



AicE-Bs2022KotaKinabalu

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10th Asia-Pacific International Conference on E-B Studies
The Magellan Sutera Resort, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 07-08 Sep 2022

Preliminary Survey on Factors Influencing Gated Community Living

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Abstract

The gated community is becoming a popular residential among the urban population. The reason for a gated community in Malaysia generally emphasizes the need for a safer community in the surrounding area. However, certain gated and guarded communities in Malaysia contribute more than security. Therefore, this research will investigate further the factors influencing gated community living. A survey was conducted, and findings reveal ten factors influencing gated community living that the developers should pay serious attention to before the development of gated communities was approved.

Keywords: Residential development; gated community; landed strata

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7i21.3700>

1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, gated communities have gained a reputation as fashionable types of neighbourhoods by the majority of people. Mutalib et al. (2012) mentioned that the gated and guarded community has become a popular trend and attracted many researchers to study this phenomenon, forming results from various perspectives (Zaireen et al., 2015). Blakely and Snyder (1997) stated that the term 'gated community' comes from 'gating' and 'community,' which refer to safe neighbourhoods with an organized social structure. Atkinson and Blandy (2005) later extended the definition by adding legal features, declaring that a gated community is characterized by legal agreements that tie the residents to a standard code of conduct with collective responsibility for management. Focus to Malaysia, Town and Country Planning Department (2010) defines it as a group of residents living in a gated, guarded, and closed residential area, either high-rise or landed, having limited access and equipped with common properties. Its features distinguish a gated community easily from open and guarded neighbourhoods. Blandy (2007) states that a gated community has two main features, namely physical terms and legal terms. The physical terms are that barricades and walls surround the gated community that only the residents have the eligibility to access. It is supervised and controlled by security guards with the help of video camera surveillance and Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). The area is private, where the interior streets, provided facilities, amenities, and services are exclusively for the residents' use. In terms of management, a professional property manager is appointed to manage and maintain the excellent conditions of the gated community. It

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7i21.3700>

is under the strata law to provide a conducive living for the residents (Teck-Hong, 2011). In terms of legal, the gated community has obligations that require all the residents to follow the code of conduct and regulations issued by their management. The residents are bound to a standard code of conduct through legal agreements (Wang & Pojani, 2019). In Malaysia, the contract shall be in line with the provision of the Strata Management Act 2013 (Act 757), especially regarding the formation of a Joint Management Body (JMB), Management Corporation (MC), and the amount of maintenance fee that needs to be paid by the residents. JMB or MC may later create and establish their by-laws, which regulate all the residents with the dos and don'ts in their gated community.

In this context, the present study contributes to the literature on the topic by expanding previous research on gated community living. First, this study provides preliminary evidence of the factors influencing gated community living. Second, this study examines the primary pull factors influencing gated communities using the Relative Importance Index analysis..

2.0 Influencing Factors to Gated Community Living

The expansion of gated community development is subject to people's desires, interests, chances, and viewpoints (Roitman, 2010). No doubt, the first factor encouraging the emergence of a gated community is safe, when the people who live in open neighbourhoods feel insecure and fear of crime due to the high crime threat in the cities (Blakely & Snyder, 1998; Breetzke & Cohn, 2013; Yegen & Sinirlioglu, 2013). However, safety is not the only factor motivating people to stay in gated communities. Atkinson & Flint (2004) mention that the apparent safety brought by gated community developments is not enough to translate the reduction in fear of crime. Crime can still happen in a gated community. Sarpong (2017) found a case in Ghana where a particular gated community went through a nightmarish experience on 13th February 2014. A gang of hooded armed robbers with pump action guns, pistols, and sledgehammers attacked the residents. They succeeded in breaking into nine homes in that scheme. Sadly, it was the second incident involving an encounter with armed robbers within two years. Previous studies show that many more motivators factorized the people living in a gated community. The primary factor differs from one place to another.

Yegen and Sinirlioglu (2013) report that gated community developments emerged in the United States, corresponding to security needs due to crime and violent activities. While in Turkey, its emergence was because of exclusivity for the high social class (Alkan-Golker, 2017). Meanwhile, in Qatar, the gated community, there is a common and recognizable form of housing development. The number of gated community schemes in Doha keeps increasing due to the demand from people who prefer to enjoy the sense of community, besides the exclusive use of facilities and amenities within a pleasant environment (Ekhteyar & Furlan, 2016). Moving to Shanghai, China, more than 80 per cent of residential schemes are gated (Wang & Pojani, 2019). In China, a gated community is also called a "sealed residential quarter" or '*xiaoqu*' which refers to a high-density residential area. These schemes may have 200 to 900 people per hectare approximately. This scenario happens due to too high demand from the people who follow the lifestyle trends. These tendencies make gated community development out of control and push the government to stop any gated community development projects for a while. While in Malaysia, Hanif et al. (2012) postulated that people live in gated communities due to a combination of security, privacy, and lifestyle trends. However, Suhana (2018) found that prestige is the prime factor motivating people to reside in gated communities, besides safety and others. Various research has been done, and no constant factor can be placed as a prime motivator influencing the people to live in this type of residential scheme. Hence, all the factors are listed and discussed for further study. The factors influencing people to live in gated communities are safety, privacy, sense of community, lifestyle facility, financial benefit, prestige, location, design, landscape, and maintenance management.

2.1. Safety

Fear of crime is the main driving force behind the multiplication of gated communities (Roitman, 2010). Fear of crime refers to people's feelings and perceptions of crime incidences. Unsafe and insecure feelings push them to move to secure places such as gated communities. Even though the crime could still happen there, at least there is a low possibility for them to face it since the residents are not exposed to the threats of the criminals like in open neighbourhoods. The safety elements of the gated community, like security personal guards, fences, walls, and a camera surveillance system, could contribute to the safe feeling of the residents. These reduce anxiety and insecurity about criminal activities (HS Ann & Ainie AR, 2022).

2.2. Privacy

A gated community is isolated from the public by built-up walls, fences, and limited access (Zarina Shamsudin et al., 2017). Access is controlled by the security guards and supported by a security system like CCTV. The security elements play multi-functional roles in ensuring the privacy living of the residents is not compromised, besides security purposes. The security elements then contribute to the sense of privacy creation, exclusivity, and private neighbourhood sense that lead to the comfort of living as the residents desire (Zarina Shamsudin et al., 2017). This factor is the main reason high-income earners prefer this type of housing due to a conducive residential and private living environment (Tan, 2010).

2.3. Sense of Community

In Doha, Qatar, a sense of community is the first factor ranked as a motivator for the people to live in the gated community (El-Ekhteyar & Furlan, 2016). A sense of community indicates quality living in a social class. Two indicators may be used to measure the sense of a community which is the community's successful functioning and the community members' feelings (El-Ekhteyar & Furlan, 2016).

2.4. Lifestyle Facility

Facilities and amenities are provided to accommodate the residents in their activities. They are located in strategic areas in which the majority of the residents can have equal access to utilize them (Tan, 2015). The residents may use the facilities and amenities provided privately without sharing them with outsiders.

2.5. Financial Benefit

Gated community housing may be rented, leased, or sold. Rental and lease produce monthly returns to the owner as long as there is a tenant at the house. While selling gives benefits in terms of capital gain to the owner. High demand by the people and low supply from the developer in this type of neighbourhood housing scheme creates significant appreciation in house values (Tan, 2015).

2.6. Prestige

Prestige is another factor influencing people's decision to live in a gated community. Tan (2015) points out that a gated community could symbolize individuals' luxury living and give them a sense of achievement. It is related to the common perception by the people, which reflects the residents there with the elite community, which has a high rank or position and earns a high income. It gives the residents an excellent self-image and distinguishes them from low-class individuals (Leisch, 2002). It was supported by Roitman (2010), who found that the people who lived in the gated community felt like they were living in a reputable area with a sense of class identity. Suhana (2018) also mentioned that the proud feeling is due to the grand entrance and security system, where status could be determined by the level of security (aesthetics of protection).

2.7. Location

Zarina Shamsudin et al. (2017); and Suhana (2018) stated that location contributes to people's decision to live in a gated community. In this context, *location* is defined as accessibility from home or to home. It is closely related to distances to workplaces and public amenities like schools and public transportation hubs. Zainon et al., (2017) found that people prefer to live near the city rather than in the middle of the city center. It is due to their understanding that houses in the city center are highly priced and thus probably unaffordable to them.

2.8. Design

Good housing design is one of the fundamental reasons people choose gated communities (Z. Shamsudin & Ying, 2016). People are highly concerned about design, including the layout plan of the house (Heng & Dastane, 2017). Zainon et al. (2017) reveal that design is positioned at number six in the ranking of main factors influencing the decision to live in a housing area, after quality and location factors. However, Zillow (2018) mentioned that most people had listed several design aspects that people would look for before deciding to buy.

2.9. Landscape

Teck-Hong (2011); and Zarina Shamsudin et al. (2017) have found that landscape is one of the attractions in a gated community that could attract people to live there. *Landscaping* is a significant influencer that could increase the value of a property (Teck-Hong, 2011; Hussain et al., 2014; Wibisono, Kwanda, and Anastasia, 2017). The landscape elements consist of but are not limited to fountains, gazebos, vegetation, benches, pergolas, railings, and parks other than compounds that could give a comfortable feeling for the residents.

2.10. Maintenance Management

Maintenance management is one of the reasons why people prefer to live in a gated community. From a study by Mohd et al. (2014), control and maintenance come second place after safety as the most influencing factors the people's decision to stay in a gated community. Maintenance is preserving and retaining the building to its standard to perform its functions as required (Chanter & Swallow, 2007). Effective maintenance management could also extend the lifespan of the building due to the avoidance of defects and deterioration (Yong & Sulieman, 2015).

3.0 Methodology

This study uses the quantitative method to gather data from respondents in selected gated community schemes. The objective of the survey was to identify and rank the factors influencing people to live in a gated community. The measurement tool used for the questionnaire was the Likert Scale method. This psychometric response scale can obtain participants' preferences or degree of agreement with a statement or set of views. The variation adopted in a Likert scale is commonly set as 5 point scale ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" on one end to 5 representing "strongly agree" on the other. There are different scales with two representing "disagree," 3 representing "natural," and 4 representing "agree" in the middle. In the survey form, ten variables of influencing factors were asked to the respondents. These factors are safety, privacy, sense of community, lifestyle facilities, financial benefits, prestige, location, design, landscaping, and maintenance management. From the questionnaire, there is a series of ten (10) questions or statements being tested, the reading of Cronbach's Alpha succeeded 0.723. Bolarinwa (2015) stated that reliability coefficient at 0.7 or higher than that is measured as reliable.

This study conducted a self-administered questionnaire survey on the residents of Taman Sentosa (Tropicana), Melaka Tengah and Taman Gangsa Impian, Alor Gajah in Melaka. As the population for this study was 213 (exceeding 200), the sampling by referring to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used. The sample size of the study was 136. However, considering a few respondents who did not

respond to the given questionnaires, 150 questionnaire survey forms were distributed directly to every unit of the terraced house. Out of these, only 24 questionnaire survey forms were returned with completed answers. It gave a response rate for this study of 16.0 percent. It was challenging to get a higher response rate in this study due to some difficulties getting cooperation from the respondents to participate in the survey. Some of the challenges were vacant houses, a tenant was not around, and occupants who were reluctant to respond to the doorbell.

All the raw data from the questionnaire survey was later statistically analyzed by using the Relative Importance Index (RII) method through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Johnson and LeBreton (2004) mentioned that RII is a weightage index that could help assess a particular variable's weight. RII is a form of relative importance analysis used in this study to rank the factors influencing people to live in a gated community. RII is computed by using the formula as follows:

Where *w* is the weighting between scales of 1 to 5 allocated by the respondents. *A* is the highest weight or scale (5 in this case) and *N* is the total number of samples (24 in this case).

$$\text{Relative Importance Index (RII)} = \frac{\sum W}{A * N}$$

Where *w* is the weighting between scales of 1 to 5 which are allocated by the respondents. *A* is the highest weight or scale (5 in this case) and *N* is the total number of samples (24 in this case).

4.0 Findings

In a grim picture, the result shows a low survey response rate for the research. However, the survey's low response rate does not mean or reflect prejudice (Rindfuss, Choe, Tsuya, Bumpass, & Tamaki, 2015). It can be factorized by the residents' unwillingness to cooperate with the researcher. It is strengthened by Groves et al. (2012), who stated that the persons in developed countries involved in the research have a reduction in interest in giving their cooperation. Tan (2015) researched residential satisfaction in gated communities at Desa Park City, Kuala Lumpur and failed to reach the required minimum response rate. He only achieved 30.0 per cent, which is 160 questionnaires returned from 549 were distributed. The same goes for Suhana (2018). The result from the data collection only got 17.0 per cent of the response rate. The data had been statistically analyzed to identify the parameters influencing people's decision to live in a gated community. By using the formula stated above, the calculation was computed. The RII for each factor and ranking of all the factors influencing the people to live in a gated community were tabulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondent's score and RII of factors influencing people to live in the gated community.

Factor	Respondent's Score					N	A	ΣW	RII	Rank
	1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Neutral	4: Agree	5: Strongly Agree					
Safety	0	0	2	8	14	24	5	108	0.900	1
Privacy	0	0	0	14	10	24	5	106	0.883	2
Location	0	0	6	6	12	24	5	102	0.850	3
Financial Benefit	0	0	6	10	8	24	5	98	0.817	4
Landscape	0	0	2	18	4	24	5	98	0.817	4
Design	0	0	4	20	0	24	5	92	0.767	6
Sense of Community	0	4	2	14	4	24	5	90	0.750	7
Maintenance Management	4	0	6	10	4	24	5	82	0.683	8
Lifestyle Facility	2	4	4	12	2	24	5	80	0.667	9
Prestige	4	4	8	6	2	24	5	70	0.583	10

As shown in Table 1 above, the safety factor ranked first in the RII reading. The second factor is privacy, followed by location, financial benefits, landscaping, design, sense of community, maintenance management, lifestyle facilities, and prestige.

5.0 Discussion

Ten influencing factors for the homebuyer's decision to live in a gated community were grouped into three level categories, as indicated by Akadiri (2011). The categories are high level for readings 0.8 to 1.0, high-medium level for readings 0.6 to 0.8, medium level for readings of 0.4 to 0.6, medium-low level for readings of 0.2 to 0.4, and low level for readings in between 0 to 0.2. The first factor, "Safety", shows that the respondents are highly concerned about security living in an open neighbourhood. Issues that may trigger the homebuyer i.e. robbery and house intrusion activities. Such criminals action is highly potential in urban area. Second factor is "Privacy". This factor is very crucial for urban residences. Homebuyers who stay in gated communities are willing to pay a sum for the maintenance fees every month even though it is pretty costly to enjoy the upscale living and privacy. The third factor is location, whereby homebuyers choose to live in a gated community due to the proximity to various nearby amenities. The fourth factor is shared point by financial benefit and landscape.

The financial benefit may become an essential factor that motivates homebuyers due to its strategic location, i.e. near the city and within a pleasant environment with a scenic view. These factors may increase the property's value for rental and resale purposes. The rest of the factors may also attract homebuyers' decision as a bonus point regarding the design concept, facilities provided and well-managed maintenance organization.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

All the factors were grouped into the high influencing factor category, the high-medium influencing factor category, and the medium influencing factor category. The high influencing factor category is the most significant factor that factorized the people to live in the gated community. Regarding this high influencing factor category, developers, especially those keen to develop gated homes, should look at this category of factors first. This category consists of safety, privacy, location, financial benefit, and landscape factors before starting to plan for a gated home development project. It is a necessary move to ensure the supply meets the demand and desire of potential homebuyers. The development will be more viable and profitable soon. It is hoped that this study's result can strengthen the knowledge of gated communities not only for the developers but for all related parties in the property development sector in Malaysia, like investors and the government. These factors may vary from one place to another, and further study on the range of this topic should be encouraged for the mutual benefit of the whole of Malaysia.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express gratitude and thanks to participants that involved in this study and the funding provided by UiTM Cawangan Perak for attending this conference.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper has successfully contributed to the literature on the topic that related to factors influencing gated community living.

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