

# A Conceptual Model for Assessing Residents' Satisfaction in the Case of Gated Communities: An Analytical Literature Review

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## Abstract

Measuring residential satisfaction has recently been considered as an important guide for architects, policymakers, urban planners, housing analysts, and housing developers. This is also true in relation to gated residential developments or gated communities. This research aims to develop a model of residential satisfaction that could be of help in measuring and evaluating overall residential satisfaction and its different components in general and in the case of gated communities. An analytical review of the literature was conducted in order to theoretically develop the model proposed. The literature helped identify five main components of residential satisfaction. Three components were derived from the housing satisfaction literature: (1) satisfaction with the dwelling unit, (2) satisfaction with the neighborhood, and (3) satisfaction with the social life and the social environment. The other two were mainly inferred from the gated community literature to better adapt this particular case: (1) sense of safety and security and (2) satisfaction with access to services and mobility. The model, furthermore, emphasizes many aspects that also contribute to determining the level of residential satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Residential Satisfaction, Housing Satisfaction, Components of Residential Satisfaction, Conceptual Model, Gated Communities, Analytical Literature Review.

## Introduction

The concept of residential satisfaction is mostly applied to express the residents' evaluation of their residential environment (Galster & Hesser, 1981; Jansen, 2012; Borgoni et al., 2018; Abdullah et al., 2020). It is important to measure housing satisfaction, which can help as a guide for designing and planning future housing projects and conducting effective housing systems (Galster, 1985; Osman et al., 2021). Furthermore, evaluating residents' satisfaction significantly indicates the quality of life of residents (Addo, 2015).

On the other hand, gated communities (GCs) have recently become common features of the urban landscape and are a part of the suburbanization trend in many cities worldwide (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Berkoy, 2008; Elhadary & Ali, 2017). The rise of this phenomenon is usually

associated with a growing desire among urban residents to live behind the protection of walls. This is due to a perceived increase in both urban crime and social heterogeneity (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Ilesanmi, 2012; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020; Makinde, 2020).

The evaluation of residential satisfaction is now considered as a very important index regarding the success of residential projects (Borgoni et al., 2018; Abdullah et al., 2020). This is also found to be true with regard to GCs (Galster & Hesser, 1981; Tan, 2012; Riazi & Emami, 2018). This study sheds light on the importance of measuring residential satisfaction and its different dimensions through highlighting these dimensions as simple variables. These variables are to be listed in the proposed model of the study and can be tested in order to help evaluate residential satisfaction in general and in the case of GCs.

Therefore, the current study aims to develop a model that helps assess residential satisfaction generally, along with its different dimensions and components. The main dimensions identified in the proposed model were primarily mentioned in several theoretical and empirical studies to help measure and assess residential satisfaction in different housing types (Mohit & Raja, 2014; Addo, 2015; Aulia & Ismail, 2016; Fernández-Portero et al, 2017; Abass & Tucker, 2018; Borgoni et al, 2018; Abidin et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020; Osman et al., 2021). However, the aspects and dimensions of residential satisfaction needed to be separately highlighted and clarified. Accordingly, the current study aims to develop a conceptual model indicating these dimensions and could be of help in measuring and evaluating residential satisfaction in general and in the particular case of GCs.

## **Method**

To fulfill the aim of the study, it relied on a theoretical research design approach. The theoretical purpose of the research is not to create a new theory, but to expand the existing theory (Groat & Wang, 2013). An analytical literature review of the theories of residential satisfaction in various housing types has been conducted to explain the process that led to the developed model of overall residential satisfaction and its components in general and in the particular case of gated developments. The study of Biswas et al (2021), in particular, has conducted a bibliometric research that helped identify the most commonly cited studies of residential satisfaction that were used in this study.

## **Analytical Literature Review**

The analytical review of the literature mainly included the concept of residential and housing satisfaction, the importance of evaluating residential satisfaction, and a summary of residential satisfaction in GCs. The literature then presented a number of theories and models of measuring and evaluating residential satisfaction. Finally, the literature systematically presented the main components of residential satisfaction that were furthermore highlighted in the conceptual model of residential satisfaction proposed in the current study.

### ***The conceptualization of residential and housing satisfaction***

Satisfaction is considered as an approach of evaluating what was received in relation to what was anticipated. It is a subjective individual reaction to the objective surrounding environment (Mohit & Raja, 2014). Satisfaction can also be expressed as users' attitude toward the surrounding physical and social environment (Francescato et al., 1989). Residential satisfaction indicates users' responses to their residential environment and the degree to which they evaluate their houses (Francescato et al., 1979; Mohit & Raja, 2014; Borgoni et al., 2018).

Residential satisfaction also indicates the quality of life of residents and reflects the degree of comfort, sustainability, and lifestyle (Addo, 2015). Residential satisfaction, in general, can be determined by many variables. The level of residential satisfaction typically increases as long as the gap between expectations and the existing situation decreases (Jiang et al., 2017). The housing literature indicates that residential satisfaction is mainly affected by different characteristics of houses, conditions of the neighborhood, and demographic characteristics of residents (Tan, 2012; Borgoni et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019).

Residential satisfaction is a widely extensive concept and involves several dimensions or aspects, including physical dimensions such as dwelling, housing facilities, as well as neighborhood factors and social dimensions, along with socio-demographic characteristics of residents (Francescato et al., 1979; Mohit & Raja, 2014; Addo, 2015; Wang et al., 2019). People tend to feel unsatisfied if their housing units or neighborhoods are not meeting their residential needs and aspirations (Grigolon et al., 2014; Mohit & Raja, 2014; Borgoni et al., 2018).

### ***The Importance of Evaluating Residential Satisfaction***

Residential satisfaction is likely to determine housing modifications and mobility or traveling behaviors (Fang, 2006; Grigolon et al., 2014). Housing dissatisfaction, in many cases, motivates families to leave their homes and relocate (Rossi, 1955; Ruel et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2019). Residential satisfaction helps to determine housing demands and needs (Aulia & Ismail, 2016). It is an important direction for policymakers and developers (Mohit & Raja, 2014). Understanding the satisfaction factors in the residential environment is a key for planning successful projects and conducting effective housing policies (Abass & Tucker, 2018; Osman et al., 2021). Residential needs should be considered by housing developers by examining the factors that contribute to housing satisfaction in order to achieve good housing sustainability and increase the resident's quality of life (Tan, 2012; Makinde, 2015; Babalola et al., 2020).

The importance of residential satisfaction can be expressed in four different ways: first, as a predictor of residents' perception of the general quality of life; second, as an assessment for judging the outcome of housing developments; third, as an indicator of residential mobility or housing demands and neighborhood change; and fourth, as an assessment of residents' perception of the shortcomings of their housing environment (Galster, 1985; Abidin, 2019).

### ***Residential Satisfaction in GCs***

In several cities around the world, GCs have emerged as rapidly spreading phenomena (Berkoz, 2008; Aulia & Ismail, 2016; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020). Many studies have conducted trials to measure and evaluate residential satisfaction in GCs. Some of these studies shed light on the unfulfilled expectations of life in GCs, which are usually combined with dissatisfaction with certain issues such as expensive maintenance and social or urban segregation (Ilesanmi, 2012; Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020).

However, several studies demonstrate that residents are generally satisfied with life in GCs because of greater levels of privacy and quietness, varied facilities, and accessibility to open green areas (Berkoz, 2008; Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016; Salah & Ayad, 2018). Residents of GCs also tend to be satisfied with enhanced security systems, improved quality of life, a greater sense of community, prestige, and keeping their real estate investment (Salah & Ayad, 2018; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020; Jacob & Chander, 2020; Osman et al., 2021). For future project

design and better addressing the requirements and goals of residents, it is crucial to look into residential satisfaction in GCs. (Aulia & Ismail, 2016; Osman et al., 2021).

### ***Theories and Models of Measuring Residential Satisfaction***

Many trials have been conducted to measure residential satisfaction and its different components. It is essential to be aware of the components of residential satisfaction, as they affect and outline the overall residential satisfaction and can reveal the residents' tendencies for choosing a specific place to live and reside (Amerigo & Aragonés, 1997; Galster & Hesser, 1981; Tan, 2012; Aulia & Ismail, 2016; Riazi & Emami, 2018).

Several authors have proposed slightly different theoretical models of residential satisfaction (Galster & Hesser, 1981; Mohit & Raja, 2014; Tao et al., 2014; Abidin et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020). For example, Galster and Hesser (1981) have developed an explanatory model of residential satisfaction. This model specifies that the objective characteristics of residents, characteristics of the dwelling, and characteristics of the neighborhood significantly influence the overall satisfaction with the dwelling and neighborhood. The model also shows that these objective characteristics not only affect residential satisfaction in general but also detail the features of the residential physical and social environment (Galster & Hesser, 1981).

Tao et al. (2014) investigated residential satisfaction in terms of socio-demographic variables, mobility characteristics, housing characteristics, and residential preferences, which include security conditions and housing cost. Their model was basically designed to approach and discuss the main aspects that predict overall residential satisfaction.

Mohit and Raja (2014) have also proposed a commonly cited model of residential satisfaction (see Figure 1). The idea of their model emphasizes four main dimensions affecting overall residential satisfaction. (1) Dwelling characteristics and housing support services. Dwelling characteristics refer to such aspects of the dwelling as dwelling area, number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, privacy issues, views, etc. Housing support services refer to such issues as garbage disposal, parking, and other services or amenities provided. (2) Neighborhood physical characteristics and neighborhood public and private facilities. This dimension addresses such issues as access to services (shopping, schools, parks, playgrounds, medical facilities), safety and security, walkability, etc. (3) Social environment which refers to the quality of the social relationships with neighbors, perceived social compatibility, and sense of community. (4) Socio-demographic characteristics such as age of residents, gender, marital status, number and age of children, income, duration of residence, tenure type, education, occupation, etc.

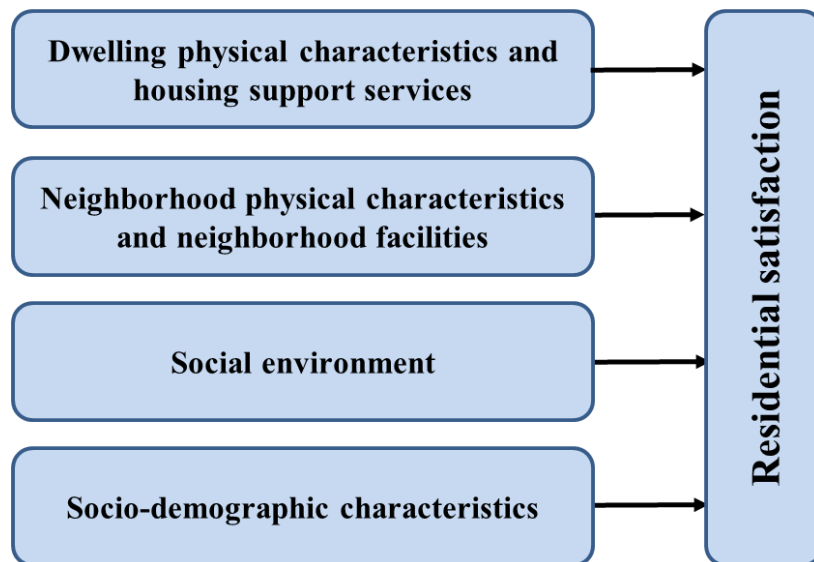


Figure 1 Main Dimensions of Residential Satisfaction Model

*Proposed by Mohit and Raja (2014)*

The model proposed by Abidin et al (2019) also features four dimensions affecting residential satisfaction (see Figure 2). Like Mohit and Raja (2014); Abidin et al (2019) emphasize “socio-demographic characteristics”, “dwelling characteristics”, and “neighborhood characteristics”. However, in their model, the fourth dimension is “behavioral characteristics”, referring to residents’ behaviors toward the residential environment, including mobility, modifications, adaptation, and maintenance.

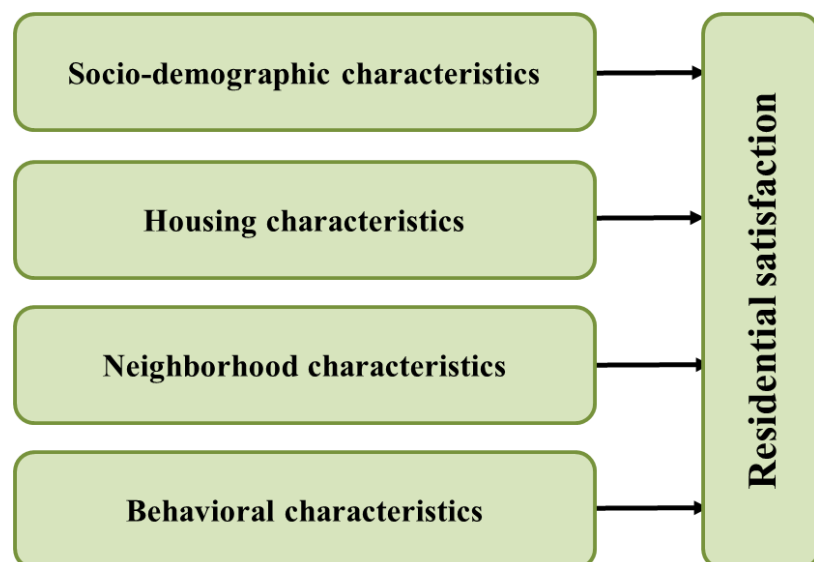


Figure 2 Main dimensions of residential satisfaction model proposed by Abidin et al (2019)

The study by Abdullah et al (2020) introduces a model that also emphasizes four similar determinants of residential satisfaction (see Figure 3). The model furthermore includes three levels of analysis of residential satisfaction studies: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

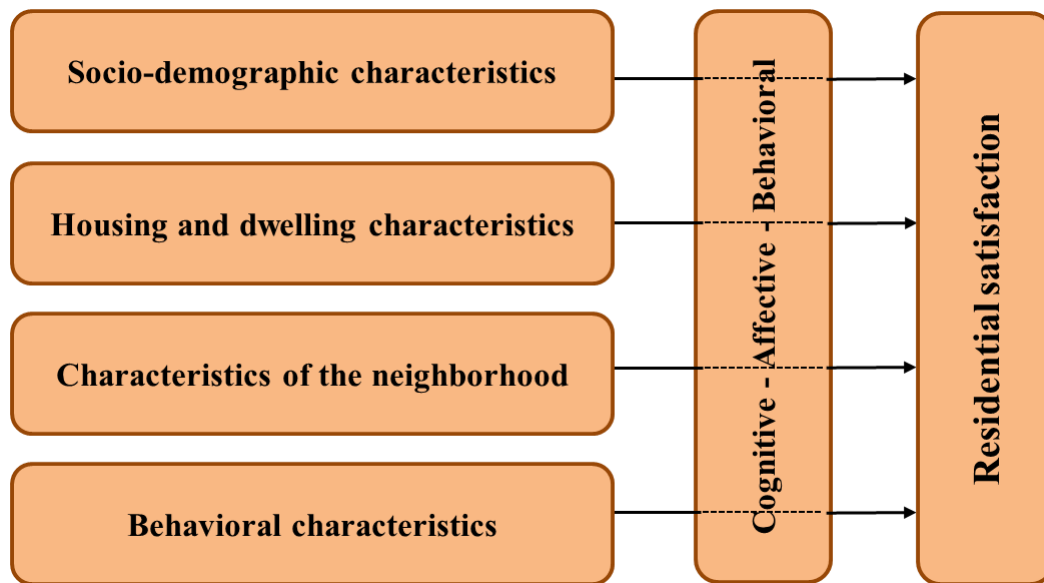


Figure 3 Main determinants of residential satisfaction model proposed by Abdullah et al (2020)

For their study, Abass and Tucker (2018) review previous models of residential satisfaction and conclude that these models tend to agree that each of “dwelling characteristics”, “neighborhood characteristics”, and “aspects of the social environment”, through interaction with “socio-demographic characteristics of residents” affect respectively “dwelling satisfaction”, “neighborhood satisfaction”, and “satisfaction with the social environment”, which in turn together affect the overall residential satisfaction (Abass & Tucker, 2018).

Accordingly, the synthesis of the residential satisfaction theoretical literature suggests three main predictors or determinants of overall residential satisfaction: (1) satisfaction of the dwelling unit, (2) satisfaction of the neighborhood, and (3) satisfaction with the social environment and social life (see Figure 4).

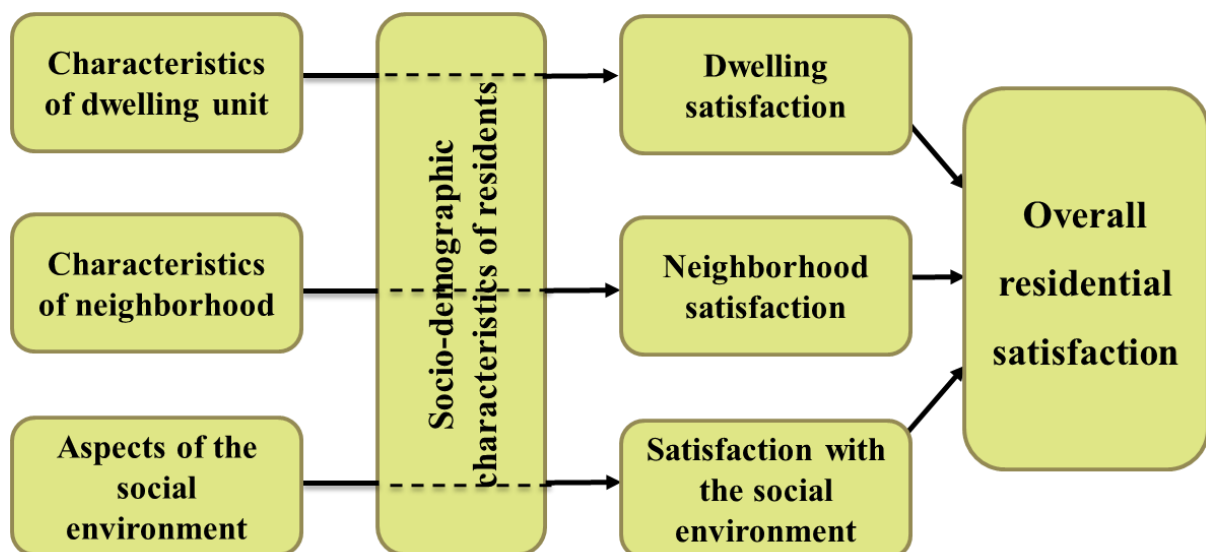


Figure 4 The three main predictors of overall residential satisfaction based on Abass and Tucker (2018)



***Components of Residential Satisfaction***

From the previous literature, most of the studies suggest that both the physical and social aspects of housing satisfaction are the main determinants of overall residential satisfaction, along with the socio-demographic characteristics of residents (Galster & Hesser, 1981; Fernandez et al., 2003; Mohit & Raja, 2014; Abass & Tucker, 2018; Borgoni et al., 2018; Abidin et al., 2019). That led to three residential satisfaction components: (1) satisfaction with the dwelling unit, (2) satisfaction with the neighborhood, and (3) satisfaction with the social environment. It is suggested here, however, that in the particular case of GCs, a model of residential satisfaction needs to further emphasize two other determinants or components of overall residential satisfaction: (1) sense of safety and security and (2) satisfaction with access to services and mobility (Amérigo & Aragones, 1997; Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Berkosz, 2008; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020; Jacob & Chander, 2020).

In typical models of residential satisfaction, both sense of safety and security and issues of mobility and access to services are considered as subsumed aspects of neighborhood satisfaction (Mohit & Raja, 2014; Abidin et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020). However, in the GC literature, sense of security as well as issues of mobility and access to services are particularly emphasized as among the most important reasons people decide to move to GCs and as among the most important issues that were found to be associated with residential satisfaction in GCs (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997; Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Berkosz, 2008; Elhadary & Ali, 2017; Atkinson & Blandy, 2020; Jacob & Chander, 2020). Thus, these two components were added to the model: (1) sense of safety and security and (2) satisfaction with access to services and mobility. The five components are detailed as follows.

- **Satisfaction with the Dwelling Unit**

Housing conditions and housing characteristics strongly influence people's quality of life and psychological well-being (Phillips et al., 2005; Mouratidis, 2020). They provide them with such important aspects as privacy, safety, stability, and life control. In contrast, less quality housing conditions contribute to physical and social problems (Turkoglu, 1997). The characteristics of the dwelling unit are considered very important factors affecting housing choice and residents' satisfaction (Phillips et al., 2005; Waziri et al., 2014).

Dwelling characteristics, such as design, location, and maintenance, have a remarkable influence on residents' satisfaction and the quality of the housing environment (Addo, 2015; Babalola et al., 2020). The quality of services and amenities within a housing project is also important (Tan, 2012; Fernandez-Portero et al., 2017). Satisfaction with any dwelling unit can be generally assessed through measures of levels of satisfaction with different aspects. These include, for example, area of dwelling unit, number of bedrooms, privacy within the dwelling unit, views from the dwelling unit, car parking spaces, etc. (Turkoglu, 1997; Phillips et al., 2005; Danquah & Afram, 2014; Makinde, 2015; Borgoni et al., 2018; Osman et al., 2021).

- **Satisfaction with the Neighborhood**

Neighborhoods can be defined as the residential areas in which people live. They are considered a suitable scale for measuring the effect of local conditions on people's well-being and quality of life (Adriaanse, 2007; Mouratidis, 2020). The neighborhood really matters for many residents, especially for families and children. The concern is majorly about the design of the environment and the services required (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997; Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016). Residential satisfaction depends not only on the housing unit conditions but also on the neighborhood (Mohit & Raja, 2014). The housing literature stresses that neighborhood

satisfaction is one of the most important determinants of residential satisfaction as a whole (Zhang & Lu, 2016; Borgoni et al., 2018; Abidin et al., 2019; Osman et al., 2021; Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022).

Aspects of the neighborhood such as distance traveled to work, school, shopping, medical centers, and safety from accidents or crimes, are positively linked with residential satisfaction and housing quality (Abidin et al., 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020; Babalola et al., 2020; Mouratidis, 2020). Neighborhood characteristics of aesthetic quality, amount of greenery, land use, walkability, public transportation, degree of maintenance, safety and security, and access to services were found to be related with neighborhood satisfaction (Amérigo & Aragones, 1997; Adriaanse, 2007; Leslie & Cerin, 2008; Kooshali et al., 2015; Türkoğlu et al., 2019; Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022). Accordingly, satisfaction with these aspects of the neighborhood can be used to measure and assess neighborhood satisfaction (Danquah & Afram, 2014; Zhang & Lu, 2016; Borgoni et al., 2018; Osman et al., 2021; Ta et al., 2021).

- **Satisfaction with Social Life and the Social Environment**

The social environment is an important aspect of the residential environment. Satisfaction with the social environment is typically stressed as an important contributor to overall residential satisfaction (Mohit & Raja, 2014; Abidin et al., 2019). Social attachments and relationships between neighbors are very crucial to enhance the quality of life (Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016). Strong social bonds within the neighborhood reduce both the fear of crime and the desire to move (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997). In fact, the increase of social interaction among neighbors or community members is an effective way to increase the feeling of safety (Riger et al., 1981; Mohit & Hannan, 2012; Sun & Webster, 2019). In addition, social interaction influences residents' satisfaction with life in their housing estates (Amérigo & Aragones, 1997; Mousavinia et al., 2019).

Community attachments, common needs and interests between neighbors are other important aspects of the social environment that support self-identity, well-being, and sense of community (Fernández et al., 2003; Moustafa, 2009; Riazi & Emami, 2018). Furthermore, sense of belonging increases in the neighborhood as an outcome of more community participation (Riger et al., 1981; Zhang & Lu, 2016; Mousavinia et al., 2019).

Riger and Lavrakas (1981) identify two dimensions of community attachment: social bonds and residential ties within a residential environment. The first refers to residents' sense of belonging to their neighborhood, while the second refers to homeownership and length of residence. The literature also points to other important aspects that help in determining the level of satisfaction with the social environment, such as social compatibility among residents, sense of community, participation in management and decision-making, etc. (Ilesanmi, 2012; Danquah & Afram, 2014; Zhang & Lu, 2016; Borgoni et al., 2018; Mousavinia et al., 2019; Osman et al., 2021).

- **Sense of safety and security**

The study of Landman (2004) shows that GCs are typically perceived to be safer than open neighborhoods and that issues of safety and security are among the main reasons people decide to move to GCs. Blakely and Snyder (1997) suggest that large numbers of American residents are opting to move and live in GC developments, driven by fear of crime and a desire for increased safety. A large number of other studies conducted in different countries also indicate that a search for higher levels of security is among the most important reasons behind



moves to GCs (Berkoz, 2008; Ilesanmi, 2012; Aulia & Ismail, 2016; Mohd et al., 2016; Salah & Ayad, 2018; Makinde, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

In the general residential satisfaction literature, sense of security is often shown to be an issue affecting levels of neighborhood satisfaction (Danquah & Afram, 2014; Makinde, 2015; Abidin et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022). However, in studies that have conducted investigations concerning residential satisfaction in gated developments, issues of sense of security are very often found to be extremely important predictors of residential satisfaction (Berkoz, 2008; Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016; Jacob & Chander, 2020; Osman et al., 2021).

- **Satisfaction with Access to Services and Mobility**

In the general literature of housing and residential satisfaction, issues of mobility, access to public transportation, and access to such services as shopping, schools, banks, medical centers, health care facilities, and recreational facilities are often found to be important predictors of satisfaction with the neighborhood (Fernandez et al., 2003; Danquah & Afram, 2014; Borgoni et al., 2018; Abidin et al., 2019; Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022).

However, like for sense of safety and security, satisfaction with access to services and mobility is more particularly emphasized in the GC residential satisfaction literature. For example, the study of Berkoz (2008) found that accessibility to different areas and services, such as accessibility to parking spaces, recreation areas, and accessibility to walking areas are of the most important variables that affect housing satisfaction in GCs. Also, approachability for better services and amenities is found to be one of the major factors behind residents' preference to live in GCs (Elhadary & Ali, 2017; Salah & Ayad, 2018).

In addition, the ease of access to various services and facilities, such as education and health-care utilities, leisure and entertainment facilities, along with the ease of access to public transportation, were very important indicators of residential satisfaction in GCs (Muiga & Rukwaro, 2016). The level of accessibility, transportation options, commuting time, the degree of vehicle dependency, the quality of public transportation, and the ease of access to work or school affect the choice of GCs as desired places to live and reside (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Landman, 2004; Berkoz, 2008; Jacob & Chander, 2020).

## **Results**

The analytical literature review conducted in the study resulted in developing a model of residential satisfaction that is adapted for the particular case of GCs (see Figure 5). Five main components of residential satisfaction were highlighted in the model. Three components were derived from the general residential satisfaction literature: (1) satisfaction with the dwelling unit, (2) satisfaction with the neighborhood, and (3) satisfaction with social life and the social environment. Then two other components were added and were derived from the GC literature: (4) sense of safety and security, and (5) satisfaction with access to services and mobility. The conceptual model proposed in the current study also emphasized many aspects that furthermore contribute to predicting the level of residential satisfaction for each of the five components.

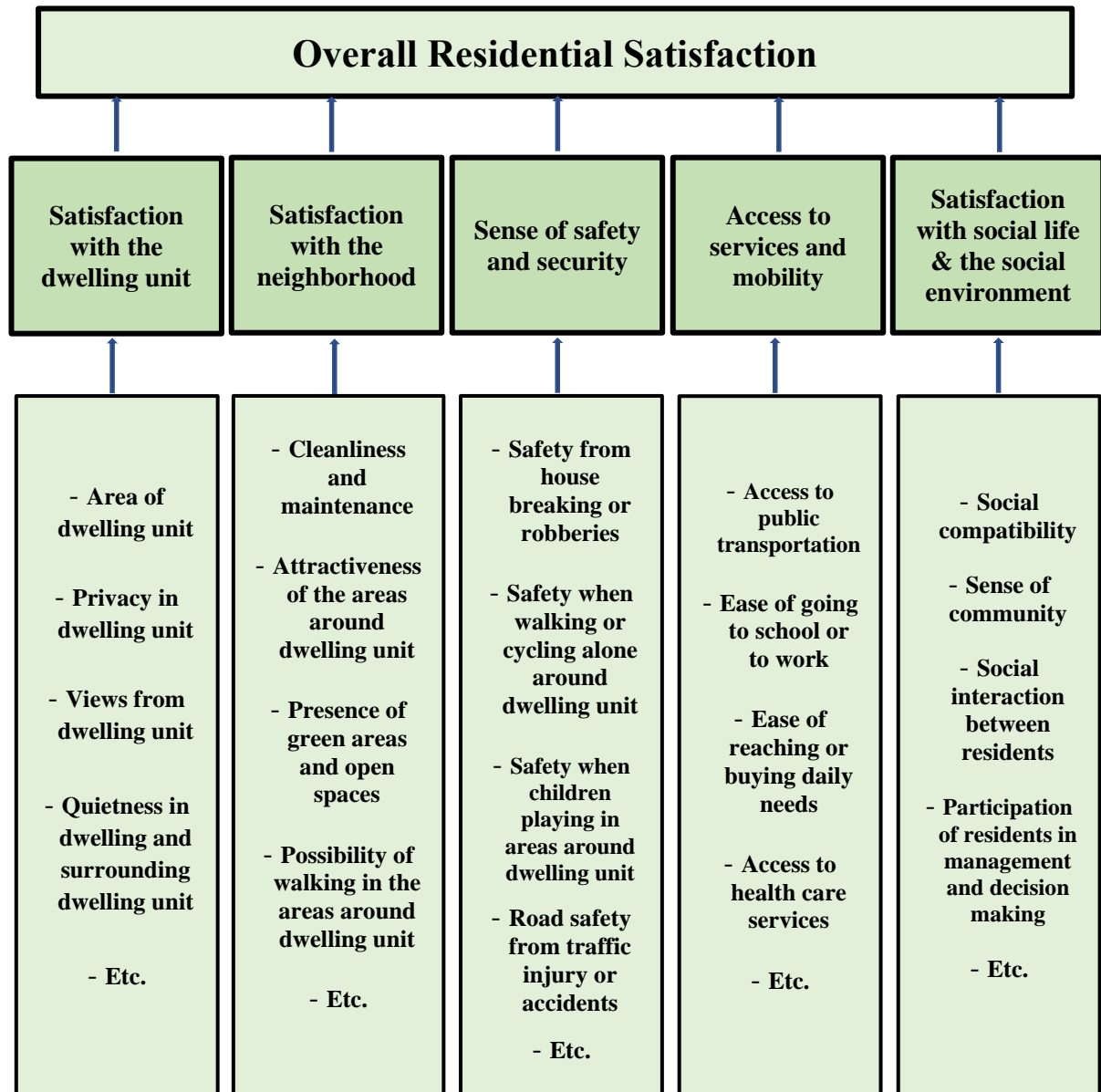


Figure 5 Conceptual model of residential satisfaction in GCs

As also shown in the proposed model, satisfaction of the dwelling unit is affected by satisfaction with such aspects as area of the dwelling unit, privacy in dwelling unit, views from the dwelling unit, quietness in and around the dwelling unit, etc. Satisfaction with the neighborhood is affected by satisfaction with such aspects as cleanliness and maintenance of the areas around dwelling unit, attractiveness of the areas around dwelling unit, presence of green areas provided in the areas around dwelling unit, possibility to walk around dwelling unit, etc.

Sense of safety and security is affected by satisfaction with such aspects as safety from house breaking or robberies, safety when walking or cycling alone around dwelling unit, safety of children playing around, road safety from traffic injury or accidents, etc. Satisfaction with access to services and mobility is affected by satisfaction with such aspects as access to public transportation, taxis or private caps, ease of going to work or school, ease of reaching or buying daily needs, access to medical and health care facilities, etc. Satisfaction with the social

life and the social environment is affected by satisfaction with such aspects as social compatibility among residents, sense of community, social interaction among residents, residents' participation in decision making and management, etc.

### Conclusions

The housing literature emphasizes the importance of measuring and evaluating residential satisfaction, as it significantly involves several dimensions and aspects. This is also found to be true in relation to gated residential developments. The residential satisfaction conceptual model illustrated in this study can help in the process of measuring and investigating residential satisfaction. It also suggests some guidelines for the planning and designing of future GC developments to further consider the demands and priorities of their residents. From a theoretical perspective, the literature confirms the usefulness of emphasizing both "sense of safety and security" and "satisfaction with access to services and mobility" in the model developed for the study as components of overall residential satisfaction in GCs distinct from "satisfaction with the neighborhood". This future suggests the importance of adapting models of residential satisfaction to better fit the particular type of housing environment in which residential satisfaction is to be investigated.

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### Declaration of Interest

The author declares that she has no competing interests.

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