondent's opinions about appropriate methods to solve the rent arrears issue.

Method	%
Salary deduction / auto-debit via active bank account or credit card / online payment	33.1%
Law enforcement (notice or eviction)	18.5%
Discussion/counseling	10.8%
Installment payment plan	24.6%
Rent reduction	3.8%
Rental bill generation for one year	0.8%
Mobile Counter	0.8%
No recommendations	8.5%
TOTAL	100%

(Source: Authors, 2023)

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the DBKL should implement the following suggestions to ensure that the tenancy management process is executed effectively while also meeting the needs of the tenants:

- a) Detailed information in the advertisement.
Important details; such as the criteria for tenant applicants, property details, and monthly rental rate; must be stated in an open advertisement about a property vacancy.
- b) Efficient vacant possession process.
The vacant possession or handing over of keys process must include an inventory checklist, an inspection of the condition of the unit to ensure that the

property is safe and conducive for occupancy, and a proper record of the handover of keys process.

- c) Maintenance and repairs.
Provide feedback and respond to damage complaints and other issues and provide an effective platform to submit complaints; such as online complaints via mobile applications.
- d) Provide adequate facilities and amenities.
Provide the best facilities and amenities to facilitate and ensure the comfort of the tenants.
- e) Efficient and simplified contract renewal process.
Provide tenants who do not have any rent arrears an opportunity to renew their contract in a process that is convenient for both parties.
- f) Conduct interviews.
An interview should be conducted to assess the social and personal aspects of the applicant that cannot be assessed during the initial screening session, including a psychometry test.
- g) Appropriate methods of solving rent arrear problems.
Salary deduction, auto-debit, and credit cards are the most effective methods for dealing with rent arrear issues. However, other suggestions should be considered on a case-by-case basis; such as instalment payment plans and rental reductions for those unable to pay the arrears.

6.0 Conclusion

This study assessed tenant perceptions of the current tenancy management practices of the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur by the DBKL. Most of the tenants had a good perception of the tenancy management of the DBKL and provided several recommendations to improve the process. These recommendations will help the DBKL review its existing policies and procedures and determine what should be prioritised. However, this study only assessed tenant perceptions based on the attributes and sub-attributes of the DBKL tenancy management, future studies should examine rent arrear strategies, how to develop a community that is "arrears-free", and the efficacy of various rent collection strategies.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their gratitude and thanks to the Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Malaysia for funding this study under the Kajian R&D 2020 – 2021 entitled *Kajian Pelaksanaan Model Amalan Terbaik Pengurusan Penyewaan Hartanah Datuk Bandar Kuala Lumpur, DBKL*.

Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

In this paper, the authors have reported on the tenant perception of the tenancy management of the properties of the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL). This is significant because the finding will recommend the most convenient solutions for tenants during the tenancy phases, and therefore, would match their expectations. The findings also will help the DBKL manage its rental properties in a better, more systematic, prudent, proactive, efficient, and orderly manner in accordance with the law, which will help prevent future rent arrears and maintenance issues.

Authors Declaration

This article is an extended version of the original conference paper published in the E-BPJ, 7 (20), June, 2022, 351-357.

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