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## THE STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVE FACTORS IN THE SENSE OF RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

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### ABSTRACT

For most people, housing is considered the biggest utilization and investment during life and residential satisfaction is the most important part of their life quality. Satisfaction is a concept which is used to predict the development of a society's welfare. To put it very simply, satisfaction reflects people's living conditions and well-being. The main purpose of conducting this study is to measure and assess the components of residents' satisfaction with the aim of 1. Identifying the effective factors in satisfaction 2. Examining the level of satisfaction with an environment 3. Investigating the impact of good location on the satisfaction of the residents of residential complexes and providing an answer to the question of "what factors play an effective role in creating the sense of satisfaction in residents of residential complexes?" In this study, the concept of residential satisfaction and the indicator of its assessment have been determined through examining the most relevant resources and investigating the viewpoints of experts in this field. By collecting the experts' viewpoints, the factors influencing residential satisfaction have been achieved. Therefore, residents' satisfaction with an environment can have physical effects on designing. Moreover, residents' dissatisfaction with residential complexes results from designers' negligence of residents' individual and cultural characteristics. In this study, based on the components of satisfaction, the author aims to take an important step towards creating residents' satisfaction with the residential complexes. Finally, some strategies have been

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proposed for the improvement of residential satisfaction according to the research analyses and findings.

**Keywords: Satisfaction, residential satisfaction, housing, life quality**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Residential satisfaction is not only an important component of individual life quality, but it also determines how people behave in residential environments. Living environment plays an important role in shaping one's personality and behavior. Attachment to the environment inspires the sense of identity and belonging in humans apart from the mental tranquility. Environmental memories will have a profound impact on our life. Many adults still remember the depression resulting from living in noisy, stressful and small environments in their childhood.

For the evolution of their life, humans stopped living in natural habitats in caves and inclined towards their own hand-made houses and until today they have changed their culture, economy, and aspects of human life. Therefore, housing development will become evident along with cultural change in any society. Each society has constructed a new kind of house according to its history, culture, economic, political and social affairs. The interior and exterior residential and architectural spaces of houses involve human life and people spend most of their time in

this environment. For human, a house is like the origin of the universe. One of the responsibilities of designers and architects is to create a good relationship between humans and their surroundings. To achieve this goal, house designers should have a correct understanding of human behavior in different environments in a way that strengthens the link between humans and places. Modern houses with current facilities and living conditions are not able to fulfil traditional Iranians' most needs. Housing is not mainly the result of physical forces or any other single cause; it is rather the result of extensive socio-cultural factors.

Mass house designing is usually associated with a decline in quality. Due to the changes that have been made in house designing, it is not clear whether these developments have been able to realize the sense of belonging to place and residential environment. Studies have shown that the quality and characteristics of the physical environment can also fulfil people's expectations and needs. Given the differences that exist in the designing of residential complexes, it seems that the focus on the physical design of

residential complexes provides the assessment of belonging to a place and the impact of different physical designs on people's feeling towards their own place of residence. One of the responsibilities of designers and architects is to create a good relationship between humans and their surroundings. To achieve this goal, house designers should have a correct understanding of human behavior in different environments in a way that strengthens the link between humans and places. Through examining the components of residential satisfaction, the present study aims to identify important facts and factors that can have a positive impact on organizational performance so that the findings of the present study will help city managers improve citizens' satisfaction and public participation in the implementation of constructive, welfare and cultural projects.

Overall, life quality as a general term is a concept to show how human needs are met. It is also a criterion for understanding people and group's satisfaction and dissatisfaction with different aspects of life.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Residential satisfaction is a complex structure and many efforts have been made to express its concept in some fields other than economics (sociology, psychology, planning

or geography). It is worth noting that the theories of residential satisfaction in all centers revolve around this concept that residential satisfaction shows the difference between actual families, desired (dream) house and neighborhood conditions. Residential satisfaction indicates the lack of complaint and a high degree of agreement between actual and desired conditions. On the other hand, the contrast between the actual house and required conditions might result in dissatisfaction. Morris and Winter have raised the concept of "housing shortage" for predicting the residential satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). In house modification model in the case of residential dynamics, they believe that people's judgment of their housing conditions is defined according to the rules and norms such as family and individual norms and aspiration (internal norm) which are determined in household standards for housing and cultural norms which have been dictated by social norms or rules for living conditions. This concept is equal to what is called external norm, external effect or coordinate effect in financial satisfaction. Rosie believes that housing needs and demands define family development and due to different life cycles, families' place of

residence often varies with their housing and neighborhood conditions.

Through migration or reconstruction, the “incongruity” between common and expected housing needs causes stress and dissatisfaction which makes a family improve their housing needs by taking into consideration the limitations resulting from their financial resources through information concerning alternative adaptation opportunities. Studies show that quality problems of housing often have significant effects on residential satisfaction. Secure and famous places have not necessarily architectural value. The reasons for having interest in such places will make a remarkable contribution to the maintenance and development of the culture of different regions. People’s satisfaction with the quality of their place of residence is relative. People’s taste, socio-economic status, age and also sex are effective in the sense of life satisfaction in a specific place. Young people prefer to live in special houses with interior decoration while older people like to live in a simple house and are not willing to live in mysterious places. Upper class people also consider the vastness of space, beauty and interior luxury and the house surrounding. However, the middle class people more seek a house with relative safety and want to

satisfy their essential household needs. Social people choose the houses that are in accordance with the dignity of their personality and career and provide them with the possibility to socialize with others easily whereas reserved people prefer small and simple houses. Many researchers have studied residential satisfaction which will be discussed briefly. To get the necessary information is very important for housing projects since it leads us to evaluation and development of housing. Residential satisfaction has become one of the evaluation indicators for useful housing functions. Satisfaction means achieving a sense of happiness and pleasure.

Basically, there are two types of residential satisfaction studies: Those that consider residential satisfaction as a behavior predictor (the intention of residence or moving from existing house) or residential satisfaction as a quality criterion for housing. Studies based on residential satisfaction as a predictor of behavior assume that satisfaction with one’s current house determines static behavior in terms of making changes in residential units or the decision to move to other residential units. The basis of this assumption is that differences in existing houses and actual housing needs and residents’ priorities will result in making

changes in existing house or moving into a residential unit which realizes their priorities and actual housing needs. The studies that consider residential satisfaction as a qualitative housing action use the

characteristics, services and facilities of residential units in order to determine the degree a person is satisfied with the current residential unit in a residential area and environment.

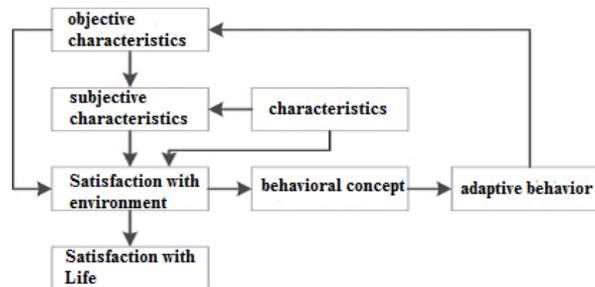


Figure 1: Residential Satisfaction Model

**Satisfaction**

In Hamid dictionary, satisfaction literally means pleasure, consent and satisfaction with something or somewhere. But how residential satisfaction is achieved? What conditions and factors influence one’s residential satisfaction? What behavioral effects will residential satisfaction or dissatisfaction have on a person? Many people want to have things they cannot afford, therefore, for economic or other

reasons; they have to choose a place which is not their favorite one. People gain satisfaction. when they choose what they desire although the house which is not interesting to someone might not be too bad .For example, many people prefer to live in a single- unit house but it is also possible to accept an apartment near the city center because that apartment is closer to their workplace (Figure 2).

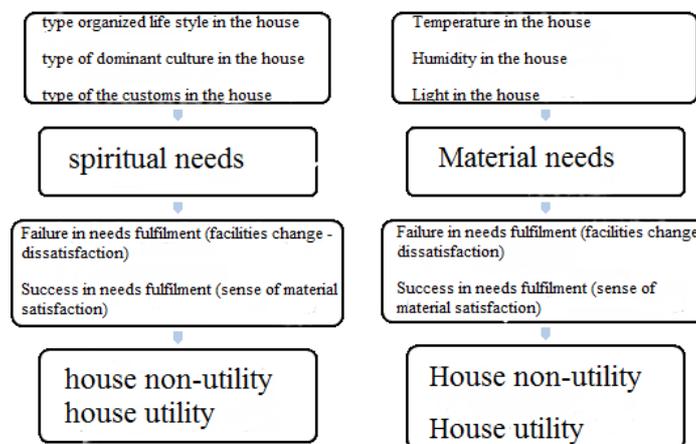


Figure 2: the formation of residential satisfaction, Factors effective in satisfaction

To perceive a place of residence, it is to be measured adequately. However, this measurement is not limited only in a simple question of “are you satisfied with your place of residence?” But what factors really cause one to be satisfied and another to be dissatisfied with a place? What factors cause

a person to be satisfied with a place at one time and be dissatisfied with that very place at another time? In other words, what factors play a role in the level of one’s residential satisfaction? The factors influencing the sense of residential satisfaction are divided in the following table 1.

**Table 1: the effective factors in satisfaction**

characteristics	factors	row
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Age and stage of life</li> <li>- Social and economic status</li> <li>-Sex and social role</li> <li>-The character and values</li> <li>- comparisons</li> <li>- Wishes for the future [18]</li> </ul>	Individual factors	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-neighbors</li> <li>-norms</li> <li>- others’ priorities [18]</li> </ul>	Social factors	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-family structure</li> <li>-Participation in social activities</li> <li>-the role of sex</li> <li>-attitude towards privacy</li> <li>-The process of social relations [19 ]</li> </ul>	Cultural factors	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- availabilities</li> <li>- Mass and space</li> <li>- Urban Landscape</li> <li>- Environment</li> <li>-social and cultural criteria</li> <li>- Residential units</li> <li>(quantitative and qualitative characteristics )</li> <li>-Facilities in the complexes</li> <li>( entertainment , services , sports )</li> <li>[18]</li> </ul>	Architecture and environmental factors	4

### The Quality of Living Environment

The subject of the quality of environment is rooted in the issues of life quality. Life quality as a multidimensional and important concept in the life of modern societies has penetrated in many scientific fields including urban planning and designing. Life quality generally means public well-being of people and the environment in which they live and it

is also a very abstract concept which cannot be defined comprehensively. The quality of residential environment is a concept with subjective value. This value is determined by the value of urban residential environment which includes basic characteristics such as individual satisfaction with house, neighborhood and neighbors. Therefore, the general subjective value of urban residential

environment is equal to the total evaluations of characteristics and constructive components of environment. The characteristics of a residential environment provide some potential functions for it. People normally use only a limited number of potential functions. Different people do different activities. Thus, the environment provides different functions for different people and creates different meanings. The quality of environment can influence people's perception and feeling towards an environment. However, in equal environments, people's perception and feeling are not the same. These differences can be social, economic, or psychological. On the other hand, elevating the relationship between an individual and the environment is one of those issues that have been considered in the last few decades. One of the most important issues in the studies of residential environment quality is considering the method of interaction and relationship between humans and their surroundings. People's perception and attitude in a place towards their environment have an impact on the level of their relationship with this environment and also on the level of their satisfaction. People have different needs. In order to realize them, suitable contexts should be provided. Environment and the

place surrounding humans is one of the most basic contexts for realizing human's multi-dimensional needs. A good environment can help actualizing the potentials of a person. The place of residence is the first environment in which people explore their surrounding and achieve experience. In fact, satisfaction with residential environment reflects one's perception of the environment and his/her relationship with it. The level of satisfaction with environment actually reflects the interaction between subjective and objective characteristics of the individual and the environment. In identifying the factors effective in the level of residential satisfaction and dissatisfaction, future decisions in order to improve the quality of people's residence areas and avoiding repeating the failures in other places are helpful.

### **The Concept of Satisfaction**

The concept of satisfaction refers to a wide range of interests and desires for fulfilling human's basic and significant needs. Most people want what they cannot afford, therefore, due to different reasons, they have to choose and realize their needs through the ways which are not their favorite ones. We gain satisfaction when we can choose and achieve what we desire although this satisfaction might cover wide ranges.

A person gains satisfaction if the current conditions are consistent with what he/she has defined for his/her own needs and desires. In this case, the people who cannot adapt to the current conditions of residence by no means are prone to struggle in order to reduce their dissatisfaction by changing their living conditions, such as repairing or moving to new residential conditions with greater adaptation.

The “residential satisfaction” theory is used for setting a guiding framework in order to identify the structural characteristics of households and the contexture of their place of residence (including house and neighborhood) that influence different aspects of satisfaction. Since residential satisfaction is in general a part of the satisfaction with life is regarded as one the most studied subjects in the field of residential environment. In dictionary, the word “satisfaction” means “fulfillment or a source of pleasure and satisfaction”. Moreover, satisfaction is called the happiness, satisfaction and utility that is brought about by the suppliers’ fulfillment of demanders’ needs, necessities and desires. According to Cutler, satisfaction level depends on the difference between one’s perception of performance and expectations. There are many types of satisfaction, one of

which is the satisfaction with residential environment or residential satisfaction. Residential satisfaction is an important component in understanding the general quality of life and is gained when the place of residence satisfy a person in terms of being and living in a place.

### **The Concept of Residential Satisfaction**

The concept of residential satisfaction is closely related to some concepts such as the standards of living, welfare, and habitability, quality of location, quality of life concerning health and quality of life. In fact, these concepts overlap with one another and are sometimes synonymous. Residential satisfaction reflects a degree of residents’ feelings which helps them to achieve their goals. The evaluation of the place of residence conditions depends on one’s own needs, expectations, aspirations and understanding of his/her actual house. Residential satisfaction is regarded as a degree of satisfaction experienced by an individual or a family member while considering the current housing situation. Residential satisfaction depends on a complicated attitude which includes the satisfaction with residential unit, neighborhood and region. According to Ogu, (2002), the concept of housing or residential satisfaction is often used to evaluate the

residents' perception and feeling towards their residential units and environments. The concept of residential satisfaction is used as a key to predict one's perception of "life quality". Some researchers have argued that the residents' perception of the environment defines the quality of their life. Significant evidences in previous studies show that residential satisfaction is influenced by a wide range of objective and subjective perceptual conditions. Habitability of a house is not only affected by engineering mechanisms, but also by social, cultural behaviors and other elements in the whole socio- environmental system. A house is only one link of the chain of factors which determines the relationship between people's relative satisfaction and their place of residence. In general, the concept of housing in individual houses is not a lie. It rather forms a combination of physical and social components of the housing system. Some values influential in people's satisfaction factor include: **A) individual values, b) social, economic and cultural values , c) environmental values**

Accordingly, residential satisfaction is the result of individual perception. It is similarly a criterion for evaluating whether a place of residence answers the needs of families and individual residents or not. Consequently, the

primary studies of satisfaction have been conducted more on the basis of one-dimensional approaches. Some researchers have described the stages of the perception of people's satisfaction level with only a conceptual point of view which means that a person evaluates his/her current residence condition by taking a set of needs and desires into consideration. For example, residential satisfaction is the visible gap between residents' aspirations and needs and the current reality of their residential context. In other words, residential satisfaction has been considered to be equal to the level of one's experienced satisfaction as a member of a family with their current condition. A high quality environment gives its residence a feeling of welfare and satisfaction through physical, social or symbolic characteristics. In addition to the above definitions, Amerigo has proposed a model for residential satisfaction in which he studies the interaction between people and the environment. This approach calls for the realization of the dynamic relationship between an individual and the environment and for an analysis of cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes which take place in this relationship.

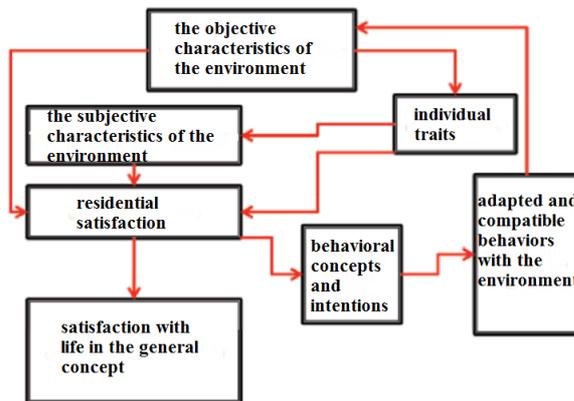


Figure 3: Amerigo's Model for Determining Residential Satisfaction

The model that Amérigo suggests gives a picture of satisfaction (Figure 3). In this model, the objective characteristics of the residential environment, after taking individual characteristics into consideration, are evaluated and subjectified by an individual and cause the increase in the satisfaction level. On the other hand, it can be said that there is a bilateral relationship between place of residence and residents and s achieving residential satisfaction.

place of residence plays an effective role in gaining their satisfaction. On the other hand, satisfaction results in the improvement of environmental quality and the realization urban goals. Households' satisfaction with the environmental conditions and housing characteristics is one of the most important criteria of life quality in the process of housing policies evaluation. Considering environmental values in the long term leads to residential satisfaction.

Households' satisfaction with their place of residence is gained based on their goals, needs and capacities. The inconsistency between these three factors and the current situation will result in dissatisfaction and consequently their movement. In these cases, the main purpose of families in moving i

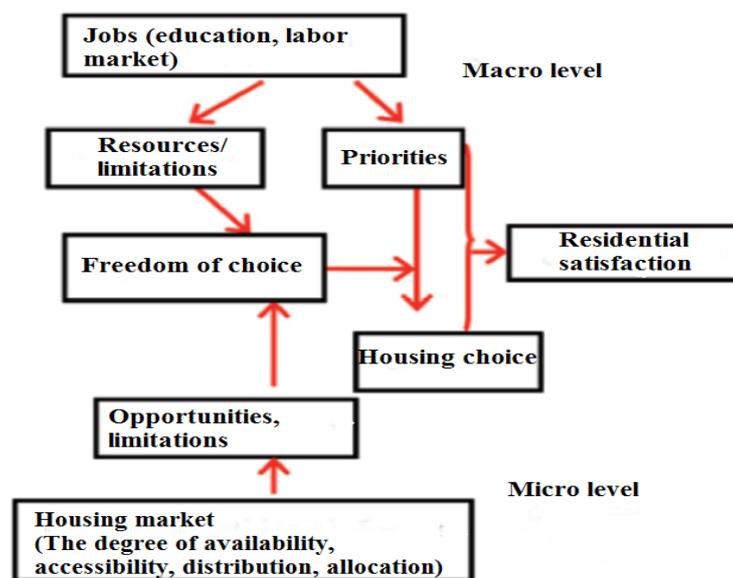


Figure 4- the conceptual model of housing choice and residential satisfaction

Residential movement is neither the goal nor demand per se. It is rather the result of the contrast between satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Figure 4).

### **Residential Satisfaction: from Subjectivity to Objectivity**

Residential satisfaction has relatively certain physical and social dimensions. In the physical dimensions, the amount of space for residential unit, number of rooms, house space, open space per capita, inner and outer appearance and installations are taken into consideration and in social dimensions, some indicators such as the people in the room, people in residential units, households in residential units can be referred to. Objective characteristics of residential environment are once evaluated by an individual and, by being subjectified, manifest themselves as a certain degree of satisfaction. Therefore, subjective characteristics are influenced by what is called individual traits in the picture. This unit involves objective sociodemographic and individual characteristics. It is regarded as “a high quality housing model” as well. In fact, it is a normative element through which people compare their real and ideal place of residence. The result of this evaluation is residential satisfaction. It is a positive

emotional enjoyment which a person experiences towards his/her place of residence and leads him/her to behave in a specific way and brings about the main satisfaction or increasing congruence with the environment. As previously noted, the cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements are included in the proposed interaction in the model.

The elements of time and place have a significant impact on the formation of satisfaction. What satisfied humans in the past is perhaps less effective in the mind of modern man or perhaps even does not have a role and older standards are replaced by a set of new values. On the other hand, environmental conditions affect humans' interpretation of this concept as well. This effect is due to the fact that individuals' expectations and desires chiefly depend on social norms and these norms differ from one society to another and sometimes even in a smaller scale. Based on what has been noted so far, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between physical, social variables, objective characteristics and subjective perception, the most important of which are displayed in the following figure (Figure 5).

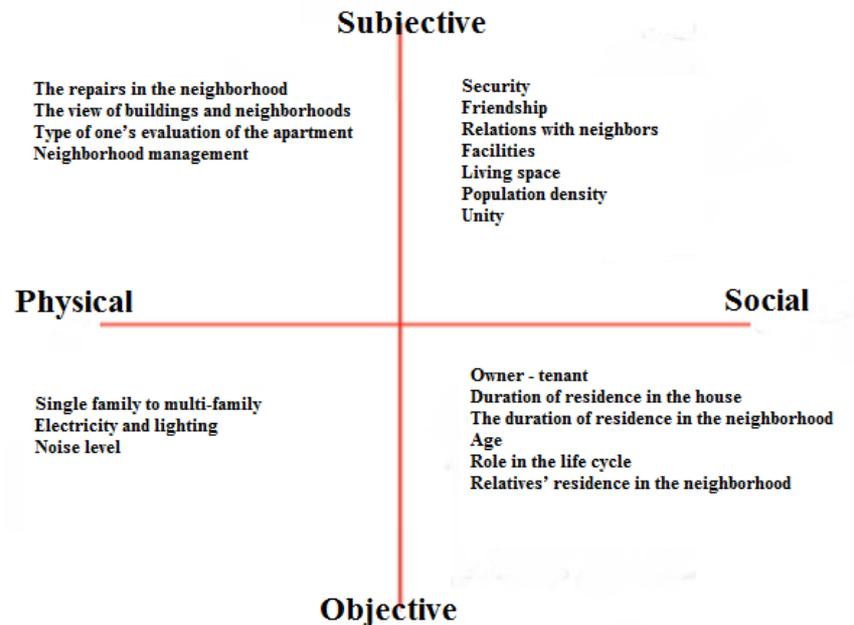


Figure 5- the relationship between physical and social variables, and subjective perception in residential satisfaction model

### The Indicator of Sense of Satisfaction

People's interaction with the environment occurs at different levels (from bedroom to the neighborhood and the entire city). These levels as the levels of interaction with the environment have been used for the evaluation model of residential satisfaction. Different levels from which people might have a satisfactory experience have been determined. The evaluation of human's other interactions with environment such as space experience and a sense of privacy in different layers of the house is similar to the emphasized layers. Although the definition of levels and indicators vary according to the type of study and the researcher's needs,

most studies have been conducted at two levels of residential and neighborhood units.

### Important factors effective in residential satisfaction

According to what has previously been stated, it can be concluded that people's attitude towards their place of residence (at the levels of residential, regional and neighborhood units) play an important role in determining the level of residential satisfaction. Six categorized areas of variables influencing residential satisfaction have been proposed by Francesca to which are as follows:

1. **Objective environmental characteristics** (visible characteristics in the environment)
2. **Individual characteristics** (individual traits)

that influence satisfaction including demographic and personality factors, values, expectations, comparing other houses and hope for future) **3. Beliefs 4. Perceptions 5. Emotions 6. Behavioral intentions.** In short, four important areas influencing life quality and residential satisfaction, based on these six areas, include:

- Natural environment (the environment and surroundings) including house and neighborhood unit
- Society and cultural including the existing relationships in life such as familial relations, relations with neighbors, the concept of society
- Economic conditions such as job, issues related to the retail, commerce and business
- Public services and facilities accessible to residents such as police stations, firefighting systems

The above factors are all linked together (interrelated) and play an important role in creating residential satisfaction either at home or in the environment.

In general, it can be said that measuring the level of residential satisfaction is complicated and depends on many factors. According to the achieved information, the level of residential satisfaction indicate that understanding the level of satisfaction by any person is different in different individual

, social, economic, cultural and physical circumstances. Several researchers have studied the impact of these conditions on the perception of satisfaction. Some individual traits influencing satisfaction include demographic and personality factors, values, expectations, comparing other houses and hope for future. Some individual and family characteristics such as age, sex and ownership have an impact on the perception of environment quality. In general, both the elderly and young people have been satisfied with their living conditions. Moreover, it seems that the owners have been more satisfied than tenants. However, the impact of these characteristics has been inconsiderable. The results of Baba and Austin's study suggest that upper class people, the elderly and owners are respectively more satisfied with the physical characteristics of their neighborhood and neighborhood units, in comparison with lower class people, the youth and tenants. Residential satisfaction directly depends on the level of satisfaction in two criteria of residential units and neighborhood or neighborhood unit and indirectly depends on individual, cultural and social characteristics. In empirical models of studies on the quality of residential environments, the level of satisfaction with residential units has been

considered as one of the main criteria. Figure 7 shows the status of satisfaction with

residential units in the quality assessment model of residential environment.

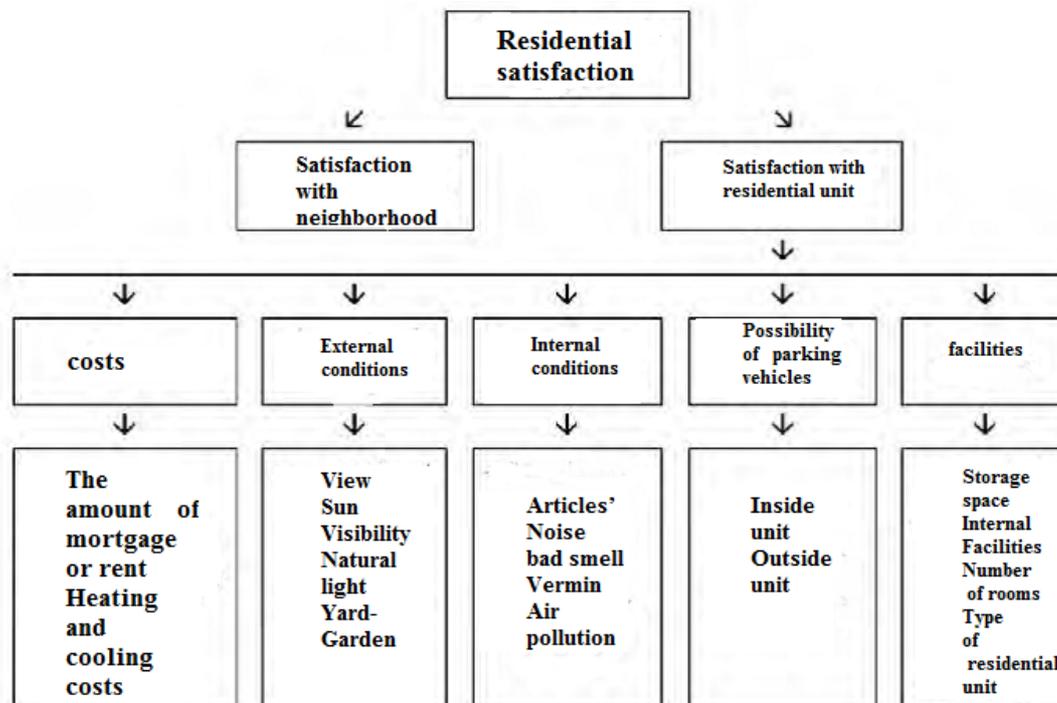


Figure 7- the empirical model of satisfaction with residential unit assessment

## CONCLUSION

Residential satisfaction can be defined as a multi-factor concept which cannot be measured only with a simple question. On the other hand, this theory is formed based on the difference between real life of families and their ambitions for the conditions and situations of residential units and its surrounding. Satisfaction is achieved when the needs and desires are consistent.

The assessment model of residential environments especially in the case of satisfaction can be influential in identifying the current condition, awareness of strengths, possible shortcomings and

drawbacks with the aim of improving the quality of residential environments. In this regard, one of the best assessment models is employing residents' viewpoints on their residential environments which are used indirectly in the form of a hierarchical model including the components of satisfaction with residential environments. Residential satisfaction is one of those issues that is mostly studied and verified in the field of residential environments which is a part of life satisfaction field. Since individual traits are not ineffective in the perception of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of the residential

environment, this study which considers individual characteristics as the independent variable and satisfaction with residential complexes as the dependent variable aims to assess the level of residents' satisfaction with residential complexes. Satisfaction approach is one of the approaches that have been introduced in the issues of environmental quality over recent decades. Residents evaluate their residential environment based on important components effective in the level of satisfaction with residential environment which are variable for various people due to their different individual traits and situations. Owing to population growth and increasing demand for residential complexes in cities, clarifying some models and guidelines to achieve the planned objectives (providing security, sense of place, environment variables, physical and service facilities, availabilities and social tendencies which, as human factors, play a significant role in people's satisfaction and comfort in their life seems necessary. Conventional low density and open space in residential complexes are important factors in creating suitable green space, good air

flow in it and peace. From the viewpoint of the residents of residential complexes, the existence of suitable green space and respecting privacy is the main factor in realizing the qualitative criteria of residential environment. It is the relationship of people with the natural environment that finally leads to the social importance of space. Good view increases the sense of belonging to a place. Therefore, it seems that as the level of sense of satisfaction with an environment increases, people feel more sense of belonging to that environment, feel more relaxed while being in that environment and ultimately, the relationships become warmer and the impact of environment on people increases. Furthermore, residential satisfaction can cause positive environmental effects in the process of relations in which the environment is being shaped. Accordingly, residential satisfaction is dependent on residents' traits, objective and subjective characteristics of residential environment, people's needs and desires, social, economic, cultural and physical factors of housing and society.

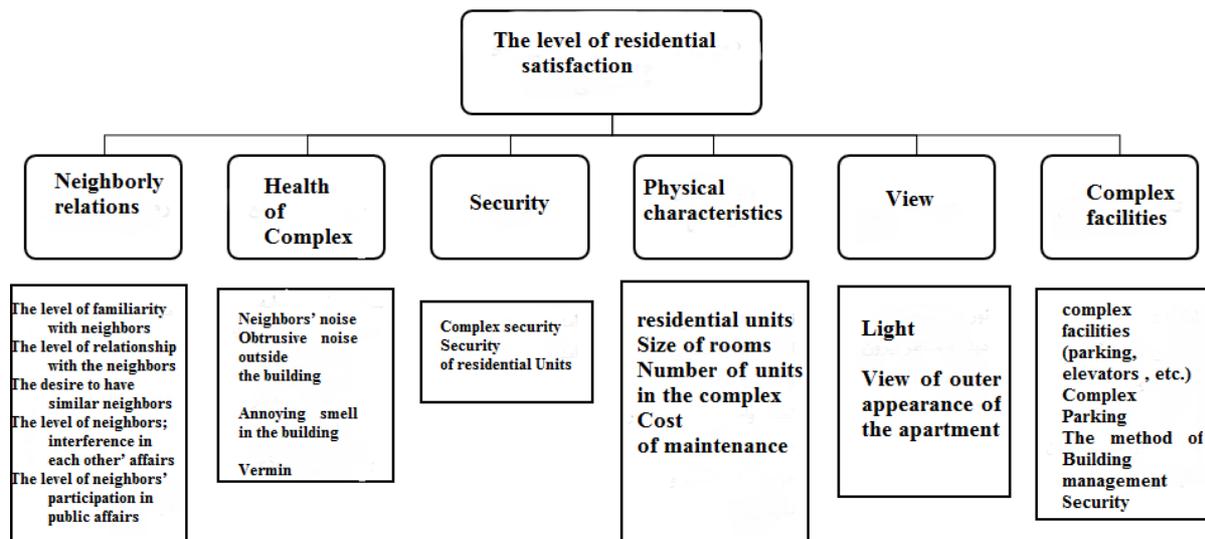


Figure 8- the empirical model of the assessment of the level of satisfaction with residential units

Table 2 – The criteria of residential satisfaction assessment ,  
Source: (author)

variables	criteria	row
Type of residential units, dimensions of residential units, Number of bedrooms, number of units in the complex The size of the building, repair and maintenance costs Aesthetics of the building, building density, architectural style Utility of the interior and exterior spaces, ceiling altitude, Outer appearance compared with adjacent buildings, The separation of private and public spaces, Access routes to the residential units. Public transportation Neighborhood Centers, meeting centers, shopping malls, parking and storage space Color of spaces, spaces lighting, good ventilation, noise level, fire extinguishing System Lack of visibility, lack of interference paths, the existence of personal space and privacy, Hierarchy, heating and cooling facilities, green space, quality of building structure, permeability.	Physical components	1
Space landscape, the proportions of space, air and proper wind flow, sense of belonging, Neighborly relations, unity, population density, attachment, age, type of ownership. Sex Climatic comfort, social class, period of residence, number of children, the spiritual Characteristics, cultural and social traits, noise pollution, air pollution, local active centers. Sense of place, sense of time, sense of belonging, a sense of vitality, Sense of friendship and cooperation, sense of privacy, identity, beliefs and views, behavioral intentions , perception	Perceptive components	2
Flexibility, visual compatibility, universality and social life, Safety and security, permeability, riding-walking accessibility inside complexes Good access to services, facilities and major utilities, open space per capita, installations. management and maintenance, costs, designing according to climate, congestion control , stability , system of waste collection , environment quality , facilities for the disabled, space for spending leisure time(for gatherings , sports and recreational facilities , playground space) , educational services ( primary, secondary , high school ) , social care services,	Functional components	3

business services (shopping centers), public transport services (bus station, subway), business services , health services		
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