



Analyzing Preferences of Households Choosing to Live in Gated Communities

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Abstract

Gated communities are new housing development concepts that currently can be found in most area of Bandung metropolitan city today. They often developed on a relatively small plot of land, with the project's size smaller than two hectares, and developed with a small number of housing units. This study attempts to examine households' preferences in the urban and suburban areas of Bandung. Two different gated community developments with different geographical conditions are surveyed for this study using qualitative research exploration method. The findings from the research indicate different preferences between housing dwellers in the urban and suburban area.

Keywords: housing preferences; housing choice; gated communities; Bandung Metropolitan Area

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1.0 Introduction

Residential developments with gated, limited access and boundaries surrounding the area are often called gated communities, and it has become a global phenomenon occurring in many countries. They happen due to issues of security, safety, and the poor quality of the urban area environments. There are many physical and social problems due to this setting, which will lead to fragmentation and segmentation (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

Gated communities in Indonesia started to develop when *Kebayoran Baru* (then known as *Pondok Indah*) was established as a residential area with township scale in 1974. Several new residential developments in the area, such as *Bumi Serpong Damai* and *Lippo Karawaci*, are continuing the development by late 1980s (Winarso, 2005). The cause of development of gated communities is the income gap that lead to increased demands of security (Leisch, 2002). These developments also started to expand to other cities in Indonesia, including Bandung. In 2005, the construction of *Purbaleunyi* toll road was opened, and Bandung has been growing rapidly since then.

Currently, gated communities concepts become the main concept of housing development that mostly can be found in Bandung metropolitan area. There are several characteristics differentiating them with the other housing development concepts:

1. The plot of land is a relatively small and sized less than two hectares.
2. Small number of housing units in the development.
3. Limited facilities and development size.
4. Mostly developed to support small nuclear families.

Sixty percent of the total populations in Indonesia are middle-class households, which has been associated with the rise of gated communities' development. Therefore, questions are arising: Why specific residential developments with gated community characteristics are trending in Bandung? Moreover, why households choose to live in a gated community with those specific characteristics?

Researchers have made studies of housing choice and preferences in various areas of Indonesia. Most of them are focusing on locational housing choice (Shinta, 2001; Harmanto, 2003; Ehwan, 2004, and Febby, 2010). Moreover, there are several studies comparing housing preferences, based on socioeconomic conditions of the households (Shinta, 2001 and Nurhadi, 2004). Researchers also have made studies based on the economic approach (Kusumawardhani, 2004; Handayani, 2009; Tambunan, 2009; Rahadi, 2012; Rahadi, 2013). The number of studies concerning gated communities in Indonesia is still considered rare. Most of the researches examine the origin of gated communities and the cause of why it happened in a particular area. Others discussed the main reason dwellers moved to gated communities (Leisch, 2004; Handoko, 2011; Kerr, 2008; Sueca, 2012). The closest study on this topic is conducted by Plaut (2011) in the United States. The study focuses on household housing choice and characteristics between dwellers living in gated and non-gated communities. With the previous studies mainly focusing on sociological issues, none of them has discussed the housing preferences, choice and gated communities in Indonesia.

This study attempts to explore the household's preferences when they choose to live in gated communities with specific characteristics. One of the factors that differentiate each of gated communities is location (Grant and Mittelsteadt, 2004) and the factor influencing

locational choice of the household is topographic condition of the area (Ahmadi, 2005). Therefore, this study trying to produce characteristics unique to the locations by comparing households' preferences based on geographical conditions: urban and suburban areas of Bandung. The research focuses on actual behavior of the households or revealed preferences.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Gated Communities Background in Bandung Metropolitan Area

Residential cluster and cul-de-sac are terms given for gated community in Indonesia, whereas Kerr (2008) called gated community as *kompleks perumahan*. These gated communities occurred because of increasing number of middle-class society, cultural diversity and increased crime rate. (Leisch, 2002)

Bandung has grown rapidly in recent years thanks to the introduction of Purbaleunyi toll road in 2005, which connects the area with the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta. The easy access increased the migration rate, leading to increasing housing needs.



Figure 1: (a) Entrance area of gated communities; (b) Neighborhood area of gated communities
(Source: Author's documentation)

New housing developments in Bandung mainly built in the suburban area, in areas such as *Kota Baru Parahyangan*, because of the high cost and scarcity of land available in central Bandung. Focusing in the northern area of Bandung are the expensive new housing developments solely dedicated for upper-class households. Consequently, the new housing developments for middle-class households mostly develop as gated communities with characteristic mentioned in the previous chapter.

The development of these residential projects occurs with self-sustainable construction method to reduce development cost, due to the small investment capital that the property developers have (Aris, 2003). Most of the developments are scattered and unregulated. This pattern occurs due to the developers inability to acquire a large parcel of land; lack of control and regulation from the government; and bullish property market condition (Rudiawan, 2008).

2.2 The Factors Affecting Housing Choice

Housing choice is the actual behavior of household or individual and sometimes can not be separated from preferences concept refers to the relative attractiveness to an object (Jansen et al., 2011). According to Berry and Horton (1978) in Ahmadi (2005), there are two factors affecting housing choice in the household level: the external factors (pull factors) and the internal factors (push factors).

Synthesis of studies made by Nurhadi (2004); Kusumawardhani (2004); Ahmadi (2005); Montgomery and Curtis (2006); Pratikto (2008) and Plaut (2011) uncover internal and external factors for household and individual characteristics.

The internal factors consisted of:

1. Socio-demographic: age, sex, marital status, household type, household size, length of occupancy, ethnicity, education level, religion, travel behavior, family/social contacts.
2. Economic: salary, household employment structure, household income from all sources, household expenses, indicator of household wealth, lifestyle.

The external factors consisted of:

1. Location: topographic condition; proximity to shopping facilities, apartment buildings, green areas, commercial services, toll way, working place.
2. Neighborhood: safety and security, physical and social quality/character, healthy environment, quiet, privacy.
3. Dwelling: the value of the unit, housing tenure, type of building, physical features of the unit, the level of property taxes, dwelling condition and form, method of payment.

3.0 Methodology

This paper will explore the first phase of the whole ongoing thesis research: qualitative study phase. The study itself primarily will be conducted via sequential mixed methods. For simpler data gathering process and time consideration, the data is collected using snowball sampling and a semi-structured interview. The interview questions are mainly asking about the main factors affecting the respondents, when choosing to live in gated communities. Direct observations are also being conducted in the researched area to gather factual information. Data collection results are then analyzed using content analysis.

Table 1: Socio-demographic and Economic Data of Respondents

No.	Socio-Demographic and Economic Attributes	Urban	Suburban
1	Respondents (n)	11	11
2	Average age (years old)	37,7	45,8
3	Education level: university graduate (%)	45,50%	54,40%
4	Average number of children (n)	1,73	2
5	Length of occupancy	6-8 years (54%)	<5 years (72.7%)
6	Average length of occupancy (years)	4,3	3,6

(Source: Author's analysis result)

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic and economic data of respondents in both areas. Respondents from both areas are working either as: private employee, government employee, entrepreneur, or housewife. Respondent's ethnicity is mostly Sundanese (72.2%).

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Household Preferences Choosing to Live in Gated Communities in Both Locations

There are three variables affecting respondents' housing choice in the both areas: location, neighborhood, and dwelling. This study result is in line with findings made by Jansen et al. (2011) and Berry and Horton (1978) in Ahmadi (2005). The most notable attributes based on the variables are:

1. The location variable: the proximity to neighborhood services
2. The neighborhood variable: livability
3. The dwelling variable: the house price

We can categorize the variables into two groups: physical and non-physical characteristics. Based on the results, non-physical characteristics play more important part for households when choosing to live in gated communities, compared with the physical characteristics.

The most notable attributes affecting housing choice in both areas as seen in figure 2 are **livability, neighborhood services, security, scenic/ environmentally attractive area, and price/ affordability**. Respondents living in the both areas often mention **livability** as their main reason to live in the area. Substitute words used by the respondents for livability include the word comfortable and tranquil environment. This finding is consistent with the study made by Kerr in 2008 which states that dwellers choose to live in gated communities because of the tranquil setting. It is the comfortable environment (clean, neat, and tidy) that will create better ambiance and safer feeling (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005 in Kerr, 2008).

The second attribute that the respondents often indicates as the main reason for living in gated communities is the **neighborhood services**. It related closely with accessibilities to various facilities, such as stated by Bourne in 1978.

The third indicator is **security**. Sakip et al. (2013) stated that in either gated or non-gated communities, there are fear of crimes. The result is consistent with the findings made by Kerr (2008), Leisch (2002) and Sakip et al. (2012). Surprisingly, the fact is quite different. Most of the respondents do feel insecure due to criminal activity that occurred in the gated community. Moreover, after the gated communities are finished being developed, crime often occurred in the surrounding area (the non-gated area). Based on that finding, we can agree that problems of crimes can not be solved by forming gated community developments. This action only transfers the criminal activities to the surrounding non-gated neighborhood.

The **scenic/ environmentally attractive area** is the next notable attribute affecting respondents' housing choice. This attribute is associated with the environment natural conditions such as view, temperature, and air quality. Lastly, the most notable attribute is **the house price**. It related with household's affordability. This finding is in line with Priemus

(1994) in Jansen et al. (2011) which stated that one of the main factors limiting housing choice is the budget of the household.

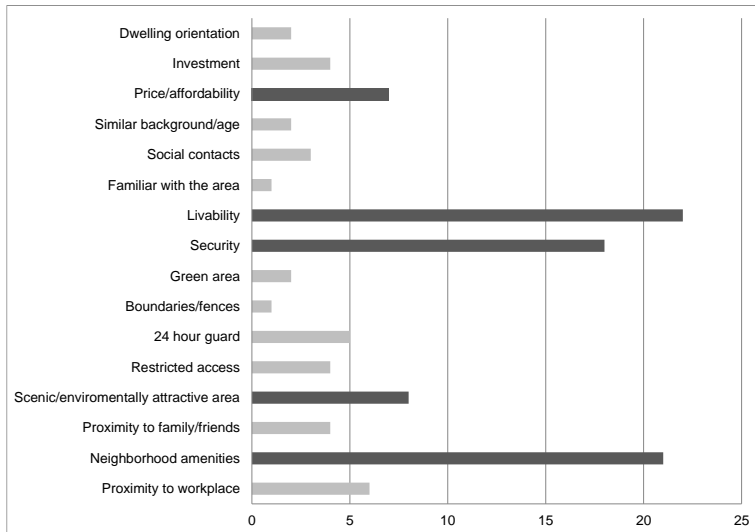


Figure 2: Histogram shows frequency of attributes affecting respondents' housing choice in both areas

(Source: Author's analysis result)

4.2 Household Preferences Choosing to Live in Gated Communities: in the Urban and the Suburban Area

According to interview results, respondents' housing choice in the urban area differs from their counterpart in the suburban area. The attributes affecting respondents' housing choice in term of their priority are listed below:

1. The urban area: neighborhood services, security, and livability.
2. The suburban area: livability, security, and environmental attractiveness/ scenic.

It shows that respondents in both areas mention two similar attributes: **livability** and **security**. These results are consistent with earlier studies made by Leisch (2002) and Kerr (2008). Since there are plenty of urban problems in cities around Indonesia, most households choose to live in gated communities to have good quality environments and good securities for their family.

There is an inconsiderable different result between respondents in both areas. In the urban area, respondents argue that their house are within easy reach of public transportation and more accessible. In the suburban area, the respondents argue that the most prominent factor for their housing choice is livability. This result associated with geographical conditions of the

suburban area that are green and less dense. It also suggests trade-off between neighborhood quality and proximity to the inner-city.

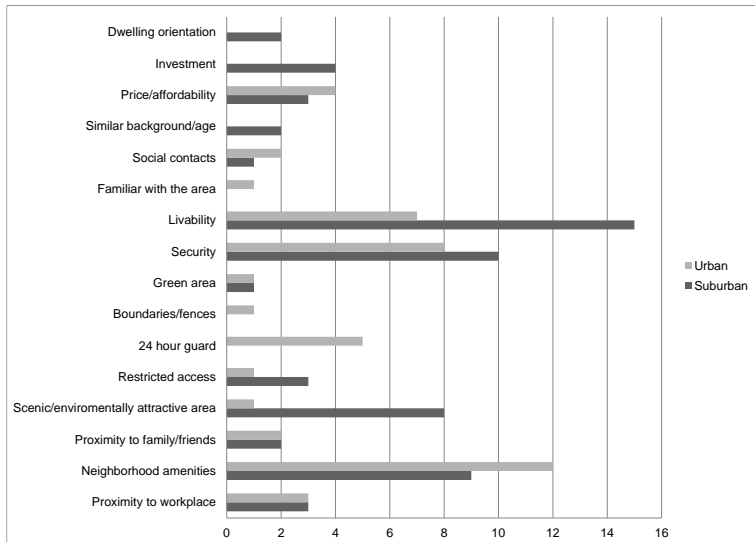


Figure 2: Histogram shows frequency of attributes affecting respondents' housing choice in the urban and suburban area
(Source: Author's analysis result)

5.0 Conclusion

According to the analysis results, there are two factors affecting households' housing choice. First, internal factors which are associated with households' needs, hopes, and aspirations regarding housing. They consisted of individual and household characteristics. Second, external factors that are associated with features of location and environment in the gated community (physical and non-physical). Table 2 shows the variables and attributes affecting households' housing choice.

The results show that there are differences between housing choice of households in the both areas. The most notable attribute for respondents in the urban area is access to neighborhood services, and for respondents in the suburban area is livability. Also, there are two important variables indicated by the respondents in both locations, although with different level of importance: security and livability or quiet and comfortable environments. Dwellers choose to live in the gated communities because of their avoidance to the poor condition of the environment in the city. Dwellers hope to enhance their quality of life by living in the gated communities. Nonetheless, in suburban areas, the respondents stated about dwelling as means of investment, similar age and/or background, and the dwelling orientation, whereas

in the urban area, the respondents never mentioned it. The finding shows the respondents choosing to live in the suburban area for their economic and social status and also property investment.

Table 2: Variables and attributes affecting households' housing

No	Internal Factors			External Factors			
	Socio-Demographic	Economic	Neighborhood Characteristics			Dwelling Characteristics	
			Physical		Non-Physical	Physical	Non-Physical
			Inside	Outside			
1	Gender	Employment	Physical characteristics of Gated Communities	Proximity to neighborhood services	Security	Architecture style	Housing price
2	Age	Household income	Green areas	Proximity to working place	Livability	Type of housing	House as investment
3	Marital status			Proximity to family or friends	Social contact	Strong and safe structure	Tenure
4	Household size			Scenic or environmentally attractive area	Propriety of user status	The quality of material specification	Methods of payment
5	Education level				Familiarity with the area	Dwelling orientation	How to get the house
6	Religion						

(Source: Author's analysis result)

As we only just conducted the first phase of sequential mixed methods research, the findings in this study will be useful for the second phase of the thesis research: quantitative analysis. With scarce studies on gated communities in Bandung and Indonesia, continuation of this study is important and urgently needed, as the developments of gated communities in Bandung are growing uncontrollably and causing spatial problems to the city. Finally, this study can also be replicated in major cities around South East Asia, to uncover different household preferences based on their geographical conditions.

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