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# The Safety Level Satisfaction towards Gated and Guarded Community in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

With rapid modernization and transformation of living environment, gated and guarded communities (GGCs) have mushroomed over the past year. It is contribute to the spatial transformation in a very significant way. It shows a great influence on urban development and social integration at the local level. Security and safety are the main reason that affluent buyer's decision to reside in this luxury and sense of wealthy housing scheme behind the fences and walls. Although security and safety have always been one of the most appealing features of GGCs, studies showed that there is no significant difference of crime rates in between GGCs and non-gated neighborhoods. This research aims to indicate the understanding level of GGC buyers and to identify the safety level of the GGC scheme with the provided security measures. Thus, questionnaires and interviews were conducted among the residents of the gated residential and developers to further discuss about the issues from different perspectives. This research discovered that GGC 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 GGCs as security was regarded as one of the most significant factors for staying in a GGC. Diverse effort and sophisticated security instruments must be added to improve the safety level of GGC scheme.

**Keywords:** Gated and Guarded Communities, Planning Guidelines, Safety Level, Security Measures, Safety Components

**JEL Classification:** M0

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gated and guarded properties contribute to the spatial transformation of development trend due to socioeconomic changes in the modernization living. 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 (GGCs) 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, nowadays

its 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-h patrol services, and closed circuit televisions (CCTV) cameras. Some of gated communities in Malaysia provide an 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 and only open to public for limited access.

In recent year, GGC scheme (GACOS) in Malaysia has become a new development trend due demand for living in high standard housing scheme with limited excess of public. GACOS in Malaysia is focused 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 which appointed by the management 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 losses of RM 85,000. 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 necessarily eliminate crime to happened. Therefore, the safety level of GGC is important to study and carry out further research to highlight their understanding towards the security and safety level in GSC scheme.

## 2. GGCS SCHEME IN MALAYSIA

The development of GGC in Malaysia was introduced since last two decades ago in the early 1990s (Said and 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 and Hussin, 2011). GGC community is a housing concept that aims directly on safety and security issues and its offer a better peaceful environment and enhanced safety for the residents. Town and Planning Department, highlighted that they are four types of GGC in Malaysia. Table 1 summarized the main typology of GGCs housing scheme which consist the different type and aspect of GGC.

“Gated community and guarded neighborhood” 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. 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

**Table 1: The aspects highlighted in GGC**

Type of GGC	Descriptions
Elite community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High class of living group – senior executive and above</li> <li>• Offer high value of elite environment of living – privacy, elite communities</li> <li>• Separated with public resident – divided by wall or gated</li> </ul>
Lifestyle community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different type of lifestyle – retirement, leisure, class of occupation and education</li> <li>• Sharing the same interest based on their type of lifestyle – retirement villages, golf communities, sport communities, education communities</li> </ul>
Security zone community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in inner city with high crime rate – threat of residential crime, traffic congested, suspicious outsiders</li> <li>• Guard services provided and surrounded by gate and fence</li> </ul>
Security zone community and lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in city centre</li> <li>• Focused on security aspects and provision of lifestyle facilities</li> </ul>

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 transfer 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 GGC. 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 is 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 apply in completing this study. The respondents were identified as the resident of the GGC and used as primary data. This data is obtained directly from the field study which is 10 GGCs 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. It is observed and collected directly from first-hand experience which has not been previously published. 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. Interviews were conducted by face to face method. Structured interviews were carried out by preparing the same set of question to target interviewees.

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. It consolidates the accuracy of research and convinces the readers.

#### 4. THE FINDING ON SAFETY AND SECURITY IN GGC SCHEME

Security is the main reasons that encourage people to reside in gated communities (Mak, 2004). The increasing of crime rate has increase fear among urban dwellers. They are looking for a better place that offers a security for their property and life. Based on planning regulation for gated community towards safety and security, people are desperately hunting for this concept of living and willing to pay at the highest price in the market. Because of their extremely demand, the value or prices of this type of property is drastically increased. There are various common safety features in gated property which are; safety and security system, guard services, security control and intercom systems at the main entrance.

From the interview outcomes, it is clearly informed 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 urban area and the security element is amongst their decision making criteria 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. Based on the interview, in reality the crime is still happened even though all the security elements have been applied. Anyhow, the crime rate in GGC is much lower than non-GGC. The major losses of residents are not serious property crimes such as suicide, rape, kidnapping or motor vehicle stolen but only involved cash, jewellery and electronic items.

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-h daily by the professional security guards hired by them. Besides that, the entrance is installed with CCTV and Intercom system is provided for communication purposes. The developers have outsourced the security tasks to the professional and listed security company. It engaged a team of professional security guards, who are in-charged for guarding the entrance and patrolling the neighborhood every few hours. The advantage by installing advance equipment such as 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

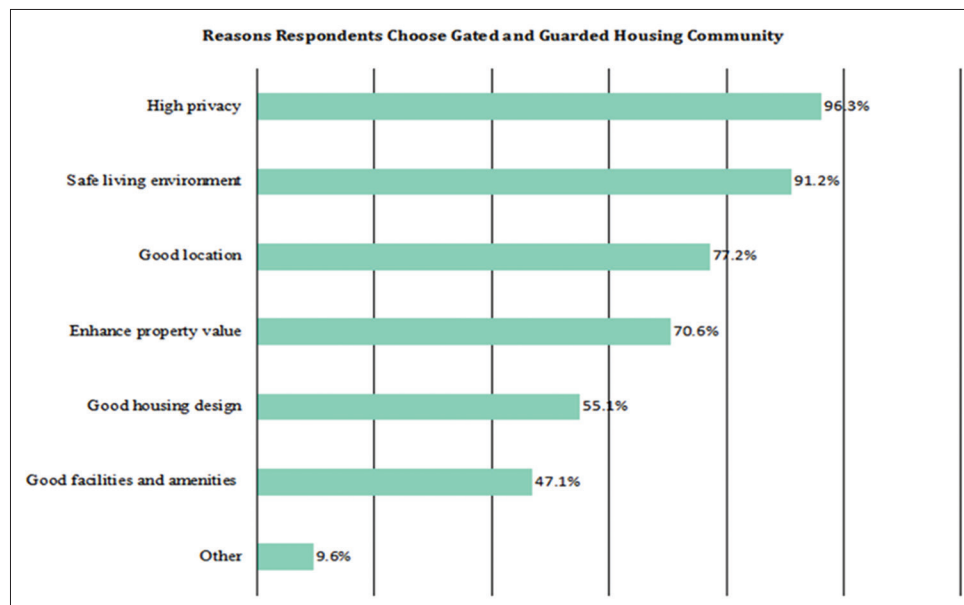
professional security guards and mostly a Nepalese former police with few years' experiences. The CCTV is normally installed at the ground floor or main entrance or main parking and it can be monitored by the owner through the screen installed in their house. Normally developers will pay the entire security maintenance fee for the first 2 years and clearly stated in the policy provided. This privileges are differ from one to another scheme.

For the residents that reside in the GGCs, 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 from 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 company and other services company such as Tenaga Nasional Berhad, 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 and safely.

In the conclusion, security is uppermost on people's minds nowadays and they are allocated more into housing investment to ensure their life, family and home are 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 Melaka shows that the reason contribute to their buying decision on gated and guarded housing were illustrated in Figure 1.

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 housing has reflected the level of privacy and security which will attract people who care about privacy life. Security and safety are the main reason contributes to resident'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 most of the residents prefer GGC due to safety and security aspect and a good investment with adding a value of safeguarding property values. Others reason that influence resident's decisions are good housing design, good facilities and amenities, good location, convenient to working place, good accessibilities and good development plan.

**Figure 1:** Reason respondents choose gated and guarded housing community**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 GGC 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 GGC 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

GGC: Gated and guarded communities

## 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 2, the mean score of all items was in range of 3.44-4.28. Respondent's perception towards safety in their living scheme was analyzed. From the result shows 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. This result similar to the study of Sakip et al. (2013) who found that perception of safety is higher in gated residential area than non-gated as it able to reduce the fear of crime and opportunities for crime. Overall based of response from respondents, it was inferred that the residents perceived their housing community is safe especially when compared to non-gated and guarded housing community.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this study had clearly interpreted all the data and information regarding safety aspects of GGC scheme. Residential environment are fundamental for people. Literally, GGC is a residential area with restriction access. GGC is now available to people of almost every income level due to trend and demand. The increasing of crime rate and the privacy factor becomes the main catalyst of the gated communities' development to meet the demand of modern lifestyle when people consider security factor on their buying decision. 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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