

DETERMINANTS OF HOUSING SATISFACTION IN PRIVATELY OWNED DWELLINGS IN EDENGLLEN, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

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Article V. Abstract

This paper presents findings on the survey conducted with residents in Edenglen suburb, Gauteng Province South Africa, that are living in privately owned dwellings to assess their level of satisfaction with the residential apartments. The study also investigates the factors which affect individuals' satisfaction levels in privately owned dwellings within, with regard to the physical and social aspects. A structured questionnaire survey was conducted in Edenglen suburb in Johannesburg to determine the objectives of the study. The respondents involved in the data gathering were residents of the suburb of Edenglen. The survey results revealed that residents were satisfied in terms of their housing needs. Further findings showed that the majority of residents were highly satisfied with the security provided in and around the suburb as well as the social aspects, such as neighbourhood friendliness and distance to local amenities. Dissatisfaction mainly occurred with renters in comparison to home owners especially with the aspect of maintenance. Due to the rising number of privately owned estates in South Africa, as well as the low visibility of literature in this aspect with regards to South Africa, it is important to establish the basic factors which contribute to residents' satisfaction in privately owned dwellings. The paper contributes to this body of knowledge.

Keywords: housing satisfaction, privately owned dwelling, Edenglen, South Africa.

Article VI. INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies on housing satisfaction have evaluated housing provisions by dealing with problems of occupant satisfaction. Theoretically, the concept of housing satisfaction has been utilized in at least four different ways:

- as a key predictor of an individual's perception of general quality of life (Campbell et al. 1976);
- as an indicator of incipient residential mobility, and hence altered housing demands and effected neighbourhood change (Speare 1974, Varady 1983);
- as an ad hoc evaluative measure for judging the success of housing developments constructed by the private sector (Lansing et al. 1970);
- to assess residents' perceptions of inadequacies in their current housing environment so as to direct forthcoming private or public efforts to improve the status quo (Michelson 1977, Francescato et al. 1976).

For instance, Onibokun (1974) informs that the habitability of a house is influenced not only by the engineering elements, but also by social, behavioural, cultural, and other elements in the entire socio-environmental system. Hence, a dwelling that is adequate from the engineering or from the design point of view may not necessarily be adequate or satisfactory from the inhabitants' point of view. Onibokun (1974) concluded that the house is only one link in a chain of factors, which determine people's relative satisfaction with their accommodation. Varady (1983) further argued that housing satisfaction acts as an intermediary variable between background characteristics and mobility behaviour. In the work of Lane and Kinsey (1980) they reported that housing characteristics were more crucial determinants of housing satisfaction than demographic characteristics of housing occupants.

Residential satisfaction is influenced by the occupants' perception of the various aspects of the house, the aspects of the community and how the house and the community are managed. Occupants tend to make an immediate comparison between their previous dwelling and their present housing and that also influences residential satisfaction. In the evaluation of residential satisfaction, certain characteristics, services and amenities in the residential environment may be identified that plays a role in housing satisfaction. Residential satisfaction or housing satisfaction gives an indication of how people respond to the environment in which they live (Francescato 1998). A completed residential building should be able to

function in such a way that it satisfies the occupant's needs. Once the building has been completed and it is occupied, maintenance commences to ensure that the elements or facilities in the building function to their maximum capacity. Occupants of the building will then evaluate the facility to determine whether the building is functioning in accordance with its intended purpose (Nawawi & Khalil 2008).

Residential satisfaction is under the umbrella of post occupancy evaluation (POE) because the occupants' satisfaction of any building (residence) is determined by the building's evaluation. Kirk and Stirret (2011) define POE "as part of value engineering that continuously improves the facilities in the building". By that time, the POE was being used based on the occupants' needs, as the building performance is judged based on the user satisfaction needs. The intention of the POE is to improve the quality of the building and to identify the problems that can be used as benchmarks so that previous mistakes and unwanted features are not included or repeated in future projects. Occupant satisfaction with the building is associated with the efficiency of building performance. For POE to be more effective, management must ensure that they create a working environment that is conducive to the safety and well-being of their occupants (students). The managerial style of managers must be structured in such a way that they will attend to and embrace occupants' grievances timeously. The resident's managers must empower their students so that they will be more accountable and responsible for whatever they are doing in the residents (Chandrasekar 2011).

Measuring residential satisfaction is important because it broadens one's understanding of how and why occupants respond to certain factors in the environment in which they live as well as to certain housing types and living conditions. It provides information that can be used to improve residential living conditions of those people whose preferences and requirements are not known through the normal housing channels and markets as they relate to the more affluent segment of the population (Francescato 1998). Residential satisfaction is based entirely on the occupant's individual definition of residential quality. For instance, one occupant's idea of good residential quality might be to have a toilet and bathroom inside the room, whilst for another, it might not be. Residential satisfaction also depends on culture and, in some cases, different socio-economic levels. Occupants usually compare what they consider to be high or good residential quality to the current residential environment in which they reside. When the gap between what they expect and what they have decreases, residential satisfaction increases (Amerigo & Aragones 1997). Hence, the present work is posed to evaluate the determinants of housing satisfaction in privately owned dwellings in Edenglen, Johannesburg, South Africa. The methodology adopted is occupants' post occupancy evaluation. POE is a process that assesses how well buildings match user's needs and also identifies ways to improve building design. The main purpose of the study is to assess the building functional suitability and fitness for its intended purposes from the building occupants' perspective.

Article VII. Methodology

The data used in this paper were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through the survey method, while the secondary data was derived from the review of literature and archival records. The primary data was obtained through the use of a structured questionnaire survey. This was distributed to a total of 150 occupants who are residing in privately owned dwellings in Edenglen, Johannesburg. Out of the 150 questionnaires sent out, 135 were received back representing a 90% response rate. This was considered adequate for the analysis based on the assertion by Moser and Kalton (1971) that the result of a survey could be considered as biased and of little value if the return rate was lower than 30–40%. The data presentation and analysis made use of frequency distributions and percentages of all the respondents. The research was conducted between the months of July and October 2011. The questionnaire was in two sections (A & B). The designs of the questionnaire envisage a maximum of 20 minutes for its completion. Section A gathered the demographic information of each member of the estate that participated in the survey. This included questions on their gender, their age, their ethnicity or population group, and how long they have been living in dwellings. Section B collects information on the satisfaction of the building and on the factors that determines satisfaction in privately owned buildings.

Findings and discussion

Findings from the 135 usable questionnaire revealed that 33% were female, while 67% were male. The majority of the respondents (76%) were within the age group of 20-29, followed by (24%) of the respondents who belong to the age group below 20. The ethnicity that comprises the majority of the respondents were

blacks (97%), followed by (3%) whites. When the respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of the building facilities (Table 1), findings revealed that respondents had high rating in some facilities in the building. Respondents showed high level of satisfaction with access to public transport (MIS=4.56; R=1) which was ranked first, followed by the building safety (MIS=4.32; R=2), Parking lot (MIS=4.30; R=3), Community hall (MIS=4.29; R=4), Laundry (MIS=4.22; R=5), Bedroom (MIS=4.01; R=6), Toilet and bathroom (MIS=3.76; R=7), Kitchen (MIS=3.47; R=9), Parking spaces (MIS=2.79; R=10), and TV room (MIS=2.41; R=11) was ranked last.

Literature reviewed indicated that the intention of post occupancy evaluation study is to improve the quality of the building and to identify the problems that can be used as benchmarks so that previous mistakes and unwanted features are not included or repeated in future projects. The findings of the study correlate with previous work as carried out in South Africa by Aigbavboa and Thwala (2012), where it was found that the occupants of the building were satisfied with some aspects, such as the parking lots and laundry rooms. From the physical observation of the satisfied building features, the research observed that there were more than enough parking lots for residents who were vehicle owners, likewise the laundry rooms had state of the art facilities as installed by the developers for the occupants’ usage. Also, the occupants were satisfied with the access to public transport as the privately owned dwelling is situated very close to a major road in the suburb. Hence, the present findings also support the statement as posit by Nawawi and Khalil (2008) that a completed residential building should be able to function in such a way that it satisfies the occupant’s need, which is what the developed residence has rightly done.

Table 1: Building features satisfaction level

| Level of satisfaction | MIS | Rank (R) |
|----------------------------|------|----------|
| Access to public transport | 4.56 | 1 |
| Building safety | 4.32 | 2 |
| Parking lot | 4.30 | 3 |
| Community hall | 4.29 | 4 |
| Laundry | 4.22 | 5 |
| Bedroom | 4.01 | 6 |
| Toilet and bathroom | 3.76 | 7 |
| Study | 3.89 | 8 |
| Kitchen | 3.47 | 9 |
| Parking spaces | 2.79 | 10 |
| TV room | 2.41 | 11 |

Furthermore, when the occupants were asked to rate the level of the safety features (human and non-human) in the dwelling, as shown in Table 2; it was revealed that they showed a high level of satisfaction with all the safety facilities and features as provided by the local developers. For instance, the Lighting level was ranked first (MIS=4.62; R=1), access to transportation (MIS=4.59; R=2), access control to building (MIS=4.51; R=3), accessible fire-fighting equipment (MIS=4.47; R=4), accessible fire escape route (MIS=4.45; R=5), a), while the visibility of the day and night security personnel (MIS=4.29; R=6) was ranked least. The findings concurs with the general POE literatures which indicate that for a building to perform to its optimal level, the building management must ensure that they create an environment that is conducive to the safety and well-being of their occupants.

Table 2: Level of satisfaction with safety features (human and non-human)

| Safety features and facilities | MIS | Rank(R) |
|--------------------------------------|------|---------|
| Lighting | 4.44 | 1 |
| Accessible fire escape route | 4.20 | 2 |
| Visibility of the security personnel | 4.18 | 3 |
| Access control to building | 3.96 | 4 |
| Accessible firefighting equipment | 3.90 | 5 |
| Access to transportation | 3.49 | 6 |

CONCLUSION

This paper examined residential satisfaction in the context of occupants' living in privately owned dwellings to assess their level of satisfaction with the residential apartment's characteristics. Findings from the study revealed that the housing provided performed above average from the occupants' evaluations; implying that the houses matched the needs of the occupants in some aspects. In conclusion, the findings from the study revealed that a majority of the occupants were satisfied with the building overall quality rating except for few qualities. However, the result showed that the occupants were not satisfied with the study, toilet and bath room, kitchen and TV room, as these were the common areas where the residents had contact. Hence, it is recommended that the management of the apartments should consider improving this aspect in order to make the apartments livable for the occupants. With regards to the safety features in the building, the research findings revealed that the occupants had high levels of satisfaction with the provided lighting, accessibility to fire escape route and the visibility of the day and night security personal around the building. In essence, based on the comprehensive evaluation of the building satisfaction, the majority of the occupants were satisfied with most qualities in the apartment which makes it satisfactory to them. This study has shown that the outcomes of satisfaction studies in other housing settings cannot simply be generalized to the present case study based in South Africa. Hence, differences arise from the occupants' characteristics as well as from the features of the housing. However, the characteristics of the occupants which predicted satisfaction were almost similar to those that determine satisfaction in other cultural contexts. Therefore, the results revealed in this study gives valuable insights for the private provided housing (apartments) in South Africa towards the improvement of much better residential apartments in the near future because of the rising number of mid-income earners in South Africa.

Article VIII. REFERENCES

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