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The Safety Level of Gated and Guarded Community Scheme in Malaysia

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Abstract

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The gated and guarded community is a popular new modern housing concept in Malaysia. Although security has always been one of the most appealing features of gated and guarded communities, several studies showed that there is no significant difference of crime rates in between gated and guarded communities and non-gated neighborhoods. How safe are gated communities? How effective are the security measures of gated and guarded communities in preventing crime? This research aims to find out the understanding level of gated and guarded community scheme among property purchasers and to identify the safety level of the gated and guarded community scheme with the provided security measures. Thus, interview sessions were conducted with the developer companies and questionnaires were distributed to the residents in selected gated and guarded communities in order to achieve the objectives. This research discovered that gated and guarded community scheme in Malaysia is not effective enough in providing a safer living environment where crimes cases still occur. The condition of safety and security of gated and guarded communities as security was regarded as one of the most significant factors for staying in a gated and guarded community. Diverse effort and sophisticated security instruments must be added to improve the safety level of gated and guarded community scheme.

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Keywords: Gated and Guarded Communities; Planning Guidelines; Safety Level; Security Measures; Safety Components .



1. Introduction

Gated and guarded properties contribute to the spatial transformation in a very significant way. It shows a great influence contribute to social integration and urban development at the local level. It is revealed that the gated properties development in United States are able to increase the resident's perception of affluent, sense of wealthy and more security as they are being protected behind the wall and surrounded by the fence (Grant,2004). In Sydney, Australia, it was revealed that the gated properties neighborhood concept had helped them to minimize uncertainty and provide self and family protection against crime (Quintal, 2006). Nowadays, the development of gated and guarded communities (GGC) in Malaysia has shown a great growth of residential property industry. It is a new housing concept in our country. Formerly, the gated and guarded property projects only confined to luxurious condominiums and apartments, but have now spilled over to the landed properties as well (Tan, 2011). In Malaysia development context, GGC are known as a cluster houses surrounded by walls or fences with controlled access. In order to ensure the security of resident, few security facilities are provided such as security guards, central base monitoring system, 24-hour patrol services, and closed circuit televisions (CCTV) cameras. Some of gated communities in Malaysia provide extra facilities not just a security, for example The Mines, Tropicana and Kajang Country Height residential areas are designed with up-market facilities such as recreational areas, golf courses and club house.

In recent year, gated and guarded community scheme (GACOS) in Malaysia has become a new development trend due to consequence of socioeconomic changes in the modernization period. GACOS in Malaysia is more focus on a more secure and safer community in order to promote reducing the fear of crime among residents for harmony atmosphere and peaceful living. However, there are many arguments of poor management of GGC especially in the context of safe and security. Research done by Osman (2011) shows that criminal activities happened in this area is caused by involvement of guard and security personnel itself. According to Daily Express (2015), in a year there are three housebreaking cases in the gated and guarded at Likas Bay which led to total loses of RM85,000. Most of GACOS require high security services, maintenance and operation cost but the efficiency and effectiveness of promised services is another important issues. The perception that gated will reduce crime is not totally eliminate crime. Therefore, the safety level of GGC is important to study and carry out further research.

2. Gated and Guarded Communities Development in Malaysia

The development of GGC in Malaysia has begun more than two decades ago in the early 1990s (Said & Martin, 2013). This type of housing concept has increasingly become a trend in the up-market niche in private housing development. The tremendous growing in demand due to the improvement of security and lifestyle changes in residential area. It is a great attraction especially for people who buy property in urban areas. GGC in Malaysia are focused in creating a safe community with secured and guarded surrounding. The first gated and guarded in Malaysia was developed by EMko Properties Sdn, Bhd, located in Wang Baiduri in SS 12 Subang Jaya, Selangor. There are no statistics to show the actual number of gated community housing in Malaysia has remarkable, especially in the large cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Penang that command premium property prices (Tahir &

Hussin, 2011). Table 1 summarized the main characteristics of gated and guarded communities housing scheme which consist the important element in GGC.

Table 1. Characteristics of Gated Communities

Characteristics	Descriptions
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guard services, Intercom System ✓ Security control at the main entrance ✓ Installation of safety and security system
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Controlled by physical barrier
Facilities and Ammenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Common facilities such as recreational park, swimming pool, Spa, gymnasium and golf course
Privatized community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maintenance fee will be charged to residents for the facilities and services provided

‘Gated Community and Guarded Neighbourhood’ is a planning guideline drafted by Town and Country Planning Department for gated communities. The specific guidelines for the development of gated communities consists of 14 elements of physical planning control standards such as; 1. Size of development area; 2. Site planning; 3. Development location; 4. Road system and hierarchy; 5. Entry and exit assess; 6. House design and building setbacks; 7. Building fence /masonry wall; 8. Guard house; 9. Landscape and tree planting; 10. Building height; 11. Preparation of car and motorcycle parking space; 12. Special utility passage; 13. Location and public facilities; 14. Name of gated community area/neighborhood. Based on observation that has been carried out in Klang Valley, most of the gated and guarded housing schemes comply with guidelines provided by Federal Town and Country Planning Department Peninsular Malaysia (FTCPD). There are several common issues related to gated communities, which are;

i) Trans-boundary effect gated property to crime rates

As highlighted by Town and Country Planning Department, 2007, crime was identified as one of the major factors adversely affecting the sense of well-being and safety of residents. The lack of attention given in design the physical development can provide opportunity of various crimes. Thus, it can be conclude that the concept of gated communities can reduce the number of crime from happening in residential areas. However, crime has been transfered to other neighborhoods. According to Grant (2006), gated communities provides a high standard security within their own areas , nevertheless, it promote insecurity to others.

ii) Social and Economic Segregation

Social segregation is identified as one of the most common implications of gated and guarded community. It has been argued to cause less communication and interaction among the residents. In Malaysia, the idea of gated community is that restriction of access and it creates segregation among people. In fact the gated communities are usually resided by people with higher income. Social and economic segregation leads to inequality and exclusion which is common in urban area (Grant, 2003).

3. Research Methodology

The data collection used as a method in this study are resulting from formulated research questions and research objective. Based on these objectives, combination of quantitation method and qualitative method are the most suitable approaches to complete this study. Primary data is obtained directly from the field study which is 10 gated and guarded communities in Melaka through questionnaire distribution and interview session. 150 set of questionnaire were distributed to the gated communities' resident in order to gain the information related to their perception towards satisfaction on safety level. Interview sessions were conducted with the selected developer companies which correspond to the 10 selected GGC to investigate the security measure provided within this area.

Secondary data which are information related to the perception on GGC and security aspects gathered from journals, articles and local authority's guideline. Content analysis was carried out on these materials.

4. The Finding on Safety and Security in Gated and Guarded Community Scheme

Security is the main reason of residents resides in choosing gated communities (Mak, 2004). The increasing of crime rate has increased fear among urban dwellers. They are looking for a better place that offers a security for the property and life. Based on planning compliance for gated community towards safety and security, people are hunting for this concept of living and willing to pay at the highest price offer in the market. There are various common safety features in gated properties which are; safety and security system, guard services, security control and intercom systems at the main entrance.

From the interview outcomes, it is clearly proven that the development of gated communities in Malaysia is increasing and the developers are also quick to catch and absorb the latest trend of lifestyle. Security has been the key factor that encourages the communities to reside in gated property. The increasing number of crime in Klang Valley area and the security element is said to be amongst their decision making to invest in gated communities. Communities are more concern about their safety and the need to protect family from any harm and threats become the first priority. Thus, gated communities are the logical choice for them.

From the interview outcomes, it was mentioned that the developers have provided several security control methods for their gated communities' residential area. The residential area is fenced up with only one entrance, guarded 24-hour daily by the professional security guards. Besides that, the entrance is installed with Close Circuit Television (CCTV) and Intercom System is provided. The developers have outsourced the security tasks to the security company. It engaged a team of professional security guards, who are in-charge for guarding the entrance and patrolling the neighborhood every few hours. The advantage by installing alarm system and SMART Home system is to give more added values to the scheme and more attraction to buyers. They also recruited a team of professional security guards and mostly a Nepalese former police with experiences. The CCTV is normally installed at the ground floor or main entrance or main parking and it can be monitored by the owner through the screen installed in their house. Developers will pay the entire security maintenance fee for the first two years and clearly stated in the policy provided.

For the residents that reside in the gated and guarded communities, they are given an electronic access card and car sticker. The residents need to scan their card at the entrance for their entry and exit from the housing areas. In the other hand, for the non-residents or visitors they are required to register themselves at the security guard house by leaving their identification documents such as driving license. The security guards are responsible to record the basic information of the visitor in the daily logbook. At the same time they have to get the permission the owner before allowed the visitor to get into the residential area. The communication will be done by using Intercom System. Some of other area, the security guard will accompany the visitor. Visitor will provided with a Visitor Pass and required to display it.

For the rubbish collectors and other services company such as Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), TM or Syarikat Bekalan Air, they are allowed to get into residential area with the permission of the security guard and the owner. Normally this services company will allocate the same worker for each gated communities. They will enter to this residential area every month to have the electricity and water usage recorded. The security guards will monitor the situation promptly in order to ensure it is work smoothly.

In the conclusion, security is uppermost on people's minds nowadays and they are allocated more into housing investment to ensure their home in the safe hand. Security control methods such as security guard house, CCTV System, Intercom System and patrolling are provided. The security control methods aim to reduce the residents' fear of crime by designing safer buildings and residential areas. It aims to protect the residents from harms and fear of crime. Survey conducted using questionnaire distribution to few gated and guarded housing communities in Klang Valley shows that the reason contribute to their buying decision on gated and guarded housing were illustrated in Figure 1.

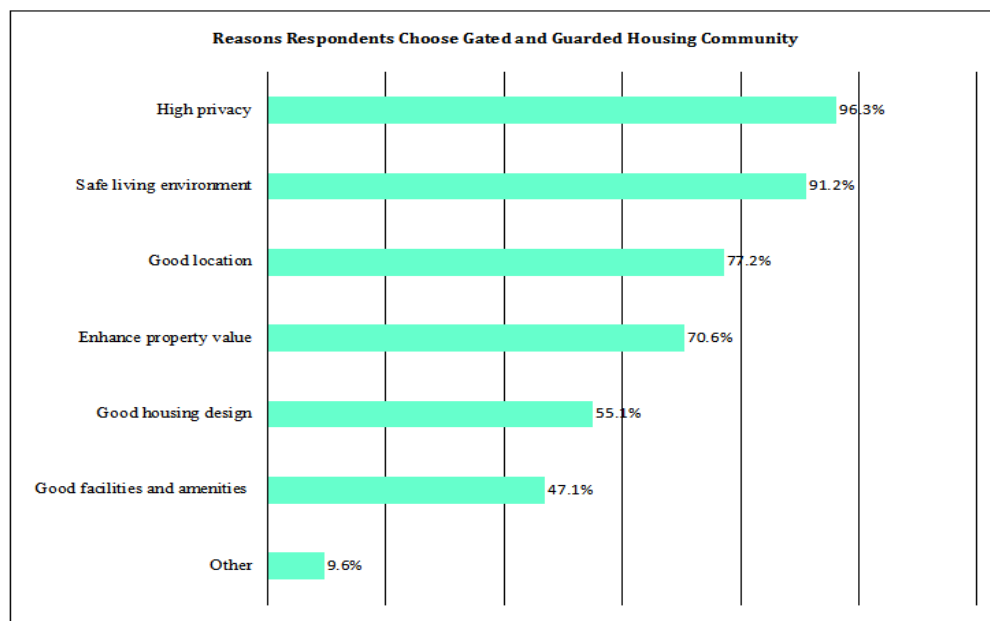


Figure 1. Reason respondents choose gated and guarded housing community

Figure 1. shows that high privacy was the most important reason influence their decision to stay in gated communities. This finding support the idea of Wang and Lau (2013) who claimed that structure of gated properties has reflected the level of privacy and security which will attract people who insist to live in privacy. Security and safety also a main reason contribute to people's decision. This shows that residents are more concern towards safety. This finding is similar to a study conducted by Mohit and Abdullah (2011) who found that safety and security also the main important reason. Others reason that influence resident's decisions are good location, enhance property value, good housing design and good facilities and amenities.

5. Respondent's Perception and Satisfaction on Safety Level of the Gated and Guarded Housing Scheme

Respondents' satisfaction and perception on safety level of the gated and guarded are gathered from questionnaire distribution to the residents. This survey was conducted to address an overarching question whether this scheme is a safe living place for their safety needs. As shown in Table 4.1, the mean score of all items was in range of 3.44 to 4.28. Respondent's perception towards safety in their living scheme was analyzed. From the result shown that resident feel very safe when they walk alone within gated and guarded area during the day time and also feel comfortable at night. The mean index achieved for residents' walk alone during day time was 4.07 which is feel safe and only score 3.44 for work alone at night. The mean result shows that they are felt neutral. In addition residents feel safer when stay alone at home during the day time even at night.

Table 2. Respondent's Perception towards Safety Level

NO.	Items	Likert Scale					Mean	Level
		1	2	3	4	5		
C1.	Perception of safety when walk alone within this gated and guarded community during day time.	0	0	29	69	38	4.07	Safe
		-	-	21.3%	50.7%	27.9%		
C2.	Perception of safety when stay alone at home during day time	0	0	23	52	61	4.28	Safe
		-	-	16.9%	38.2%	44.9%		
C3.	Perception of safety when walk alone within this gated and guarded community during night time	0	17	48	65	6	3.44	Neutral
		-	12.5%	35.3%	47.8%	4.4%		
C4.	Perception of safety when stay alone at home during night time	0	9	23	86	18	3.83	Safe
		-	6.6%	16.9%	63.2%	13.2%		
Mean Index							3.91	Safe

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, this study had clearly interpreted all the data and information regarding safety aspects of GGC scheme. Literally, gated and guarded community is a residential area with restriction access. The increasing of crime rate and the privacy factor becomes the main catalyst of the gated communities' development. Thus it is designed to consider safety and security as a main objective by providing all safety elements. Based on my study, overall, data shown that crime rate in this gated and guarded area just a small percent compared to non-gated area which increase from year to year. Hence, diverse effort and complex security instruments must be added and implemented in order to introduce a crime free housing scheme.

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