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Connecting People with Nature: Urban park and human well-being

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Abstract

With increasing urbanization, the quality and quantity of nature experiences is degrading. The existence of parks such as the botanical garden can play an important role in the urban landscape. The usage of the parks can increase the quality of life by increasing the degree of enjoyment and satisfaction experienced in everyday life. To achieved the positive effect of the urban park on human, research need to be done. A study was conducted to determine the community needs related to urban parks. This research is useful in order to increase the quality of urban parks.

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Keywords: Urban park; botanical garden; quality of life; recreational activities

1. Introduction

Accelerating development of urban was obviously reducing the green area. This situation also contributes to the deterioration of natural resources value and benefits (NurHuzeima & Hugh, 2012; Noriah, Noralizawati, Mohd Hisham, & Mohd Ali Waliyuddin, 2015). Deterioration of natural resources value and benefits will give bad

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influence to the urban lifestyle and urban community. Previous research shows that 73% of the Malaysian population predicted to be urbanites in 2020 (Nor A'aini & Kamarul'ain, 2007; Noralizawati & Noriah, 2012). This high percentage shows that the small green spaces need to be preserved and maintained for urban people usage. Increasing of the urban area also can cause an imbalance of biodiversity. According to (Sabrina & Nik Hanita, 2012), biodiversity is facing a huge problem that is many of land surfaces has been transformed and influenced by the human. This problem can give negative effect to the urban environment because the urban park can reduce the greenhouse effect. As mentioned by (Mohd Akmal & Noriah, 2012), planted trees helping to reduce the temperature by absorbing surrounding heat. It is also can increase the air quality in the urban area and served better environment for the urban dweller. Therefore, for those who appreciate the natural environment, this little green area becomes so valuable. In order to protect this little green area from human greed, the urban parks need to be alive and useful for the urban dweller and avoid this space from becoming abandoned space.

1.1. The purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to achieve information on how the city dwellers are spending their time in the gardens and what attributes contributed to their needs. The amenities provided in the gardens can be one of the influential factors to motivate their visitation. This study also aims to promote the natural environment as a platform to enhance human well-being. The findings from this research can be a reference in a way to improve and enhance the quality of urban park to fulfill visitors need. It is also useful to the researcher, students, urban park management, local authorities and other related bodies to ensure the changes made will successful in the future.

2. Literature review

2.1. Urban park

Urban park is a place with nature environment that surrounded by urban setting. Urban park also located near the housing area that is less than 5 to 10 km and as an activity center for the urban dweller (Suria, Nik Hanita, & Sabrina, 2013). This statement shows that how closed the urban park in urban community environments. Urban parks give benefits for visitors in term of education and research purpose (Gailbraith, Iwanycki, McGoe, McGregor, Pringle, Rothfels, & Smith, 2010). Other than that, urban park is not only a place for existing vegetation and environments conservation, but it is also give positive impact on human's social and psychological which involves the quality of urban itself (Ward, Parker, & Shackleton, 2010; Noriah, Noralizawati, Mohd Hisham, & Mohd Ali Waliyuddin, 2015). According to (Chiesura, 2004), urban park and urban green spaces are important for urbanized society in improving the quality of life. The early establishment of the urban park, the roles and the purpose of these urban green spaces are different compared to nowadays. Botanic garden was focused on the study and spread knowledge about botany, and it is also a place for plants conservation in a way to protect the species from extinction. The naturalness of the botanical garden can be resources in attracting and developing the community to connect with natural areas (Kithiia & Lyth, 2011). While other urban parks, the main attention were focused on social, economic, and environmental requirements only, less attention to the benefits on human health (Godbey, 2009). Today, the roles of the urban park are more than that. Urban parks provide a place for recreation, meditation, tourist attractions, places to gather with family and friends, a place to enjoy the beauty of nature, and many others. That means it's suitable for different ages, ethnic, and gender. So it is not surprising if many urban parks in Malaysia are upgraded to fulfill the community needs. Successful parks will allow the user to relax and get away from daily life while providing engaging elements such as vegetation and scenic views. Successful parks also can be seen by how its attract visitors to come and get positive benefits from park facilities (Asmah & Abdullah, 2014). This statement shows that not the only natural elements in the urban park give the positive impact on visitors, but the man-made elements or structure also can effect visitor's satisfaction. Visitors will motivate to come to the urban park if the park itself can attract visitors to come.

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