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A Review of the Meaning of Home in Multi-Ethnic Settings

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the meaning of home from multiple regions and the factors that influence the definition of home from multi-ethnic perspectives. A hypothesis derived that each ethnicity of a household practises cultural values and that reconfiguring physical spaces provides greater knowledge of their definition of home. This study employed a systematic review to gather the most relevant papers in the existing literature from the year 2000 to 2023, to address the gaps in knowledge in conceptualising the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings. The findings respond to the hypothesis of this paper, that each household practises privacy and social boundaries in line with their belief systems and that reconfiguring physical space is part of homemaking tactics. This study outcome contributes to the development of a new conceptual framework that clarifies a comprehensive cause-effect relationship between key variables, ethnicity as the social aspect, built space as the physical aspect and practice as the personal or psychological aspect, resulting in a greater understanding of the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings from three scenarios; the home as socio-spatial, psycho-spatial and emotive space entity.

Highlights	**Contribution to the field statement**
- Elucidate the interweaving relationship between the disciplines of sociology, psychology, emotions, architecture and urbanism. - Introduce a new framework as a guide to investigating human intervention in the transformability of spaces and physical settings. - The outcome of the systematic review responds to the hypothesis of this paper that each household practises cultural values, privacy and social boundaries in line with their belief systems and that reconfiguring a physical space defines the meaning of home.	The primary contribution of this article to academia is the development of a new conceptual framework that synthesizes the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings, incorporating ethnicity, home practice, and physical spaces. This interdisciplinary framework is essential for understanding how cultural values and privacy influence individuals' definitions of home, particularly in contemporary housing design and policy. Additionally, the article highlights the importance of examining research methods and tools and acknowledges the role of digital spaces in redefining the meaning of 'home' in today's world.

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1. Introduction

In the context of architecture and urbanism, a physical home or a house is an architectural typology that provides shelter and protection for the members of households to perform their daily domestic activities (Cuerdo-Vilches et al., 2020; Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022). A house is a fundamental aspect of human life and provides provisions to support basic physical survival needs (Muhammad Koderi et al., 2020). In socio-economic research, ownership of a house usually indicates an individual's living standard, status and social standing (Mohan & Twigg, 2007). Functionally, a house stands as a tangible structure that demarcates distinct spatial zones within which household members operate (Hu, 2008). One of the fundamental objectives of house design strategies is to differentiate between public and private areas (Hu, 2008; Rahim & Hashim, 2012). In essence, a house assumes the role of a 'human habitat' as articulated by Lefebvre (1991, p. 12).

Phenomenological inquiry further elucidates the notion of inhabiting a space or dwelling, drawing parallels to the scholarship of Heidegger (Handel, 2019), who forged connections between architectural concepts, dwelling, and the idea of home. Heidegger posited that 'We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers' (Heidegger, 2001, p. 146). Throughout the early stages of human history, when individuals sought transient safety at specific locations while also migrating to meet their survival needs, dwelling was inherently transient. However, as human settlements became more permanent, the notion of 'home' underwent an evolutionary transformation (Easthope, 2004; Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022).

Crucially, the concept of home transcends its physical permanence, expanding to encompass the constructive interpersonal relationships crucial for human well-being (Werner et al., 1992; Morrison, 2013; Al-Tarazi, 2021). Home assumes a central role as a social setting for establishing and nurturing interpersonal bonds among household members, as well as fostering friendships with neighbours and guests (Werner, 1987, p. 170).

The interaction between people (individually or in groups), setting (physical home) and time (linear or cyclical) (Case, 1996), expressed the need for psychological comfort, social interactions, spatial attachment and recognition (Abu-Ghazzeh, 2000; Rioux et al., 2017; Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010). Consequently, the field of domestic architecture assumes the role of a symbol, reflecting identity and cultural expression (Abdelmonem & Selim, 2012; Vale, 1999; Woodward, 2003). Nonetheless, within the context of domestic architectural evolution amid globalisation, the construction of physical home or houses becomes substantially influenced by factors such as construction efficiency, cost considerations, political agendas, and the representational identity of corporate entities. This emphasis on practical considerations often diminishes the attention afforded to the profound significance of the concept of home and its suitability for domestic practice (Lah et al., 2015; Mallett, 2004; Samanani & Lenhard, 2019; Ureta, 2007).

Several international case studies have unequivocally exemplified that contemporary housing, particularly in the form of row houses, tends to adopt a standardised, generic approach to housing design. This approach, however, gradually erodes the socio-cultural practices of indigenous populations, as social and personal needs inherently vary across ethnicities (Abed et al., 2022; Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Al-Thahab, 2016; Suryadi et al., 2022). These issues, with global ramifications, have necessitated adaptation and appropriation strategies within the physical dwelling unit to facilitate sustainable living for its occupants (Abu Bakar et al., 2016; Al-Thahab, 2016; Mackay & Perkins, 2017; Ureta, 2007). It is crucial to recognise that a house, considered solely as a physical structure, can transcend its mere physicality and evolve into a 'home' over time through experiences and acts of appropriation (Abdelmonem & Selim, 2012; Aziz & Ahmad, 2012; Graham et al., 2015; Samanani & Lenhard, 2019).

In the practice of everyday life (Certeau, 1984), the dynamism of practices may influence the physical configuration of spaces; constructing an appropriate domestic space over time in response to personal and social needs can be perceived as a dynamic homemaking 'tactic' (Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022). A home reflects the culture, social convention and values, manifested in people's habits, practices and

predispositions towards their homes, which Bourdieu (1977) referred to as "habitus." These values and dispositions are acquired through the cultural history we carry across contexts, thus enabling us to respond in various ways towards cultural rules and contexts, even though where and who we have been largely determines and regulates our responses to the setting.

In Chile, low-income households domesticated their interior homes as a way to find a balance between their sense of identity and their inclusion into the Chilean community, always concerning policymakers' and developers' perceptions, as reflected in estate architectural design on how low-income families should reside in urban settings (Ureta, 2007, p. 132). For it to feel like a 'home', these families appropriated the physical configurations of their new domestic space to suit their perceived needs (Ureta, 2007).

A similar challenge was faced by Muslim dwellers when occupying contemporary Australian houses as they are required to adapt to the extroversion design despite gender and social boundaries being constantly stressed in Islamic practice (Othman, 2014).

Vale (1999) identified continued evidence for this practice in politicised urbanism in developing countries such as Malaysia. Since the early development of contemporary row houses in the 1970s, Malaysian scholars have criticised the design of contemporary homes, calling it a 'forced architectural identity' (Rasdi, 2007).

Numerous research on identical and mirror-image built forms in contemporary row housing led to physical modifications by dwellers, describing issues concerning privacy tensions and social conflicts which are inefficient to their home practice and experience (Omar et al., 2016; Razali & Talib, 2013; Samsudin & Idid, 2016).

In sum, the studies on the meaning of 'home' from Western, Middle-Eastern and Eastern scholarships are vast; however, there is a knowledge gap in conceptualising the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings. A systematic review is required to explore the existing empirical studies from diverse ethnic backgrounds and the factors that influence their meaning of home. To fill in the gap, the following questions must be researched:

1. How do we conceptualise the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings?
2. What is the definition of home and the factor(s) that influence the meaning of home?
3. What are the key variables that can be included in the new conceptual framework of the meaning of home in a multi-ethnic setting, particularly in the Malaysian context?

This article is a reviewed paper that explicitly identifies the meaning of home from multiple regions and the factors that influence the definition of home from multi-ethnic perspectives. The objective is to comprehend the definition of 'home', not only bound to the physical aspect but also how various ethnicities construct the meaning of home from social and personal aspects. This paper derived a hypothesis that each ethnicity of a household practises cultural values and that reconfiguring physical spaces provides greater knowledge of their definition of a home.

This article is divided into five sections. Section 1 introduces the definition of a physical home and the research problem. Section 2 explains the methodology this paper used is a systematic literature review to gather the existing publications related to the meaning of home in multiple contexts.

Section 3 reveals the results on the definition of home and the factors that influence the meaning of home from each related publication's context study. In Section 4, this paper analyses and discusses the key variables that contribute to the development of a new conceptual framework that describes the meaning of 'home' for a multi-ethnic setting, particularly in the Malaysian context. Section 5 concludes with contributions to the study and suggestions for future research.

1.1.Background: Socio-demographic in Malaysia
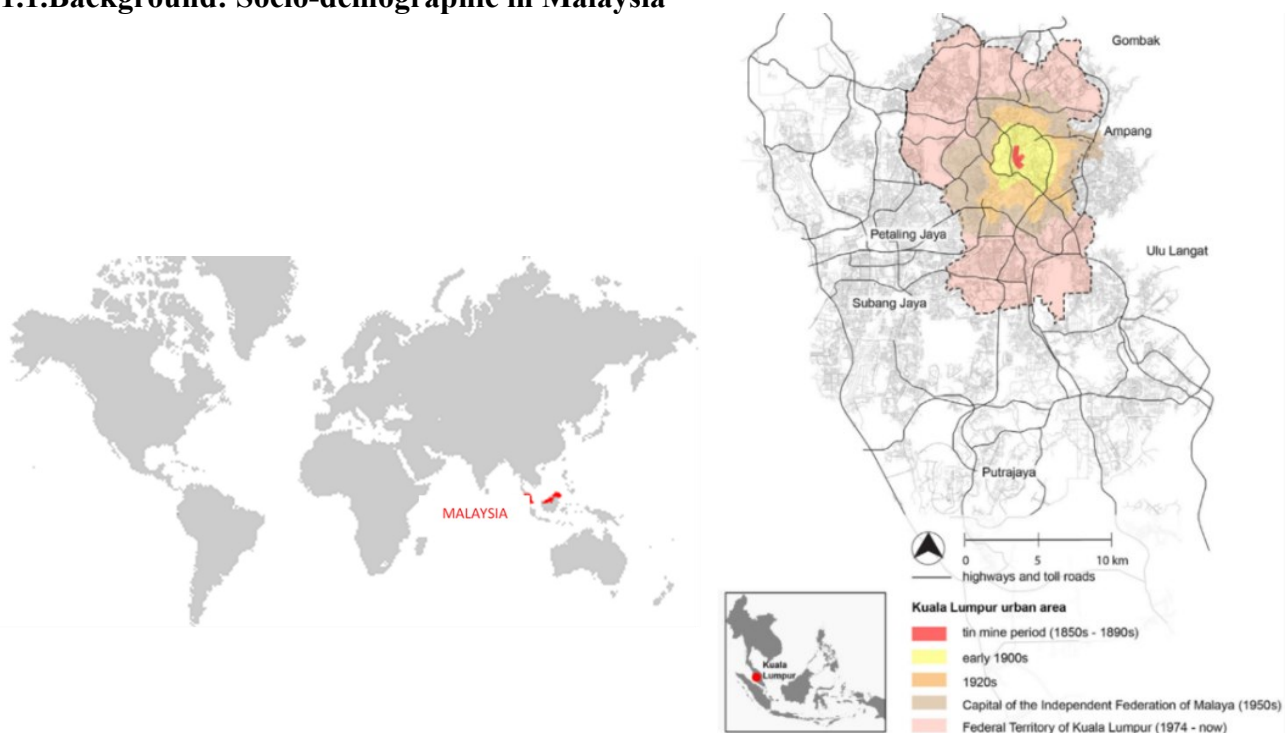
Figure 1. World map (left) and location map of Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia (right).

Malaysia is a region near the tropic, located at the centre of South East Asia and mixed with Malay, Chinese, Indian and European cultural influences. Malaysia is not only a region where monsoons meet but is also a transit centre hub for major civilisations. For decades, the population of Malaysia had experienced turbulent events, such as wars, decolonisation, migration and occupation, before the country achieved independence in 1957 (Abdullah et al., 2022; Suryadi et al., 2022).

This phenomenon has drastically transformed the nation from a homogeneous socio-demography into a heterogeneous society that speaks and practises different languages, traditions and cultures. The Malay-Muslim ethnic group constitutes the majority of Malaysia's population, followed by Chinese Buddhists, Taoists or Christians and Indian Hindus or Christians (Abdullah et al., 2022).

During post-war British Malaya, Kuala Lumpur's capital city experienced overpopulation with immigrants, as well as significant migration of people from rural areas, who flocked to the city, the nation's centre of business and commerce, to gain jobs and achieve a better standard of living (Suryadi et al., 2022). The sudden population growth led to the rapid development of contemporary row housing in 1970 and spread across the Selangor state (Ju et al., 2011). As time passed by, the transformation of these contemporary houses started to take shape differently (Omar et al., 2016).

Mohamad (1992) looked at how the transition of Malaysian households use their homes to support their belief system and practises in traditional homes, squatters and contemporary flat dwellings. Intriguingly, this research discovered that Malay and Indian households appropriated domestic spaces to preserve gender domains (male: public; female: private), Chinese homes delimit between public for outsiders and family domains as private (Mohamad, 1992).

All three households gradually appropriated the physical configurations of their interior homes to adapt to their perceived needs, a similar case to Chile's low-income families. Malaysian housing policies advocate home ownership based on the anticipated socio-psychological benefits to its citizens. However, there is less emphasis on the distinctly Eastern cultural characteristics that support the locals' lived experience and spatial practice. (Hamzah & Adnan, 2016).

2. Materials and Methods: Systematic Literature Review

A systematic literature review is a scientific exercise, a tool to gather existing literature reviews and identify evidence where it may be lacking, whether contradictory or inconclusive. The principal objective of this work is to identify features or connections between major concepts from previous research that are pertinent to the issue, which is also the aim of a systematic review (Aromataris & Pearson, 2014).
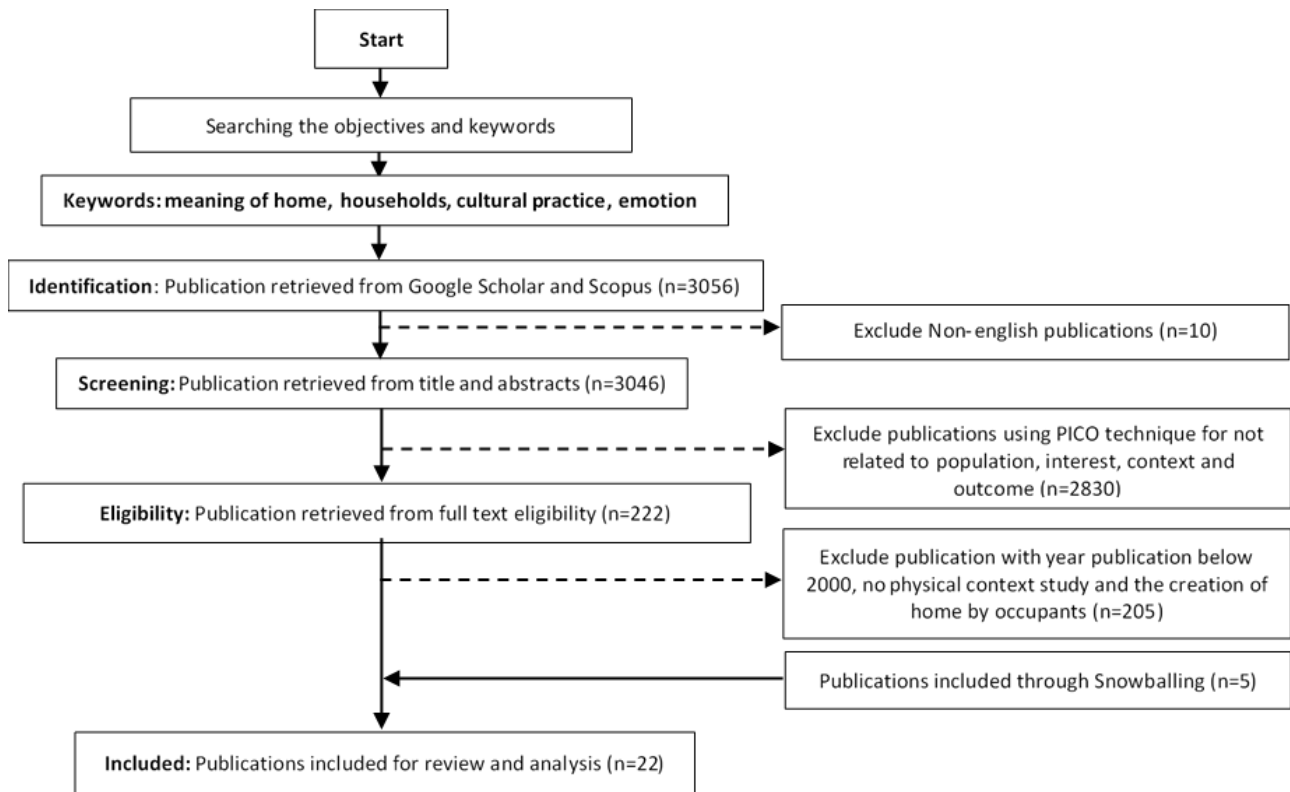
Figure 2. Publication selection process (Developed by Author).

The works of literature associated with 'the meaning of home' were gathered from a corpus of both theoretical and empirical literature from various disciplines. However, the focus of this review is to gather empirical studies with diverse ethnic backgrounds. A set of search strings using the keywords and synonyms were identified through primary literature review and were finalised TITLE-ABS-KEY ('meaning' or 'concept' or 'interpretation') and ('home' or 'house' or 'dwelling*') and ('family*' or 'household*' or 'domestic*') and ('ethnic*' or "culture*" or 'practice') and ('emotion' or 'feeling*' or 'attachment').

A search in the academic databases of Google Scholar (n=2990) and Scopus (n=166), from the 1980s to the present (31st March 2023) revealed 3,056 publications. This was followed by the selection process of identification, screening, eligibility and final inclusion. Ten papers identified as non-English publications were excluded from the selection process.

To assess the eligibility of the chosen papers, a PICO Qualitative technique was utilized (Methley et al., 2014), which included the following four review criteria: (1) the papers studied a population that focused on home dwellers who have experienced and modified their physical homes (structural or objects), (2) interest/intervention: the discourses on the definition of home and the practice of home; (3) context/setting: households from regions with multicultural backgrounds and a focus within South Eastern context; (4) outcome: theoretical results on the meaning of home from empirical studies.

222 publications were found to be relevant and selected for the full-text eligibility process. Empirical studies with actual physical context are highly preferable and publications published before the year 2000 were excluded since the focus is primarily on the target population in recent years (2000 – 2023). Studies from Malaysia are mainly selected and included for its multi-cultural context.

Hence, only 17 publications are found to be relevant. Another five most relevant papers were selected through a snowballing procedure to collect other highly relevant sources of the empirical literature and were recognised through citation and reference lists. Ultimately, 22 scientific publications ranging from 2000 to 2023 were selected for analysis. Figure 2 above illustrates the overall selection process.

2.1 Data Analysis

Initially, a thematic analysis was utilised to review and synthesise data from experimental and non-experimental literature. A qualitative research approach to examine textual data permits the extraction of main themes and subthemes from a complex and rich dataset, thereby rendering it suitable for the development of a conceptual framework (Crowe et al., 2015).

A semantic approach was applied to the specific content data in the primary literature study to identify common themes and concepts concerning the meaning of 'home'. A content analysis was then conducted on the selected 22 publications to identify and categorise home definitions and the factors that influence the meaning of home from each context.

The data were then examined holistically and in-depth by utilising the primary themes, which resulted in secondary coding to develop subthemes. Such introspective theme analysis provided a solid structure for conceptualising the meaning of home which was then included in the initial development of the conceptual framework. The following are the primary themes identified as a result of data analysis: 1) the physical home, 2) the social home, and 3) the personal home.

3. Results: Conceptualising the Meaning of Home

A home is a synthesis of physical, social and personal aspects that include everyday notions of living within architecture and urban experience (Al-Tarazi, 2021; Graham et al., 2015; Watkins, 2005). Subthemes that emerged from the data analysis are the factors that influence the home's physical, social and personal aspects following the context of each publication.

Table 1 below presents the physical aspect consisting of six subthemes; the social aspect has six subthemes, and the personal aspect has eight. These classifications should not be considered in separate entities, but rather as a whole that reflects how each of these categories (social, personal and physical) impacts and is affected by the other two, in line with the argument made by Al-Tarazi (2021).

**Table 1:** Conceptualisation of the Meaning of 'Home'.

			Definition of a 'Home'			
Themes		**Physical**		**Social**		**Personal/ Psychology**
Subthemes	1	Portrayal of architectural style and preference	1	Neighbours and Multigeneration relations	1	Belonging and material attachment
	2	Quality of material structure and neighbourhood	2	Family bonding and interactions	2	Responsible, ownership and status
	3	Suitable and Convenient Services	3	Cultural adaptation and acceptance	3	Permenance, belief and values
	4	Appropriation and the use of space	4	Positive atmosphere and caring	4	Privacy and refuge
	5	Boundary and status indicator	5	Friendships and celebration	5	Domestic practice and experiences
	6	Physical characteristics and identity	6	Gender role and domain	6	Transformability and control
					7	Memories and retreat

No	Author	Year	Region			8 Notions of comfort and familiarity
1	Woodward	2003	Australia	(1);(4);(5)	(2);(4);(5);(6)	(2);(3);(5);(6);(8)
2	Hand et al.	2005	UK	(1);(3);(5);(6)	(1);(3);(5)	(2);(5);(8)
3	Hu	2007	China	(1);(4);(5);(6)	(1);(2);(4);(6)	(1);(3);(5);(6);(8)
4	Ureta	2007	Chile	(2);(3);(4);(5)	(3);(4)	(1);(2);(5);(8)
5	Zohri	2010	Malaysia	(1);(4);(5)	(1);(2);(5);(6)	(3);(4);(5);(8)
6	Rahim and Hashim	2012	Malaysia	(2);(4);(6)	(2);(5)	(3);(4);(5);(8)
7	Abdelmonem	2012	Cairo	(4);(5);(6)	(1);(2);(4);(5);(6)	(3);(4);(5);(6);(7)
8	Morrison	2013	New Zealand	(4);(5);(6)	(2);(4);(6)	(1);(3);(5);(7);(8)
9	Othman	2014	Australia	(1);(5);(6)	(3);(6)	(3);(4);(5);(8)
10	Lah et al.	2015	Malaysia	(1);(4);(6)	(3);(6)	(3);(5);(7);(8)
11	Hamzah	2016	Malaysia	(2);(4);(5);(6)	(2);(4);(6)	(1);(2);(3);(4);(5);(7);(8)
12	Omar et al.	2017	Malaysia	(2);(4);(5);(6)	(2);(3)	(3);(4);(5);(6);(8)
13	Razali and Talib	2017	Malaysia	(2);(4);(6)	(2);(3);(6)	(4);(5);(6);(7)
14	Masran	2019	Malaysia	(2);(3);(5)	(1);(2)	(3);(4);(5);(6)
15	Al-Tarazi	2021	UK	(1);(2);(3):(6)	(2);(3)	(1);(2);(4);(6);(8)
16	Oczentin	2022	Syria	(1);(4);(6)	(3);(4);(6)	(1);(3);(4);(5);(7);(8)
17	Okeyinka	2022	Africa	(3);(4);(6)	(2);(3);(4)	(3);(4);(7);(8)
18	Kottman	2022	Japan	(2);(4);(5)	(2);(3);(6)	(1);(4);(5);(6)
19	Suryadi et al.	2022	Malaysia	(1);(4);(6)	(6)	(5);(8)
20	Soligbo	2022	Australia	(1);(4);(6)	(1);(2);(3);(4)	(1);(2);(5);(6);(8)
21	Abed	2022	Jordan	(3);(4);(5);(6)	(1);(2)	(1);(2);(4);(5);(8)
22	Lordoğlu	2023	Istanbul	(2);(3);(4)	(3);(4);(6)	(1);(4);(6);(7):(8)

The definition of 'home' can be found at the centre of human life and is heavily influenced by the inhabitants' lived experiences (Watkins, 2005). The interpretation of home inherently varies across ethnicities and is related to lived experiences and acts of appropriation towards their home environment.

3.1 Home in Multi-ethnic Settings: Ethnicity, Practice and Physical Space
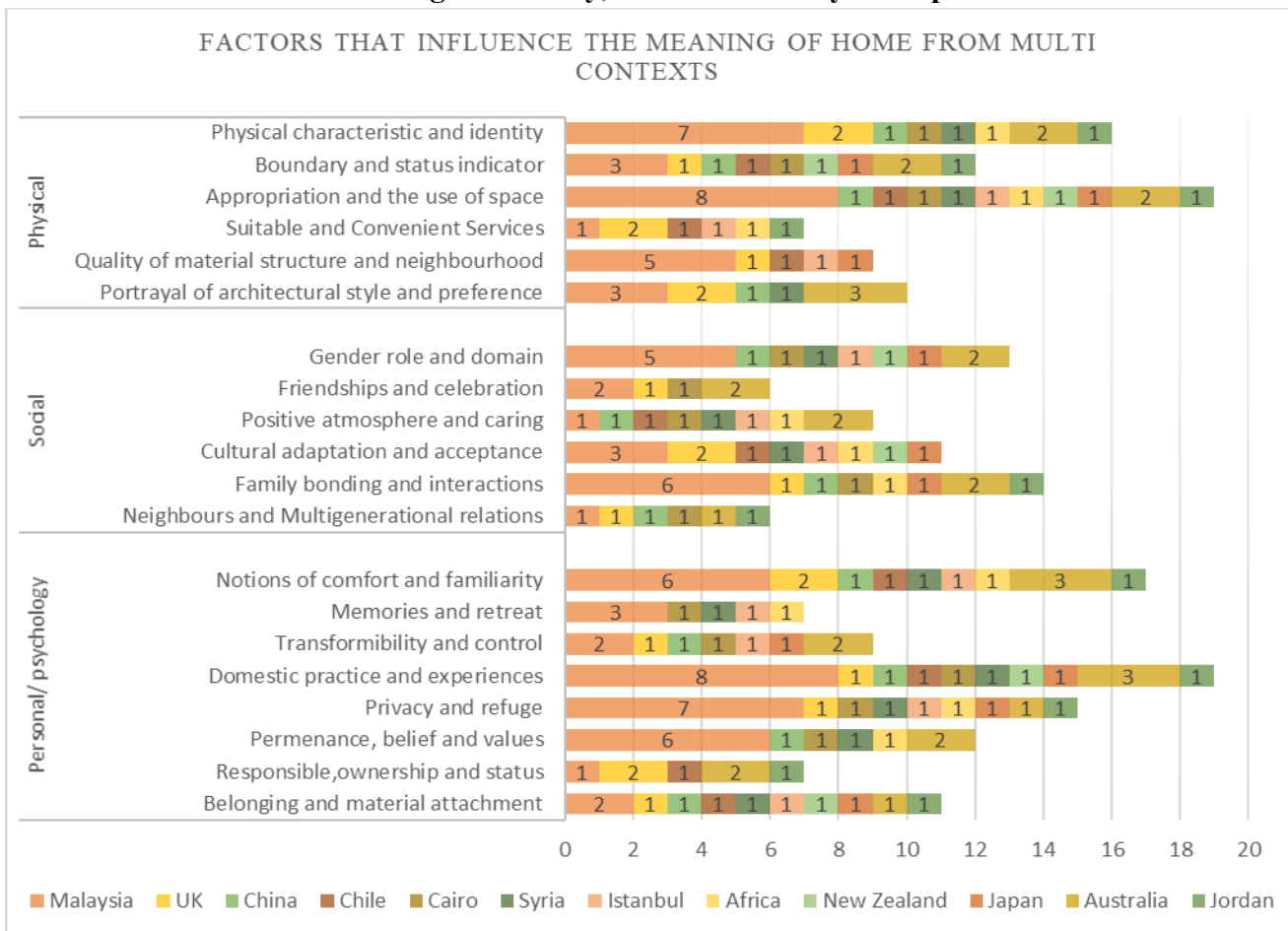
Figure 3. Subthemes emerged from content analysis: key factors that influence the meaning of home by regions (Developed by the Authors).

'Home' is a realm where things are 'culturally and socially bounded' and it becomes 'the centre of our experience of space' (Case, 1996, p. 2; Woodward, 2003), which induces a sense of 'home', either individually or collectively (Terkenli, 1995). The aspect of home experience is an interaction between people (individually or in groups), setting (physical space) and time (linear or cyclical) (Case, 1996). According to Figure 3 above, all reviewed papers from multiple regions interpret home as a dynamic 'homemaking' tactic of appropriation and the use of physical space.

From a personal or psychological aspect, home is a psycho-spatial entity and almost all regions associate home with domestic practices and experiences, the notions of comfort and familiarity and the need for privacy and refuge (Kottmann, 2022; Lordoğlu, 2022; Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022).

From a social aspect, there is the necessity of a clear gender role and domain within the physical home setting. Furthermore, cultural adaptation and acceptance within a community are critical for sustainable living in a multigenerational and multicultural society (Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Okeyinka & Amole, 2012; Soligbo, 2020). As there is a consensus that a physical home is an environment for socialising (social space), scholars view homes as a socio-spatial entity (Hand et al., 2007; Morrison, 2013; Woodward, 2003).

The results also revealed that the characteristics of a physical home are equally significant since they reflect the identity, social group or individual's architectural style and preferences within the self or self-expression (Ureta, 2007). Thus, home is a space for an expression of feelings involving the occupants' mood and desire for personalisation that profoundly impact the psychological mind (Graham et al., 2015; Rowles, 1983). Emotional appropriation occurs within the home environment through behavioural tactics such as creating partitions to define boundaries, repainting to suit colour

preference and incorporating DIY products and material belonging that signify family relationships and accomplishments (Graham et al., 2015; Mackay & Perkins, 2017; Morrison, 2013).

In other words, the concept of 'home' is a complex amalgamation of people's perception of space, experience of space and daily use of space that shaped their meanings and cultural values within it (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020).

In socio-psychology, community living or togetherness within a neighbourhood context is equally vital to the meaning of 'home' (Soligbo, 2020). The feeling of comfort and safety does not solely rely on the physical or material structure of a home, but also on the relationships with the family and neighbours (Abdelmonem, 2012; Soligbo, 2020; Werner et al., 1992).

Researchers also describe home as a social realm defined by their daily interaction with others and their code of behaviour (Case, 1996, p. 2). It is determined by a belief system that outlines rules and regulations regarding a way of living, whether individual or part of a congregation, and hence, influences the home arrangement for psychological well-being (Lah et al., 2015) and socio-cultural practice (Mohamad, 1992). Sacred rituals, such as praying, religious services and ceremonies, are actions and activities that can shape the meaning of home as a way to sustain family relationships and lineage (Hu, 2008).

Malaysian homes, according to Hasniyati (2016), are connected with substantial female participation in the homemaking process, and the home is described as an emotional appropriation of lived space evolving around family-centred activities. The 'home' becomes a woman's domain when a woman fulfils the nurturing and caring roles that are traditionally associated with mother figures. It is an emotional attachment an individual has to the meaning of 'home' (Aziz & Ahmad, 2012; Graham et al., 2015; Zohri, 2010).

Spatial quality and privacy are personal needs and have been significantly discoursed by the Middle-eastern and Asian scholars in contemporary houses (Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Hamid et al., 2017; Masran, 2019; Rahim & Hashim, 2012; Razali & Talib, 2013). A study in Old Cairo examined how daily interactions between homes, friends, extended family and the historic neighbourhood affect people's daily lives. The study developed the idea of multi-use outdoor spaces that are also maintaining the intangible heritage of sociocultural practices across time. Social interaction occurs in temporal arrangements resulting in 'part-time' space produced according to time, gender associations and social class activities by its community (Abdelmonem, 2012).

In a quantitative study on space utilisation in a low-cost flat unit, the living hall and kitchen are the dominant spaces with the highest space integration value to the entrance hall (Suryadi et al., 2022). From a graphic perspective, the layout appears to provide easy access and better connectivity between the rooms and space relations. Then again, setting up this inside and outside border varies by ethnicity; when it is crossed, individuals feel as though their privacy has been invaded (Abed et al., 2022; Musa et al., 2021).

Today, domestic wares and utensils are replaced with new technology and machinery for comfortable and compact living. However, from another ethnic perspective, the new machinery may not be a utilitarian practice to prepare traditional cuisines along with its culinary techniques, particularly within Eastern cultures (Hand et al., 2007; Zohri, 2010).

The findings support the theory of practice by Certeau (1984a) and Bourdie (1977) that the dynamism of home practice influences the physical configuration of spaces; constructing an appropriate domestic space over time in response to personal and social needs is a dynamic 'tactic.'

Home experience is an interaction between people (individually or in groups), setting (physical space) and time (linear or cyclical). The experience can be enhanced through home practice, which involves the occupant's affordance for a place or material belonging, social rules and interactions defined by their belief system, and the act of appropriation through daily use and way of living (Case, 1996).

4. Discussion: The Influences of Ethnicity on Physical Spaces

From the results, the concept of home is not only a physical shelter for physiological needs; it also refers to the practice of 'home', regardless if the home is a concrete structure (e.g. housing), less concrete (e.g. a neighbourhood or hometown) or something intangible (e.g. a spiritual/personal home). When a home is perceived as a physical entity, the dynamism of cultural practice inspires human habits for the appropriation of spaces (Al-Tarazi, 2021).

It is a 'homemaking' process between people, physical space and notions of home (Sixsmith, 1986) that can be formed into a dynamic tactic of 'creating or making' spaces (Mallett, 2004), 'for space is never empty but embodies meaning' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154). The desire to appropriate or create has been perceived as an effort to establish social boundaries (Aziz & Ahmad, 2012).

Those who have 'authority' of decision in making space hold the power to shape the activities within spaces as they define home (Mallett, 2004). The following are the aspects of 'home' that describe the relationship between ethnicity, physical space and practice. Hence the definitions can be understood from this theoretical perspective.

### Ethnicity as the social aspect

This element refers to the households' ethnicity and belief system within the physical space and describes how people interact with one another within their homes. According to this viewpoint, ethnicity has the power to impact the configuration of the physical spaces.

Space as the physical aspect

This element refers to a building structure or space in which the social and personal/psychological aspects may take place. This aspect is the focus of this study since the presence of the other two elements has the ability to reconfigure and transform it.

Practice as the personal aspect

This aspect focuses on the household's definition of home. Their home perceptions, experiences and emotions are a result of household practices that take place inside the actual physical home. Personal aspects refer to the outcome that we are trying to understand, which alludes to how individuals constructed meanings and defined spaces as home based on their lived experiences and practices.
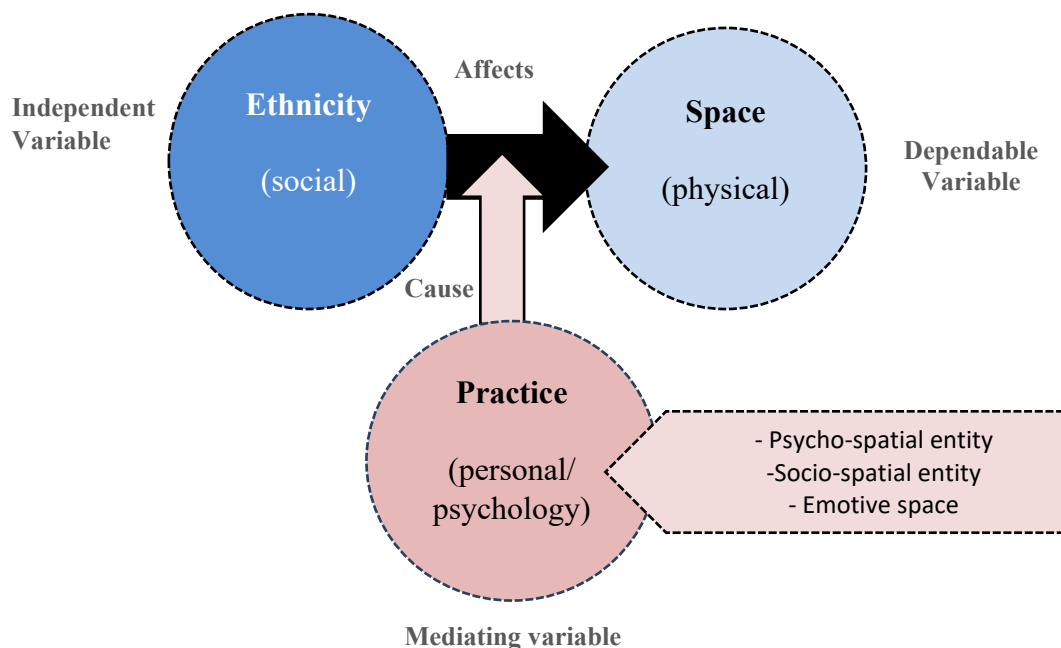
Figure 4. An initial development of a conceptual framework with combined theories. (Developed by the authors).

Figure 4 above illustrates an initial conceptual framework describing the cause-effect relationship between ethnicity, space and practice as initial steps to answer the hypothesis of this paper.

All reviewed papers were examined on how ethnicity influences physical space and how space is produced culturally. This includes 'nonspecific-functional spaces'(Hu, 2008), 'transitory spaces' (Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022), 'in-between' spaces (Masran, 2019), 'part-time' spaces (Abdelmonem, 2012) and 'negotiated' spaces (Othman, 2014; Rahim & Hashim, 2012), revealing a rich variety of cultural and social influences in the physical home settings, to which housing policymakers are oblivious (Abed et al., 2022; Suryadi et al., 2022; Ureta, 2007).

Table 2 below presents the contributions of reviewed papers and their views on home from each context of their studies.

Table 2. Contribution to the understanding of the meaning of home in multi-ethnic settings.

No.	Author	Year	Region	Key Contribution (Space appropriation)	Home approach
1	Woodward	2003	Australia	Middle-class households placing objects for comfort use or aesthetics and style, create space for socially mediating symbolic boundaries of self	Psycho-spatial
2	Hand et al.	2005	United Kingdom	A comparison study on the 1980s and small modern homes with accumulating domestic technologies. Modern kitchen becomes a multifunctional space and the bathroom is multiplying.	Psycho-spatial
3	Hu	2007	China	Spatial boundaries: all rooms have multifunctional uses across the time and life course of the families: nonspecific-functional space and family hierarchy.	Socio-spatial
4	Ureta	2007	Chile	DIY: domesticate home strategies on homogeneous spaces for a sense of identity	Psycho-spatial
5	Zohri	2010	Malaysia	Flexible expansion system on physical space for privacy and Muslim women's comfort use	Psycho-spatial
6	Rahim and Hashim	2012	Malaysia	Negotiation/shared space: Living and dining become interchangeable spaces based on affordance	Socio-spatial
7	Abdelmonem	2012	Cairo	Part-time space: The use of private/outdoor according to time and social practice	Socio-spatial
8	Morrison	2013	New Zealand	Domestic space and material objects embodied the intimacy and relationships of a household	Emotive Space
9	Othman	2014	Australia	In-between space: the balancing factor to provide hospitality and achieve optimum privacy in Muslim homes	Psycho-spatial
10	Lah et al.	2015	Malaysia	Spiritual space: The influence of 'metaphysic' on the design of physical buildings in ancient Asian cultures	Psycho-spatial
11	Hamzah	2016	Malaysia	Feelings, perceptions, relations and attachment to lived space is a homemaking process	Emotive space
12	Omar et al.	2017	Malaysia	'Mirror' arrangement of terrace housing is visually exposing and leads to reconfiguration of home material	Psycho-spatial
13	Razali and Talib	2017	Malaysia	Imbalanced space: the Malay women's domain and visual privacy are conflicted in a tiny flat housing	Psycho-spatial
14	Masran	2019	Malaysia	In between space: Home frontage distance to achieve the optimum privacy	Psycho-spatial
15	Al-Tarazi	2021	United Kingdom	Personalising: assessment of human psychological well-being in the physical homes and general life	Psycho-spatial
16	Oczentin	2022	Syria	Redecorated home in Istanbul and reminisced home in Syria: transitional space for a sense of belonging	Emotive space

| 17 | Okeyinka | 2022 | Africa | Comfort and security in physical home features are most preferable in the Yoruba culture to develop a sense of belonging | Psycho-spatial |
18	Kottman	2022	Japan	'New' space of relating and belonging: diversification of living arrangement in 'hyper solo society' practice	Emotive space
19	Suryadi et al.	2022	Malaysia	Integration of domestic spaces: space connectivity and accessibility of dominant spaces	Psycho-spatial
20	Soligbo	2022	Australia	Homemaking for migrants in vertical housing and seeking a sense of community is a multi-staging process of home experience	Socio-spatial
21	Abed	2022	Jordan	Home designs with sociocultural considerations produce different architectural forms, it is never a static home layout.	Psycho-spatial
22	Lordoğlu	2022	Istanbul	Gendered space: women conflicts to feel a sense of belonging in the foreign cultural environment	Emotive space

According to the findings, setting boundaries and safety are always associated with the physical aspect of a home (Abu-Ghazzeh, 2000; Masran, 2019; Woodward, 2003). However, these elements can be found through the aspects of social and personal needs (Abdelmonem, 2012; Kottmann, 2022; Woodward, 2003).

For example, a 'tactic of belonging' was utilised by Syrian female occupants to recreate kitchen space in their new homes in Istanbul by placing objects that provide them good use for cooking practice and memories of their homes in Syria (Özçetin & Rottmann, 2022). This act of demarcation defines a space for home dwellers as a 'safe' and 'functional' place that supports their daily activities and practices (Kottmann, 2022; Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010).

Meanwhile, the spatial meaning of Chinese traditional family dwellings mirrors their family hierarchy and Confucianism practice. There are numerous courtyards in the traditional Chinese house to accommodate 4–5 generations of family members. Consequently, maintaining privacy and social boundaries is possible with wall-segregated areas. However, interestingly, all rooms are multipurpose and offer flexibility of usage across time and the life course of the family. Except for the kitchen and main hall, the homes were never functional spaces. The sacred and safest space is for the eldest family members and is located at the innermost space within this traditional home (Hu, 2008).

All reviewed papers focus on a single ethnic group, a single belief system, social class and migration, from elderly, gender, student and refugee perspectives. Thus, the outcome discovered few studies on the cultural practice of multi-ethnic households within a home setting. More research studies on multi-ethnic homes are required in contemporary housing policy because the primary emphasis is on house supply, and the design is focused heavily on supplying practical rooms based on population affordance. (Hamid et al., 2017; Im & Fah, 2018; Suryadi et al., 2022). Therefore, it is vital to develop a conceptual framework as a guide to explore the meaning of home from this perspective.

4.1 The Development of Conceptual Framework: The Practice of Home in Multi-Ethnic Settings
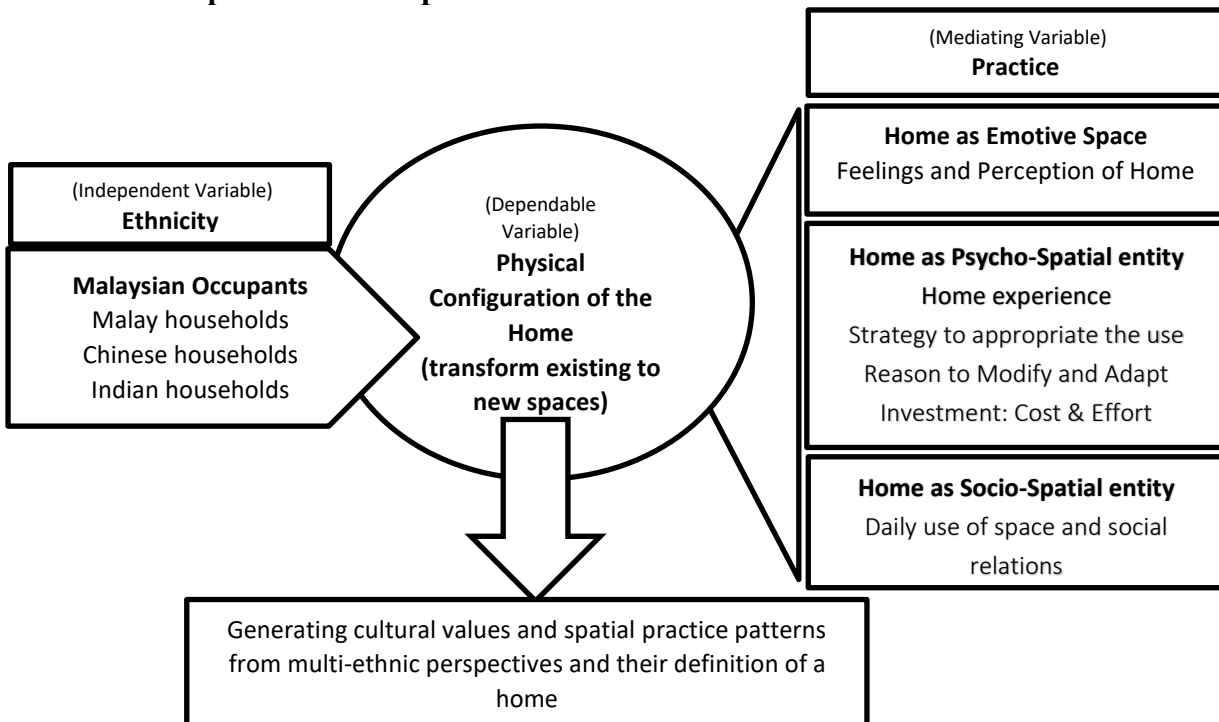
Figure 5. A Conceptual Framework on the Meaning of Home for Multi-Ethnic Settings (Developed by the authors).

A new conceptual framework is constructed in Figure 5 utilising all the combined theories on ethnicity, space and practice, and how they can be applied to an investigation in a multi-ethnic home setting.

The ethnicity of a household is an independent variable that can affect the physical home settings as a dependable variable over time, experience and appropriation (Easthope, 2004). Each household has a different set of family structures and belief systems. It is important to identify the target group of a household structure before conducting an experimental study. In the context of Malaysia, a single neighbourhood may comprise multi-ethnicities—Malay, Chinese and Indian households. Their belief system and practices may influence the use of spaces in a home setting.

The practice of home is a mediating variable explaining how and why the effect occurs in the physical home settings. Based on the literature, this practice can be divided into three parts, following the three approaches to defining home as 'emotive space', 'socio-spatial entity' and 'psycho-spatial entity' (Easthope, 2004). The first portion examines the occupants' perceptions and feelings of their homes due to their experience within their physical homes and the neighbourhoods. The experience depends on the household structure and belief system that regulates their lifestyle.

The second portion concerns the occupants' lived experience and way of living, concerning the home as a psycho-spatial entity. It explores the occupants' daily use of space and their strategies to appropriate the house. This section elaborates on the transformability of existing rooms, their involvement and inspiration to transform spaces, the reason to modify and the effort to produce, consume and adapt indoor, outdoor and in-between spaces in a home.

The final portion discusses the daily use and social relations of households. This portion focuses on the use of space in a home, as well as their daily and social activities, which include personal activities (hobbies or interests), family activities, religious activities, neighbourhood activities and social, and celebratory activities according to the time of day, weekend and special events (Abdelmonem, 2012; Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Rahim & Hashim, 2012). It is an indication of how frequently they engage in these activities, as well as what significant activities take place in their homes, a socio-spatial approach.

This is a holistic approach to home practice that develops spatial practice patterns to explain how an ethnicity's ideas, cultural values and practices influence the physical configuration of a home and regulate its spatial boundaries and privacy. In a multi-ethnic home setting, there is a need to understand how they perceive each space and in-between space to perform their domestic activities comfortably and respectably (Abdullah et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

This article is a review paper that explicitly identifies the meaning of home from multiple regions and the factors that influence the definition of home from multi-ethnic perspectives. This comprehensive review identifies that the notion of 'home' is a synthesis of three aspects of home: physical, social and personal. From an extensive content analysis, subthemes emerged as the factors that influence the meaning of home from the context study of each publication.

A new conceptual framework introduces three key variables: ethnicity (household structure and belief system), home practice (emotions, experiences and daily use) and the physical spaces (appropriated or transformed space) and how the interactions of key variables are applicable to investigate the meaning of home in a multi-ethnic setting. This study clarifies how people practising and define home as a dynamic 'tactic' of homemaking.

Consequently, this review paper made the following contributions. First, this study is significant for interweaving the gap between the disciplines of sociology, psychology, emotions, architecture and urbanism. The purpose of this new framework is to guide research that involves human intervention in the transformability of spaces and physical settings, which is vast from territorial, psychology, socio-psychology and phenomenology studies. Hence, this study provides a full grasp of 'home', where physical homes are constantly appropriated inside and outside following the behaviours of occupants towards their living environment.

Second, the outcome responds to the hypothesis of this paper that each household practises cultural values, privacy and social boundaries in line with their belief systems, and that reconfiguring a physical space defines the meaning of home. Most occupants, for example, define home as a 'safe' place, but how they practice safety in their living environment demonstrates varied interpretations that have yet to be investigated. Thus, this study suggests further research with households of different belief systems in a contemporary housing design. This knowledge is vital and can contribute to the contemporary housing policy that is less attentive to the design of houses with cultural characteristics for multi-ethnic homes.

Third, this systematic review utilised a qualitative research method. As much as the study revealed a greater meaning of home, there is a need to examine the methods and tools utilised by related empirical papers and the outcome of their methods for future investigations.

Lastly, the digital world has opened up a new 'place' where people, particularly the young generation, can find the meaning of 'home' virtually. This research focuses on physical places, while social media platforms are abstract spaces where social and personal needs can be appropriated and evolved for personal presence, intercultural and social networking and preservation of memories.

Within art and humanities, the new framework is highly recommended to all local architects, designers, developers and urban planners to guide overall design practices and policies for all housing types. The purpose is to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of 'home' incorporating the actual home practises of occupants within multi-ethnic neighbourhoods or countries, similar to Malaysia.

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Conflict of Interests
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement
The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

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