

# The experience of internal (Domestic) migration among 30 Homeless Former Prisoners in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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**Abstract.** The recurring return of homeless former prisoners to Chow Kit Road each time after being released from prison leads to various key questions. One of which: What is so interesting about Chow Kit Road that it has become a focal point for these homeless former prisoners? Their return to Chow Kit Road illustrates two big pictures, either they have no choice or they see Chow Kit Road as a suitable home for them. The repeated return of the homeless former prisoners indicated that they have developed a form of comfort and pleasure with the place. Hence, we conducted a qualitative study to understand the repetitive migration among the homeless former prisoners by interviewing 30 of them around Chow Kit Road. This study stopped the data collection process when the study's overall findings achieved data saturation. Atlas.ti software was utilised to perform the thematic coding process. This software provides a more systematic coding process. Several strategies were adopted in this study to increase the data's validity and reliability, triangulation, member check, peer review, long period in the field and audit trail. This study involved a larger qualitative sample by offering several diverse themes. Based on the findings, 11 sub-themes were grouped into 4 superordinate themes, namely social, economic and urban infrastructure, services, and personal offer factors. The social offer factor superordinate theme included sub-themes of familiarity with the environment, ease of getting drugs, and concentration of friends who are also former prisoners. Followed by the economic offer factor with the sub-theme of finding a job and easy ways to earn. The sub-themes of the urban infrastructure and service offer factor superordinate theme were access to transportation, plenty of food aid, and easy access to hospitals. While the sub-themes of the personal offer factor included wanting freedom, nowhere else to go, and bringing oneself away from family. These results added to the existing knowledge by considering migrations from chronic and marginal groups, i.e., the homeless former prisoners as study subjects.

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## 1. Introduction

The migration of individuals to a new destination within a country for a specific purpose is called internal migration (Czaika, 2015). According to the United Nations (1983), internal migration is triggered by the desire of individuals to move from their original location to a new destination that is complete with infrastructural advances. Migration can be classified into; rural-to-urban, rural-to-rural, urban-to-rural, urban-to-urban, and inter-provincial migrations. The migratory reasons include economic factors (William & Jobs, 1990), socio-political and educational (Crivello, 2011), and climate change (Piguet, Pecoud & De Guchteneire, 2011). Based on the literature, internal migration occurs among the population from urban to rural to rural to urban areas in almost all countries, for example African countries (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016) like Nigeria (Oyeniyi, 2013), some European countries (Nauman, Stoetzer & Pietrantonio, 2018), like England and Wales (Champion & Shuttleworth, 2016; McNeil,

2017), Korea (Kim, 2017), Japan (Oishi, 2020), Bangladesh (Marshall & Rahman, 2013) and Malaysia (Rashid, Ghani, Ngah & Yasin, 2014). Internal migration involves the migration of highly-skilled and low-skilled migrants into an area (Nauman et al., 2018; Oishi, 2020). Generally, migration can lead to development when a large group of communities join hands in developing the area. However, various impacts can be observed from international and internal migration (Gheasi & Nijkamp, 2017), including gender discrimination (Hennebry & Petrozziello, 2019), pay gap, inequality and poverty (McKenzie, 2017), feelings of belonging (Hoerder, 2012), congestion (Rees et al., 2016), diverse pattern and composition of the population (Bell & Charles-Edwards, 2013), and the most worrying when it contributes to urban poverty (Tacoli, McGranahan & Satterwaite, 2014). Nevertheless, internal migration can also benefit development, workforce influx, and new thinking (Nauman et al., 2018; Oyeniyi, 2013; Skeldon, 2017; Rashid et al., 2014).

This study is novel as it discusses the internal migration of homeless former prisoners from one area to another in search of livelihood. The focus of the discussion on migration is more on immigrants and refugees as subjects of this study. Hence, this study is expected to significantly contribute to geography, sociology, and the criminal justice system by exploring the migration of different study subjects. The concentration of homeless former prisoners in the big cities is a common occurrence since the existence of prison institutions in Malaysia. However, researchers are aware of insufficient secondary data on the internal migration of this group within the country and the statistics provided are often not comprehensive. The lack of sources in terms of statistics in proving the internal migration of homeless former prisoners to be in big cities. The migration of homeless former prisoners across provincial boundaries to Urban Areas can occur for a variety of reasons including employment opportunities, better income, achieving better skills, public services, personal interests, etc. The opportunities and offers existing in such urban destinations could be the important factors explaining the internal migration among these homeless former prisoners. Such internal migrations are expected to contribute to rapid economic growth and reduce poverty. However, it could also lead to a different landscape when such internal migrations involve homeless former prisoners considered a highly chronic marginal group. The internal migration of homeless former prisoners to Chow Kit Road could lead to negative impacts.

The migration of homeless former prisoners to urban areas has also been recorded in various countries including underdeveloped, developing, and developed countries. This homelessness phenomenon occurs across various walks of life. Factors contributing to a person becoming homeless (Berawi & Ismail, 2019) include poverty (Mustafar *et al.*, 2018; Jasni *et al.*, 2022; Jasni *et al.*, 2023a), drug abuse (Ku Yaacob, Mohamad & Sarnon, 2017), mental illness, ageing and prostitution (Ismail, Ghani & David, 2018), and OKU (Drani, 2016; Ghee & Omar, 2015; Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, 2012; Kamis & Salamat, 2014; Yildirim & Yildirim, 2014). Alhabshi & Abdul Manan (2012) and Jasni *et al.* (2018) are among the few who began discussing this matter in the Malaysian context. The two local studies examined the attractive and repulsive factors (Jasni *et al.*, 2018) and personal factors (Jasni *et al.*, 2021) that encouraged these homeless former prisoners to migrate from their original place of residence to Kuala Lumpur. Jasni *et al.* (2018) incriminated that societal discrimination and family exclusion as push factors, while employment opportunities and peer support as pull factors for their concentration in Kuala Lumpur. These existing pull and push factors led to their continued migration to Kuala Lumpur as a destination upon being released from prison. Meanwhile, Jasni *et al.* (2021) added that personal factors such as self-choice, finding a job, having friends, access to food, and being in an area that is familiar to them can be observed as additional factors to their migration. The most recent study by Jasni *et al.* (2023a) discussed aspects of homeless former prisoner migration from the perspective of professional officers and volunteers. The study used a group of experienced officers from Malaysian government agencies such as the National Welfare Foundation Officer, Social Welfare Malaysia Officers, Kuala Lumpur City Hall Officers, Prisons Department Officers, National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA) Officer, and the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) to gather the information needed. According to professional officers and volunteers, the migration of homeless

former prisoners could happen due to economic, social, and personal factors, apart from urban infrastructure and services. Contrarily, the current study appears more authentic by using a different study subject: a more significant number of homeless former prisoners.

The objective of this study was to explore the internal migration factors of homeless former prisoners in Chow Kit Road. This study used a much larger qualitative sample involving 30 homeless former prisoners to determine various forms of offer. The offer factors were divided into several large groups such as social, personal, urban infrastructure and service, and personal offers. These findings could fill the gaps in the existing knowledge. The findings can also be used by government agencies to understand the homeless former prisoners by looking for ways in introducing proper interventions in helping them. The government needs to introduce holistic methods to provide other options to the homeless former prisoners after release instead of becoming homeless at Chow Kit Road. This study is expected to lead to important contributions, especially in the fields of criminal justice, social work, and geography by filling the gaps in the extant knowledge.

The phenomenon of migration occurs when there is a civilisation in the society that occurs as a result of the gathering of a group of people who come from different destinations to sit together, gather and carry out activities among themselves in certain areas or places. Generally, migration can be categorised into several broad categories. Internal migration refers to the movement of individuals and families from one area to another (e.g., from rural to urban areas) within the same country. While international migration refers to the movement from one country to another. Secondly, migrations could occur voluntarily or forcefully. Most migration occurs voluntarily, either internally or externally, in search of better economic or housing opportunities (Czaika, 2015; Zanabazar, Kho & Jigjiddorj, 2021). Whereas, forced migration usually involves people who have been deported by the government during war or other political unrest or who have been forcibly transported as slaves or captives. Whereas, voluntary migration involves refugees fleeing war, famine or natural disasters. Internal migration is a phenomenon experienced by all countries around the world where people move from one place to another for the better based on their rational decisions. The frequent transition from rural to urban society is one of the most important transformations in the geography of contemporary populations (Lerch, 2020). Human beings migrate in search of new livelihoods and opportunities. Significant changes in government policies are made to achieve the status of a developed country from a developing country. Based on the Malaysia Migration Survey Report 2018, the migration rate from urban to rural was estimated at 19.5% in 2018 compared to 4.2% in 2016, while the migration rate from rural to urban in 2018 was 4.8% compared to 15.2% in 2016 (Bernama, 7 January 2020).

Many researchers indicated that early migration emphasises the importance of “push” and “pull” elements in human decision-making. In this perspective, neither an individual nor a group of individuals chooses to leave their place of origin when the conditions are no longer suitable and other places offer more attractive opportunities. Many believe that relocation could improve their lives and their families with better economic prospects at the other locations driven by economic migration (Czaika, 2015). Poor living conditions,

lack of economic opportunities, soil infertility, and low living standards are examples of driving factors, whereas, prosperity, employment opportunities, and higher living standards at the desired destinations are examples of attraction factors (Zanabazar, et al., 2021). Prior to deciding, individuals would need to weigh the prospective costs and rewards that could be achieved through migration. In other words, the decision to migrate should be based on several considerations, including the cost of travel and accommodation, the rate of salary to be received, and the new cost of living. Researchers perceive that the decision to move stems from the offerings available at the destination of choice which attracts people to concentrate en masse. This study will focus on the inherent supply factors that attract homeless former prisoners to concentrate in Chow Kit Road.

## 2. Method

### Research Design

To explore the factors influencing migration and concentration of homeless former prisoners around Chow Kit Road, the use of philosophy in the form of interpretivism was more appropriate for the highlighted objectives. Hence, a qualitative framework was adopted to descriptively and exploratively answer the research questions. This study explores the factors leading to former prisoners becoming homeless every time they are released. The objectives required analytical methods in the form of exploration and views of homeless former prisoners. Views from homeless former prisoners on the repeated migratory factors to concentrate around Chow Kit Road were assessed.

### Location, Population, and Sampling

Several local studies classified Kuala Lumpur as a hotspot for homelessness including former prisoners (Jasni et al., 2018, 2019; Berawi & Ismail 2019). Hence, the localities around Chow Kit Road were chosen for this study. Figure 1 illustrates the location map of Chow Kit Road. Although a population is a comprehensive study group, the study sample for this study only involved a specific or smaller group. The study participants selected for this study were Malaysian citizens who are above 21 years old with a prison record and have repeatedly been to Chow Kit Road, every time upon being released. The participants were also homeless and had no mental problems. With the discovery of 30 homeless former prisoners, this study ceased to enrol more participants as the sample size reached the required saturation. The purposeful sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique selected based on the characteristics of the population and the objectives of the proposed study. Since the purposeful sampling is fairly straightforward, only participants who fit the inclusive characteristics are selected excluding those who do not fit the inclusion characteristics.

### Testing data accuracy

Several strategies were employed in this study to increase the validity and reliability of the study data, namely triangulation, member check, peer review, long period in the field, and audit trail. Data triangulation ensures balanced and supported research findings. The results of this study was triangulated with that of the previous studies to ensure that the results are comparable and in line. Second, through examination of findings by study informants or member checks. This strategy is carried out by obtaining consent

and confirmation from the informant of the study related to the transcription of the interview and the researcher's interpretation of the interview's findings, then on the themes or categories formed. This step ensures that the study purpose of the interview results matches the original intent. Thirdly, the findings were examined through friends, or also known as peer review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) or peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The supervisor repeatedly reviewed the interview protocol in this study, which also underwent an expert review process (also known as expert review or expert validation). The peer review involved discussions between the researcher and supervisor, apart from the informal discussion sessions with fellow social work and criminal justice academicians.

Next, a long period in the field (September 2020 to August 2021) allows the repetition of interviews and field notes on the same phenomenon to obtain concrete and reliable data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, the data collection process in the field was only halted when the data reached saturation, as no more new data was discovered. The fifth strategy was the audit trail (audit trail) which detailed the procedures and steps of data collection, data analysis, and category formation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The process of coding themes and sub-themes in this study was performed using Atlas.ti software. This software helps produce an audit trail regarding the found codes. The Atlas.ti software also allows more systematic code management as it lists the principles and themes in order of appearance.

### Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis is the most critical part and is the most challenging, especially in qualitative research because it requires the understanding and knowledge of researchers in the field and subject of study. Prior to the coding process, the recording session was converted into written form (verbatim transcript). Verbatim transcripts are the dialogues of participants written word for word based on the interviews that were conducted. Following the transcription, the transcript was loaded into the Atlas.ti software. A thematic analysis method was used to encode any verbatim or dialogue that described the objectives of the study. The researcher will name the codes found according to the researcher's understanding and knowledge. Once the coding process is completed, the codes were grouped into main themes (also referred to as superordinate themes). The coding process reached a saturation level with the 30<sup>th</sup> participant's transcript as no more new codes or sub-themes were identified. When the superordinate themes and sub-themes were determined, the code report was extracted from Atlas.ti software. The codes were interpreted before the process of writing and explaining commenced. The findings are discussed in the following sections.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### Data Finding

#### Social Demography Of Homeless Former Prisoners

In terms of gender and race, there were 20 Malay males, 5 Chinese males, and 5 Malay females. According to their statehood origin, 6 were from Perak, 4 from Kuala Lumpur, 3 from Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, and Johor each, 2 from Selangor, Kedah, Penang, and Kelantan each, 1 from Melaka, Pahang, and Sabah each. This demography indicated that they were from different states of Malaysia. In terms of their education level, 9 were SPM (Form 5) leavers, 9 PMR (Form

3) leavers, 6 UPSR (grade 6) leavers, while 2 held a Malaysian Skills Institute Certificate, while 2 were illiterate, 1 educated up to Form 1, and the other up to Grade 3. Their low level of education might affect their chances of landing a stable job. As for the number of incarcerations served, 3 informants served imprisonment 1-2 times, 7 at least 3-5 times, 12 held a prison record of at least 6-10 times, 5 with more than 10 times of prison time, and 3 with a prison record exceeding 20 times. A majority of them served repeated and chronic incarceration. The findings of the study found that each time it was released, the informants would choose to return to Chow Kit Road again. The failure to reintegrate resulted in the majority of them living without having a stable place to live. Some managed to rent a place for some time before ending up homeless for not being able to pay for the rental. Their inability to pay the rent could be due to financial insufficiency from unemployment. The results were discussed by linking the factors leading to repeated migration to Chow Kit Road.

### Repeated Migration Factors to Chow Kit Road

The 30 homeless former prisoners interviewed have not had a home for more than a year and portrayed a lifestyle of repeatedly returning to live on the streets. Based on the observation, they tend to repeated become homeless every time they were released. Previous experience of having to live as a homeless has created a sense of familiarity (familiar) with the surrounding conditions around Chow Kit Road, Kuala Lumpur. Despite realising that they would eventually end up on the streets, they still chose Chow Kit Road as their destination of choice. Based on the analysis, 11 sub-themes were identified to discuss the selection factors of repeated homeless former prisoners to Chow Kit Road. Moreover, 4 superordinate themes were also determined namely social, economic, urban infrastructure and services, and personal offer factors. The first superordinate theme, the social offer factor, involves (i) familiarity with the environment, (ii) easy access to drugs, and (iii) concentration of peers. Followed by the second superordinate theme: (i) the economic offer factor in finding a job and (ii) an easy way to make money. The next third superordinate theme is the urban infrastructure and service offer factors comprising: (i) access to transportation, (ii) plenty of food aid, and (iii) access to hospitals. Finally, the fourth superordinate theme of the personal offer factor involves sub-themes: (i) wanting freedom, (ii) nowhere else to go, and (iii) bringing oneself away from family.

### Superordinate Theme 1: Social Offer Factors

The first superordinate theme involved a group of sub-themes that illustrate a propensity for deep migration due to social supply. This social offer refers to an ability that brings joy and enjoyment to the surrounding environment. It also involves the presence of the surrounding community leading to the ability to form community relationships collectively. The three sub-themes under this superordinate are as follows:

#### Sub-theme 1a: Familiar with the environment

The first factor when asked about their repeated return to Chow Kit Road was familiarity with the environment. Based on the findings, the homeless former prisoners would either migrate immediately upon release from prison or return to their place of origin for a short period before migrating to Kuala Lumpur. So, they will eventually end up in Kuala Lumpur at some point. The excerpts from the interviews with

the homeless former prisoner informants are enclosed as follows:

*"I think of Chow Kit Road as a place I have always been (normally) since 1994 because I used to do business at the Chow Kit Market. I stay in this Chow Kit because I am an outcast."*

(1<sup>st</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"Yes, it's like I said earlier to me, I'm more comfortable without being confined without rules, eating is easy, accommodation doesn't matter, I can sleep in an empty house, I'm ok with crowded places. We are used to the situation in Chow Kit."*

(28<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

#### Sub-theme 1b: Easy Access to Drugs

The repeated return of homeless former prisoners to Chow Kit Road was due to the easy access to drugs. A majority of informants were highly addicted to drugs. Hence, a constant supply of drugs has become a necessity for them. Therefore, they concentrate on Chow Kit Road because it is easy to procure drugs here. Chow Kit Road is known as a hotbed for the widespread sale and distribution of drugs. Hence, these homeless former prisoners often perceive it as an attractive factor for them to return to Kuala Lumpur upon release. The excerpts from the interview sessions are enclosed as follows:

*"Here (referring to Jalan Chow Kit) it is easy to find drugs. This makes me feel easy when I am around the Chow Kit Road area."*

(9<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"I live in Chow Kit Road because near here it is easy to get drugs. Lots of access to drugs here."*

(24<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

#### Sub-theme 1c: Concentration of like-minded friends around Chow Kit Road

Based on the findings, the concentration of close friends around Chow Kit Road was an interesting sub-theme. It was perceived as a strong pulling factor that made them return to Kuala Lumpur. The presence of these like-minded peers is deemed as a substitute for the social support they lack. Whereby the absence of a family or spouse makes the support and presence of friends an important factor in the life of a homeless former prisoner. This factor was highlighted by 9 homeless former prisoner informants as they converged around Chow Kit Road due to the concentration of like-minded friends. The following are excerpts of the interview sessions.

*"I chose to come to Chow Kit Road because my friend is also staying here."*

(13<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"There are many friends here. Therefore, I choose to stay here."*

(24<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

**Superordinate Theme 2: Economic Offer Factors**

Apart from the social offer factors, the factor of the economic offer is also a reason for the homeless former prisoners to concentrate on Chow Kit Road. The economic offer refers to the ability of homeless former prisoners in generating income in the vicinity of Chow Kit Road. Hence, it is another factor that attracts homeless former prisoners to being around Chow Kit Road. Two sub-themes were identified as economically sourced correlations in terms of the migration to Chow Kit Road.

**Sub-theme 2a: Finding a Job**

Based on the findings, six homeless former prisoner informants mentioned that among the factors that attracted them to concentrate around Chow Kit Road was finding a job. Employment is a need for an individual, to ensure the ability to continue living and sustain. The job search factor remains an important factor in the return of homeless former prisoners to Chow Kit Road. They believe that Chow Kit Road is a destination with opportunities and jobs. Although they were aware that a criminal record would frustrate their chances of obtaining employment, it did not deter their job search factor as one of the migration factors.

*"It's easy to come to Chow Kit Road because I want to earn money, it's really easy."*

(6<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"I want to find a source of livelihood in Chow Kit Road."*

(26<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

These interview excerpts proved that employment is a factor they choose to return to Kuala Lumpur. It was intriguing to learn that Luqman still chose to become a security guard despite realising that his prison records could be a barrier to securing a job as a security guard. It is interesting to know about the types of jobs that are often on the minds of this group. Of the various jobs available around Chow Kit Road, some still choose to become security guards as the desired jobs. When asked about the selection factors, not many could answer the questions. Most of them said that they have no choice but to become security guards. However, they were often dismissed as security guards due to their criminal records. Employers who come to know about their criminal records would not hesitate to fire the homeless former prisoners.

*"Among the factors, I keep living on the streets is due to unemployment. I used to work as a security guard but it was very complicated. This is because they can trace my prison record. I used to be a security guard for three months, after that they found out my record, and I was finally fired. Now he can know, he checks our identity card in the system."*

(8<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"Because I have a prison record. I work as a security guard 4-5 times I change jobs because of records."*

(12<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

**Sub-theme 2b: Easy ways to make money**

The homeless former prisoners choose to live in Chow Kit Road because it is easy to make money here. They can perform various activities that could generate income. The life on Chow Kit Road allows them to generate income easily through various activities like selling used items. Hence, Chow Kit Road is the location of choice for many of the homeless former prisoners to settle.

*"Because I feel easy, easy to make money, I sell all makeup items, all bundle clothes, I sell a little bit, okay that's my contribution these days."*

(16<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*"Here it is easier to make money. There is so much to do in a lifetime here. That is why I still choose to return to Chow Kit Road every time I am released."*

(21<sup>st</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

**Superordinate Theme 3: Urban infrastructure and services offer factor**

The third superordinate theme was the offering factor of urban infrastructure and services. Chow Kit Road is in one of the big cities with various developmental and infrastructure advancements. City life offers a variety of city services. Three accumulated sub-themes lead to the formation of this third superordinate theme.

**Sub-theme 3a: Transportation access on Chow Kit Road**

The results indicated that homeless former prisoners needed transportation as a basic need (Eden 2018; Li, Raeside, Chen & McQuaid, 2012; Hui & Khandker 2016). Transportation can offer a form of convenience for the homeless former prisoners. Hence, they perceive Chow Kit Road as a strategic location which offers easy access to public transport. It allows them to move, engage in activities, and go about their daily lives. A total of 4 former inmate homeless informants mentioned the need for transportation. They see transportation as an important aspect to facilitate their movement. The excerpts from the interviews are as below in support of this sub-theme:

*"I love staying in Chow Kit Road because of the access to public transportation. I need public transport to move. Living around Chow Kit Road does not stop in terms of getting transportation."*

(3<sup>rd</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner)

*"I find life in Chow Kit Road very fun. There is access to transportation that makes life easier. It makes me think Chow Kit is a good place to stay."*

(8<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner)

**Sub-theme 3b: Lots of food aid**

Repeated selection of Chow Kit Road was also due to a large amount of food aid available there. Various NGOs and welfare organisations channel food aid to the homeless there. Therefore, homeless former prisoners often choose Chow Kit Road as their preferred destination due to the access to

food around this area. The ability to gain access to food is an important factor for the homeless former prisoners to continue to return to Chow Kit Road each time they are released. The excerpt of the interviews highlighted the reason.

*“If you’re like a criminal like me sitting in Chow Kit Road, like a gold mine, food is easy to get.”*

(5<sup>th</sup> Former Prisoner Homeless Informant)

*“Living in Chow Kit Road, because there is food, there are clothes, that’s what I see I’m brave to live here.”*

(27<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former prisoner Informant)

### **Sub-theme 3c: Access to hospitals around Chow Kit Road**

The study also revealed that homeless former prisoners were attentive to their health care needs. It is a basic need to acquire and be enjoyed by homeless former prisoners throughout their lives on the streets. It can be difficult for these homeless former prisoners to monitor their health status without access to health care. Thus, this sub-theme highlighted the importance of health care as a basic need for the homeless former prisoners at Chow Kit Road. According to informants, the urban area is where they could have easy access to health care. Health care is important to treat existing illnesses or diseases.

*“Living in Chow Kit Road makes easy access to the health facility. This facility is very important.”*

(15<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*“I can the facility offer here such as Hospital make it easy to be here. You can easily get treatment. If you don’t go to the hospital, the disease will get worse, it won’t go away.”*

(16<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

### **Superordinate theme 4: Personal Offer Factors**

Three sub-themes indicated the existence of a personal offer factor for the homeless former prisoners to be concentrated in the streets of Chow Kit. Three sub-themes that were identified indicated evidence of internal migration factors due to personal offers.

#### **Sub-theme 4a: Offering independent living**

This group of individuals tend to return to Chow Kit Road again due to the guaranteed free life offerings available there. They feel life on Chow Kit Road is without social control. Hence, they feel happy and free after returning to Chow Kit Road after being released every time. Life without control of family members and the lack of commitments makes Chow Kit Road an attractive destination for these homeless former prisoners.

*“I chose Chow Kit Road because I can live independently without any control, especially from my family. I am free to do whatever I like.”*

(6<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*“Life on Chow Kit Road is very free. We are free to do anything without any restrictions. I’ve been here a long time. I will continue to be here.”*

(21<sup>st</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

#### **Sub-theme 4b: There is nowhere else to go**

Most of the former prisoners have nowhere to go each time after being released from prison. That said, Chow Kit Road is often the destination of choice for these homeless former prisoners. They felt that Chow Kit Road was the last destination to go to. This situation proved that the lack of options could lead the homeless former prisoners to return to Chow Kit Road.

*“I have nowhere else to go. In the end, I chose Chow Kitt Road.”*

(16<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*“I don’t even know where to go. Indeed, the brain will think of going back to Chow Kit Road”*

(19<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

#### **Sub-theme 4c: Being away from family**

Some homeless former prisoners head to Chow Kit Road because they want to take themselves away from their families. Living conditions different from family members can be one of the pushing factors for the homeless former prisoners to move out or migrate to Chow Kit Road. They do not feel accepted by their family and felt ashamed. They stayed away from their families because their family members were ashamed of them. They perceive that being with families would lead to more problems than happiness.

*“My family is doing good. They all do good work, the work of lecturers are all professions, that’s why I brought myself to Kuala Lumpur, there is a place to stay, sometimes I got a free room. I rent and sometimes I stay with friends”*

(18<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

*“Because Chow Kit Road came, if it is near the village, I am a former prisoner, my siblings are ashamed. That’s why I chose to stay away.”*

(24<sup>th</sup> Homeless Former Prisoner Informant)

Migration is an important phenomenon that changes the pattern of a city and has succeeded in becoming a major driving factor of urban development around the world. In this study, the internal migration of homeless former prisoners from various socio-demography into Chow Kit Road en masse due to several factors was successfully identified. Such internal migrations have had a huge impact on the landscape of Chow Kit Road when a concentration of homeless former prisoners flock to the area upon being released from prison. Studies have proven the repeated internal migration of homeless former prisoners upon release. The increasing concentration of homeless former prisoners collectively around Chow Kit Road led to key questions about the situation at hand. The concentration and mass migration is evident due to the offer

factors that exist around Chow Kit Road. The four main offer factors identified include social, economic, urban, and personal infrastructure and services offered. According to Hussain, Abdullah & Abdullah (2015), migration occurs when people begin to look for opportunities to change their life for the better in the city. The possible source of income in the countryside can be limited compared to big cities. Hence, it can be interpreted that migration occurs when there is supply and demand in the economic space leading to human migration. It has become one of the main factors for the homeless former prisoners to concentrate in the same area, Chow Kit Road. The concentrated issue of homeless people around Kuala Lumpur is not a new phenomenon in the country as evidenced through this study, where former prisoners migrate to Chow Kit Road due to personal offer factors. Life in Chow Kit Road can offer an independent life away from families and they also have nowhere to go.

Studies on the homelessness of former prisoners need to be conducted continuously in search of a more holistic solution in line with their current needs. Their mass concentration in a common area calls for new attention to the ongoing phenomenon. The increasingly vibrant development of the world makes relevant studies on homelessness no longer generalisable. The problems faced by homeless former prisoners are very complicated. The issue of homeless former prisoners who will repeatedly return to Chow Kit Road when they are released from prison has not yet been discussed academically and systemically. Such a phenomenon is very worrying when Chow Kit Road has become the main destination for homeless former prisoners instead of returning to their families. This situation requires effort to find solutions to reduce the problem of homelessness. Repeated choices to return to Chow Kit Road lead to two big pictures, either they have no choice or they are happy and comfortable in Chow Kit Road. Thus, the solution to be introduced by the government will be inappropriate when they see Chow Kit Road as their home. They will keep returning to Chow Kit Road even though there are programmes or interventions introduced by the government.

Challenging city life has impacted rural-to-urban migration. Among the various offer factors that attracted these homeless former prisoners to return repeatedly to Chow Kit Road each time they are released include social and economic factors. Recognising the opportunity to get a suitable job with present job skills led to rural-to-urban migration becoming one of the biggest attractive factors. Although this group is aware of the possible challenges and competition due to population density, Chow Kit Road remains their destination of choice. The high rate of unemployment caused many of them to fail to own a place to live and ended up on the streets. This situation caused some to work even harder by engaging in various forms of legal or illegal work to generate income for survival. The same goes for the informants when they will be looking for two jobs at one time for survival. Most of those who migrate from rural to urban in Malaysia with the desire to free themselves from the cocoon of poverty, experience the pressure of urban life which becomes a new burden for the homeless former prisoners as they need money to continue living. According to Wan Abd Aziz, Ahmad & Hanif (2011), the migration from the rural to the urban areas leads to urban poverty which encompasses various aspects of life including inadequate income and insufficient expenditure due to low income, in addition to failure to attain necessities such as

housing, education, health are vulnerable to various problems. A similar scenario occurs in the lives of homeless former prisoners who repeatedly choose to return to Chow Kit Road each time after being released. Social offer factors such as familiarity with the environment also attracted these former prisoners to return to Chow Kit Road. The ease of access to drugs and food influenced their migration patterns. Moreover, the gathering of similar friends in large numbers also caused the former prisoners to feel comfortable being next to each other.

Nevertheless, the space and opportunities that are expected through the process of rural-to-urban migration are seen to be increasingly irrelevant in the current situation. Although there is a variety of offers to be enjoyed from the homeless former prisoners' point of view, it is not an easy task. Although it is quite difficult to get a job, rural to urban migration is an option among these homeless former prisoners. The homeless former prisoners who migrate to Chow Kit Road originate from a variety of similar sociodemographic backgrounds. They are from the less skilled group, with no higher education, lack necessary skills, have drug addiction problems, face family rejection, etc. Hence, Chow Kit Road has become the focus of these homeless former prisoners to continue living in the city due to the access to transportation, food, opportunities, and health care. Although many former prisoners migrate to Chow Kit Road repeatedly in search of employment opportunities, they face various barriers such as limited skills and education which left them stranded in this challenging city (Md. Shah, 2015). This, many of the former prisoners become homeless due to urban poverty. According to Nur Hasfazli & Ramli (2021), dense economic growth with inclusive development has made big cities in Malaysia to become the main focus of people looking for a source of livelihood to get out of poverty. The lack of experience and skills has made it difficult to get a good job in the city. They only have the opportunity to do jobs that do not require higher education and are often paid a minimal wage. It is evident from the failure of many homeless former prisoners in securing stable employment and opportunity in getting a place to live.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results, former prisoners who tend to concentrate and migrate to Chow Kit Road after their release end up homeless regardless of limited opportunities. Various supply factors lead to the interest of former prisoners (now homeless) to choose Chow Kit Road as their preferred destination. Among the offer factors determined in this study include social, economic, urban infrastructure and services, and personal supply offer factors. Internal migration of former prisoners to Chow kit Road occurred due to the economic opportunities that are restricted due to competition. The various opportunities expected of life in Chow Kit Road differ when the homeless former prisoners are alone in Chow Kit Road. Even those who repeatedly return to Chow Kit Road end up homeless, it did not deter them from returning to Chow Kit Road upon release.

#### Future Research Suggestions

The results obtained from this study presented some recommendations and directions for future studies. Based on the findings, increasing the number of informants' representativeness is recommended to reflect the homeless context of former prisoners in Chow Kit Road by conducting a

census on the total sample of homeless former prisoners. Such a quantitative study can prove and justify the research findings, covering different cultural, socioeconomic, social classes, and geographical areas. Additionally, a longitudinal study was recommended; it is well to involve the families of homeless former prisoners, and other influential groups of individuals, such as the community, sellers, and employers, to strengthen the understanding of the lives of homeless former prisoners. Subsequently, a more diverse and heterogeneous sample can be achieved. Moreover, there is a need to diversify the form of data collection using focus group discussion (FGD) method. This method could provide advantages in the accumulated research findings. Data collection by interviewing a group of homeless former prisoner's informants can lead to a more extensive discussion. Their life experiences can be shared to come to an agreement. These recommendations are expected to inspire future researchers to explore the issue of homeless former prisoners around Chow Kit Road. These vulnerable people need their voices to be heard. Such studies could enable government agencies to become aware of the issues happening. Moreover, such studies can help to guide the service delivery process to homeless former prisoners.

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