

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

“Housing does not mean an individual’s dwelling unit only. It is a composite of the overall physical and social components that make up the housing system” (Francescato, Weidemann, and Anderson 1989). Housing also has a profound impact on quality of life and well-being of a person (Yusoff 2017). Research on housing has gone beyond the study of the physical, structural and functional features of one’s territorial core called house (Smith 1994). “Many scholars have concentrated their research preferences on housing conditions, urban housing provisions and neighborhood environmental quality. Research conducted in various countries has provided evidence that having satisfactory accommodation is often at the top of people’s human needs” (Kiel and Carson 1990). Satisfaction is a process of evaluation between what was received and what was expected (Parker and Mathews 2001).

Parker and Mathews (2001) revealed that “quality of life, housing satisfaction, job performance, and job satisfaction have been the subjects of research for a long time. Quality of life components related to housing satisfaction indicated that respondents are very satisfied with their family relationships, helping others, and participation in government” (Henderson 1988). In view of this, Aigbavboa & Thwala, (2016) mentioned that “the motivation for the interest and popularity of residential satisfaction is twofold. First, residential satisfaction is recognized as an important component of an individuals’ general quality of life; meaning that for most people, housing is the largest consumption item in their lifetime. Second, a home is the place where one most often finds refuge, rest and satisfaction. This means that the degree to which an individual’s needs and aspirations are met by their housing condition is a concern for researchers but most importantly for housing developers, planners and specifically for housing policy-makers”.

Correspondingly, Balestra and Sultan (2013) concluded that “residential satisfaction is thus the result of how individual perceive salient attributes of their

physical environment and their consequent evaluation according to certain standards of comparison. Understanding the levers of residential satisfaction is important for any public policy aiming at enhancing people's housing opportunities". Besides, Ibem et al., (2013) stated that findings of these studies help us to understand the importance of housing characteristics, housing unit support services, neighborhood environment and management aspect of housing as well as the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of residents in residential satisfaction.

Based on the above-mentioned points, it can be inferred that a thorough understanding of residential satisfaction can provide valuable insights into improving the quality of life of residents. This data can also support housing developers, planners, and policy-makers in making informed decisions.

In fact, in 2006, when the Military Government declared Naypyitaw (meaning "Abode of Kings" in Burmese) as the new administrative capital of the Union of Myanmar (Burma), 1,200 four-storey apartment blocks were built in the residential zone area to accommodate civil servants. With Naypyitaw replacing Yangon as the nation's capital, many civil servants were moved there, and those working in government departments located in Naypyitaw City are allowed to live in these government-provided apartment buildings without paying rent, except for electricity and water tax, until the age of 60 while performing government duties. Despite housing provision for low-income people and civil servants being one of the top priorities of Myanmar government-led housing plans, no study has been conducted to assess the residents' satisfaction with the government-provided housing in Myanmar. New constructions of four-story apartment buildings for government employees are still being built according to the data.

At the same time, Smart City action Plans (SCAPS) of Naypyitaw (Aung 2019), revealed that one of the main visions for Naypyitaw City up to 2040 is to become a green and livable city, which poses a challenge in attracting residents to reside in Naypyitaw. Consequently, the role of housing and settlement has become an important aspect of the city's development. Kabisch et al., (2020) argued that "A key component of livable cities is the residential satisfaction of their inhabitants. To achieve, maintain and improve residential satisfaction, it is essential to gather detailed insights regarding opportunities and obstacles at the district, neighborhood and apartment level. Appropriate study results deliver arguments, recommendations and proposals that enable municipal and planning institutions and housing providers to

make targeted and tailored decisions”. Therefore, there is a need to examine the residents' satisfaction with government-provided apartment buildings in Naypyitaw City.

This study aims to investigate the residential satisfaction with government-provided four-storey apartment buildings in civil servant housings of Naypyitaw City to support potential ways to improve the satisfaction level of residents in future building constructions."

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, housing in many third world countries, including Myanmar, has become a subject of public discourse regarding its quality, performance, quantity of infrastructural facilities, design standards, building design quality, and environmental requirements of the occupants.

UN-Habitat (2017) reported that “after land, networked services are regarded as the greatest obstacle to constructing affordable housing in Myanmar. Physical services are poorly and unevenly provided. Only 32% of the country is electrified, hampering industry, communications and other services. Piped water is only available to 12.5% of households. Drinking water is mostly obtained from plastic bottles, which are damaging to the environment. Sewerage is almost unknown, and septic tanks and long drops are mostly used in the cities, with a deleterious effect on ground water quality. Wastewater is often carried in open drains. As a result, infant diarrhea is much more prevalent in Myanmar than elsewhere in South East Asia, and child mortality is comparatively higher”. In addition, Habitat for Humanity, Myanmar (Myanmar | Habitat for Humanity n.d.) expressed that “inadequate access to basic necessities of life such as shelter, water and sanitation defines poverty housing in Myanmar, especially in slum areas and the rural villages. Despite average annual economic growth of 7% during 2011-2017, one in three people continues to live below the national poverty line. The population and housing census in 2014 showed that close to 81% of housing units were made of wood and bamboo and were not durable. About 28% of households obtained their drinking water from unsafe sources and nearly 14% did not have a toilet”.

Similarly, Janet Jackson, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar” (UNFPA Myanmar n.d.) said that “a new census report reveals that an estimated 13.5 million people, a quarter of Myanmar’s population, live in housing that is made of materials

that can deteriorate rapidly. 3.8 million homes – new or with improved roofing, walls, and/or floors – are needed to address the immediate housing needs of people whose homes are deficient or extremely deficient. There is an urgent need to address Myanmar's housing challenges holistically. We need to look at all aspects of living conditions, including health, sanitation, electricity, communications, and safety. Space is also a key element to dignified housing. People need homes that allow for privacy for families as well as for intimacy between couples".

Further, Htun (2021) outlined that “while the World Health Organization (WHO) is promoting the practice of social distancing and stay-at-home for every country around the world so as to control the virus spread, it is unlikely that a country like Myanmar, where there is a lack of adequate urban housing, particularly in Yangon, can follow these restrictions. Most townships with high caseloads have similar features such as having informal settlements, low-income renters, high density, homelessness, poor housing conditions, and shared living space with the whole family. At the same time, urban poor have struggled when it comes to financial stability, adequate housing, and social issues during the semi-lockdown”.

Conclusively, based on the background information presented, it is evident that millions of families in Myanmar are facing a severe housing problem. Therefore, it is necessary to implement systematic housing policies and programs in cities and countries to increase housing affordability and improve housing quality, and sustainability. Aigbavboa and Thwala (2018) stated that “it has been shown that residential satisfaction is a very significant issue. It is important because it deals with the housing occupants’ satisfaction and aims to inform policy and planning intervention. Similarly, it has also been revealed that measures of residential satisfaction will provide additional insights regarding individuals’ experience with housing, and can be used to evaluate the success of housing programmes”. Thus, this study aims to provide important indicators for designing and implementing successful housing policies and programmes to address the housing challenges faced by the residents of Myanmar.

Meanwhile, based on the literature study, it is apparent that Myanmar’s government-led housing measures have mainly supported civil servants and low-income people. Financing affordable housing in Yangon (ADB 2019) stated that “the thrust of the Myanmar's government-led housing measures has been to provide access to affordable housing to the target segment comprising lower-middle-income groups,

urban poor, and government staff”. However, there is a lack of empirical data or research on residential satisfaction among residents of housing constructed using different strategies, even though new constructions of four-story apartment buildings for government employees in Naypyitaw are being built on demand, according to data from the Ministry of Construction, Naypyitaw Council, and Naypyitaw Development Committee of Myanmar.

Hence, there is a need for research to examine residential satisfaction with government-provided apartment buildings in Naypyitaw City to gauge the expectations, needs, and preferences of the residents. This research will help determine which factors are important and what types of improvements are required in existing and future housing development in Myanmar.

1.3 Research Questions of the Study

Through background of the study, literature reviews, and previous studies of determinants for residential satisfaction, this study classifies socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and thirty variables/attributes based on the determinants of residential satisfaction that includes five categories such as physical features of the housing unit, environmental features of housing unit, social environment within the housing area, services provided for the housing area, and housing location. The critical questions here regarding the levels of satisfaction of respondents with the government-provided four-storey apartments have been formulated as follows;

- (1) What are the dominant factors that can improve residential satisfaction at the government-provided four-storey apartment units in civil-servant housings of Naypyitaw City according to the results of Importance-Performance Analysis and Gap Analysis?
- (2) What are the potential ways to improve residential satisfaction level for dwellers at the government-provided four-storey apartments?

1.4 Objective of the study

Led by those abovementioned research questions, this study is going to investigate the factors related inhabitants’ residential satisfaction of government-provided four-storey apartment units in civil-servant housings of Naypyitaw City. Thus, the following research objectives are aimed to achieve for this study.

- (1) To identify the dominant factors that can improve residential satisfaction at the government-provided four-storey apartment units in civil-servant housings of Naypyitaw City using Importance-Performance Analysis and Gap Analysis.
- (2) To recommend suggestions that can help to improve the residential satisfaction level for new buildings to be built in the future at Naypyitaw City.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this research is to identify the dominant attributes that can improve residential satisfaction with government-provided four-storey apartment buildings located in nine civil servant housings at Naypyitaw City.

- The study was conducted exclusively in the civil-servant housings of Naypyitaw City, Myanmar.
- Only residents living in four-storey apartment buildings within these nine civil-servant housings of Naypyitaw City were examined.
- Respondents were selected through a multi-cluster sampling method and were interviewed face-to-face using paper questionnaires administered by surveyors.
- The respondents were asked to rate their level of importance and satisfaction using a five-point Likert's Scale Format. The questionnaire comprised of semi-structured criteria, including socio demographic characteristics, physical features of housing units, environmental features of housing units, social environment within the housing area, services provided for the housing area, and housing locations.
- The collected data was analyzed using Importance-Performance Analysis, Gap Analysis, and Hypothesis Testing.

1.6 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study, including the background, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, and scope of the study. Chapter two presents the literature review, which includes an overview of the theoretical background, a

description of the housing sector in Myanmar as it relates to this study, and the conceptual framework. The third chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents the results of the analysis, which are then discussed in detail. Finally, chapter five concludes the thesis and presents recommendations.

