

The Impact of Residential Gated Compounds on Quality of Life in Egypt

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Abstract Over the last twenty years, gated communities have been growing rapidly in Egypt to present a better living standard to their residents. Accordingly, a lot of Egyptians moved to gated communities to improve their Quality of Life through upgrading their human need satisfaction level. The rapid development of gated residential communities combined with some problems, and gated communities are not preferable to some residents because they are far away from downtown and from most famous neighborhoods in Egypt. Research showed that living in the suburbs has direct and indirect effects on human psychological behavior. It affects people's leisure in addition to the clear classification that has been introduced among the Egyptians according to their address. Nevertheless, gated communities could participate in enhancing residents' security, understanding, spirituality and other human needs. This paper aims at investigating the impact of living in gated communities on middle class residents' Quality of Life by illustrating positive and negative impacts on both residents and non-residents of gated communities in a comparative method. This is achieved through a qualitative methodology that clarifies how Quality of Life for gated community residents has been improved.

Keywords Gated Community, Quality of Life, Egyptian Residents, Human Needs

1. Introduction

According to Ayad and Salah [1], home is the place where families are gathered together, spending most of their time, so people's decision about their homes location is not an easy one as they consider many aspects that could affect their choices. For example, the location decision is usually based on the surrounding neighborhoods and educational institutions, in addition to how easy the access to urban areas could be, how the location could influence the family social connections and work [2]. Home location has a direct effect on one's Quality of Life (QOL) [1]. As a result, contractors started to think about constructing gated communities to improve the facilities and utilities for the residents. By establishing this kind of construction, a lot of developments in the residential units in Greater Cairo Region were initiated to improve residence QOL [3]. This research will illustrate the impact of living in gated compounds on the QOL of middle class residents by illustrating its pros and cons.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What are Gated Communities?

A gated compound can be defined as a plot of residential buildings that are surrounded by restricted access, containing planned pathways for cars, pedestrians and bicycles. Its streets have different levels of security

and amenities such as parking areas. It is characterized by a distinctive lifestyle, and its residents are from the same economic class [1]. Gated communities are spreading very fast all over the world. To illustrate; until 2010 more than 466 gated communities have been developed in Cairo, then, by 2013 this number reached 500 communities, in addition to the number of gated communities that are dispersed across different cities in Egypt [1].

2.2. Historical Background for Gated Communities

The idea of gated communities was developed to provide better living conditions for residents of crowded areas. This idea is a historical one that started to alleviate hostility and provide security to a group of residents through fortified cities. However, the modern version of this closed territory started to be established by developers as gated communities with private streets as a refuge for the growing upper middle class and the wealthy [4].

Egypt started to implement concepts of urban development by selling public land to private real state entrepreneur, which lead to the existing gated communities that offer luxurious villas and apartments targeting the middle-class to the high-class population. In the 1980s, gated communities appeared in Egypt due to changes in some social, cultural and economic factors. First they appeared in coastal zones; consequently they started to spread through different cities in Egypt especially the capital, Cairo [5]. Nowadays, gated communities are considered one of the most prevalent developments that apply sustainability standards and occurred in the last century in Egypt [1], [6], [7].

2.3. Definition of QOL and Its Framework

QOL is a term used to illustrate how people are satisfied with their needs in life, and it is measured according to the provided opportunities to meet the human needs, and to have the policies available to enhance these opportunities. The measurement of QOL is based on two methodologies; first "objective indicator" that points out the social and economic levels, through which it explains how human needs are satisfied; the second one declares the levels of happiness, fulfillment, and pleasure that people has as a result; it is termed as "subjective well-being". Some human needs are used to indicate the Quality of Life, such as Subsistence, Reproduction, Security, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Spirituality, Creativity, Identity, and Freedom. The measurement of these needs explains the level of happiness, fulfillment and utilities that people enjoy [8],[9],[10].

2.4. Impact of Gated Communities on QOL

The rapid growth of gated communities resulted in the fact that many scientists decided to study their impact [11].

Although developers have worked a lot to satisfy the residents' desires, this kind of modification is accompanied by many of the disadvantages [5]. Some people prefer to live in a gated community rather than urban areas for the purpose socioeconomic status, seeking better facilities or to trade off as they purchased units for high prices. Accordingly, they could lease it with high monthly rent as a source of income. On the other hand, some people do not prefer to live in suburban areas as they will not go through living at a gated community due to its distance from downtown and the most popular destinations, in addition to the racialism principle that has been introduced to the society through the gated communities. As a result, Blakely and Snyder presented the most three famous types of gated communities that are classified according to their function; they are lifestyle, prestige, and security district society. Another classification is done by another researcher Touman who classified gated communities in Egypt Geographically and Chronologically [11]. The phenomenon of gated communities has positive and negative impacts on residents in Egypt. Although it has been established recently, its rapid growth and its effect rapidly spread among Egyptians. For more illustration, a qualitative methodology is explained, analyzed, and compared to show how this phenomenon affected the Egyptian middle class residents.

3. Methodology

This study used qualitative methodology to investigate the QOL for residents and non-residents of a gated community in Cairo through applying two different methods: first by asking eighty-two residents and eighty non-residents of gated communities through questionnaires to get their feedback about the impact of gated communities and how it affects their QOL; second by having interviews with residents who moved recently into a gated community to show how it affected their QOL. Qualitative research helped to analyze the situation through observation, interviews, and questionnaires. It helps to understand the human behavior more deeply and explains how the decision has been taken and why. Through a qualitative method, data could be collected easily without complicated restrictions and it allows participants to express their opinions in their own way.

3.1. Study Area

Questionnaires took place in Al-Rehab and Madinaty compounds (fig. 1) as they have a high rate of population, in addition to New Cairo district to compare the residents' responses according to their living place and how it affected their QOL. Al-Rehab city is the first city built away from the busy city; it was established in 1997 by the private developer Talaat Moustafa Group Company that also started the construction of Madinaty in 2006.

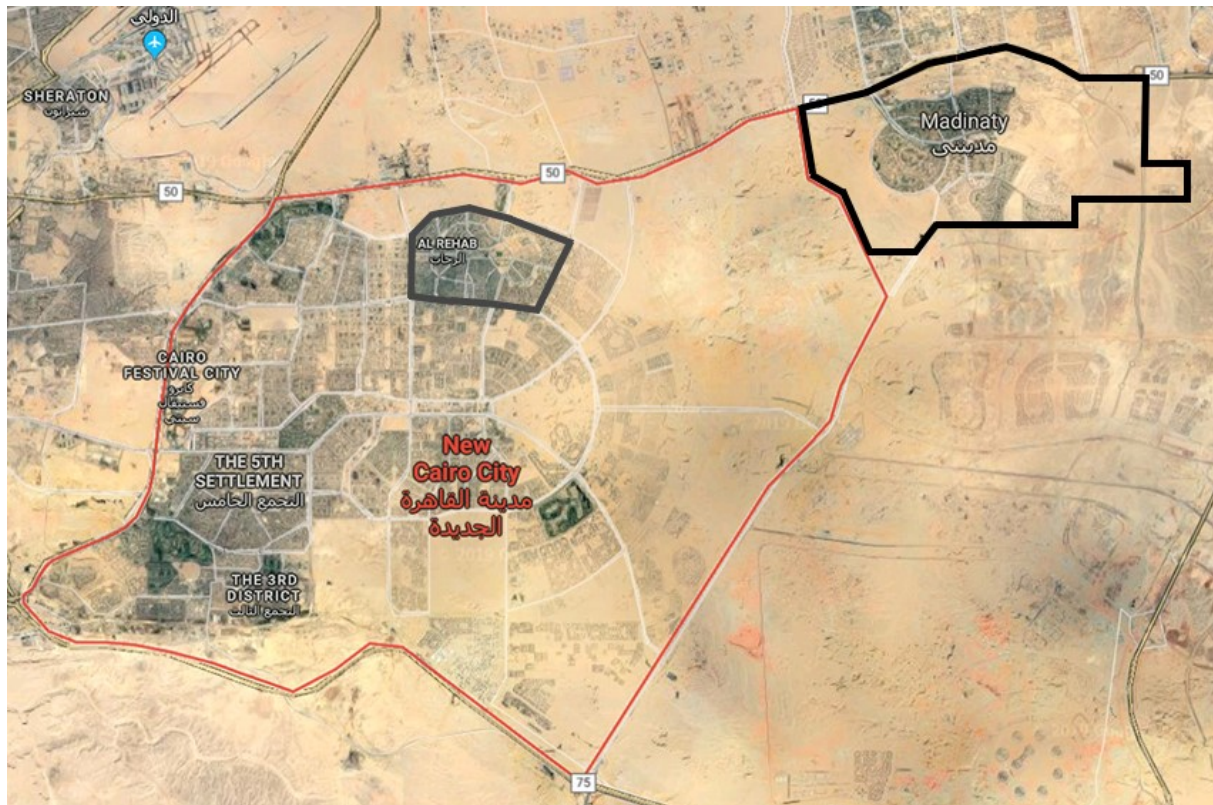


Figure 1. Location of New Cairo City, Al-Rehab City, and Madinaty City, Cairo, Egypt, Source (Google Maps, 2019)

3.2. Data Collection Questionnaires

In this research, each questionnaire is composed of 14 questions. Each one examines how the resident's district satisfies his/her needs in life and it shows the level of opportunities that is provided to them. It is a 5-point scale questionnaire and its answer ranges from 1 to 5. Number 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 indicates disagree, 3 indicates neutral, 4 indicates agree, and 5 indicates strongly agree. Data were collected electronically through direct interviews with gated compound residents. The main goal of this method was to explain how a neighborhood could affect one's happiness.

3.3. Characteristics of Participants

A total of one hundred sixty-four persons participated during April, 2019. The questionnaire targeted middle class residents in Greater Cairo Region. The survey included eighty-two gated community residents, and seventy-nine of non-gated community residents who answered the questionnaire. The gated community residents are living in new Cairo (Al-Rehab and Madinaty compounds) and the non-gated community residents are living in New Cairo districts. In addition to two interviews that took place with people living at Al-Rehab City at their neighborhood. The real sample should be more than three hundred residents and non-resident of gated communities, but only one hundred sixty-four persons

were considered in this survey who found the questionnaire not too long to be answered and who accepted to have an interview. The average age of the participants is 23 years old.

3.4. Survey Questionnaire

The survey was answered electronically by one hundred sixty-four participants. The main aim of the survey was explained to each participant before answering it, and each question was clear enough through a description written next to it or by more explanation when a participant was asked for that to get a clear reflection of participant's level of satisfaction.

3.5. Interview

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews with open ended questions was to understand more freely the impact of gated communities on people's QOL. Two interviews took place at Al-Rehab city with two residents who moved to this gated community for different purposes.

First one was done with architect Waleed Gamal who is thirty-eight years old; he owns an architectural firm located at New Cairo and spends most of his day at work. Engineer Waleed has three kids, he moved into a gated community in 2010 because it is very close to his work, and he believes that gated communities provide his family

with security, specially his kids as they can find a lot of safe open green spaces to play and can easily make new acquaintances, in addition to the ease of access to the markets. Additionally, it supplies them with utilities that could not be found at regular neighborhood; hence, he considers that a gated community is the best option for him and his family.

Second interview took place with Mrs. Omaima Mahmoud. She is a retired engineer who moved into Al-Rehab city in 2014. This decision was not easy for her as she spent more than thirty years at her old house, but the changes that took place in her old neighborhood encouraged her to take this decision, such as the lack of security, disturbance, acoustic and air pollution, in

addition to the crowdedness as she said that caused her to suffer to find a parking space for her car every day. Accordingly, she moved into the gated community to improve her life, the only problem that she has is living at suburb area which is far away from all her memories.

4. Results and Discussion

This section illustrates and analyzes the impact of gated communities on people's QOL by comparing answers of residents and non-residents of gated communities about their level of satisfaction with their needs that is provided to them by their neighborhood.

Table 1. Questionnaire results and statistical analysis (by author)

Compound Residents	Non-Compound Residents
Q1	
Did the compound improve your sense of security?	Did your neighborhood improve your security?
Total Respond: 80	Total Respond: 79
Average Answer: 3.74	Average Answer: 3.27
Discussion: Residents of the gated community feel more secure with higher average according to chart although the difference is not big.	
Q2	
Is it easy for you to find food and markets at the compound?	Is it easy to find food and markets at your neighborhood?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 79
Average Answer: 3.88	Average Answer: 4.27
Discussion: Residents of non-gated community have the ability to find their food and markets more easily, and this is due to gated community planning that locates markets in an area not close to the residential buildings.	
Q3	
Did the compound improve your family interaction time? (As if it helps the family to spend more time with each other)	Did your neighborhood improve your family interaction time? (As if it helps he family to spend more time with each other)
Total Respond: 81	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.25	Average Answer: 2.98
Discussion: Gated communities help families to interact more with each other as it provides them with different facilities and places to gather jointly easily.	
Q4	
Did the compound help you to find new friends and make you feel attached to your neighbours?	Did your neighborhood help you to find new friends and makes you feel attached to it?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.09	Average Answer: 2.98
Discussion: Residents of gated communities can find new friends more easily because they have more common interaction areas.	
Q5	
Did the compound improve your ability to access to any information you need, at the compound or at any other place?	Did you neighborhood improve your ability to access to any information you need at it or at any other place?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.09	Average Answer: 3.14
Discussion: Residents of non-gated community have access more easily to any information due to its location nearby most of the public services buildings	

Table 1. Continued

Q6	
Did the compound help you to interact more with your neighbors?	Did your neighborhood help you to interact more with your neighbors?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 79
Average Answer: 2.88	Average Answer: 3
Discussion: The neighborhood interaction among non-compound residents due to the intimate social connections that they have as they can only interact at their residential building with no other places to meet	
Q7	
Did the compound make you feel more relaxed?	Do you feel more relaxed at your neighborhood?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 4.20	Average Answer: 3.5
Discussion: The architectural planning of gated communities provides its residence with quietness that makes them feel more relaxed	
Q8	
Are you willing to participate in public services related to the compound?	Are you willing to participate in public services related to your neighborhood?
Total Respond: 81	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.35	Average Answer: 3.15
Discussion: For each gated community there is an operations management entity that organizes its activities and that encourages its residents to participate in any services related to the compound.	
Q9	
Did the compound improve the children's creativity?	Do you think your neighborhood helped in improving children's creativity?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 2.99	Average Answer: 2.58
Discussion: The quietness, organization, neatness, and fresh air that exist in gated communities could encourage children to think, imagine, and create more.	
Q10	
Do you belong to the compound as it is your home, and you cannot move to another place to live in?	Q10: Do you feel that you belong to your neighborhood as it is your home, and you cannot move to another place?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 79
Average Answer: 3.51	Average Answer: 2.87
Discussion: This is due to the design of the gated communities as it inspires the residents with the idea of a small town in which they live and to which they belong, in addition to the multiple services that are provided to them.	
Q11	
Do you have a sense of freedom to do different activities within your residence in the compound?	Do you feel free during your residence at your neighborhood?
Total Respond: 81	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.81	Average Answer: 3.66
Discussion: Due to the safety that is provided at gated community, its residents feel freer to do different activities rather than non-gated residents for example, walking in the streets at night.	
Q12	
Do you want to move to a regular neighborhood?	If you have a chance would you like to move to live in a compound?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 1.10	Average Answer: 3.44
Discussion: Happiness is gained when one's needs are satisfied. Results showed that gated communities' residents are more happy, accordingly gated community satisfy people's needs more than non-gated community	

Table 1. Continued

Q13	
Q13: Are all the utilities available at the compound?	Q13: Are all the utilities available at your neighborhood?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 80
Average Answer: 3.68	Average Answer: 3.64
Discussion: Results almost the same with a slightly higher percentage at gated communities showing more relief provided to their residents.	
Q14	
Do you think compound improved your Quality of Life?	Do you think your neighborhood improved your Quality of Life ?
Total Respond: 82	Total Respond: 79
Average Answer: 4.02	Average Answer: 3.25
Discussion: Results proved that residence at the gated communities could satisfy one's needs rather than regular neighborhood, consequently living at a gated community improves people's Quality of Life	

5. Conclusions

QOL of middle class residents in Greater Cairo region residents could be improved by raising their level of satisfaction through living in gated communities that fulfil their needs. Gated Communities also have some disadvantages that could affect resident's psychological behavior whether they are living in or out of it. This research evaluated the residents' level of satisfaction according to their neighborhood; it showed that gated communities improved people's QOL rather than regular neighborhood as it provided them with the required human needs. As a result, the level of happiness of the residents was raised. As a recommendation, the government should set rules to address any problems at regular neighborhood to improve the QOL of its inhabitants by providing them their needs and provide opportunities to meet those needs.

Appendix

List of Questions used in this survey for gated community residences.

- (1) Did the compound improve your security?
- (2) Is it easy for you to find food and markets at the compound?
- (3) Did the compound improve your family interaction time? (As if it helps the family to spend more time with each other's)
- (4) Did the compound help you to find new friends and makes you feel attached to your neighbors?
- (5) Did the compound improve your ability to access to any information you need, at the compound or at any other place?
- (6) Did the compound help you to interact more with your neighbors?
- (7) Did the compound make you feel more relaxed?
- (8) Are you willing to participate in public services that related to compound?

- (9) Did the compound improve the children's creativity?
- (10) Do you belong to the compound as it is your home, and you cannot move to another place to live in?
- (11) Do you have a sense of freedom to do different activities within your residence in the compound?
- (12) Do you want to move to a regular neighborhood?
- (13) Are all the utilities available at the compound?
- (14) Do you think compound improved your Quality of Life?

List of Questions used in this survey for non-gated community residences.

- (1) Did your neighborhood improve your security?
- (2) Is it easy to find food and markets at your neighborhood?
- (3) Did your neighborhood improve your family interaction time? (As if it helps, he family to spend more time with each other)
- (4) Did your neighborhood help you to find new friends and makes you feel attached to it?
- (5) Did you neighborhood improve your ability to access to any information you need at it or at any other place?
- (6) Did your neighborhood help you to interact more with your neighbors?
- (7) Do you feel more relaxed at your neighborhood?
- (8) Are you willing to participate in public services related to your neighborhood?
- (9) Do you think your neighborhood helped in improving children's creativity?
- (10) Do you feel that you belong to your neighborhood as it is your home, and you cannot move to another place?
- (11) Do you feel free during your residence at your neighborhood?
- (12) If you have a chance would you like to move to live in a compound?
- (13) Are all the utilities available at your neighborhood?
- (14) Do you think your neighborhood improved your Quality of Life?

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