

BEST DISSERTATION 最佳碩士論文



Effective Implementation of Pet Control Measures in Private Residential Buildings under Pet-Friendly Trend in Hong Kong



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Introduction

This dissertation investigates the implementation of pet control measures within private residential buildings in Hong Kong. With the common idiom, “prevention is better than cure.”, it emphasizes that proactive pet control measures are more effective than reactive dispute resolution processes for addressing pet-related complaints (AFCD, 2024). Their effectiveness is attributed to an emphasis on prevention, clarity, and established community standards. By establishing clear guidelines for pet ownership concerning safety, noise, and hygiene, these measures prevent issues from arising. In contrast, dispute resolution is reactive, often initiated only after complaints have escalated into conflicts where emotions can cloud judgment and heighten tensions between residents.

Furthermore, pet control measures provide consistency and clarity, ensuring all residents understand expectations. This reduces misunderstandings, whereas dispute resolution can involve subjective interpretations of behaviour, leading to communication breakdowns and extended disputes. A framework of established measures helps to eliminate negative emotions, as residents are less likely to feel personally targeted.

A critical consideration for Property Management Companies (PMCs) is executing within the legal framework, including ordinances and the Deed of Mutual Covenant (DMC). As PMCs are not law enforcement agents, they can only use ordinances to advise residents and seek governmental departments’ assistance. Crucially, they must not establish rules that contradict the DMC, as past court cases have invalidated measures that prohibited pets or their access to common areas where the DMC allowed them (Chung, 2010).

This task is also complicated by a growing pet-friendly trend in Hong Kong, supported by Government initiatives to create more pet-accessible public areas (LegCo, 2019; LCSD, 2024; the Government of HKSAR Press Release, 2024). Consequently, PMCs face the challenge of balancing the expectation to accommodate pet owners with the need to safeguard the interests of all residents. This research aims to explore this balance by investigating current measures and providing recommendations.

The specific research questions focus on identifying existing pet control measures, the elements of pet-friendly policies, the criteria for effective implementation, and the challenges PMCs encounter. The objectives are to review relevant policies and disputes, identify the legal framework, investigate factors for effective implementation, and explore recommendations.

The study's scope is precisely defined, evaluating implementation through implementability (measures' complexity, legal compliance, stakeholder perceptions, resources) and effectiveness (objective metrics: complaint reduction, compliance rate; subjective metrics: residents' satisfaction). Data collection was concentrated on three private estates whose DMCs do not prohibit pets, as estates with complete prohibition on DMC require no further control measures.

Literature Review

Pet Control Measures

Since the Mid-90s, the relationship between humans and animals has progressed, leading to the development of control measures for safer coexistence (Srinivasan, 2013). In Hong Kong, Government measures primarily target pet dogs due to their need to be walked in public. Key controls mandate that owners must clean up their pets' waste and prevent excessive noise that causes annoyance to prevent health hazards and nuisances (CLIC, 2021; FEHD, 2024). Furthermore, all dogs over five months must be licensed and vaccinated against rabies, with renewals every three years to monitor health (CLIC, 2021). In public spaces, dogs must be leashed; larger dogs (20kg+) require a shorter, 2-meter or less leash to prevent physical nuisance (CLIC, 2021).

Effective Implementation

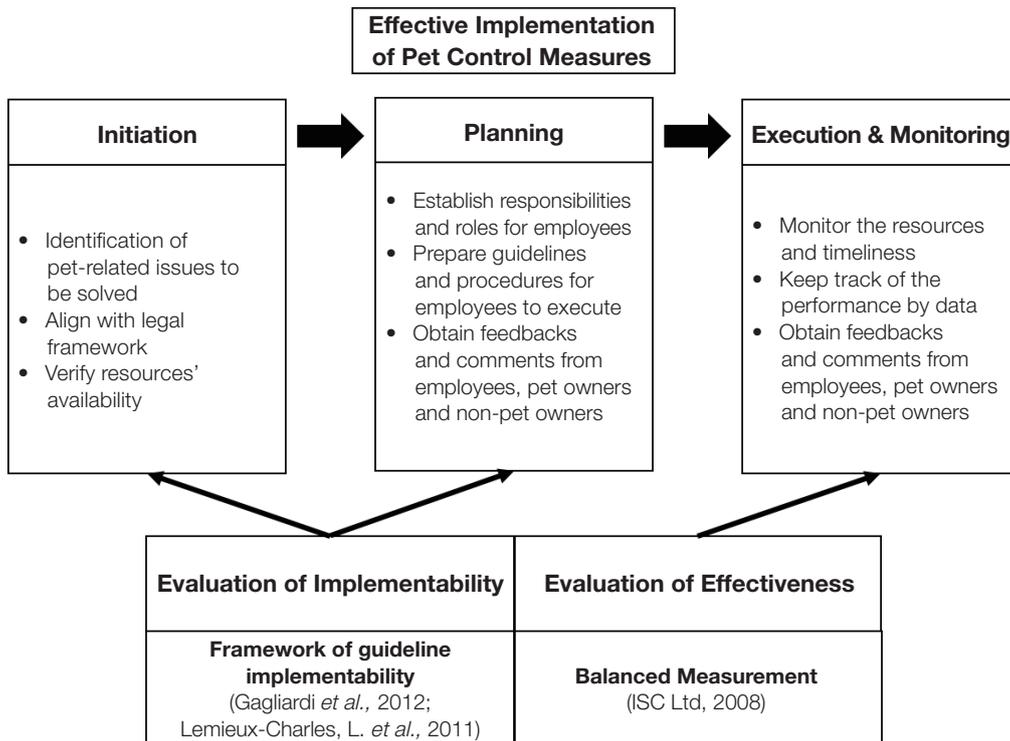
Effective implementation requires distinct objectives, a supportive legal framework, collaborative stakeholder efforts, and a resourced execution team. It hinges on effective governance, planning, and ongoing stakeholder engagement (Figure 1). The legal framework and resource availability form the foundation during initiation. The planning phase necessitates clearly defined roles and established tasks. Essential tools, such as standard operating procedures (SOPs), must be in place prior to execution, which itself must include monitoring and data collection for reliable reporting. Continuous stakeholder engagement is vital for evaluating a measure's implementability during initiation and planning, and its effectiveness during execution and monitoring (Figure 2). Implementability is evaluated across domains of usability, validity, communicability, and resource implication (Figure 3). Effectiveness is assessed through objective internal and output measures, and subjective satisfaction measures capturing residents' perceptions (Figure 4).

Figure 1: The Required Elements of Effective Implementation

Effective Implementation		
Governance	Planning & Project Management	Engagement and Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the legal framework Recognize required resources' availability Set up responsibilities and roles for internal stakeholders (employees) with measures' clarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline "What", "How", "Where", "When" & for "Whom" for internal stakeholders (employees) to follow Monitor the resources and timeliness Keep track of the performance of measures by data during the progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider internal stakeholders (employees) & external stakeholders (pet owners and non-pet owners) Regular engagement and communication with stakeholders

Source: International Organization for Migration, 2024

Figure 2: Effective Implementation in Project Management Phases & The evaluation of implementability and effectiveness in different phases



Source: Gagliardi *et al.*, 2012; ISC Ltd, 2008; Lemieux-Charles *et al.*, 2011, Westland, 2007

Figure 3: The Framework of Implementability Evaluation

Framework of Implementability Evaluation		
Domain	Criteria	Examples
Usability	Clarity of measures; Ease of execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity of measures' procedures Adequacy of measures' guidelines
Validity	Legal compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with legal framework (Ordinances & DMC)
Communicability	Stakeholder engagement and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn the attitude of staff, pet owners and non-pet owners towards measures To learn the degree of impact to pet owners' and non-pet owners' enjoyment in order to make a balance
Resource implication	Availability of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Manpower Hardware materials Geographical

Source: Gagliardi *et al.*, 2012; Lemieux-Charles *et al.*, 2011; Meyers *et al.*, 2012

Figure 4: The Framework of Effectiveness

Framework of Effectiveness Evaluation		
Internal Measures	Output Measures	Satisfaction Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time of processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction rate of pet-related complaints/undesired occurrences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of living quality in terms of pet-related issues (e.g., hygiene, noise & perception of safety) (For non-pet owners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources used for the measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pet owners' compliance rate of the measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of pet-friendly environment (e.g., convenience, inclusiveness & supportiveness) (For pet owners)

Source: ISC Ltd, 2008

Development of Pet-Friendly Trend in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has witnessed a significant rise in pet ownership in recent years, driven by demographic changes, higher income levels, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Adults in their 20s to 30s and millennials form the major owner group, often viewing pets as family members (HealthforAnimals, 2022). Dogs and cats remain the most popular pets, with survey data confirming a strong and growing trend (CSD, 2019; Tam, 2024). To facilitate this, the Government has actively expanded pet-friendly facilities. The number of pet gardens has substantially increased, and a pilot scheme for “inclusive parks for pets” has grown remarkably from 6 to 175 locations from 2019 to 2024 (LegCo, 2019; LCSD, 2024). However, restrictions remain in public housing and transport. Inspired by models like Taipei and New Zealand, the Government is reviewing policies, including the possibility of allowing pets in food premises, signaling a continued shift towards balancing a pet-friendly culture with public health and safety through proper control measures (LegCo, 2019; Government of HKSAR Press Release, 2024) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The comparison of animal-friendly measures between Hong Kong, Taipei and New Zealand as at 2019

	Hong Kong	Taipei	New Zealand
B. Animal-friendly policy measures			
Overview of policy measures to promote animal-human integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited measures have been implemented by responsible Government departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The animal protection authority, TCAPO, has coordinated and implemented relevant measures as part of the comprehensive action plan to promote Taipei as an animal-friendly city (“動物友善城市行動計劃”). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual central and local government authorities have initiated animal-friendly measures to supplement the animal welfare system administered by MPI.
Providing activity spaces for pet animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing 45 pet gardens; and Piloting an “inclusive parks for pets” scheme in six selected parks in 2019. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening all parks and playgrounds for access by pet animals provided that they are kept on a leash or under proper control; establishing dedicated dog parks and designating activity spaces for dogs in specific public parks; and implementing the voluntary Animal-Friendly Spaces Campaign (“動物友善空間計劃”) to encourage public and private establishments to open their facilities for access by pet owners together with their pets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual local governments have designated dog exercise areas such as parks and beaches where dogs can exercise off-leash.

	Hong Kong	Taipei	New Zealand
B. Animal-friendly policy measures (cont'd)			
Access of pet animals to public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some public transport modes such as public light buses, taxis, ferries and non-franchised buses may allow passengers to carry pets on board at their discretion, but MTR and franchised buses do not allow passengers to carry animals except for guide dogs on board. The Government has no plan to change the existing arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most public transport operators allow passengers to carry a small pet animal on board if it is kept in a container. TCAPO has piloted a “dog-friendly” bus services programme (“友善狗狗公車計劃”) allowing passengers to travel with bigger dogs and other pet animals on seven bus routes on weekends and holidays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some major cities such as Wellington and Auckland have relaxed the access rules allowing pet owners to travel with a small pet animal during off-peak hours provided that it is kept in a pet carrier.
Education/training programmes for pet owners and/or pet animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and publicity programmes targeting at pet owners have been implemented to promote responsible pet ownership and proper care for animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free training courses for pet owners and pet animals are provided to promote responsible pet ownership, relationship building with pet animals, and proper management of pet animals' behaviours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The codes of welfare for specific animals such as pet cats and dogs provide information and guidelines on the standards and best practices for animal care and management. Relevant pet animal training programmes are mainly offered by private organizations.
Other measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping of small household pets is allowed in PRH estates but there has been no plan to relax the restriction on dog keeping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private organizations are subsidized to set up animal hospice service centres to support needy pet owners to take care of their aged pet animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The restriction on pet keeping in public housing has been relaxed.

Source: LegCo, 2019

Pet Friendly Policies

The role of pets has evolved from being guards to cherished family members, providing emotional support and fostering an expectation of mutual respect (Junca-Silva, 2022). This shift has propelled pet-friendly policies, prevalent in Europe and Asian locales like Taipei and New Zealand. Hong Kong is referencing these models to become more pet-inclusive (LegCo, 2019). Taipei designates off-leash dog parks and awards labels to pet-welcome establishments (TCAPO, 2019). New Zealand relaxed regulations, now permitting dogs in food premises (except food handling areas) and allowing both on and off-leash activities in designated public spaces, fostering integration into human life (Food Standards Australia New Zealand, 2023; Auckland Council, 2024).

Pet-Related Disputes in Hong Kong Private Residential Buildings

Hong Kong's dense, high-rise living creates an environment where diverse resident expectations can easily lead to disputes, with pets being a significant source. These conflicts often arise when nuisances exceed tolerance levels, potentially resulting in civil or criminal liabilities for owners (Chan, 2015; CLIC, 2021; EPD, 2022; AFCD, 2024). Key pet-related disputes involve hygiene, noise, and injury. Unsatisfactory handling of pet waste can cause health issues and psychological disturbance from odour, leading PMCs to seek resolutions like reminders or intensified cleaning, with Government enforcement as a last resort (Tang, 2013; CLIC, 2023; Nidirect government services, 2024). Noise from dogs, cats, and birds, often stemming from owners' neglect or lack of knowledge, requires PMC coordination to establish acceptable time periods and issue reminders; persistent issues can also lead to fines (Tang, 2013; Travernier *et al.*, 2020; CLIC, 2021; Augusta Georgia, 2024; EPD, 2024; Toowoomba Region, 2024). Injuries from pets, primarily to hands, pose disease transmission risks like rabies or cat-scratch disease (Chan *et al.*, 2017; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). While vaccinations prevent many issues, PMCs often assist in negotiating reimbursements between parties and must provide evidence like CCTV footage to law enforcement if a consensus cannot be reached (Chu & Tam, 2009; Chan *et al.*, 2017). This presents an ongoing challenge for PMCs in balancing pet ownership within confined residential spaces.

Current Development of Hong Kong Government's Legal Framework

Hong Kong's legal framework for managing pets in private residential estates is a dual structure founded on ordinances and the private Deed of Mutual Covenant (DMC). Ordinances provide the statutory basis for addressing specific nuisances. Under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation (Cap. 132BK), dog owners face substantial fines, up to \$25,000, for failing to clean their pet's waste from common areas (FEHD, 2024). The Noise Control Ordinance (Cap. 400) empowers authorities to levy fines of up to \$10,000 if a pet's noise, such as sustained barking, causes a nuisance to neighbours (CLIC, 2021). For injuries, the Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) requires dogs to be leashed in public spaces. Owners can be fined \$10,000 if their unrestrained dog injures a person, unless they can prove all reasonable preventive measures were taken. The Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D) imposes stricter penalties, including a \$25,000 fine or three months' imprisonment, for failing to control a large breed dog (20kg or over). Furthermore, mandatory dog licensing and vaccination against rabies every three years is enforced under the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A), with non-compliance punishable by a \$10,000 fine.

However, the application of these public laws is profoundly shaped by the private contractual agreement known as the DMC. This legally binding document, unique to each building, outlines the rules for managing the estate and using its common areas. Its clauses regarding pets are decisive, a principle firmly established by contrasting court rulings (CLIC, 2024; HAD, 2017). In the landmark Mei Foo Sun Chuen case, the District Court ruled in favour of dog owners because the building's DMC contained no clause prohibiting pets, rendering the management's "no dog" rule *ultra vires* (beyond its legal power) (Kwok, 2008). Conversely, in the Serenade Cove case, the court upheld the management's right to enforce a pet ban and compel residents to remove their dogs because the DMC explicitly stipulated that keeping pets required written consent from the manager. The management had acted upon receiving numerous nuisance complaints (Chung, 2010).

These rulings provide a clear inspiration that a PMC authority is not absolute but is circumscribed by the specific wording of the DMC. Typically, DMCs fall into one of three categories: those explicitly permitting pets, those silent on the matter (which are generally treated as permissive unless nuisance complaints arise), and those explicitly prohibiting pets, which grant the PMC clear authority to enforce a ban. Consequently, the DMC is the foundational document, and any pet control measures implemented by a PMC must not contravene its clauses. Each dispute must be analyzed on its individual merits based on this private contractual framework, with ordinances serving as a supporting enforcement tool for specific nuisance issues (Chung, 2010; Ricacorp Mortgage Agency Limited; 2018).

Methodology

This research employed a mixed-methods approach for data collection, utilizing both qualitative in-depth interviews and quantitative surveys to investigate the implementability and effectiveness of pet control measures in three private estates whose DMC does not prohibit pets. The evaluation frameworks from the section of “Effective Implementation” guided the investigation into factors impacting these measures in tackling hygiene, noise, and safety issues.

In-depth interviews were conducted with property officers and managers. For implementability, these interviews qualitatively assessed each measure across four domains: usability (clarity & ease of execution), validity (legal compliance with the DMC), communicability (stakeholder engagement), and resource implications. For effectiveness, the interviews gathered objective data on internal measures (e.g., time and resource input) and output measures (e.g., reduction in complaint rates and compliance levels).

Quantitatively, surveys were distributed to residents. To ensure a balanced comparison, a 1:1 ratio was achieved by sampling 30 pet owners and 30 non-pet owners from each of the three estates, resulting in 180 total respondents. The surveys measured subjective satisfaction to learn the effectiveness: pet owners were surveyed on their satisfaction with pet-friendliness, inclusiveness, and supportiveness, while non-pet owners were surveyed on their satisfaction with improvements in living quality, such as hygiene, noise, and safety standards. Property management staff assisted in identifying residents and distributing invitations to participate to minimize disturbance.

Data Analysis & Discussion

Figure 6: Overview of the Three Selected Private Estates

	Estate A	Estate B	Estate C
Location	Yuen Long, New Territories	Lam Tin, Kowloon	Mid-Levels, Hong Kong
Year of Establishment	2014	1991	1993
No. of Units	780 units	4,110 units	528 units
Area of Communal space (sq. ft)	~130,000 sq. ft	~430,000 sq. ft	~50,000 sq. ft
DMC clause related to pets owning	Not disallowing pets, but no nuisance to residents should be caused	Not disallowing pets, but no nuisance to residents should be cause	Not disallowing pets, but no nuisance to residents should be cause
Current Pet Control Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet Walking Path/Pet Activity Area • Pet Waste Station • Pet Care Station (Diapers & Poop Bags) • Dog Latrine • Pet Training Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of Dogs' Vaccination and License Record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Noise Machine Lending Service
Disapproved/ Abandoned Pet Control Measures	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet Walking Path • Dog Latrine (Disapproved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet Walking Path (Abandoned)
Pet-Friendly Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet Carnival • DIY Pet Accessories Workshop • Pet Food Cooking Class • Tour Exhibition 	N/A	N/A

Source: Estate A, 2025; Estate B, 2025; Estate C, 2025

Estate A

Estate A, a medium-scale estate in Yuen Long established in 2014, consists of 780 units and does not disallow pet ownership provided no nuisance is caused (HKIFM, 2023). It has implemented a comprehensive suite of pet control measures aimed at hygiene, noise, and safety, alongside initiatives to foster a pet-friendly environment.

The core infrastructure includes a designated pet walking path with pet activity areas for socialization, though these high-traffic zones require more frequent cleaning. To address hygiene, several supporting facilities were introduced: pet waste stations placed throughout communal areas encourage proper waste disposal; accompanying pet care stations provide complimentary amenities like diapers, poop bags, and odour neutralizers for immediate use; and a dedicated dog latrine was installed in 2016, which requires specific sanitation methods like deodorizing and sand replacement.

Beyond physical measures, the estate proactively addresses owner behaviour. Biannual pet training workshops, conducted in collaboration with the AFCD, educate owners on responsible practices and provide techniques for non-owners interacting with pets. Furthermore, the PMC organizes pet-friendly events such as carnivals, DIY workshops, and cooking classes to enhance the sense of inclusion for pet-owning residents. Regular tours are also held to familiarize all residents with the location and purpose of the various pet facilities, promoting awareness and proper usage. This all-rounded strategy combines physical infrastructure, education, and community engagement to manage pets effectively (Figure 6).

Estate B

Estate B, a large-scale estate in Lam Tin established in 1991, consists of 4,110 units and does not disallow pet ownership provided no nuisance is caused (HKIFM, 2023). The sole implemented measure is the voluntary collection of dogs' vaccination and license records, initiated in 2000 to address resident safety concerns regarding diseases like rabies and to ensure compliance with the Rabies Regulation. This measure aims to reassure non-pet owners but lacks enforceability, as provision of proof is optional.

In contrast, more substantive proposals for a pet walking path and a dog latrine, aimed at mitigating hygiene and safety concerns, were disapproved by the Owners' Committee (OC). The OC rejected the walking path due to concerns over high pedestrian traffic causing disturbance and opposed the latrine over potential hygiene, odor issues for nearby residents, and the perceived unfairness of using communal funds to serve only pet owners' interests (Figure 6).

Estate C

Estate C, a medium-scale estate in Mid-Levels established in 1993, consists of 528 units and does not disallow pet ownership provided no nuisance is caused (HKIFM, 2023). The estate's current pet control is offering only a white noise machine lending service. Initiated in 2022, this service was originally for residents disturbed by external noise but was identified by the PMC as a tool to soothe pets with a steady sound frequency, thereby inhibiting their intention to produce noise while owners are away.

A more substantive measure, a designated pet walking path implemented in 2020 to concentrate waste and narrow the affected hygiene scope, was abandoned after just one year. It was cancelled due to numerous resident complaints about severe sanitation deterioration caused by the high intensity of pet walking traffic in the routed area (Figure 6).

Discussion & Analysis of Pet Control Measures

Eight pet control measures were found from the three selected estates. Each pet control measure was analyzed by adopting the evaluation framework of implementability and effectiveness respectively.

Pet Walking Path

Regarding the implementability of a designated pet walking path, its usability is straightforward, requiring no complex procedures from staff beyond issuing notices and signage. It presents no legal (validity) concerns. However, communicability was a significant shortcoming in all three estates, as PMCs did not engage all residents prior to implementation. Decisions were based on consultations with a minority, such as the OC, despite survey data from Estates B and C showing non-pet owners highly valued such a measure for hygiene and safety. This indicates a need for more comprehensive resident surveys. Resource-wise, the measure demands no major funding but does

require additional cleaning time and, crucially, spacious communal areas to successfully separate pets from non-pet owners, a factor Estate C lacked.

Regarding effectiveness, the measure requires an internal input of 30-60 minutes of additional cleaning twice daily. While output data on complaint reduction was unavailable from Estate A, high survey ratings from pet owners on ease of understanding (4.6) and compliance (4.5) suggest good adherence. Most importantly, the measure achieved high satisfaction ratings from both pet owners (4.4) and non-pet owners (4.1), demonstrating its effectiveness in balancing the interests of all residents and facilitating a harmonious living environment.

Pet Activity Area

Regarding the implementability of a pet activity area, its usability is straightforward, requiring no complex procedures from staff beyond installing signage. It raises no legal (validity) concerns. However, a high degree of communicability is required; while Estate A implemented it without prior resident engagement, it is suggested that such a measure, as part of the communal area, should be decided by majority vote. Resource-wise, it demands no additional funding but does require more spacious communal grounds than a walking path and necessitates additional cleaning time from staff.

Regarding effectiveness, the internal resource input is identical to that of a pet walking path. While output data on compliance was unavailable, survey results from Estate A indicate a high likelihood of owner compliance, with strong ratings for ease of understanding (4.6) and complying (4.5). Crucially, the measure achieved high satisfaction, with pet owners in Estate A reporting an average rating of 4.5 for inclusiveness and environment, and non-pet owners reporting 4.2 for safety. High importance ratings from both groups in all estates demonstrate the measure's effectiveness in balancing interests and fostering a harmonious living environment.

Pet Waste Station

Regarding the implementability of pet waste stations, its usability is straightforward, requiring only the placement of bins and signage, with no complex procedures. The measure involves no legal concerns. Communicability requirements are low due to its minimal influence and complexity; in Estate A, it was approved by the OC in direct

response to odor complaints about waste in general bins. Resource needs are modest, requiring approximately \$100 per station for the bins with no additional manpower.

Regarding effectiveness, the internal measure requires no notable processing time beyond routine waste collection. While output data on compliance was unavailable, the cessation of related complaints in Estate A and high survey ratings from pet owners for ease of understanding (4.6) and complying (4.5) indicate strong effectiveness. The measure achieved high satisfaction, with average ratings of 4.3 from pet owners for convenience and 4.2 from non-pet owners for hygiene in Estate A, demonstrating its success in serving both groups.

Pet Care Station

Regarding the implementability of a pet care station, its usability is straightforward, requiring only a small corner for amenities and basic signage, with no complex procedures. It involves no legal concerns. Communicability requirements are low due to the measure's minimal influence; in Estate A, implementation was approved by the OC in direct response to hygiene complaints about waste in communal areas. Resource needs are modest, requiring approximately \$300 per station for initial amenities and funding for regular refills, but no additional manpower or space.

Regarding effectiveness, the internal measure requires no notable processing time beyond purchasing and refilling supplies. While hard output data was unavailable, high survey ratings from pet owners in Estate A for ease of understanding (4.6) and complying (4.5) indicate strong compliance. The measure facilitated high satisfaction, with average ratings of 4.2 from pet owners for convenience and 4.1 from non-pet owners for hygiene, demonstrating its success in serving both groups.

Dog Latrine

Regarding the implementability of a dog latrine, its usability is straightforward, requiring no specific procedures beyond notices and signage, its validity is contingent on legal approval. As an Alterations and Additions work, it requires submission to the Buildings Department for approval under the Buildings Ordinance prior to commencement. Communicability requirements are high due to its impact on communal areas and significant funding; in Estate A, it was approved by the OC only after other measures were unable to resolve hygiene complaints. Resource needs

are substantial, requiring not only sufficient space but also significant funding—approximately \$100,000 for builder's work and BD application—along with specific cleaning protocols.

Regarding effectiveness, the internal measure requires no notable extra time, only routine cleaning like spraying odor eliminator and sand replacement. While hard output data was unavailable, high survey ratings from pet owners for ease of understanding (4.6) and complying (4.5) indicate strong compliance. The measure achieved balanced satisfaction, with both pet owners and non-pet owners in Estate A reporting an average rating of 4, demonstrating its effectiveness in maintaining harmony.

Pet Training Workshop

Regarding the implementability of pet training workshops, its usability is simple, requiring only coordination with AFCD and promotional posters. The measure involves no legal concerns, and due to its low complexity and influence, communicability requirements with stakeholders prior to implementation are minimal. Resource needs are low, requiring no funding or hardware, only the use of a function room and PMC staff for on-site standby.

For effectiveness, the internal measure involves organizing a quarterly 1-hour seminar. While hard output data was unavailable, high survey ratings from pet owners in Estate A for ease of understanding (4.6) and complying (4.5) indicate strong compliance. The measure achieved high satisfaction, with pet owners reporting an average rating of 4.3 for supportiveness and environment, and non-pet owners in Estate A reporting a rating of 4 for various living quality metrics. Results from all estates show the workshop facilitates satisfaction for both resident groups.

Collection of Dogs' Vaccination Record

Regarding the implementability of collecting vaccination, while it aligns with the Rabies Regulation and requires no funding or hardware, its usability involves staff inputting data and directly contacting owners. A key challenge is communicability; as implementation in Estate B was proactive and without prior engagement, the measure's voluntary nature means owners can refuse to provide records, necessitating advance understanding of their attitudes.

Regarding the effectiveness, the internal measure requires minimal processing time for record input. However, output is weak: survey data from Estate B indicates only a medium likelihood of owner compliance, with low ratings for ease of understanding (2.8) and complying (3.1). Satisfaction is medium overall, with nearly half of pet owners feeling unsupported and non-pet owners reporting an average safety satisfaction rating of just 3.

White Noise Machine Lending Service

Regarding the implementability of the white noise machine lending service, its usability is straightforward, requiring only record input and explaining the machine's benefits to owners. It involves no legal concerns. While communicability was initially low in Estate C, it is suggested that a trial period be used to promote its effect and gather feedback, as the concept is unfamiliar to some. Resource needs are minimal, with each machine costing around \$300 and no additional space required.

For effectiveness, internal processing time is negligible. The service achieved an 80% issue resolution rate in Estate C, and survey data indicates a high likelihood of owner compliance, with ratings of 3.6 for both ease of understanding and complying. However, satisfaction is medium, with pet owners averaging a rating of 3.6 and non-pet owners a lower 2.8, primarily due to noise concerns.

Recommended Pet Control Measures for Effective Implementation

Figure 7: Ranking of Pet Control Measures

	Pet Walking Path	Pet Activity Area	Pet Waste Station	Pet Care Station	Dog Latrine	Pet Training Workshop	Collection of Dogs' Vaccination Record	White Noise Machine Lending Service
Focused Issue(s)	Hygiene & Safety	Safety	Hygiene	Hygiene	Hygiene	Hygiene, Noise & Safety	Safety	Noise
Implementability								
Degree of Usability	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Degree of Validity	High	High	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
Degree of Communicability Dispensableness	Low	Low	High	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Degree of Resources Dispensableness	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High	High	Medium
AVERAGE	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-Low	High	Medium-High	Medium-High
Effectiveness								
Performance of Internal Measure	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
Performance of Output Measure	High	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Performance of Satisfaction	High	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
AVERAGE	Medium-High	Medium-High	High	High	Medium-High	High	Medium-High	Medium-High
RANKING	3rd	7th	2nd	2nd	4th	1st	6th	5th

Based on survey data from three estates, non-pet owners identified hygiene (38%), noise (29%), and safety (2%) as the most common issues. Recommended pet control measures are prioritized accordingly. The pet training workshop is the top recommendation, addressing all three issues with high implementability and effectiveness, supported by strong importance ratings from non-pet owners. Pet waste and care stations rank second for hygiene prevention, advised for simultaneous implementation. The pet walking path follows for hygiene and safety. The dog latrine, white noise machine, vaccination record collection, and pet activity area are subsequently recommended (Figure 7).

Conclusion

Hong Kong's progression towards a pet-friendly environment lags behind other developed cities. While some shopping malls are implementing successful measures, most private residential buildings rely on reactive, ineffective methods like notices and signage (Ng, 2023). PMCs must adopt a proactive "prevention is better than cure" mindset by exploring implementable and effective pet control measures. However, resource implications remain a significant hindrance for small-scale estates and PMCs in adopting these necessary changes.

Development of the Balance between Pet Control and Pet-Friendly Environment

Survey results show both pet owners and non-pet owners agree on balancing pet control with a pet-friendly environment, with younger residents being more supportive (Carnovale *et al.*, 2022). PMCs should create a balanced approach that addresses non-owners' concerns about hygiene, noise, and safety while ensuring owners feel included through convenience and support. Organizing pet events, like in Estate A, can foster community harmony and increase overall satisfaction with PMC services.

Proactive Engagement with Stakeholders by PMCs in the Phases of Initiation and Planning

Effective stakeholder engagement is critical during the initiation and planning phases. PMCs must proactively consult residents via surveys to align measures with community needs, ensuring transparency and trust. For instance, pet walking paths were rejected in Estates B and C despite non-owner support for hygiene and safety. Therefore, understanding majority opinions and ensuring clear communication of measure details are essential before implementation, especially for initiatives impacting communal spaces.

Continuous Monitoring of the Output Measure & Residents' Satisfaction in Effectiveness by PMCs

PMCs often lack data on complaint reduction and compliance rates. To properly assess effectiveness, they must establish systems for ongoing monitoring of output metrics and resident satisfaction, enabling continuous improvement of pet control measures.

The Challenges of Resource Implications for Small-Scale Private Estates and Residential Buildings & PMCs on Implementing Measures

Small-scale private estates often face significant resource constraints that hinder pet control implementation. Financially, limited funding from few units covers only essential services like security and maintenance, leaving little for additional measures. Manpower is typically minimal, restricted to basic security without a central office. Geographically, a lack of spacious communal areas prevents measures like pet walking paths or activity zones. Consequently, hardware-dependent solutions such as pet waste stations, care stations, or dog latrines are often impractical. Only low-resource measures like pet training workshops (requiring rented function space) and voluntary vaccination record collection are feasible. However, these still increase the workload for PMC officers already managing multiple buildings, posing a challenge to sustainable execution.

Limitation of the Study

PMCs mostly recognize dog owners (84%) due to daily encounters, so most questionnaires went to them. Consequently, most pet-related complaints are caused by dogs.

Further Areas of Study

The analyzed pet control measures focus on issues from dogs, so exploring issues from other pets is suggested. Further research could provide PMCs insights for future uncommon issues. As the Hong Kong Government may allow pets in PRHs, this research's analytical framework could be used as reference to explore implementability and effectiveness, which may find different results without a DMC or BMO legal framework. For the framework itself, further research should determine the significance of each criterion in implementability and effectiveness to weigh their importance proportionally, rather than averaging them.

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Examining the Impact of Youth Hostels on Well-Being: A Research Study of Young Residents in Hong Kong Youth Hostel



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Introduction

The Government introduced the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS) in the 2011 Policy Address. This initiative responds to concerns expressed by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding the need for suitable accommodation for working youths. The initiative involves full funding for Youth Hostels on under-utilized sites, with the expectation that they will become self-financing. In 2024, the YHS was expanded to include subsidies for NGOs to rent hotels and guesthouses as Youth Hostels. The Policy Address emphasizes the need for collaboration across sectors to tackle the shortage of affordable housing and highlights the importance of independent living spaces for young people's self-sufficiency and stability, as demonstrated by Youth Hostel projects.

In Hong Kong, 72.6% of non-married young people aged 15 to 34 live with their parents, highlighting the challenges of independent living due to high housing prices and cultural norms that discourage leaving home before marriage (Yip 2012). In 2025, average property prices for small units reached \$13,448.63 per sq. ft. on Hong Kong Island and \$11,457.36 per sq. ft. in Kowloon, while median monthly earnings for those aged 15-24 and 25-34 were only \$15,400 and \$22,500, respectively (Census and Statistics Department 2025), illustrating severe housing unaffordability. Prolonged education and student debt further hinder young people's independence, with 32,212 post-secondary students receiving loans averaging \$52,970.26 in the 2024-2025 academic year (Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency 2025).

In 2023, Hong Kong had the least affordable housing market among developed economies, with a Housing Affordability Rating of 16.7. Young people face significant financial burdens after moving out from parental home, often spending nearly 40% of their household income on housing, which impacts their mental health and aspirations, including marriage (Musa et al., 2021). The YHS aims to provide affordable living spaces for young workers, with rents ranging from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month, significantly lower than private housing. The scheme allows young individuals to live independently while alleviating some financial pressure, making it a viable alternative for those navigating early career challenges. However, the high demand and stringent eligibility criteria mean that access remains limited.

In Hong Kong, average monthly housing expenditure accounts for 39.3% of total household spending, significantly impacting mental health (Census and Statistics Department 2024). The cultural phenomenon of "tang ping," or "lying flat," reflects young people's rejection of overwork and high aspirations due to their financial struggles. The lack of affordable housing creates barriers to homeownership and marriage, with rising economic pressures leading to declining marriage rates and increased median ages at first marriage. In *Marriage and Divorce Trends in Hong Kong*, it shows that the crude marriage rate of male and female from 2016 to 2020 are 14.8 and 12.6, 15.3 and 12.9, 14.5 and 12.2, 12.9 and 10.8 and 8.2 and 6.8 respectively. Young individuals often postpone marriage until they achieve financial stability, opting for a low-consumption lifestyle as a form of silent protest against societal expectations.

The YHS in Hong Kong aims to provide affordable housing for working young people while utilizing vacant development sites. Completed projects include hostels in the New Territories, which account for the majority of bed spaces. Rental costs range from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month, making them accessible for young workers, given their median monthly earnings of \$15,200 for those aged 15-24 (Census and Statistics Department 2025). This results in a rent-to-income ratio of approximately 13% to 26%. With living spaces exceeding government minimum standards, the YHS offers a viable option for young individuals navigating early career challenges.

This research investigates the effects of Youth Hostels on the well-being of young people aged 18 to 30 in Hong Kong. Despite their growing recognition as affordable accommodations, there is a notable lack of comprehensive studies on their impact on well-being. While some research has highlighted the benefits of communal living, there is insufficient qualitative and quantitative data on how these experiences affect aspects such as housing stability, economic security, psychological health, social connections, and personal development.

Literature review

Well-being is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of human life, including physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions. Some scholars Ross et al. (2020), Western and Tomaszewski (2016) utilized both subjective well-being and objective well-being as the indicators to measure the overall well-being. Subjective well-being is associated with psychological factors, for instance personal fulfillment, feeling, sense of belonging and satisfactions etc., which is unique for everyone. Objective well-being is related to physical factors with the human basic rights and needs, such as food, income, housing, health, education and safety etc. Additionally, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2013) published a report that revealed income, health condition, employment condition and social relationship were the determinants of subjective well-being. This further demonstrates that certain factors influencing objective well-being also impact subjective well-being.

Besides, well-being is shaped by the social-ecological contexts, such as relationships with family and friends, community involvement, and other factors that can alleviate challenges and increase life satisfaction. It is both an outcome and a coordinator of positive youth development, shaped by individual strengths and ecological supports, and is closely related to life satisfaction as a way to sustain health and happiness (Arnold and Ferrari 2018).

To make a brief conclusion on well-being, it is influenced by various factors and represents a multidimensional construct that extends beyond mere happiness and life satisfaction. It encompasses physical and mental health, family dynamics, community connections, supportive and safe environments, autonomy, and personal development. Also, it is not solely an outcome but also a facilitator for the positive development of young people.

Youth hostels, in European countries, primarily serve as a shelter for homeless youth and those in need, offering them safe and temporary accommodation within the community. On the other hand, the youth hostel in Hong Kong is a tailor-made scheme for Hong Kong working youth which is different from the situation in worldwide youth hostels. Besides, in Hong Kong, reports and research on youth hostels mostly emphasizes the process of youth hostel development and young people's housing expectation. As Hong Kong youth hostel scheme has been launched since 2011, but the effectiveness of youth hostel scheme and the impact of young people's well-being have not been studied in Hong Kong, it is essential to have fully understanding of how far Hong Kong youth hostels have impacted the young people in different well-being. Therefore, our research investigations are going to fill in the research gap.

Based on different descriptions of well-being across various previous literatures, both subjective and objective well-being will be divided into five aspects such as Housing, Economic, Psychological, Social and Personal Development, which have been categorized for investigation in our research. The study focuses on evaluating the well-being of young people living in youth hostels. First, Housing well-being involves factors such as space, stability, location, and surrounding amenities. Previous studies (e.g., Chan & Wong, 2021; Wong, 2022) showed that narrow living conditions and environments negatively influence subjective well-being. Youth hostels' living space, proximity to work and transport is critical in shaping the subjective well-being of the young people. Second, Economic well-being is assessed through affordability, non-housing expenses, and savings. Rising

housing prices and rents in Hong Kong are hindering home ownership among young people, negatively impacting their well-being. Youth hostels provide a more affordable housing option, but their true economic benefits for the young people require further examination. Third, Psychological well-being includes privacy, satisfaction, and self-esteem. Studies highlight the importance of private, autonomous spaces for mental health and personal growth (Ross et al., 2020). Although youth hostels provide young people with private space, autonomy, and increased life satisfaction, it remains unclear whether these benefits alleviate life, financial, and occupational pressures or enhance psychological well-being. Fourth, Social well-being examines friendships, family relationships, and social mobility. Living independently may reduce family conflict (Wong, 2022). While youth hostels are the platform for providing young people space and opportunity to communicate with each other and expand their social circle, also offering different financial management talks, career training and opportunity. Fifth, Personal development focuses on communication, societal contribution, and future homeownership. Though hostels aim to support youth in life planning and career growth (Wong, 2024), the factors including interpersonal communication skill, contribution to society and the ability of homeownership will be reviewed. It is necessary to review whether it has contributed to the development of young people.

Five aspects of well-being are mutual influence with each other. Our research will base on these aspects to investigate the young people who are living in youth hostels and try to find out the impact of living in youth hostels on different aspects of well-being. Additionally, based on the findings, we aim to determine which solutions could effectively aid young people or refine the existing plan.

Methodology

This study aims to compare the well-being of young people before and after moving into the Youth Hostel in which qualitative and quantitative research methods will both be applied in this research. To apply the mixed method research, data collection processes were unfolded into two stages in this study. Qualitative research focuses on understanding concepts, thoughts, or experiences through in-depth exploration will be the first approach. Ten in-depth interviews have been conducted to gather experiences and insights regarding the well-being of young people before and after moving into the hostel from different stakeholders listed below. The opinions and data collected from the in-depth interviews used for designing the questionnaire. Quantitative research that involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, test hypotheses, and make predictions will be the second approach. Questionnaires were designed based on the well-being conceptual framework and target to be administered to the target population, residents who are living in Youth Hostel in Hong Kong, to measure well-being indicators, including housing well-being, economic well-being and psychological well-being, social well-being and well-being in relation to personal development.

List of interviewees:

- 1) Young People (Age 24) – Female, staying in youth hostel
- 2) Young People (Age 28) – Male, staying in youth hostel
- 3) Young People (Age 24) – Female, not choosing youth hostel
- 4) Young People (Age 27) – Female, not choosing youth hostel
- 5) Young People (Age 30) – Male, not choosing youth hostel
- 6) Parent of Youth (Age 63) – Male, children live in Youth hostel
- 7) Parent of Youth (Age 58) – Female, children live in Youth hostel
- 8) Organizer of Youth hostel – Female
- 9) Leader of District Services & Community Care Teams – Male
- 10) Member of the Youth Development Commission – Male

In our survey analyzing the well-being of young people before and after moving into the Youth Hostel, we adopted a modified systematic approach to calculate the sample sizes for each hostel, aiming to detect significant differences in well-being indicators before and after moving into the hostel. We identified a total of 2 hostels under the Completed Youth Hostel Project, providing 1,760 hostel places, and 4 hostels under the Subsidy Scheme for Using Hotels and Guesthouses as Youth Hostels, offering 1,150 hostel places. Our target was to collect 120 survey samples from young people living in these 6 hostels, including Po Leung Kuk Lee Shau Kee Youth Oasis, The HKFYG Youth Hostel PH2, Home2 Youth Hostel, BeLIVING Youth Hub, Sky One Hostel and Joseph's House.

Regarding the design of the questionnaire, the questions were designed based on the insights from the qualitative interviews and aimed to measure well-being among Hong Kong youth hostel residents aligned with the well-being conceptual framework in five dimensions: housing, economic, psychological, social, and personal development. The 5-point Likert scale which was validated for subjective well-being measures (Diener et al. 2009), was applied to compare well-being of young residents before and after moving into the youth hostels.

A pilot test is a critical step in refining survey instruments. We used the modified systematic sampling approach in which we counted every individual who came out from the hostel, and we invited every third person to take part in the questionnaire. Therefore, to ensure the data collection process works smoothly. Pilot test was conducted two weeks before the full-scale data collection in order to analyze feedback, make revisions, and finalize the questions. The pilot test proceeded smoothly, with participants completing the questionnaire without major issues, confirming its overall feasibility. Only some minor amendments were made based on feedback to enhance usability and smoothness.

In conducting questionnaire, we also used the modified systematic sampling approach same as the pilot test. Questionnaires have been distributed to a larger sample of residents compared to the qualitative phase, allowing for the collection of numerical data to identify patterns and test hypotheses. This sampling approach minimizes selection bias by providing an equal opportunity for participation while maintaining a systematic approach to participant selection (Creswell 2014).

Five hypotheses have been set to investigate whether the young people's well-being would be different before and after moving into Youth Hostel in 5 dimensions of well-being, including housing well-being, economic well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being and well-being in relation to personal development.

Result and analysis

From the results of the questionnaire administered in Hong Kong, this study examines how a youth moving into a Youth Hostel influences youth well-being of housing, economic, psychological, social and in relation to personal development of overall well-being.

In Housing well-being, respondents were asked to rank the various evaluating statements on a 5-point measurement scale, with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree". "Sufficient space", "Stable living place", "Ideal location", "Sufficient estate facilities" and "Comprehensive amenities nearby" are the aspects of respondents living situation which contributed to their Housing well-being.

In fact, the questionnaires and in-depth interviews revealed several key insights regarding residents' housing well-being. Moving into the Youth Hostel significantly improved the well-being in relation to "sufficient space" and "estate facilities", with results indicating that the physical environment improved, and various facilities as well as living together with a group of young people positively impacts well-being. However, other aspects such as having a "stable living place" and "ideal location" show mixed results. The time constraint of a maximum five-year stay in the Youth Hostel creates pressure and decreases residents' sense of stability, negatively affecting their overall well-being. Also, the result of analysis indicates that the locations of Youth Hostels are not attractive. Additionally, while the Youth Hostel offers a supportive community, the availability of "comprehensive amenities nearby" did not significantly change, indicating that residents may prefer to stay home rather than utilize local services. Overall, while the Youth Hostel enhances certain dimensions of housing well-being, challenges related to stability and location remain significant.

In Economic well-being, "Housing cost", "Sufficient money for daily spending apart from housing cost", and "Personal saving" are the aspects of respondents' living situation which contributed in Economic well-being. The result indicates a significant difference that moving to the Youth Hostel may not cause a positive move towards young people's economic well-being because young people bear all housing cost when they live on their own in Youth Hostel.

Also, they may need to purchase more personal items to support their daily life which may be provided or shared by their family previously. It explicitly reflects that young people's well-being in economic aspect decreased after they moved into Youth Hostel.

In the statement of "Sufficient Privacy", "Feel satisfied with your life" and "Increase in self-esteem" of Psychological Well-being, young people tended to have their own room or designed space that provides a sense of privacy. They could engage in their personal favourite activities without interruption. It fosters a sense of ownership and independence. Also, young people could get more chances to meet others in similar age groups and situations, which creates a sense of community. After moving into Youth Hostel, young people indicate that they have more opportunities to make their own decisions in daily life and overcome difficulties independently, the achievement of successfully handling the challenges could positively contribute to their self-esteem. All in all, data indicated that moving to the Youth Hostel may have a positive impact on young people's psychological well-being.

When comes to the part of Social Well-being, statement of "Good social network", "Good relationships with family" and "Opportunities for upward social mobility", the questionnaire and interview show that the age of young people who live in Youth Hostel is similar, and they have a higher chance to share more common values and strike a chord with each other. Living in Youth Hostel can reduce conflict between young people and their parents. Furthermore, there is a public stereotype that those living in public housing or subdivided units will be regarded as the "needy" or the "poor" in the society. When young people choose to live in Youth Hostel, a new different living style can be taken as an option for them to experience life in various ways. Hence, moving to the Youth Hostel may have a positive impact on young people's social well-being.

For the "Well-being in relation to Personal Development", Statement of "Having good interpersonal communication skills", "Opportunities to contribute to society or the community" and "Faith of abilities to own a home", it is proved that communication skill can be improved after young people moved into Youth Hostel. Young people are obligated to engage in volunteer work under the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS). Besides, living in Youth Hostel is a touchstone of young people to try their way to learn wealth management and save money. They will pay more attention to every expenditure in relation to household affairs. Therefore, it gives confidence to young people who live in Youth Hostel to review their expenditure regularly and foster a sense of saving.

Conclusion

The challenge of housing for young people in Hong Kong has been a persistent issue, sparking extensive discussion. This research reviews the Youth Hostel Scheme (YHS) by examining its impact on young residents' well-being across housing, economic, psychological, social, and personal development before and after moving into youth hostels, the research reveals notable improvements in psychological, social, and personal well-being among residents.

It finds that young people's well-being in the aspects of psychological, social and personal development has significantly improved. The result indicates that residents gain independence, especially for the young people who lived with parents previously, they gain privacy as well after moving into the youth hostel. The hostel environment not only provides a physical space for these young people but also facilitates connections with peers through shared activities, fostering friendships that enhance their social well-being. Besides, the volunteer work requirement and the increased opportunities for participating in community activities further supports personal development by fostering empathy and community engagement which is aligning with the Hong Kong government's Youth Development Blueprint (Home and Youth Affairs 2025).

However, the findings regarding housing well-being showed mixed outcomes. While having positive impacts in gaining sufficient space and facilities after moving into the youth hostels, challenges such as the remote locations of some hostels and the five-year tenancy limit create instability that negatively affects overall well-being. The availability of nearby amenities has minimal impact on enhancing residents' experiences. Economic well-being also emerges as a critical concern, as the burden of accommodation expenses has increased particularly for those previously living rent-free with family, leaving insufficient funds for daily necessities. Economic hardship remains a significant concern that requires attention.

To maximize the benefits of the Youth Hostel Scheme while addressing its limitations, several strategies are proposed. First, the positive aspects of housing well-being such as sufficient space and facilities have to be sustained that hostel organizers should invest in modern amenities. Furthermore, organizers should put more effort to hold more events and activities relating to community-building for creating more opportunities to the young residents in forging friendships and share life experiences.

To improve housing stability, the five-year tenancy limit should be relaxed, and flexible extensions could be offered based on individual financial circumstances or vacancy availability. Additionally, for those youth hostels located far from urban centres, the government should work to improve and expand the surrounding amenities. To effectively address the challenges in the economic well-being of youth hostel residents, the government and hostel organizers should introduce income-based rent subsidies to alleviate financial strain for lower-income individuals. It could alleviate financial burdens, while financial literacy workshops would provide essential budgeting skills to help manage expenses effectively. Regular surveys, feedback hotlines, and digital platforms should be utilized and strengthened to actively monitor the well-being outcomes of young residents, allowing for the scheme to be fine-tuned to meet their evolving needs and aspirations.

Given the positive contributions of the Youth Hostel Scheme, it would be beneficial for the government to evaluate the operational models and living style of youth hostels and take them as a reference for future housing planning and development with long-term potential.

This research does have several limitations. First, the Youth Hostel Scheme was introduced by the Hong Kong government in 2011 which is a relatively new policy, resulting in limited sources of secondary research and official reports on its development and impact. Reliance on primary data may not fully reflect long-term impacts. Resource and time constraints restricted the study to 120 surveys and 10 interviews, covering only 4.12% of available hostel places. Challenges such as difficulty accessing residents, incomplete survey responses, or scheduling conflicts may have affected the data quality, while the small sample size could limit statistical reliability.

Additionally, the sampling is confined to those physically present at the hostel during data collection, potentially excluding less accessible residents. Moreover, reliance on residents' recollections of pre-hostel well-being may lead to inaccuracies due to memory errors or changed perspectives after moving. Given Hong Kong's unique housing context, characterized by high costs and crowded conditions, the findings may not be applicable to other regions. Lastly, addressing sensitive topics related to well-being and personal backgrounds raised privacy concerns that necessitate careful ethical handling to maintain participant trust and data quality.

To address these limitations, future research should utilize government reports and collaborate with hostel organizers to access longitudinal data on demographics and program outcomes. Expanding the sample size to 5-10%, as suggested by Hossan et al. (2023), and using modified systematic sampling administered during the day and at night would improve representativeness. Conducting longitudinal studies that track residents' well-being before, during, and after their stay including feedback from former residents would offer a clearer picture of the scheme's long-term impact. These measures would improve data quality and foster a supportive research environment.

Comparative studies with youth housing programs in countries like Australia or Denmark could identify adaptable best practices while accounting for differences in cost of living and cultural norms. To ethically manage sensitive topics, researchers should undergo training to support participants and conduct pilot tests to refine questions. These steps would enhance data quality, create a supportive research environment, and deliver precise insights to refine the Youth Hostel Scheme, improving young people's well-being in Hong Kong and informing global housing policies.

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The Impact of Social Welfare Facilities on the Rental Levels of Subdivided Units (SDUs)



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Introduction

Hong Kong's housing crisis is marked by heavy reliance on substandard subdivided units (SDUs)—about 215,709 residents in 2021—densely clustered in older Kowloon buildings (56.9%) with a median per capita space of just 5.3 m² and frequent lack of basic facilities such as independent kitchens, alongside safety risks from unauthorized alterations (GovHK, 2018; Cheng, 2018; Hui et al., 2018). Yet despite these deficits, SDU rents are high and have risen sharply (up to 35.8% between 2013 and 2023), intensifying affordability pressure on low-income households (Statista, 2025). The academic puzzle is that tenants pay premiums while nearby public amenities and social infrastructure remain insufficient or uneven: proximity to positive amenities (e.g., libraries, parks) tends to raise SDU rents, but semi-obnoxious facilities (e.g., hospitals) can depress values at close range, revealing a reliance on external spaces amid trade-offs between convenience and livability (Huang, 2017; Hui et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2018; Peng & Chiang, 2015). This mismatch—high rents versus inadequate, and sometimes ambivalent, neighborhood support—motivates examining welfare-oriented facilities such as Community Living Rooms (CLRs) and Community Pharmacies (CPs).

In response to the above challenges, the 2023 Policy Address established Community Living Rooms (CLRs) to improve living conditions via shared facilities, alongside Community Pharmacies (CPs) to expand community-based healthcare and reduce public system strain. This study investigates whether proximity to CLRs and CPs correlates with subdivided unit (SDU) rents, focusing on high-density Kowloon districts. It aims to identify rental determinants, collect SDU data, analyze distance-rent relationships, and propose evidence-based policies for housing affordability and equitable resource allocation.

Literature Review

Background of CLRs and CPs

Hong Kong's 2023 Policy Address introduced Community Living Rooms (CLRs) to alleviate cramped living conditions in subdivided units (SDUs) by offering shared amenities for daily activities (GovHK, 2023). Four CLRs were operational by December 2024. The concept draws from historical precedents such as 1980s crisis respite "Living Rooms" in the U.S., which provided non-institutional support (Jones et al., 2013), and European co-housing models that expanded due to housing affordability pressures (Pepper, 2019). Unlike these, Hong Kong's CLRs specifically aim to extend private living space and improve quality of life.

CLRs also strengthen social cohesion. UK evidence indicates community centres promote health through social and recreational activities (Jones et al., 2013), enhancing belonging and networks (Francis et al., 2012). In Hong Kong, CPs serve chronic disease and cancer patients with medication and counselling (Pires & Sousa, 2023). Yet no research examines how CP proximity affects SDU rents.

Impacts of Urban Facilities on Housing Values

Research demonstrates that social spaces significantly influence housing choices and values by fostering community cohesion and interaction. The presence of social organizations and venues, such as community halls, enhances neighborhood relationships and provides functional support, leading households to prefer such areas (Tong et al., 2019). Tan (2011) quantifies this preference, showing a willingness-to-pay premium of 11.05% for communities with local improvement groups. Facilities like community living rooms (CLRs) and kitchens further promote collective living and social engagement, offering emotional and practical benefits (Tzeng, 2014).

The impact of public facilities on housing values is well-established for amenities such as parks, schools, and libraries, which consistently correlate with higher property values due to enhanced neighborhood quality (Huang, 2017; Liang et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022). This effect is often more pronounced in peripheral areas where such facilities are scarce (Feng et al., 2018). In contrast, medical facilities exhibit divergent effects across contexts. Some studies in Chinese cities report positive links between hospital proximity and housing values (Wang et al., 2012; Li et al., 2019), whereas others, particularly in Western contexts, identify negative associations (Li et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2019). This ambivalence stems from the classification of hospitals as semi-obnoxious facilities, where convenience is offset by disamenities including noise, traffic, and health risks (Hui et al., 2018; Chaerul et al., 2008). Residents thus often prefer moderate, but not immediate, proximity (Feng et al., 2018). Notably, smaller medical facilities such as clinics and community pharmacies (CPs) remain understudied. Despite their role in improving medical accessibility, empirical research examining the specific impact of clinics or CPs on housing prices, particularly in the context of subdivided units (SDUs) is notably absent from the literature.

Impacts of Urban Facilities on the rental levels of SDUs

Research indicates a clear positive correlation between access to amenities and rents for subdivided units (SDUs). Studies show tenants are willing to pay up to 7% more in rent to live near libraries and parks, a preference driven by the severe spatial and functional limitations of SDUs that increase reliance on external facilities (Huang, 2017). Research by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2023) further confirms that SDU residents exhibit strong demand for lifestyle amenities, social spaces, and household utilities. Although many SDUs are located near essential public services such as hospitals, police stations, and fire stations to improve access for low-income residents, rental levels paradoxically correlate positively with distance from these semi-obnoxious facilities, reflecting a trade-off between convenience and livability among financially constrained tenants (Liang et al., 2023).

Existing literature has largely focused on the influence of urban facilities, transportation, and renewal projects on SDU rents. By contrast, very few studies examine the rental impact of welfare-oriented facilities such as Community Living Rooms (CLRs) and Community Pharmacies (CPs).

While CLRs may enhance neighborhood appeal and put upward pressure on rents, systematic evidence is lacking. Similarly, whether Community Pharmacies (CPs), which may be perceived as either convenient or undesirable, affect SDU rental prices remains an important and understudied empirical question.

Accessibility of Urban Facilities

15-minute cities, where residents are able to walk or cycle to a variety of amenities and services needed for daily living within 15 minutes (Moreno et al., 2021). In peripheral urban and developing city areas, limited service availability restricts resident options and increases travel time. Consequently, studies show that closer proximity to public services generally correlates with higher housing values, assuming adequate resident accessibility, due to the positive impact of facility access on property prices (Feng et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022).

In Peng & Chiang (2015), it was found that within 500m of a hospital, the farther the property is from the hospital, the higher the property price, which may be due to the fact that

the space is exposed to stronger negative externalities (such as crowds, busy traffic, or nighttime ambulance sirens), rather than its positive externalities (such as convenient medical services). Conversely, beyond 500 meters from the hospital, the negative significant impact on house prices gradually disappears, and the positive impact gradually becomes apparent, with house prices decreasing with increasing distance.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

After reviewing the literature on the conceptualisation and empirical studies on the relationship between housing values and public service facilities, as well as studies on the influence of welfare facilities and semi-obnoxious facilities on the choice of low-income people, the conceptual framework of the study in Figure 1, which is used to study the relationship between the rental levels of SDUs and CLRs, and the rental levels of SDUs and CPs, is constructed.

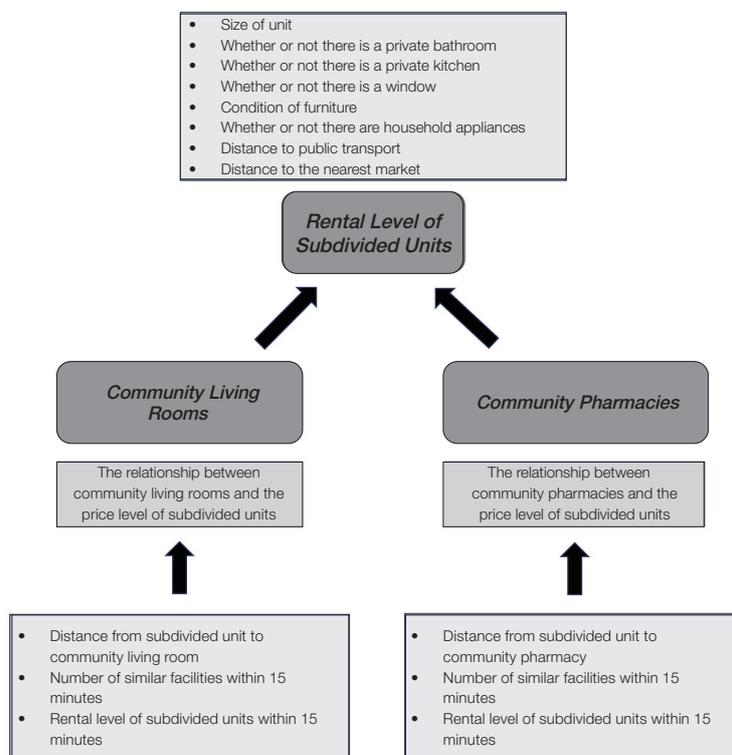


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

This study examines whether these facilities affect the SDUs rental levels in Kowloon. Two research questions are proposed:

Q1: Does the CLR have an impact on the rent of SDUs in Kowloon?

Q2: Does the CP have an impact on the rental levels of SDUs in Kowloon?

Hypotheses

In order to study these two questions, we have formulated two hypotheses for each of the two research questions.

For Q1:

H1: The rent of a SDU increases with the SDU's proximity to a CLR.

For Q2:

H2a: When other attributes remain constant, the distance between SDUs and CPs is negatively correlated with the rental level of SDUs.

H2b: The higher is the number of CPs within 1500m from the centre of the SDU, the higher will be the rental level of the SDU.

The first hypothesis is grounded in the notion that CLRs compensate for spatial and qualitative deficiencies in SDUs by providing shared amenities, thereby enhancing tenants' willingness to pay for proximity (Huang, 2017). The second set of hypotheses reflects the dual nature of CPs, which may offer convenience in medicinal access yet pose perceived health risks, leading to nuanced spatial effects on rental levels (Peng & Chiang, 2015). Higher CP density is expected to increase rental appeal by providing greater choice and access to pharmaceutical services.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses regression analysis to investigate the relationship between the rental levels of Subdivided Units (SDUs) and their proximity to social welfare facilities. Data on SDU listings, rental prices, and unit characteristics were collected. By integrating a Geographic Information System (QGIS), the research measures the straight-line distance from each SDU to the nearest social welfare facility. This analysis will reveal any correlation between SDU rent and accessibility to these social services in the Sham Shui Po area. Figure 2 demonstrates the designated workflow of this particular research.

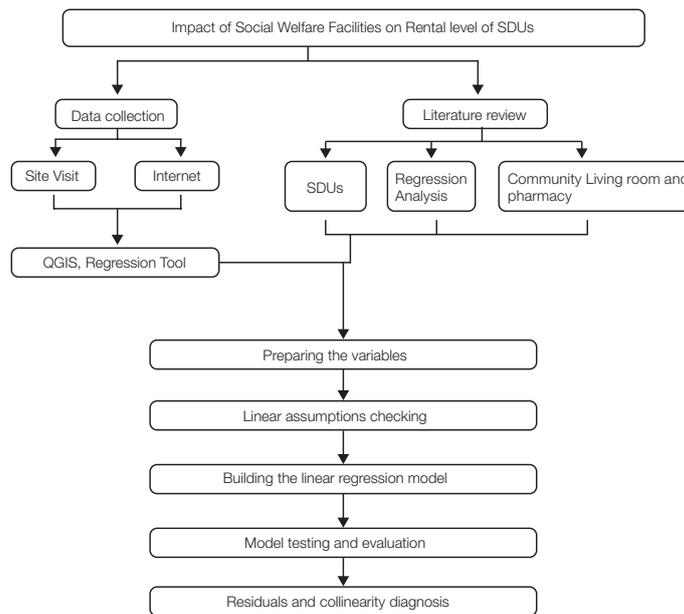


Figure 2 Workflow of the Project

Sampling

Due to the unregulated nature of Subdivided Units (SDUs), data collection is challenging. This study sourced a total of 510 SDU listings from the publicly accessible rental platform, 28hse.com. To ensure the samples met the typical characteristics of SDUs, The research sample data was filtered based on different dimensions following an analysis of “Progress of Implementation of Tenancy Control on Subdivided Units” (LCPH, 2024) and “Subdivided Units—Median Rents by Area and District” (HKRVD, 2025), and finally focused on four criteria: floor area, rental price, internal layout, and building age.

Specifically, the filters targeted units with a floor area ranging from 7 to 13 square meters, a monthly rent between \$4,000 and \$5,900 HKD, and a classification as “open” or “room” units. As 90% of SDUs are in buildings 50 years or older (LCPH, 2024), this criterion was also a key filter. All the collected SDUs rental data are shown in Figure 3.

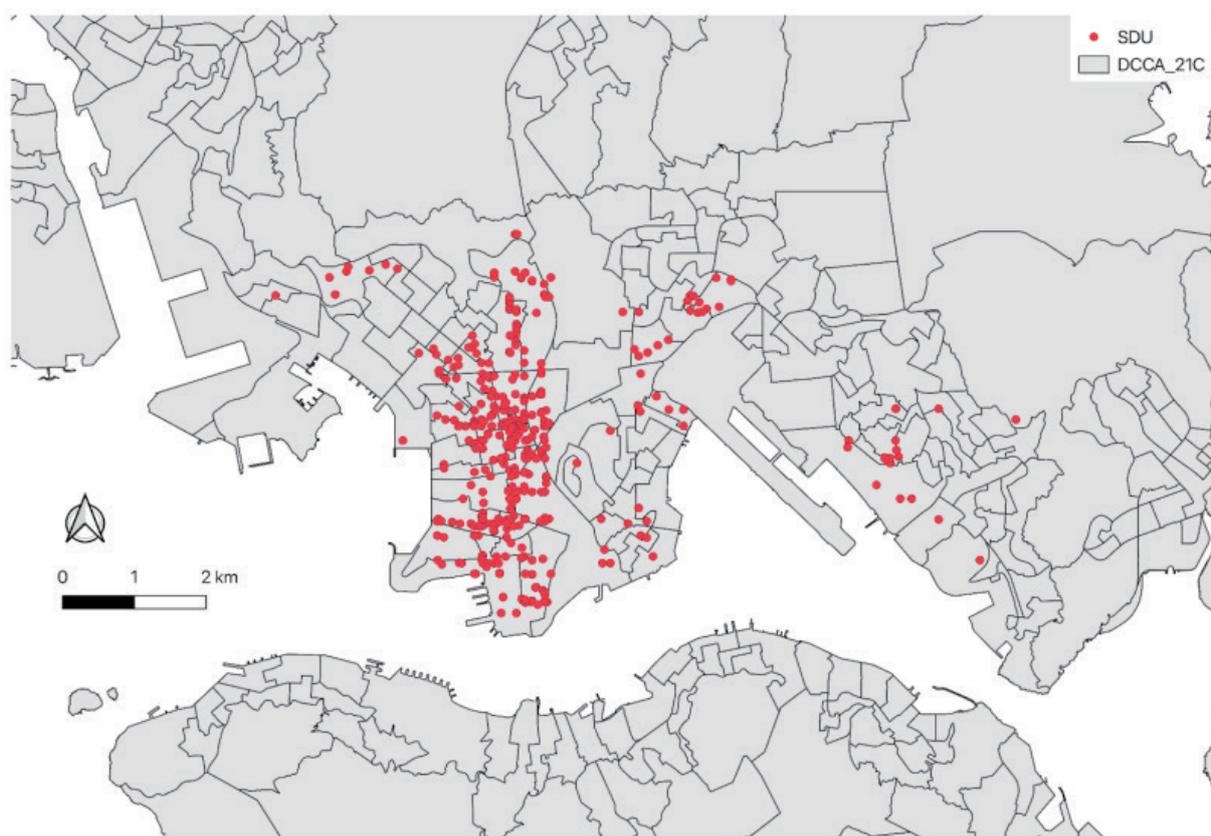


Figure 3 SDUs in Kowloon Under Investigation

The dataset is geographically concentrated in the Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, and Kowloon City districts, which collectively represent over 95% of the samples. This study includes four operational Community Living Rooms (CLRs) and six Community Pharmacies (CPs), with three non-operational CLRs scheduled for 2025 excluded from the scope of this study. The rental price of SDUs serves as the dependent variable. Six categories of attributes were selected as independent variables: structural, facilities, location, service, and two welfare facility attributes. Structural attributes include floor level (low, middle, or high), usable area, and building age. Facilities attributes, coded as a binary value (0 or 1), detail the presence of a window, individual kitchen, individual bathroom, elevator, decoration condition, and household appliances. Location attributes classify the SDU by its district (e.g., Yau Tsim Mong), also using a binary value. Service attributes measure the distance to the nearest MTR and bus station. The welfare facilities attributes, central to this study, include the distance to the nearest CLR and CP, the number of CPs within 1,500 meters, and a binary value indicating whether a CP is within 500 meters. Distances were measured using a Geographic Information System (QGIS), which calculates the straight-line distance from the SDU to the nearest facility. The geo-spatial distributions of the samples, and a summary of variables are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

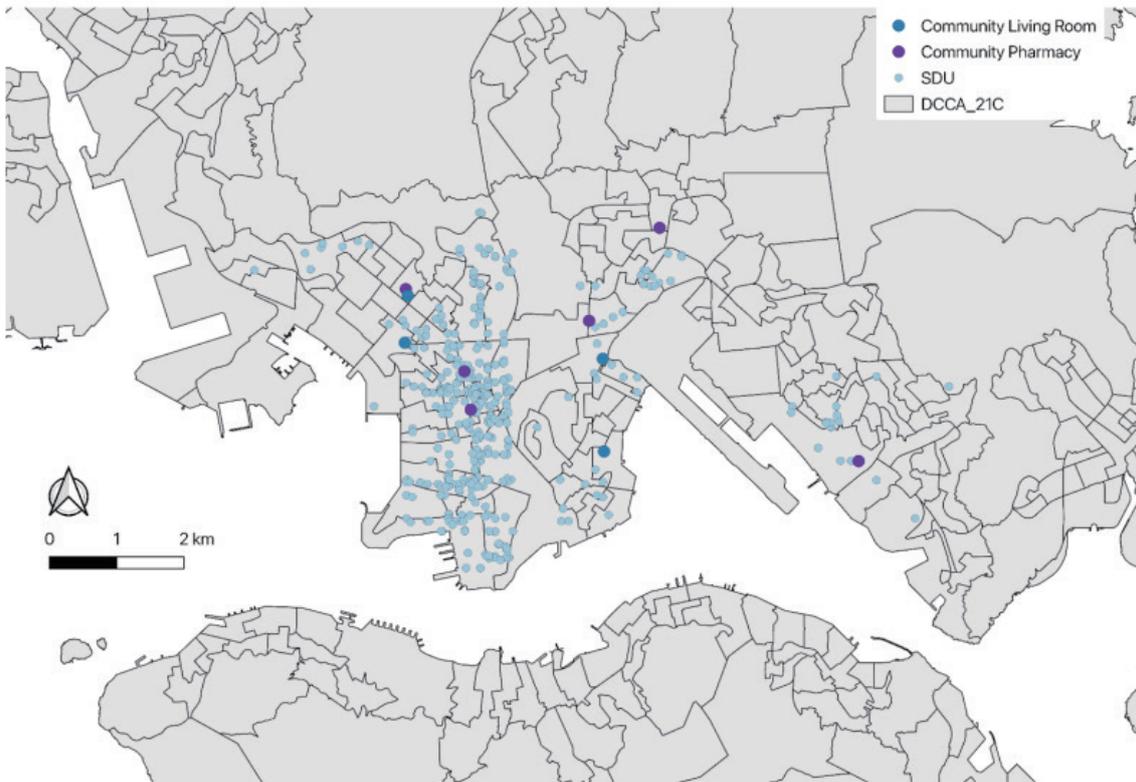


Figure 4 SDUs, CLRs and CPs in Kowloon Under Investigation

Variable	Description	Unit
Rent	Rental level (dependent variable)	\$HK
Structural Attributes		
Floor	Floor level on which SDU is located	1 or 2 or 3
Usable area	Usable area of SDU	Square metres (foot)
Building age	Age of flat	Count
Facilities Attributes		
Window	With window or not	0 or 1
Indi_kitchen	Individual kitchen or not	0 or 1
Indi_bathroom	Individual bathroom or not	0 or 1
Elevator	With elevator or not	0 or 1
Decoration	Decoration condition	0 or 1
Household appliances	With household application or not	0 or 1
Location Attributes		
Kowloon City District	District where SDU is located	0 or 1
Yau Tsim Mong District	District where SDU is located	0 or 1
Sham Shui Po District	District where SDU is located	0 or 1
Wong Tai Sin District	District where SDU is located	0 or 1
Kwun Tong District	District where SDU is located	0 or 1
Service Attributes		
MTR	Distance to nearest MTR	Count
Bus Station	Distance to nearest Bus Station	Count
Welfare Facilities (explanation of Q1)		
CLR	Distance to nearest community living room	Count
Welfare Facilities (explanation of Q2)		
CP	Distance to nearest community pharmacy	Count
CP_500	Distance to community pharmacy within 500m or above	0 or 1
CP_num_1500	Number of community pharmacies within 1500m	Count

Figure 5 Summary of Variables

The analysis employs a multi-variable linear regression model to analyze a dataset of 510 Subdivided Unit (SDU) listings from the Kowloon region, sourced from 28hse.com. The data shows a significant concentration in Yau Tsim Mong (68%), Sham Shui Po (13.7%), and Kowloon City (13.4%) districts, which collectively account for over 95% of the samples. The rental prices range from \$2,300 to \$12,500 HKD, with a mean of \$7,017 HKD and a median of \$7,000 HKD. The normal distribution of SDUs rent is reflected in Figure 6.

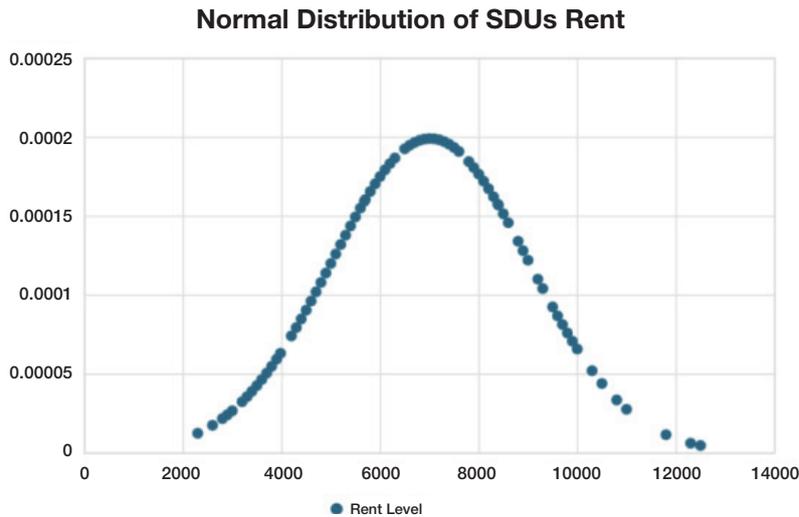


Figure 6 Normal Distribution of SDUs Rent

Finding and Discussion

The estimated coefficients for two regression models are analyzed, which are reported in Figures 7 and 9 respectively. Model 1 investigated the relationship between rental prices and distance to Community Living Rooms (CLRs), while Model 2 analyzed the correlations with both the distance to Community Pharmacies (CPs) and their quantity, with two additional variables: distance from SDUs to CPs within 500 meters (Dist_sdu_to_CP_less_500) and the number of CPs within 1,500 meters (CP_num_1500). Both models shared independent variables related to structural, facilities, location, and service attributes.

In Model 1 (Figure 7), the coefficient for distance to CLRs was -0.2813, indicating a negative and highly significant correlation ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that a greater distance from a CLR is associated with lower rental prices. In Model 2 (Figure 9), the coefficient for the distance to CPs showed a positive and highly significant correlation (0.707). Conversely, the coefficient for CPs within 500 meters (Dist_sdu_to_CP_less_500) was 66.9955, but with low statistical significance. The coefficient for the number of CPs within 1,500 meters (CP_num_1500) was 577.57, showing a highly significant positive correlation, indicating that each additional CP is associated with an approximate \$577 HKD increase in rental price. Both models demonstrated a good fit, with an R-squared of nearly 70% for Model 1 and 71.2% for Model 2.

Regression Analysis of Community Living Rooms (CLRs)

In model 1, Building age is negatively correlated. The P-values of both are indicated as significantly correlated. Therefore, in the absence of clarity on the relative location and relative height of the floors, the level of variation in the sample is not significant, resulting in this variable not being one of the factors explaining the model. Elevator, renovation, and appliance provision are positively associated with rents. The variables for separate bathrooms, kitchens, and windows are not significant, likely due to market default configurations or data limitations. Wong Tai Sin District shows lower rents due to older housing stock and weaker amenities. However, overall locational attributes are insignificant, likely because their explanatory power overlaps with transportation and facility distance variables. Proximity to MTR and bus stations is not significant. Given Hong Kong's dense transport network, tenants are insensitive to minor distance differences. Distance to CLRs is significant at the 1% level, confirming Hypothesis H1 that CLR accessibility positively affects SDU rental values.

	Dependent variable:
	Rent
Floor	-19.7067 (50.2114)
Usable Area	39.6047*** (1.7277)
Building Age	-13.0297** (6.1156)
Window	97.2308 (112.4482)
Indi_Bathroom	-61.4049 (205.0810)
Indi_Kitchen	-64.2817 (177.8731)
Elevator	986.7915*** (122.5690)
Decoration	392.8606*** (119.4114)
Household Appliances	311.9242*** (115.5999)
Kowloon City District	408.8450 (340.3177)
Yau Tsim Mong District	439.5057 (315.6359)
Sham Shui Po District	-309.8053 (362.0378)
Wong Tai Sin District	-536.7117 (424.0577)
Dist_SDU to MTR	0.1353 (0.3541)
Dist_SDU to bus	1.0697 (0.9988)
Dist_SDU to CLR	-0.2813*** (0.0945)
Constant	997.9605 (677.8140)
Observations	516
R2	0.6976
Adjusted R2	0.6879
Residual Std. Error	1,119.5970 (df = 499)
F Statistic	71.9466*** (df = 16; 499)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 7 Regression Result of Model 1

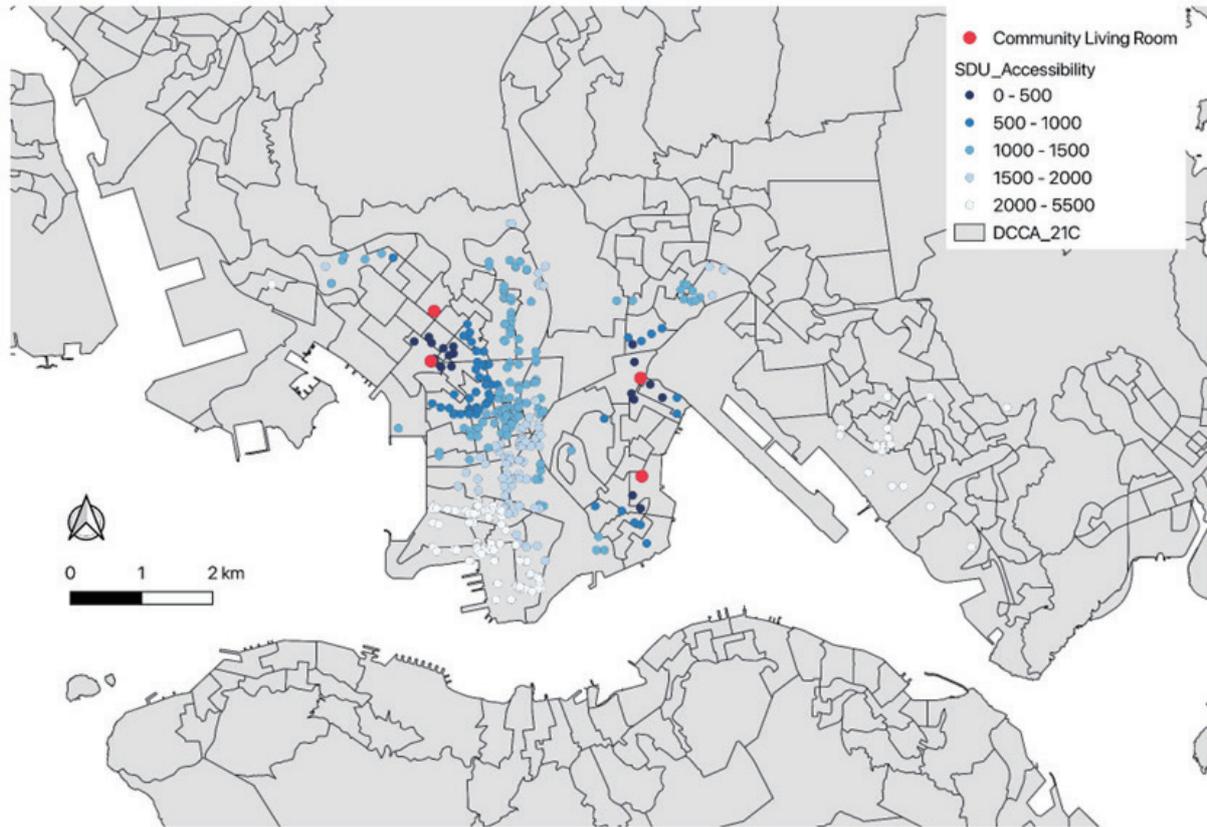


Figure 8 Accessibility of CLRs in Kowloon

Regression Analysis of Community Pharmacies (CPs)

In model 2 (Figure 9), Building age is positively correlated with studio apartment rent. Elevator, renovation, and furnishing are strongly significant. Independent bathroom and kitchen remain insignificant. Among the districts, Kowloon City records the highest rents. The other three districts show no significant difference. Distances to MTR and bus stations are not significant, possibly due to limited sample size. Contrary to Hypothesis H2a, rents increase with distance from CPs, suggesting tenants prefer to live farther from pharmacies, possibly due to health or environmental concerns. However, within 1,500 meters, a higher number of CPs raises rents, reflecting demand for diverse medical options and reduced healthcare pressure. CPs within 500 meters have no significant impact.

	Dependent variable: Rent
Floor	-19.0069 (49.1579)
Usable Area	38.5455*** (1.7084)
Building Age	-12.1569** (5.9921)
Window	113.3303 (110.3764)
Indi_Bathroom	-76.0472 (200.4901)
Indi_Kitchen	-131.6910 (174.3029)
Elevator	932.1538*** (120.0188)
Decoration	353.4560*** (117.0132)
Household Appliances	289.4745** (113.1104)
Kowloon City District	747.8058*** (274.9686)
Yau Tsim Mong District	666.1737** (258.1704)
Sham Shui Po District	-179.0376 (291.9453)
Wong Tai Sin District	-400.4191 (377.6100)
Dist_SDU to MTR	0.1877 (0.3645)
Dist_SDU to bus	0.1640 (0.9601)
Dist_SDU to CP	0.7254*** (0.1933)
Dist_SDU to CP_less 500	66.9955 (168.2761)
CP_NUM_1500	577.5776*** (100.7622)
Constant	-960.5582 (600.0455)
Observations	516
R2	0.7122
Adjusted R2	0.7018
Residual Std. Error	1,094.4240 (df = 497)
F Statistic	68.3293*** (df = 18; 497)

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Figure 9 Regression Result of Model 2

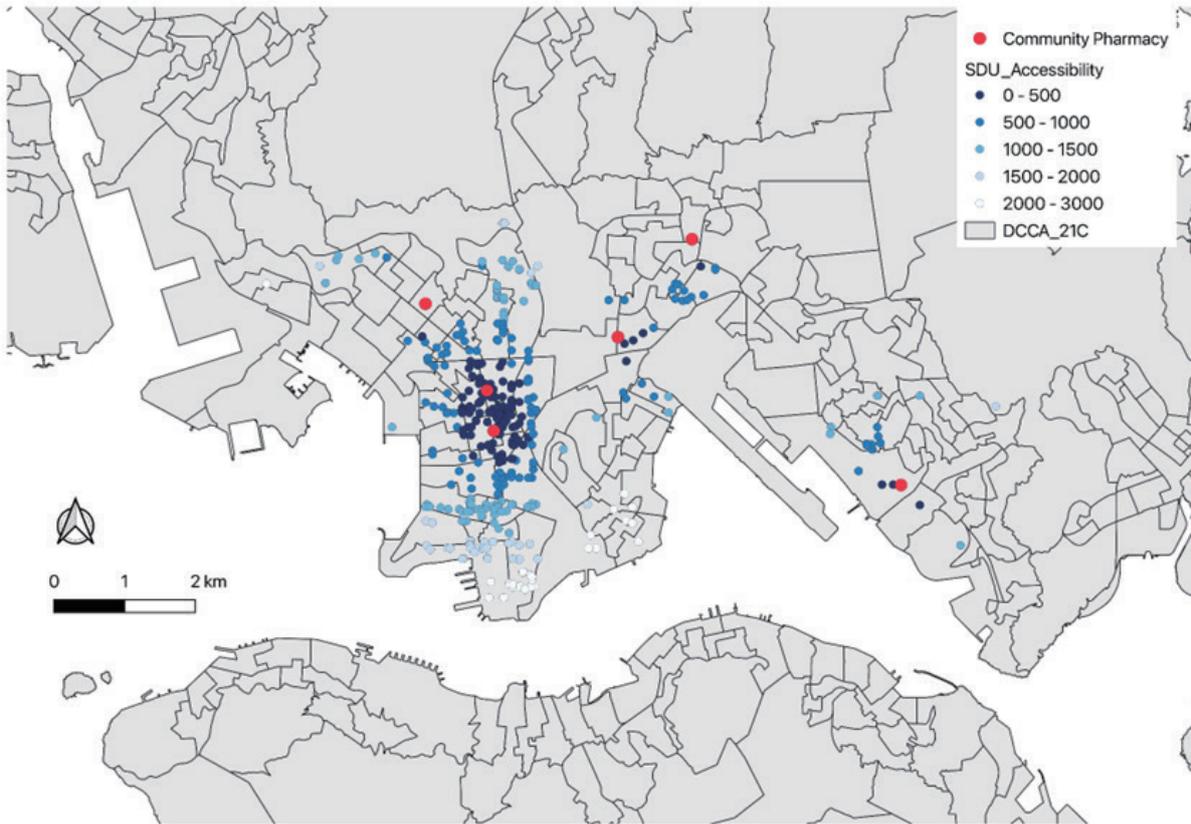


Figure 10 Accessibility of CPs in Kowloon

Policy Implication

This study quantitatively examines the impact of community pharmacies and activity centers on subdivided flat rents in Hong Kong. Results indicate that community living rooms exert a positive influence on rents, reflecting market emphasis on livability and social interaction; conversely, community pharmacies show a negative correlation, highlighting residents’ economic concerns regarding health risks.

Specifically, community living rooms enhance property values through positive externalities, prompting residents to pay premiums. Policies must ensure facility accessibility, though the study also notes gentrification risks—rising rents may displace vulnerable groups. Urban planning should prioritize positive externalities like parks and green spaces while establishing rent monitoring mechanisms to prevent gentrification from crowding out disadvantaged residents.

Community pharmacies exert negative rental effects, requiring mitigation through strategic site selection, operational oversight, and transportation integration. Adopting Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) models to integrate pharmacies with transit hubs is recommended to balance accessibility and risk management.

In summary, this study reveals starkly contrasting rental impacts between the two facility types. Policy formulation must accurately interpret market signals, balance social benefits against economic costs, and advance sustainable community development.

Conclusion

Summary of the Research

This study analyzed the effects of CLRs and CPs on SDU rental prices in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Regression models considered facility distance, number of CPs, and housing attributes such as building age, floor level, size, and transport access.

Results show CLRs raise rental values: the closer the unit, the higher the rent. Residents value these welfare resources for the social and support services they provide. CPs show a more complex effect. Within 500 meters, greater distance from a CP correlates with higher rent, suggesting nearby pharmacies may be seen as undesirable due to crowding or nuisance. Yet, more CPs within 1,500 meters increase rental prices, showing residents want medical options nearby but not directly adjacent. Geospatial analysis highlights the strategic distribution of CPs in western Kowloon. Two CPs are only 650 meters apart, and a new facility will open in Sham Shui Po in 2025, helping relieve healthcare pressure while preserving residential comfort.

Overall, CLRs are strongly valued, while CPs require balanced spatial planning. The findings inform both housing research and welfare facility design, showing that careful planning can enhance living conditions without distorting the rental market.

Limitations and Agenda for Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. First, multicollinearity may have affected regression accuracy, especially for the CP distance variable. Second, raw data were used for interpretability, but skewed distributions could have weakened results; future research may adopt log transformations. Third, data collection was constrained by the informal nature of SDUs, requiring indirect identification that may have introduced errors. Fourth, the relatively small sample size limited statistical power. Finally, including not-yet-open CPs created a mismatch with current rental data, possibly weakening observed correlations. Despite these challenges, the study provides valuable evidence on how community amenities shape SDU rental prices in Hong Kong.

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