

# Understanding the Housing Acquisition Behavior of Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework Based on ABC Theory

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**Abstract:** *House is the most important basic need for the human survival, however many people especially those who are categorised in the category of generation Y do not acquire a house due to various factors (internal salient belief factors, personal factor, and extra factor). In accordance, the volume of residential transaction and homeownership rate among youths in Malaysia has been decreasing for the past few years. It is proven as the number of residential property transaction has dropped from 272,669 transactions in 2012 to 250,586 transactions in 2023. Thus, it is important to examine the behavior of generation Y towards house acquisition in Malaysia. This study focuses on Muslim Generation Y in West Malaysia, specifically on those who have purchased a home and those who have not. The research proposes to examine the internal salient belief factors (attitude and perceived religiosity on property), personal factors (lifestyles) as well as external factors (house features, house location, financing factors, and government support) in influencing house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia. As such, this study proposes to adapt Attitude-Behavior-Context (ABC) theory in discovering the behavior.*

**Keywords:** House acquisition, House ownership, Consumer behavior, Islamic consumer behavior, ABC theory

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## 1. Introduction

Although a house is a necessity for human survival, most purchasers find the price of houses to be prohibitively high. Shelter is seen as a psychological need according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where it is the most fundamental and vital requirement for the human-being along with water, air, food and clothes (Chuon et al., 2017). In Islam, Allah (S.W.T) commands (16:80);

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا....

“We provide the house for humanity as a place of comfort....”

Islam specifies the importance of supplying real needs for human communities so that human beings may well live together with the utmost safety, security, health, and far from the fears and problems (Azemati et al., 2017; Nik Mohammad, 2024). Consequently, as a house is a basic need in both Islamic and Western cultures, it should be within the reach of most individuals.

Unfortunately, according to property market report in 2023, the house price has been increasing massively since a decade ago. In 2010, the average house price was at RM217,877.00 per unit, however in 2023, the house price is doubling to RM467,144.00 per unit (Property Market Report 2023, 2024). This shows how fast the increment of house price is, as compared to the increment of Malaysians' incomes (Nik Mohammad, 2024; Soon & Tan, 2019). This situation has led to unaffordability of Malaysians to own a house.

This study argues that the current house price situation will have the greatest impact on the young generation, particularly Muslim generation Y, as apart from house price issue, generation Y also faces other major concerns such as youth unemployment, low rate of salary, high general debt, education loan, lack of financial literacy, and lastly bankruptcy (N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2021, 2022; N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024). In addition, the reason why this study is piloted on Muslim as it is found that almost 70% out of more than 3000 Muslim respondents had poor financial literacy and in need for financial literacy support (Murugiah, 2020; N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024). Therefore, it is important to examine this issue from the perspective of Muslim generation Y.

Furthermore, this study proposes to examine and further validate the Attitude-Behavior-Context Theory in exploring the behavior of Muslim generation Y towards house acquisition in Malaysia. The ABC theory believes that an individual's behaviour is not only affected by the individual's beliefs, but it is also affected through the interaction between belief (internal) factors and contextual (external) factors (Guagnano et al., 1995).

In summary, this conceptual paper will provide details on housing crisis in Malaysia, issues related to Generation Y, previous studies related to house acquisition in Malaysia, and possibility of Attitude-Behavior-Context theory to be examined in the context of house acquisition behavior. In hoping, with this information, insights, and details from this paper could possibly further and extend this conceptual paper with real data to investigate the behavior of Muslim generation Y towards house acquisition in Malaysia.

## **2. Literature Review**

The discussion on literature review consists of four main parts, they are housing crisis in Malaysia, Generation Y in Malaysia, followed by consumer behavior and house acquisition studies in Malaysia, lastly discussion on Attitude-Behavior-Context (ABC) Theory.

### **2.1 Housing Crisis in Malaysia**

the housing crisis is one of the global crises dogging big cities across the world, including cities in Malaysia. Voluminous of past researchers highlighted the housing crisis, especially on the price issue. A study stated that over the past few years, the house prices in Malaysia have experienced a huge value development and turned into a stress pattern for those who want to own a house, especially first-time home buyers (Mohd Shoed & Subramaniam, 2015). Another research added that the continuous upward trend of housing prices in Malaysia has raised the attention of home buyers, investors, and policymakers (Auyong et al., 2018). A recent study

also indicated that the prices of property in Malaysia have been continuously rising over the past 10 years with the slight increase in salary that has made the Malaysian affordability to purchase a house drop (N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024). The increment of house prices has led to less house transaction volume compared to last decades. The following table 1 shows the volume of residential transaction in Malaysia from 2009 to 2023;

**Table 1: Volume of Residential Transaction in Malaysia**

Year	House Transaction Volume
2023	250,586
2022	243,190
2021	198,812
2020	191,354
2019	209,295
2018	197,385
2017	194,684
2016	203,064
2015	235,967
2014	247,251
2013	246,225
2012	272,669
2011	269,789
2010	226,874
2009	211,653

Source: (N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2022; Property Market Report 2023, 2024)

Based on table 1 above, it showed that the volume of house transactions has been decreasing from 271,669 transactions in 2012 to 250,586 transactions in 2023. From 2009-2012, there was a significant increase in transaction volumes, culminating in the peak of 272,669 transactions in 2012. From 2013 to 2020, after 2012, transaction volumes generally declined, reaching a low in 2020. This decline could be attributed to various factors such as economic conditions or market saturation. However, in 2021 to 2023, following the low in 2020, transaction volumes have been on the rise. By 2023, the volume had increased to 250,586 transactions, indicating a recovery and upward trend in the housing market. The data from the last few years shows a positive trend with a notable increase from 2020 to 2023, suggesting an improving market condition and possibly increased buyer and seller activity. Overall, the data highlights a recovery in the housing market in recent years after a period of decline following the 2012 peak. However, when comparing the number of housing transactions recorded in 2023 to those recorded in 2012 and 2011, the volume is more than 20,000 transactions lower. This circumstance has resulted in a residential overhang of more than 25,816 units in 2023 and surprisingly, the largest number of residential overhang units are houses priced below RM300,000, with 7,592 units, or 25.3% of 25,816 units. (Property Market Report 2023, 2024). This demonstrates how affordable residences in Malaysia are not accessible to Malaysians. It is claimed that the big rise in property prices with a little increase in salary has made Malaysian affordability to own a house diminish (N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2022; Soon & Tan, 2019).

Fortunately, the Malaysian government has launched a variety of affordable housing projects, such as Perumahan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (PR1MA), MyHome, Rumah Mesra Rakyat (RMR), Program Rumah Mampu Milik (RMM) (Olanrewaju & Woon, 2017), and Rumah Selangorku through the state government of Selangor as well as Residensi Madani that has been recently introduced by the Malaysian government. Furthermore, the government also offers financing scheme to help Malaysians buying their first house, known as Skim Jaminan Kredit Perumahan (SJKP). SJKP is designed to assist first-time home purchasers who do not have a steady source of income, such as freelancer, gig workers, business owners, traders, or small entrepreneurs (N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2022). While there are numerous schemes from the government available for Malaysians, regrettably the supply of affordable houses is falling short the demand.

It is shown in the case of PR1MA, where only 42,432 units of housing offer for application, and another 24,064 units of houses in various phases of development will be provided to 1,416,970 registrants or individuals who have registered accounts with PR1MA as of December 2021 (Laporan Tahunan PR1MA 2021: Mendepani Cabaran, Memperkukuh Kestabilan, 2022). It means that there are still many applicants who are eligible but unable to obtain a PR1MA home because the demand for affordable housing is far greater than the supply. Unpredictably, developers prefer to build high-rise structures over affordable housing, which directly results in supply-demand mismatches in the property market (Mariadas et al., 2019; N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024).

It is proven in case of PR1MA, where only 64,239 units of house offer for application and another 136,609 units of houses in various stages of construction will be offered to 1,421,843 registrants or individuals that have created accounts with PR1MA as of March 2017 (PR1MA Annual Report, 2016). It means, there are still many applicants who are eligible but are unable to obtain a PR1MA house due to the demand for affordable housing is huge compared to the supply. Unpredictably, developers prefer to build high-rise buildings over affordable housing, directly has resulted in supply-demand mismatches in the property market (Mariadas et al., 2019). This is consistent with a report that stated that only 35% of new launches in 2021 were for residences priced below RM300,00 (Property Market Status, 2022).

## **2.2 Generation Y in Malaysia**

There are several arguments on the age range of Gen Y, though many studies have recognized Generation Y to be those who were born between 1978 and 1994 (Lim et al., 2015). Basically, their current age-range is around 29 to 46 years old. In Malaysia, Gen Y makes up the biggest population of consumers, they tend to have a high level of spending power and make clear decision on their purchases (Azmi & Madden, 2015; N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2022)

However, generation Y faces other severe issues aside the issue of house price. The first issue is unemployment, before the arrival of COVID-19, the unemployment rate in Malaysia stood at 3.3% (Murugiah, 2020). During COVID-19, the unemployment rate was increased to 4.2%. As of January 2024, the unemployment rate in Malaysia has decreased to 3.3%, with the number of unemployed Malaysians declining further to 567,300 from 567,800 in December 2023 (Labor Force Malaysia, 2024; N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024). Secondly, the rate of salary for most Malaysians increases slightly as compared to the house price, where it rapidly surges since last decades, this incongruity has resulted to the housing problems (N. F. Nik Mohammad et al., 2022; Soon & Tan, 2019). Moreover, Malaysians' relatively low salary leads to their inability to purchase a house (Hassan et al., 2021). Accordingly, research found that most of Malaysians earned less than RM3000 (Azma et al., 2019). These scenarios have led

Malaysians to feel that their salary is insufficient to meet the cost of living (N. M. F. Nik Mohammad, 2024; World Bank Group, 2019). Thirdly, generation Y is visible to the high indebtedness such as education loan and credit card. Their attitude of “spend now save later” and “live for the moment” is primarily the reason of lack financial stability and are vulnerable to indebtedness (Kaur & Hassan, 2018). Additionally, personal loan, also offered by non-bank credit providers, has become a critical factor in bankruptcy in Malaysia (Ilias et al., 2023). Fourthly, a number of generation Y are actually financially ignorant. According to a survey, just 36% of Malaysian millennials are financially educated, compared to 51% in Myanmar and 66% in Singapore (World Bank Group, 2019). To support this statement, a recent study stated that many people do not have a strong degree of financial knowledge, which lead to financial misunderstandings (Tze Ying & Abdul Jamal, 2023). Finally, the issues of unemployment, low rate of salary, high debt and lack of financial literacy consequently will lead to bankruptcy. In 2021, 289,766 Malaysians have been declared as bankrupt where almost 60% of them were youths (Bankruptcy Statistic 2021, 2021). As in 2023, the number has increased to 233,483, where 37,461 cases were recorded from 2019 to 2023, with approximately 57% of the cases were youths (Bankruptcy Statistic 2021, 2024).

### 2.3 Consumer Behavior and House Acquisition Studies in Malaysia

In general, consumer behavior emphasizes on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources such as money, time and effort on consumption related items, it includes what, why, when, where, and how they buy (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006). There are stages involved in making decision namely problem recognition, information search, evaluation alternatives, purchase decision and lastly post purchase decision (Kotler & Armstrong, 2000). However, these stages are affected by the individuals’ characteristics, social characteristics and psychological factors (Saeed, 2019).

There is various research conducted related to house acquisition behavior in Malaysia specifically studies in affordable housing ownership, Malaysians’ housing affordability and factors affected purchasing decision. Though, there are fewer studies piloted on the house acquisition within Malaysians’ youth, also less research underlined by theory compared to conceptual and descriptive research.

Four most used factors in investigating house acquisition behavior by previous research are house location, House feature, and financing factors. House location is related to distance from different point of interest (Chia et al., 2016). Distance to work, distance to the central business district, distance to retailer outlets, and distance to school are among examples of the various point of interest that need to be considered by customers (Opoku & Abdul-Muhmin, 2010). House feature refers to type of buildings, unit size, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, and presence of parking area (Olanrewaju & Woon, 2017). Financing factor is a group of interest rate, maximum monthly payment, maximum mortgage, and length of time for payment (Mohd Thas Thaker & Chandra Sakaran, 2016). House prices refer to perception of potential homebuyers towards the current house price. These four factors are known as external factors in influencing the house acquisition behavior. The following table 2 shows the factors used in previous studies.

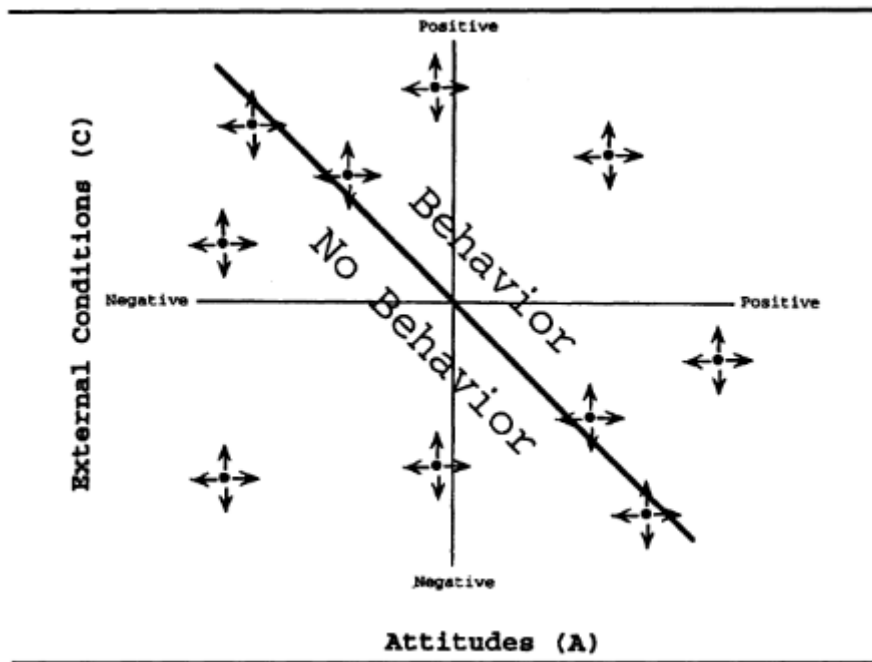
**Table 2: Previous Research on House Acquisition Behavior**

Authors	Factors	Theory
Zeng (2013)	Housing attributes, Demographics, Housing service quality	Consumer behaviour and purchase decision-making process

Al-Nahdi et al. (2015)	Attitude, Location, Living space, Public service, Friends influence, Reference group	Descriptive
Akinyode, Hayat Khan, & Hj Ahmad (2015)	Consumer resources, Motivation & involvement, Knowledge, Attitudes, Culture, Social class, Personal influence	Consumer purchase decision-making process
Baqutaya et al. (2016)	Location, House price, Financing, Government effort	Descriptive
Chia et al. (2016)	House attributes, Location, Environment, Financing, Developer	Descriptive
Visitnitikija & Chonphunnon (2016)	Product, Price, Place, Promotion	Consumer behaviour and Marketing mix theory
Boon et al. (2018)	Income, Property price, Land cost, Demand & supply, Changing in economic, Developers' profit margin, Demographics, Construction cost, Interest rates, Government	Descriptive
Liu & Li (2018)	Fixed income, Children's education, Solid credit, Forthcoming Child, Getting married	Descriptive
Sundrani (2018)	Product, Price, Location, Security, Privacy, Intuition, Influencing persons, Amnesties, Promotion	Descriptive
Zhang et al. (2018)	Attitude, Subjective norm, Perceived behavioural control	Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)
Yusof et al. (2019)	Government efforts, Home financing, Macroeconomics	Descriptive
N. F. Nik Mohammad et al. (2022)	Attitude, House features, location, financial factors, government support	Attitude-Behavioural-Context Theory

#### **2.4 Attitude-Behavior-Context (ABC) Theory**

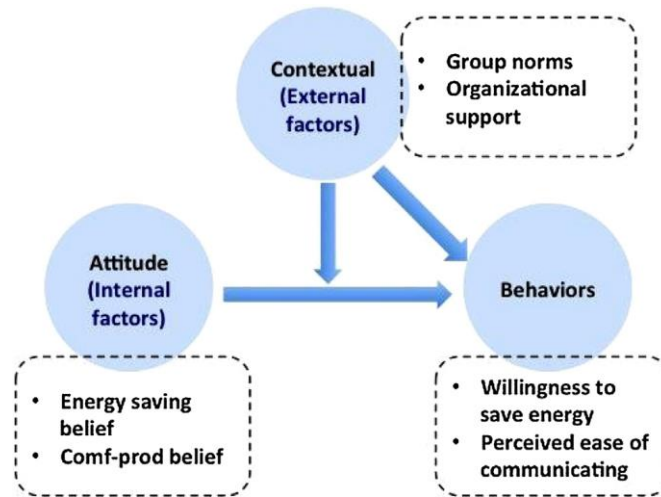
ABC is a general framework originally applied in the field of environmental psychology developed by Guagnano, Stern, and Dietz in 1995 in understanding consumers' recycling behavior through attitudes and external factors (Olander & Thøgersen, 2005). ABC is a modest theory in which attitudinal factors and external conditions act in mutual to influence behavior where attitudes consist of personal beliefs, norms and values, conversely external conditions consist of physical, financial, legal and social (Guagnano et al., 1995). The theory suggests that an individual's behavior is not only affected by the individual's attitude, but also affected by the external factors (Guo et al., 2018). Concisely, ABC theory explains that attitudes would only be significantly correlated with actual behavior depending upon external or context factors (Zepeda & Deal, 2009). The following figure 1 shows the original model of ABC developed by Guagnano et al. (1995) in the field of environmental studying the curbside recycling behavior.



**Figure 1: The ABC Model**  
 Source: (Guagnano et al., 1995)

As shown in the ABC model, the horizontal axis represents the external factors, and the vertical axis exemplifies the attitude beliefs. The model believes that a behavior will occur if the value of external factors and attitude beliefs are greater than zero. On the contrary, a behavior will not occur when both external factors and attitude belief are less than zero. Theoretically, greater value in both attitude beliefs and external factors will lead to higher chances of a behavior to happen. The critical element in this developed model is that the effect of attitude beliefs and external factors on a behavior depends on the values of attitude beliefs and external factors relative to each other rather than the value of either by itself (Guagnano et al., 1995).

Initially, ABC theory is developed in the field of environmental psychology, however the theory is applicable and relevant in general topic (Olander & Thøgersen, 2005). Plus, ABC theory is highly valuable in capturing not only internal factors, but especially external contextual factors (Ertz et al., 2016). The justification behind the application of the ABC theory is mainly on the existence of external factors where it is projected that there are numeral external factors affect the behavior of Muslim gen Y in house ownership. Xu, Maki, Chen, Dong, & Day (2017) applied ABC theory in their research to investigate how factors at both individual (internal) and organizational (external) levels, as well as interactions between internal and external factors in examining willingness to save energy in the American workplace. The framework of the research is as follow.



**Figure 2: ABC Theory in saving energy research**  
 Source: (Xu et al., 2017)

From the framework illustrated in figure 2, it is understood that the attitude beliefs (internal factors)-behavior relationship is moderated by contextual (external factors). The result indicated that both attitudinal and contextual factors were related to the outcomes of interest (Xu et al., 2017). Likewise, a former study from Olander & Thøgersen (2005) in identifying consumers’ waste recycling behavior showed that the external factors (providing a convenient storage and collection system for kitchen waste) substantially improved consumers’ behavior in waste recycling.

### 3. Research Framework

This conceptual paper proposes the ABC theory model in the context of house acquisition behavior (Figure 3) developed based on the ABC theory to examine the relationship between internal factor (Attitude and perceived religiosity on the property), personal factor (lifestyle) and external factors (House location, House feature, financing factor, house price, and government support) in influencing the house acquisition behavior among Muslims generation Y in Malaysia.

Basically, attitude affecting the behavior of Muslim generation Y applied in this present study is derived from the Attitude-Behavior-Context (ABC) theory. According to past literatures, attitude is proven to be one of the factors in influencing the intention and actual behavior of an individual customer. In the context of environmental study, the relationship of attitude is found to be as huge indicator towards curbside recycling behavior (Guagnano et al., 1995) and drive motivation in affecting the organic food consumption behavior (Zepeda & Deal, 2009). Thus, the study proposes:

**H1:** Attitude will positively influence the house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia

In term of perceived religiosity on property, it is adopted from the theory of Islamic consumer behavior. In general, there are many studies highlighted the impact of religion in the consumption’s behavior. As an example, in exploring the behavior of durable goods consumptions, Delener (1990) found out that religiosity has great influence towards purchase decision. Similarly, religiosity is found to affect the consumer behavior ethics (Schneider et al., 2011). In Halal food purchasing behavior research, it is understood that religion determines



the pattern of food consumption among generation Y consumers in Malaysia (Marmaya et al., 2019). It is also found that religion influenced in a significant and positive way upon entrepreneurial behavior among Brazilians (Sousa et al., 2020). Thus, to explore the relationship between the perceived religiosity on property and the actual behavior of house acquisition, the present research proposed the following hypothesis.

**H2:** Perceived religiosity on property will influence the house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

In general, personal factor such as lifestyles is known to influence the consumers' behaviors (Hamsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2016). Evidently, in the context of house acquisition, almost 80% of the 380 respondents believed that lifestyles lessened the opportunity of an individual in acquiring a house (Awang Besar et al., 2020). Similarly, in measuring housing affordability problems, Bujang et al. (2015) measured lifestyles as one of the factors affecting house affordability problems. Over twenty years ago, Fagnani & Brun (1994) reminded that individuals need to sacrifice high requirement of lifestyles in order to acquire a house. In the context of house preferences, lifestyle is one of the main factors affected the housing preferences among homebuyers (Beamish et al., 2001). Moreover, Gajjar (2013) mentioned lifestyles as one of the factors that affect general purchasing including house purchasing. Therefore, to explore the relationship between lifestyles and the actual behavior of house acquisition among Muslims generation Y, the present research proposed the following hypothesis.

**H3:** Lifestyles will influence the house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

House feature has been one of many factors influencing decision in purchasing a house in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (Mohd Thas Thaker & Chandra Sakaran, 2016). It is believed that house feature such as house size has significance influence to retired-homebuyers in buying retirement home (Tan & Lee, 2018). Hence:

**H4:** House feature will positively influence house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

Location is ranked as the third most influential factor in India (Sundrani, 2018). Additionally, in exploring homebuyers' preferences, location is discovered as one of the major factors perceived by homebuyers (Soon & Tan, 2019). Thus:

**H5:** Location will positively influence house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

In a qualitative study related to the housing-behavior research, three interviewees believed financing as one of the factors affected the house acquisition behavior among Malaysians (Boon et al., 2018). Also, financing factor is believed to be one of the most important factors when considering to purchase a residential property (Mohd Thas Thaker & Chandra Sakaran, 2016). Therefore:

**H6:** Financing factors will positively influence house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

Pricing factor has also been given a higher rank compared to other factors in prioritization of key factors affecting the housing purchasing decision in Malaysia (Mohd Thas Thaker & Chandra Sakaran, 2016). Furthermore, most respondents placed more weightage to housing price as one of the most influencing factors in house-purchase decision (Sundrani, 2018). Thus:

**H7:** House price will positively influence house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

In investigating green residential purchasing behavior, Zhang et al. (2018) highlighted that, governmental supports and incentives is the most important determinant influencing young customers in purchasing green house. In the context of house purchasing behavior (non-green house), it is also found that government efforts played significant roles in promoting homeownership in Malaysia (Yusof et al., 2019). In accordance, there is a need for the government, policymaker and industries to mutually cooperate in reviewing the existing policies as well as developing and introducing more housing programs to help the nations in acquiring houses at affordable price (Baqtaya et al., 2016). In qualitative research related to the housing study, expert respondents agreed that government support affected the housing acquisition behavior (Boon et al., 2018). Later in the study, they listed numbers of actions that need to be taken by the government in promoting house ownership including supplying more housing programs for low-income group as well as mid-income group, controlling residential property price, and loosening regulations in application of housing programs. Therefore, to see the relationship between government support and actual behavior from the perspective of the present research, it is proposed.

**H8:** Government support will influence house acquisition behavior among Muslim Generation Y in Malaysia.

Based on the Attitude-Behavior-Context (ABC) theory, it is believed that internal factors and external factors act in combination to influence the behavior (Guagnano et al., 1995). The ABC theory emphasizes on a specific set of perceived external factors which are expected to interrelate with internal factors in influencing a certain behavior (Ertz et al., 2016). In the context of recycling research, (Olander & Thøgersen, 2005) found that there is an interaction between internal factors and external conditions in influencing recycling behavior among household in Denmark. Therefore, the study proposes:

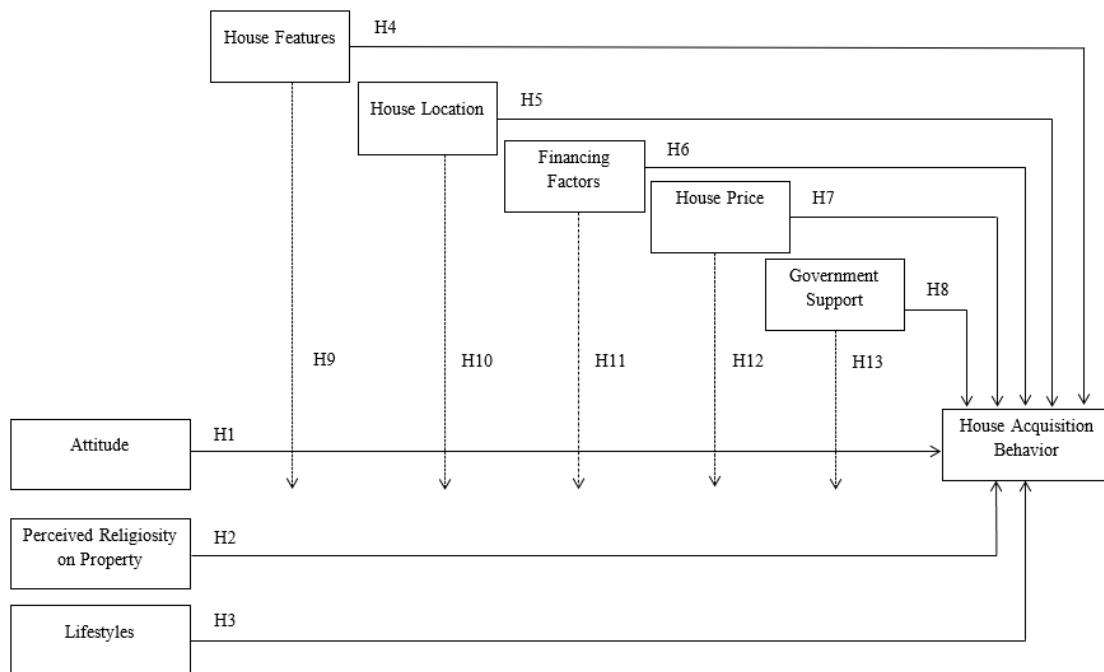
**H9:** House feature will moderate the relationship between attitude and house acquisition behavior

**H10:** House location will moderate the relationship between attitude and house acquisition behavior

**H11:** Financing factors will moderate the relationship between attitude and house acquisition behavior

**H12:** House price will moderate the relationship between attitude and house acquisition behavior

**H13:** Government support will moderate the relationship between attitude and house acquisition behavior



**Figure 3: Proposed Research Framework**

#### 4. Conclusion and Future research

All in all, the present study proposed that there are 13 factors affecting the behaviour of Muslims generation Y in Malaysia towards house acquisition. These factors consist of internal, personal, and external factors namely attitude, perceived religiosity on property, lifestyle, house features, house location, financing factors, house price, and government support. These factors are believed to act mutually in influencing the house acquisition behaviour, where external factors act as moderators for the internal factor (attitude). In this theory, it suggests that the attitude of Muslim generation Y towards house acquisition behaviour might increase or decrease depending on the external factors (house feature, house location, financing factor, house price and government support). For example, increase in government support, might affect to the positive attitude in buying a house.

This conceptual article has prospective contributions. Firstly, the study broadens the application of the ABC theory and creates theoretical reasons while also making a significant contribution to the theory's extension and development. Secondly, in terms of industrial and societal contribution, future study might provide insights on the Muslims generation Y pattern behaviour towards house acquisition, and might discovers key factors in affecting the house acquisition behaviour. These insights will help the government, developers, policy maker, and other related authorities to understand Muslims generation Y preferences towards house acquisition, and to address proper strategies to help them getting their first house. Additionally, it is fully recommended for future research to collect real data from the Muslims generation Y to examine their pattern behaviour towards house acquisition.

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