

A STUDY ON SAFETY FEATURES IN THE GATED AND GUARDED COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

A gated and guarded community is generally focused on the need for a safer community with secured and guarded surroundings. Gated communities are residential areas developed within restricted areas. Nowadays, this type of housing becomes the important criteria among the public before they make decision to purchase a house. Usually, a gated and guarded community is a form of housing area with strictly-controlled entrances and often characterized by a close perimeter of wall or fences. It is revealed that gated communities are purposely to prevent crime, increased sense of security and provide self and family protection against unwanted intrusion. However, this type of residential area is still experienced crime although it has been strictly controlled by its security features. Hence, the purpose of the research is to study on the impact of gated and guarded community to the residents for the safety features and the relationship among them. This study attempts to obtain the feedback from the residents at the gated and guarded community on the safety features at their residential area. Sets of questionnaire-based responses were obtained for the final analysis. The finding shows that the gated and guarded community has taken care of the safety features but at the same time there are some other issues occurred. It is also found that the respondents viewed that instead of good security system, they also having some other recommendation.

Keywords: *Gated and guarded community, safety, residential area*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of gated and guarded communities in this world has started long time ago but particularly started in Malaysia in year 2007. Safety has become the main awareness among the public to live in this modern era. According to Siti Rashidah, Aldrin and Mohd Najib (2013) respondents who occupy individual gated residential areas demonstrate a higher fear of crime when compared to their counterparts who live in non-gated residential areas. The main reason they choose to live in gated and guarded community is because of the security provided by the housing scheme.

It has become the main focus for the developer to build gated and guarded community due to good response and demand among public. Planning for the development of a country has become the priority and plays an important role to ensure that all citizens can enjoy and gain some benefits of it. It is currently practice in our country, whereby there are various housing concept put forward the security as main element in ensuring the comfort of people and at the same time giving satisfaction to all parties.

Malaysia is conducting various restructuring efforts in global terrorism, crime affecting the democratic process and problem involving public order (Zurinah & Khadijah, 2011). This is due to several things including fear, anxiety and insecurity always felt in the minds of the people, especially those living at the urban area. It has been like a new trend for the developers and also owner because of the high demands in property market. After year 2007, the local government has set up the rule for the developers to register their proposed housing development as gated and guarded community before they can build up with the security concept.

1.0 GATED AND GUARDED COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA

Gated communities generally refer to housing developments where access to the neighborhoods is restricted to the other residents. In Malaysia, according to Stanley Gabriel (2007) and Azimudin (2005) the gated community refers to a cluster of houses or buildings that are surrounded by walls or fences or a perimeter with entry or access to houses or buildings controlled by certain measures or restrictions such as guards, ropes, strings, boom gates, chains or blocks which normally includes 24-hour security, guard patrols, central monitoring systems and closed circuit televisions (CCTVs). The definitions of gated communities, locally and internationally, are usually related to the physical security features available in gated communities, particularly the perimeter fencing which surrounds the area. According to Asnida (2009), gated communities are also associated with other related features such as private recreational facilities and private maintenance of amenities for the residents.

The local definition of gated communities was discussed by Azimuddin Bahari (2005), where gated communities were described as “cluster of houses or buildings that are surrounded by a wall, fence or a perimeter or any enclosure with entry or access of houses or buildings controlled by certain measures or restrictions such as guards, ropes, strings, boom gates, chains or blocks which normally include 24-hour security, guard patrols, central monitoring systems and closed circuit televisions (CCTV).

This description corresponds to one of the earliest definitions of gated communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997), where gated communities were defined as the residential areas with restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatized. Usually gated and guarded community are guarded by hired guard, wall surrounded the housing area and well equipped with CCTV in order to prevent crime happened in the area.

2.1 Gated and Guarded Community and the law related

The legal status of gated communities can be examined from two positions: the position before the amendments to the Strata Titles Act 1985 on 12 April 2007 and the position after (Mohammad Tahir Sabit Haji Mohammad, Tan Cheng Ting, and Asiah Othman, 2009). A gated and guarded community scheme also known as GACOS is a cluster of houses that is surrounded by walls or fences with the entry to or exit from these houses in the area controlled by certain measures or restrictions. It is a concept that makes the community a private and self-managed residential area in terms of security and traffic flow generally brought within the Malaysian legal framework for housing accommodations.

Malaysian GACOS refer to a type of residential development where access is restricted and public spaces are privatized (Gobbler, 2002). GACOS could be high-rise or landed properties which may include terraced houses, semi-detached and bungalow houses with or without facilities (Hasmah and Ahmad Ariffian, 1993). Today, there are a lot of types for gated and guarded community has been build such as for landed property and also apartment. Usually, the price also become higher when the housing area is labeled as gated and guarded community.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study aims to examine the impacts of the physical environment on crimes in residential areas, thus exploring the relationship between residential crimes and defensible space as indicated by the CPTED principles. The following objectives have been set for the study:

- i) to identify the impact of gated and guarded community to the resident;
- ii) to investigate the issues related with gated and guarded community;
- iii) to formulate recommendations and suggested solutions based on the findings; and
- iv) to examine the safety level and issues related of the housing area that are not gated and guarded community.

Research method included structured questionnaires which distributed around residential houses in Melaka.

The survey has been done by distributing the questionnaires at 3 different housing estates as follow:

- i) Distributed 50 questionnaires at Cheng Height Apartment (Gated and guarded community-apartment) Cheng Height Apartment, Melaka.
- ii) Distributed 50 questionnaires at (Gated and guarded community-landed property) Taman Paya Emas, Melaka
- iii) Distributed 50 questionnaires at Taman Bertam Jaya, Melaka (Not Gated and Guarded community)

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gated and guarded community (Cheng Height Apartment, Melaka)

A majority of the respondents were aged between 21 and 30 years old represent 40 percent. This is followed by 41-50 years old who comprised 30 percent, 31-40 years old represent 20 percent and 51-60 years old contribute 10 percent.

The number of female respondents in this study comprised almost two-thirds of the sample. The majority of the respondents are Malays (100%). Differences in occupational fields of the respondents, where the dominance contributors come from civil servants which comprises of 40 respondents (80%), followed by private sector (20%),

The result also indicates the duration of resident of the respondents at the township, with the biggest contributor coming from respondents who lived less than 2 – 5 years comprised 40 respondents (80%), 6-10 years and more than 10 years comprise of 10 percent each respectively. The roles of the respondents are largely come from the ordinary residents of the housing area (80%) and the rest 20 percent from the committee representative of the area.

The finding also shows the result of information analysis on gated and guarded community. For the fees, RM 60-100 is the highest frequencies represent 60 percent, followed by RM 20-30 by 30 percent and the range RM 110-130 at the lowest contributor which is 10 percent. The different fees are based on the different house owned by the respondents. There are 80 percent of the respondents stated that the fees at the reasonable price and the most frequent patrols done at the area daily is 3-4 times represent 40 percent. So the findings show that the respondents satisfied with the fees that they have to pay and accompanied by good frequent control.

Besides that, all of the respondents saying that the gated and guarded communities at the area are based on community agreement and local authorities consent. This is because the housing estate has been built by getting the approval from the local authorities related in getting the approval to implement gated and guarded and being sold to the communities with the same condition.

There are 80 percent of the respondents are agree on good security system at their housing area and 90 percent agree on the system has increased the security upon the community of the area. Generally all of the respondents agree on the system has reducing the crime at the area and 80 percent agree that the system has control the outsider entrance. The result of the findings shows the positive impact enjoyed by the residents by the gated and guarded at the housing area.

As referred to table 4.1.1 below, there are 90 percent of the respondents agree both that the system provide security guarantee when the respondents are not at their homes and also they having good associations committee. But there are some issues raised by the system whereby 30 percent of the respondents say that there is lack of good interaction among the residents of the area due to the system and 40 percent disagree that they having good neighbourhoods spirit among the residents. These issues are common in the urban area whereby some of the residents are lacking in having good relationship with the communities and regard that it is not important for them.

Table 4.1.1: Analysis on the impact of gated and guarded community to the residents

Impact to the residents	Frequency	Percent
Good Security system		
Agree	40	80
Disagree	10	20
Increased security on community		
Agree	45	90
Disagree	5	10
Less crime		
Agree	50	100
Disagree	0	0
Controlling outsider		
Agree	40	80
Disagree	10	20
Security guarantee when not at homes		
Agree	45	90
Disagree	5	10
Good interaction		
Agree	35	70
Disagree	15	30
Good association's committee		
Agree	45	90
Disagree	5	10
Good neighbourhoods spirit		
Agree	30	60
Disagree	20	40

4.1.2 ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

From the study conducted there are some of the raised by from the respondents based on gated and guarded at their housing area of the survey as listed below:

i) Discipline issues among the guard

There are some problems faced the management of gated and guarded at the apartment, whereby the guard hired got some discipline issues and need to be fired to avoid any future problems to the security system of the community.

ii) Lead to some difficulties when there are visits from relatives.

The tight regulation to control the outsider to enter the area has brought some difficulties especially to the residents relatives when they come to the area. In which they need leave their vehicle outside and exposed to the danger of car theft.

iii) Individualistic life

Life in the area of gated and guarded community has led to individualistic life among the residents due to the enjoying the prestige life in the area and being influenced by the urban life that do not like mixing with the communities.

iv) Lack of interactions among the residents with the security officer

The residents just leave the security issues at the hand of security officers solely without having any interaction with them. The situation is dangerous as they will not be aware of any security issues happened at their area.

In order to solve the issues raised, there are some recommendations and suggested solutions listed by the respondents as below:

i) More activities to unite the residents

They suggest that, there should be more activities held by the management and also residents associations to unite the residents and overcome the individualistic life of the residents. Through such activities, it may lead to good relationship among the residents of the area.

ii) The security should well recognize the residents

It is important to the security to well recognize the residents in the area so they can identify any outsider and also reducing crime at the area.

iii) Good cooperation between the security and also the residents

The good relationship between the security and the residents is necessary as to increase the awareness of the residents about the security level at the area. By having good relationship, they can change information about any security issues in the area and together curb the problems.

iv) Need to install CCTV

The residents also identified some area that need to be installed CCTV to ensure the safety of their housing estate.

v) Hiring local people as the security officer

The problematic security officer usually comes from the foreign security officer, so the best solution should be hiring the local people as the security officer. The suggested solution also can improve the relationship and interactions between the security and the residents of the area.

4.2 Gated and guarded community (Taman Paya Emas, Melaka)

Majority of the respondents were aged between 21 and 30 years old represent 80 percent and followed by 41-50 years old who comprised 20 percent. Male respondents in this study become the dominants respondents in the study. The majority of the respondents are Malays (70%), Indian 10 percent and Chinese represent by 20 percent. Dominance contributors for the jobs come from civil servants which comprises of 8 respondents (80%), followed by private sector (20%),

The duration of resident of the respondents at the township, with the biggest contributor coming from respondents who lived between 2 – 5 years comprised of 4 respondents (80%), and another 10 percent of the respondents stay less than 2 years in the area. The roles of the respondents are largely come from the ordinary residents of the housing area (80%) and the rest 20 percent from the committee representative of the area.

Table 4.2.1: Information analysis on gated and guarded community (n=50)

Information on gated and guarded community	Frequency	Percent
Fees		
RM 110-130	30	70
RM 140-170	20	30
Reasonable Fees		
Yes	40	80
No	10	20
Frequent patrols		
3-4 times	20	30
7-8 times	30	70

For the fees, as listed in table 4.2.1 above RM 110-130 is the highest frequencies represent 70 percent, closely followed by RM 140-170 by 30 percent. Based on the fees agree, there are 80 percent of the respondents stated that the fees at the reasonable price and the most frequent patrols done at the area daily is between 7-4 times represent 70 percent. The gated and guarded at the area got full community agreement due to they buy the house at the area based on the security offered by the developer. The security system also getting local authorities consent as the housing estate needs the consent before being built at the first hand.

Hundred percent of the respondents agree that the system be the efficient system, ensuring good security, reducing crimes, successfully controlling the outsider and having good residents associations. All of these impacts show the goodness of having gated and guarded at the housing area which bring a lot of benefits to the residents.

Besides that there are 80 percent of the respondents agree that the system provide security guarantee when the respondents are not at their homes and 60 percent agree on they having good associations committee. But one issue rose by the system whereby 60 percent of the respondents say that there is lack of good neighbourhood's spirit among the residents in the area. As being highlighted before, this is the most common problems faced by the urban communities especially at the elite area such as gated and guarded community.

4.2.1 ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR GATED AND GUARDED COMMUNITY

Issues related with gated and guarded at the Taman PayaEmas, Melaka raised by the residents are as follow:

i) Individualistic

The residents of the area become individualistic due to the prestige life living in the gated and guarded community. They presumed that no need for them to taking care each other as they already having good security system in ensuring the security system of the area.

ii) Too depending on foreign worker in holding the guard post

The same problem faced by the residents at Melaka, their security system also is too depending to the foreign worker in holding the guard post. Thus lead to some difficulties in the relationship and interaction with the communities.

iii) The security guard didn't get the proper training

The guard didn't get proper training before they encounter their duty so it may cause some other problem such as affected the efficiency of the task perform.

iv) Lead to some difficulties when there are visits from relatives

The relatives having problem in dealing with rigid procedure to enter the area as the main requirement of the security system is to controlling the outsider regardless of the resident's relatives.

v) Unfriendly neighbour

Due to individualistic life that being practiced by the residents, they become unfriendly neighbour. They do not care about their surrounding and just focus on their life only.

Based on the issues raised, there are some recommendations and suggested solution listed by the respondents as below:

i) More activities to unite the residents

The residents association is urged to conduct activities to unite residents in the area.

ii) Installing CCTV at the affected area

The most affected area in the housing estate is the part of corner lot houses that located at the ends of the residential area. Usually the places become theft preferences and bring danger to the affected household. It is an essential needs to install CCTV at the area as it may caught any crime action in tape and become the main evidence in the case if happened.

iii) Hiring local people to hold the guard post with proper training provided

It is important to hire local people to become the guard officer as it may increase the interaction between the guard and also the residents. Proper training should be provided to ensure the higher quality in performing the task of the guard especially in ensuring the safety of the area.

iv) A standard procedure for having visits among the relatives of the residents

There should be some standard procedure to have visitors especially from the relatives of the residents so that they wouldn't have facing any difficulties to visit the residents. For an example is by providing special access card for them to make it easy to entry the area during their visits.

v) A meeting between guards with the residents to discuss any issues related

Regular meeting between guards with the residents also important to update any essential issues related with the safety at their residential area. The residents shouldn't hand over all the matter to the security system only and need to encounter the issues so that they can take any necessary precautions action.

4.3 Not Gated and guarded community (Taman Bertam Jaya, Melaka)

The dominance age of the respondents is at the age of 21-30 represent 50 percent. Both male and female are well represented as the respondents that contribute 50 percent each. The majority of the respondents are Malays (70%). Respondents of ethnic Indians are second largest comprising 20 percent.

For this study, the ethnic Chinese is not well represented as comprising only 10 percent. Majority of the respondents are working as the civil servant which carries 80 percent. Sharing the same ratio, those who live less than 2 years – 5 years and more than 10 years represents 30 percent each (90%). The ordinary residents are the largest respondents in the study represent 80 percent.

There are half of the respondents know about the gated and guarded community which represent 50 percent and 60 percent of the respondents didn't hire any security system at their area. The amount of fees for the security for those who hired the system is at the same range of RM 60-100. From the findings, it shows that not all of the residents at not gated and guarded place are having security system at their area due to some difficulties of hiring good security system.

There are 70 percent of the respondents saying that the fee is at reasonable price. The frequent patrols at the area are 3-4 times and 80 percent from the 10 respondents shows their interest with having gated and guarded community in the future for their housing area. It shows that the security is the most important things for today and the communities do not mind paying for their safety.

Half of the respondents agree that the security system in their housing area having good security upon the community of the area which represent 20 percent. Same goes to the respondent's opinion towards the security system reducing the crime at the area represent 20 percent. There are also 30 percent of the respondents agree that the system provide security guarantee when the respondents are not at their homes and 20 percent agree that they having good interaction among the residents of the area.

In spite of the positive impact, there are some issues raised by the security system whereby 30 percent of the respondents say that there is lack of good resident's association's good neighbourhood's spirit among the residents. Furthermore hundred percent of the respondents disagree that the system has successfully control the outsider entrance.

4.3.1 ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Issues raised by the residents of chosen area are as below:

i) The residents associations didn't play their role

The residents association is there, but not plays their role as it should be especially in uniting the resident in the area.

ii) No standard procedure in ensuring the safety of the area & poor security system

Due to not gated and guarded community area, their safety system appointed not that proper if to compare with the area of gated and guarded. So their current security system does not have standard procedure in ensuring the safety of the residents in the area. The existing security system in not gated and guarded is very weak and poor, in delivering their services.

iii) Lack of communication among the residents & lead to individualistic life

Facing the same problem as gated and guarded community, the residents in not gated and guarded community also didn't have good interaction each other's. Their daily life is focusing on their own matter regardless what happened on their surrounding area and lead to individualistic life.

Based on the issues above, the respondents has come with some recommendations and suggested solutions as below:

i) Conducting events to unite the communities

To overcome the individualistic life, they suggested that the residents association conducting some events or activities to unite the residents. The suggested activities are such as family day, open house, aerobics and etc.

ii) Gathering a meeting for the society

A meeting also should be conducted regularly so that the residents can know each other and can discussing the current development regarding with the security issues in the area.

iii) More efficient and systematic security system& strongly propose to change into gated and guarded community in future

Because of very weak and poor security system, the residents suggested that they need to hire more efficient and systematic security system in ensuring the safety at their residential area is guaranteed. Besides that, they also strongly propose to change their residential area into gated and guarded community in the future.

iv) Installing CCTV

Other option that they have for the time being is that, installing CCTV especially at the affected area that always become the target of the theft or crime. It is important to curb the problem immediately or it will be spread over to other residential area.

4.4 COMPARISON FROM THE DIFFERENT FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

As being discussed above, there are three different findings of the study, whereby the feedback collected from three different residential areas. The feedback of gated and guarded community collected from the apartment area and also landed property to see the comparison between the feedbacks given. While the feedback of not gated and guarded community were collected among the landed property.

For the result gathered from both gated and guarded community, they having the same issues and recommendations such as need of hiring local people to hold the post position, more activities to unite residents and etc. But there are some different opinion regarding with the impact of the gated and guarded at their area. The result shows that, the landed property enjoys more positive impact rather than apartment area in the efficient system, good security, less crime, controlling outsider and good residents association. This is might be because of the total of the respondents in the landed property are not same as the residents that live in the apartment, so it is more easy to manage and ensuring the safety in the area.

The different results gained from the gated and guarded community and not gated and guarded community are based on the security system that both area have. The gated and guarded are less facing the security issues due to having systematic and proper system compare to the not gated and guarded community that hired ordinary people to hold the post position.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The main objective of the study was to investigate on the safety features on the gated and guarded community. The finding of the study shows that the important of having good security system in any residential area. Nowadays, there are high demands for gated and guarded community are about the implementation of the concept should be applied with an appropriate guidelines and laws in order to regulate the developments and at the same time protect the resident's right. Gated and guarded community is one of the housing concepts that play an important role in creating safe living environment for the residents. Through various study, Gated developments have the potentials to reduce crimes in the housing areas. In spite of that, the residents still concern on the importance of having good relationship and cooperation among the society members by requested of activities that can unite the residents.

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