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Original Research Article

Examining Women's Needs and Preferences in the Semi-Public Spaces of High-Rise Gated Communities*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Investigating the concept of lifestyle as a comprehensive set of activities and living patterns can provide insights into residents' needs and preferences, informing spatial planning and residential design. Given that women comprise half of any society's population, understanding their lifestyles is crucial, as it offers perspectives on how the residential environment may impact their physical and mental well-being, contributing to the reduction of gender-based inequalities and the enhancement of their quality of life. However, residential behaviors shaped by women's lifestyles have rarely been explored in the literature.

Research objective: This study aims to identify women's needs and preferences in the semi-public spaces of high-rise gated communities, considering their lifestyle patterns.

Research method: Autoethnography was chosen as the research method to explore women's activity patterns and housing preferences. To analyze the qualitative data, reports were coded, and thematic analysis was employed to extract key themes.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that spatial limitations within apartment units, along with restrictions on time and place for utilizing public spaces outside the building, have created challenges for many activities. Consequently, most women seek a residential environment that supports their social, leisure, professional, and occupational activities. Additionally, key preferences include the management of objects in shared spaces, spatial density management and congestion control, regulation of pet movement, and access to security infrastructure and provisions. As a result, utilizing semi-public spaces to integrate daily life and extend lifestyle beyond the private unit—alongside their role as connective spaces—can enhance the quality of life in these communities at various levels.

Keywords: *Women's lifestyle, Housing preferences, Semi-public space preferences, High-rise gated communities, Gated communities.*

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Introduction and Problem Statement

The rapid urban expansion in Iran since the early 20th century, along with the emergence of a new housing typology apartments has significantly transformed urban residential patterns (Azizi & Malek Mohammadnezhad, 2008, 29). The 1950s marked the beginning of high-rise construction in Tehran, accompanied by the promotion of residential districts and housing complexes for low-income migrants. By the 1960s, the development of gated communities catering to middle-income groups gained momentum. The 1970s witnessed a surge in high-rise luxury housing projects, primarily designed for affluent residents, which became increasingly popular (Einifar, 2005, 30). Following a decade of stagnation, a new wave of high-rise developments began in Tehran in the late 1980s, fueled by rising land prices and municipal policies promoting density sales (Talebi & Kalantari, 2016, 12), and this trend continues to the present day. These communities are structured across three spatial layers: private spaces (individual residential units), semi-public spaces (shared indoor spaces within buildings, including corridors, stairwells, lobbies, etc.), and public spaces (interstitial areas between buildings, including green spaces, children's play areas, commercial facilities, and other communal amenities) (Kim, 2006, 25). Despite the increasing demand for this housing typology, the extensive development of high-rise gated communities in Tehran appears to lack the necessary specialized research foundation. The design and planning of such densely populated residential environments, given their multiple spatial scales and diverse resident demographics, necessitate extensive interdisciplinary research—particularly concerning lifestyle patterns. Residential planning should accommodate the diverse lifestyles of individuals and families, ensuring that residents are not compelled to conform their lifestyle to the built environment. Instead, the built environment should be designed to support a broad spectrum of lifestyles and household preferences (Lufkin et al., 2018, 5). Consequently, understanding the needs and preferences of different demographic groups—particularly women—is essential

for research in this field. Women, who assume multiple and diverse roles within both the household and society, may encounter specific challenges and requirements in relation to residential environments. Given the limited body of research addressing qualitative, lifestyle-based preferences and needs within the semi-public spaces of high-rise gated communities, the present study aims to explore these aspects. This research seeks to identify the patterns of women's daily activities and how they are accommodated within semi-public spaces in high-rise gated communities. The findings provide recommendations for enhancing the design and planning of these spaces, ultimately contributing to improved quality of life for women in this residential typology.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

• Semi-public space in high-rise gated communities

Semi-public space in high-rise gated Communities encompasses internal passageways within apartment blocks, open areas, and shared spaces such as lobbies, interior corridors, external balconies, communal halls, elevators, staircases, parking areas, gyms, swimming pools, semi-open and open courtyards, rooftops, and other shared zones within the blocks. These semi-public spaces are exclusively accessible to the residents of each block and are designed for their collective use (NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2015, 96).

The research background indicates that numerous factors are involved in the planning and design of semi-public spaces, and this subject has been explored from various research perspectives, including the impact of the pandemic on shared spaces in high-rise buildings (March & Lehrer, 2022), the design and planning of social spaces to enhance resident interactions within the living environment (Muhuri & Basu, 2021; He, 2018; Bee & Im, 2016), the design of shared spaces in high-rise apartments based on children's perception (Lum, 2011), and the integration of green spaces with shared spaces in high-rise buildings (Prihatmanti & Taib, 2018; Chan, 2005). A review of previous studies suggests that limited research has

been conducted on lifestyle-based resident preferences in the design of semi-public spaces in high-rise gated Communities. This research gap underscores the need for further studies to gain a deeper understanding of residents' preferences and improve their quality of life.

• Review of housing preference studies

The integration of lifestyle studies into housing research provides diverse objectives and applications for analysis. A brief review of studies on housing and lifestyle indicates that research adopting a lifestyle-oriented approach has been conducted in various domains, including the meaning of home, housing preferences, housing design, and building energy consumption (Zarrabi et al., 2022, 578; Zarrabi et al., 2021a, 10). Given the selected approach of the present study, the following section examines research conducted in the field of housing preferences. The study of housing preferences plays a crucial role in international research, particularly in housing planning, marketing, and the provision of high-quality housing. This subject is often analyzed in relation to residents' lifestyles (Zarrabi et al., 2022, 580). A review of existing research suggests that housing preferences can be examined across five primary dimensions.

The first dimension focuses on the preferred location and spatial characteristics of housing, analyzing how residents' lifestyle choices influence their selection of a neighborhood or area. Key factors in this category include access to schools, workplaces, public transportation systems, green spaces, retail stores, healthcare facilities, recreational, sports, and religious amenities, commuting time, proximity to government institutions, population density, and building height (Lindberg et al., 1988; Ærø, 2006; Frenkel et al., 2013; Jansen, 2012; Jansen, 2014; Lee et al., 2007; Zhang, 2020). The second dimension pertains to economic factors related to housing, where studies explore the financial aspects of housing decisions. These include affordability, purchase or rental prices, mortgage payments, energy consumption costs, maintenance and management expenses, tenure type (ownership vs. rental), and housing as an investment (Andersen, 2011; Darab et al., 2018; Jansen, 2012; Palicki, 2020;

Salama, 2006). The third dimension of housing preferences relates to design and architecture, focusing on the types of residential dwellings preferred by individuals, including single-family detached houses, apartments, high-rise buildings, and townhouses. This category also encompasses factors such as architectural styles, interior design, space size and dimensions, the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, spatial organization and layout, building standards, decorative elements, natural lighting, building age, the use of sustainable technologies, parking capacity, façade aesthetics, and the technical condition of the building (Ærø, 2006; Beamish et al., 2001; Gram-Hanssen et al., 2004; Hooimeijer & Schutjens, 1991; Jansen, 2012; Jansen, 2014; Kwon et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2007; Peatross & Hasell, 1992). The fourth dimension pertains to socio-cultural factors, focusing on resident characteristics and the broader residential environment. This includes aspects such as the demographic composition of neighbors in terms of age and behavior, household structures (including singles, elderly individuals, and families), the presence of immigrants and ethnic groups, socio-economic homogeneity, opportunities for neighborly interaction, neighborhood vibrancy, environmental tranquility, social support networks, building regulations and requirements, and crime history (Akmal Farraz et al., 2021; Darab et al., 2018; de Jong et al., 2018; Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen, 2004; Jansen, 2012; Jansen, 2014). Finally, the fifth dimension focuses on demographic group preferences, addressing the unique challenges and needs of various population segments, including families, singles, elderly residents, income groups, and immigrants (Akmal Farraz et al., 2021; Darab et al., 2018; de Jong et al., 2018; Gürel & Öztop, 2014; Kam et al., 2018; Karsten, 2006; Kim et al., 2003; Kwon et al., 2016). To achieve a comprehensive understanding of residents' housing preferences, researchers often integrate these dimensions into their studies and propose housing design, development, and planning strategies accordingly.

Housing preference studies conducted in Iran include the assessment of physical-spatial needs in high-rise

buildings based on residents' preferential priorities (Kamelnia & Karimani, 2019), the identification and prioritization of flexible housing interior design strategies aligned with the lifestyles of Tehran residents (Zare Shahamati et al., 2023), the identification of residents' preferences and priorities in selecting healthy homes in Tehran's apartment units in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Zarrabi et al., 2021b), and the identification of housing preferences in Tabriz (Rostaie et al., 2023).

• Gender in lifestyle and housing research

While gender has not been a primary focus in lifestyle and housing studies, a limited number of studies have addressed gender differences, and several others have specifically concentrated on women. Rapoport (Rapoport, 1929, as cited in Rapoport, 2016), in his study of cultures from different regions, highlighted various approaches toward gender issues, private life within the home, public spaces, and the tendency toward privacy. Devlin (1994, 225) explored the relationship between gender and the preferred choices of different housing styles and types of residential environments. In another study (Graff, 1982), the author examined changes in housing design during suburbanization and its connection to women's employment. Yuhaniz & Jusan (2016) in their study identified the roles and activity patterns of housewives and their relationship with Malaysian housing design preferences. Darab et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study on housing preferences among single women, the elderly, and non-homeowners in Australia. In Iran, studies on the spatial interpretation of homes in relation to gender and lifestyle have been conducted. These studies examine the reflection of gender in the spatial organization of traditional homes (Mehri et al., 2021; Mohammadzadeh et al., 2022; Ebrahimi et al., 2017; Rashidzadeh & Habibi, 2020; KamiShirazi et al., 2018; Varmaghani, H., & Soltanzade, 2018).

• Summary of the literature review

A review of the literature related to housing preferences reveals that in some studies, no specific categorization has been provided for housing characteristics. Instead, a set of pre-defined spatial characteristics (constructed

by the researcher) has been presented at macro scales (including neighborhood, district, and city characteristics) and micro scales (including the external structure or the internal space of the housing unit). In such cases, respondents have not been allowed to freely choose preferences based on their lifestyle, and other spatial aspects, such as semi-public spaces in high-rise gated communities, have been less examined. Furthermore, the review indicates that the study of lifestyle among demographic groups has been very underrepresented in studies conducted in Iran. Gender research in the field of lifestyle and housing shows that the role of women and their interaction with various spaces within the home has been diverse across cultures and historical periods, and gender has had a direct or indirect influence on the design, formation, and choice of housing. Most domestic research in this field has focused on traditional housing types, with fewer studies on contemporary housing types. Based on this, the present study, considering the less studied aspects, focuses on the examination of semi-public spaces in high-rise gated communities as a spatial dimension and targets the demographic group of women to explore lifestyle-based housing preferences.

• Operationalizing the concept of lifestyle in housing studies

One way to understand the concept of lifestyle in housing studies is by defining the components that influence it. Table 1 shows the components extracted from the review of lifestyle and housing research.

The most common operationalizations of lifestyle in research are based on the following aspects: examining objective components (e.g., household activities), examining subjective components (e.g., attitudes, opinions), a combination of subjective and objective components, a combination of socio-demographic characteristics, and a combination of socio-demographic characteristics and other components (Jansen, 2012). A review of the conducted studies shows that demographic characteristics and activity components are two important evaluation factors in international studies (Zarrabi et al., 2021a), while demographic and economic factors have been less

Table 1. Lifestyle Components in housing studies. Source: Zarrabi Alhosseini, 2021.

| Components | Physical / Material Dimension | | | Mental / Immaterial | | Social - Demographic Characteristics | |
|------------------------|--|---|---|--|-------------------------|---|--|
| | Daily activities | Social relationships | Cultural activity | Psychological | Ideology | Economic | Demographic |
| Examples of Components | - Leisure time - Housework Paid work at home Daily habits Personal hygiene | - Family relationships - Social interactions | - Customs and traditions - Cultural activities | - Needs - Taste - Sense of belonging - Personal Characteristics | - Beliefs - Religion | - Income - Ownership - Technology - Social class | - Household structure - Gender - Age - Employment Education |

prominent in studies conducted in Iran. Therefore, in this study, by combining socio-demographic characteristics (such as attention to household structure and social class of residents) and the objective component of activity, the needs and preferences of women in the semi-public spaces of high-rise gated communities were identified. Fig. 1 summarizes the research studies.

Research Methodology

Considering the subject of the present study, a qualitative ethnographic approach and the method of autoethnography were utilized. To understand the lifestyle and living patterns of women, life stories were collected along with narratives of activities taking place in residential spaces.

Sociological studies indicate that residents of different areas of Tehran, due to the distribution of economic and cultural capital, belong to distinct social classes and have different lifestyles (Kalantari & Taslimi Tehrani, 2014, 187). Therefore, to conduct housing preference research, it is necessary to focus on a community where individuals exhibit greater homogeneity, reducing the influence of intervening factors as much as possible. The geographical distribution of different social classes in the areas of Tehran shows three categories: upper, middle, and lower social classes (ibid., 187). This highlights the fact that, due to economic difficulties, residents in some areas of Tehran cannot choose their lifestyle and housing forms, while in other areas, where there is complete economic prosperity, residents have the most freedom of choice (Zarrabi Alhosseini, 2021). Consequently, the current research, excluding areas from both the high and low social class ends, aims to

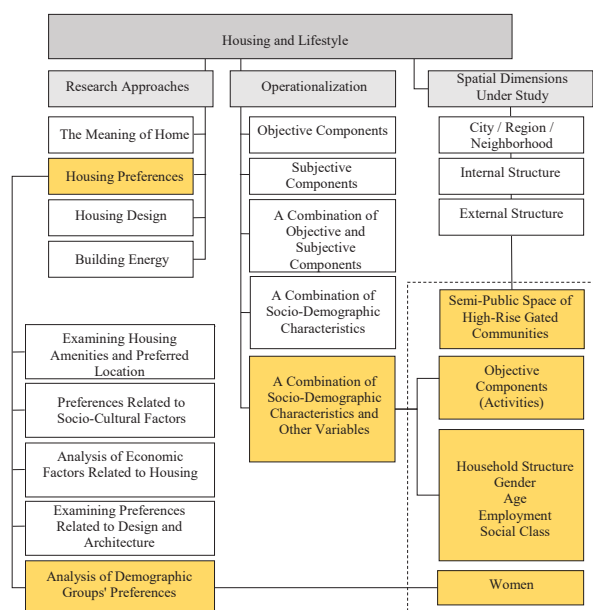


Fig. 1. Summary of research studies. Source: Authors.

select residents from the middle spectrum who, with relative economic capability, have the ability to choose their lifestyle and residential architecture. Thus, in the first step, urban areas of Tehran were restricted to those focused on the middle class. According to research, residents of different city areas exhibit very diverse patterns of activities and interpersonal relationships (Michelson & Reed, 1970). In the second step, District² of Tehran was chosen for the study due to its high concentration of gated communities within middle-class areas.

The typology of gated communities, based on the coexistence of open and closed spaces, reveals that the dominant layout of Tehran’s gated communities consists of scattered blocks in open spaces, with the most common construction type being high-rise

buildings (Ghazizadeh, 2011). Therefore, considering the prevailing type of construction to maximize generalizability, high-rise gated communities with scattered layouts were selected, including Mahan, Mahestan, Shahgholi, Hormozan, and Atisaz complexes. In this qualitative study, the goal was to identify and select participants who, in addition to their willingness to share their lived experiences, were capable of articulating these experiences accurately and effectively. Initially, information about the research plan was communicated through groups related to the residents of the gated communities on messaging platforms. However, due to the insufficient number of samples in some complexes, the information was also disseminated with the help of the managers of these complexes. As a result, 58 individuals expressed their willingness to participate. Instead of random sampling, the study focused on achieving maximum diversity of perspectives. Therefore, after reviewing the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, a purposeful sampling method was used to select women who had household responsibilities and were likely to have a greater impact on the home and family environment. Additionally, factors such as household structure, age, and employment status were considered when selecting individuals. Ultimately, 47 participants were selected as the final sample for reporting. Participants were instructed to present their reports in a narrative form, emphasizing the description of daily activities and their locations within the gated communities¹. After receiving the reports, 12 participants were excluded due to the poor quality of their submissions, and 35 participants were retained for further study. After extracting patterns of daily activities from the received reports, to complete the information and prevent misinterpretations, individual and semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants regarding how they performed their activities, related challenges, and their needs and preferences concerning the semi-public spaces of the gated communities. For organizing qualitative data, coding techniques were employed using thematic analysis and the six-phase framework by Braun & Clarke (2006). Fig. 2 illustrates the stages of the research methodology.

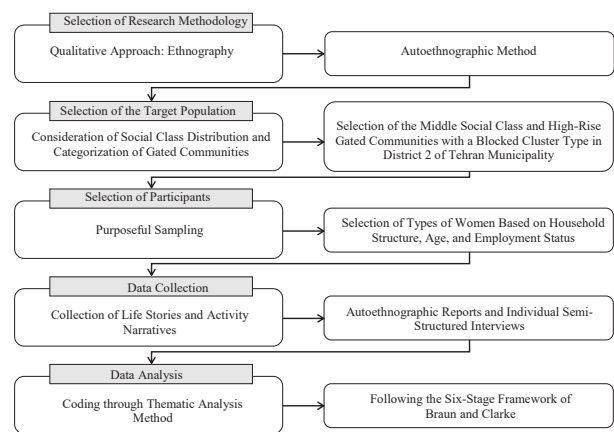


Fig. 2. Stages of the research methodology. Source: Authors.

Discussion and Research Findings

• Semi-public spaces in the studied gated communities

Based on the conducted studies, the semi-public spaces in the studied gated communities are limited to the lobby, hallways between units, stairwells, and parking areas. These spaces connect the public and private areas of the gated communities and serve merely a transitional role. Residents of these complexes lack other shared spaces within the high-rise blocks for engaging in activities and social interactions, and access to the rooftop is restricted.

• Participant characteristics

According to demographic characteristics, 35 women participated in this study, with ages ranging from 25 to 70 years, 66% of whom were employed. Various family structures, including single-person households, couples, couples with children, single-parent households with children, and multi-generational families, were identified in the reports. Table 2 presents the demographic information of the participants.

• Needs and preferences of women in the semi-public spaces of high-rise gated communities

Based on the analysis of individuals' personal narratives within the residential environment and interviews with them, a total of 138 initial codes were extracted². After analyzing the initial codes, 11 Sub-themes were identified, and finally, these 11 Sub-themes were grouped into 7 Main Themes: support for social activities, support for leisure activities, support for work

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of participants. Source: Authors.

| Demographic Characteristics | | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | 25-34 | 9 | 25/7 |
| | 35-44 | 7 | 20 |
| | 45-54 | 6 | 17/1 |
| | 55-64 | 8 | 22/9 |
| | 65-70 | 5 | 14/3 |
| Household Size | 1 | 8 | 14/3 |
| | 2 | 11 | 22/9 |
| | 3 | 8 | 31/3 |
| | 4 | 8 | 22/9 |
| Household Type | Single-person household | 8 | 22/8 |
| | Single parent with child(ren) | 3 | 8/6 |
| | Couple | 9 | 25/7 |
| | Couple with child(ren) | 12 | 34/3 |
| | Multigenerational household | 3 | 8/6 |
| Employment Status | Employed at home | 10 | 28/6 |
| | Employed outside | 13 | 37/1 |
| | Unemployed | 12 | 34/3 |
| | Total | 35 | 100 |

activities, object management in space, management of congestion and overcrowding, management of pet movement, and security facilities and measures. Table 3 presents an example of the production of initial codes, while Table 4 illustrates the classification of main and Sub-themes.

- Support for women’s social activities

Neighbor Interaction: Interaction between neighbors in semi-public spaces can be examined at various levels and dimensions. These interactions may occur through brief, spontaneous encounters or longer conversations and pre-arranged interactions in shared spaces that residents frequently use throughout the day. Therefore, attention should be given to the space’s capacity for pre-arranged interactions as well as short-term social interactions, and to designing collective interaction zones in areas such as the elevator entryway, hallways between units on each floor, and the lobby. Women typically prefer to limit their social interactions with neighbors to outside their residential units due to the need to maintain privacy for themselves and their families. Reports show that most neighborhood interactions between units on each floor and neighboring floors

occur due to shared characteristics such as similar age groups, the presence of children in the family structure, or single-person households. It seems that the proximity of residential units plays a key role in the formation of social networks in high-density living environments. These findings highlight the importance of paying attention to the layout of semi-public spaces with lower capacity between floors to enhance social connections between neighboring floors. Some narratives point to limitations in the time and space available for women to use collective spaces outside the building throughout the day, on holidays, and in different seasons. These restrictions have been cited for cultural, security, weather-related, and physical reasons. This issue can serve as an idea for designing larger collective spaces to prevent the limitation of social interactions in adverse conditions. Additionally, there was significant interest among participants in holding meetings, social events, and various ceremonies without needing to leave the building. This highlights the need for attention to the capacity and multi-purpose use of community halls to meet the diverse needs of social activities.

Interaction with Guests: Hosting guests with a number

Table 3. Example of initial code generation. Source: Authors.

| | Semantic Units | Initial Code |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | “My neighbor lives alone. Sometimes she comes to check on me, and if I’m alone, she comes in, but otherwise, we just talk outside the door.” | - Interaction between neighbors in adjacent units - Avoiding hosting guests - Family members present at home - Interaction at the front door |
| 2 | “Right in front of the elevator, and sometimes I see that neighbors who see each other start greeting and chatting, and their conversation goes on and on. They don’t get in the elevator to go, and they don’t open the door for us, the ones who are behind. That whole area is always crowded, and it really bothers me.” | - Casual encounters - brief - Interaction - in front of the elevator - Limited capacity at the elevator entrance - Blocked circulation space - Dissatisfaction with the crowded elevator waiting area |
| 3 | “I wish there was a place in the building where we could sit with my daughter and our neighbor, especially at night when our husbands are home and we can’t go to each other’s houses. That way, we’d still be in the building, and since you can’t go out at night... Everyone could bring their own tea and snacks, for example. Especially in the summer when the kids stay up late.” | - Children’s interactions in shared spaces - Avoiding hosting guests - Family members present at home - Time restrictions for leaving the house at night - Common features in communication - Importance of the placement of shared spaces |

Table 4. Classification of main and sub-themes. Source: Authors.

| | Main Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Support for Women’s Social Activities. | Neighbor Interaction, Interaction with Guests. |
| 2 | Support for Women’s Leisure Activities. | Sports Facilities, Private Outdoor Space, Utilizing Urban Views, Children’s Play Areas. |
| 3 | Support for Women’s professional and occupational activities. | Need for Shared Workspaces. |
| 4 | Management of Objects in Shared Spaces. | Space Organization. |
| 5 | spatial density management and congestion control. | Capacity of Transitional Spaces. |
| 6 | regulation of pet movement. | Impact of Pet Presence on Shared Space Use. |
| 7 | access to security infrastructure and provisions. | Security Needs and Challenges. |

exceeding the indoor space’s capacity and furniture, as well as time restrictions set by the building management, were major challenges faced by residents when holding parties, gatherings, and mourning ceremonies inside their homes. Furthermore, differences in household structures, particularly multi-generational families and families living with young children, have made organizing events and parties within homes challenging. These issues underline the need for designers to consider creating spaces with varying capacities for hosting residents’ private events in shared areas.

- Support for women’s leisure activities

Sports Facilities: The presence of certain sports facilities, such as multipurpose sports halls, swimming pools, and walking paths in the semi-public spaces, was among the preferences of women in gated communities. These opinions and preferences have been mentioned for various reasons, including convenience, ease of

access, and improved time management throughout the day.

Private Outdoor Space: Reports indicate that allocating outdoor space holds special significance for women. Factors such as maintaining privacy, choice of attire, and receiving sunlight for health are the main reasons for this need. Furthermore, designers’ attention to the possibility of converting open and semi-open spaces into enclosed areas as a protective environment against air pollution in certain seasons makes it possible to use leisure spaces throughout the year.

Utilizing Urban Views: Reports show that viewing urban and natural landscapes is one of the significant potentials of living in high-rise gated communities in Tehran, which residents highly appreciate. Attention to the placement of shared spaces, the creation of terraces and balconies overlooking views, and the use of rooftop spaces to maximize the utilization of these

views can positively impact the quality of leisure time for individuals.

Children’s Play Areas: Several participants have emphasized the necessity of creating play areas for children in semi-public spaces and the importance of establishing connections with neighbors who have similar family characteristics. Play areas allow mothers to engage their children in these spaces while attending to their personal or work-related needs. Additionally, the presence of these spaces provides a suitable opportunity for interaction and relaxation for mothers during their leisure time. Fig. 3 illustrates how semi-public spaces support women’s social and leisure activities.

- Support for women’s paid employment activities

Need for Shared Workspaces: The challenges of working from home and the needs related to women’s wage labor were discussed in various ways in the reports. In some cases, the internal space of the home, due to size limitations, the presence of family members, and the specific needs of the activity, was not sufficient, and implementing proposed solutions to facilitate work activities was not supported within the internal space. Therefore, attention to appropriate spatial planning that can facilitate women’s wage labor activities in the semi-public spaces of gated communities is essential. The presence of diverse spaces with adequate facilities for different types of work activities, including focus-based tasks, in-person educational activities, and hands-on tasks, will significantly improve women’s work and

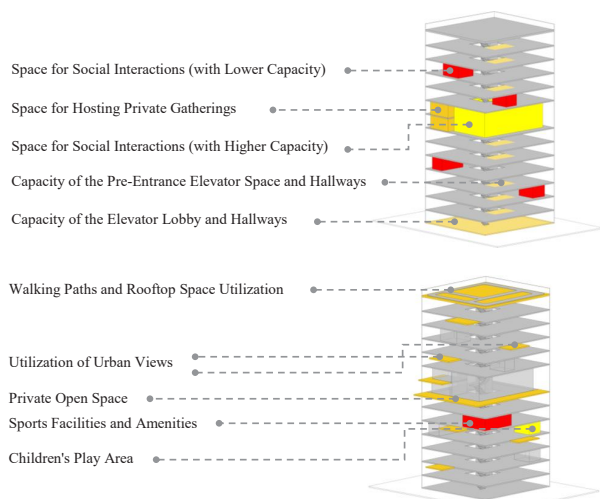


Fig. 3. From Top to Bottom: Support for Women’s Social and Leisure Activities. Source: Authors.

living conditions. Moreover, the reports show that the lack of separation between the workplace and home environment leads to the loss of work-related social interactions and women’s desire to engage with the community outside the home. As a result, providing a workspace in the shared space not only enhances women’s wage labor needs but also helps reduce social isolation and increase interactions among them.

- Management of objects in shared spaces

Space Organization: Organizing space in the semi-public areas was one of the issues mentioned in the reports. Problems such as storing items in hallway spaces between units, accumulation of postal packages, and other resident-related items in the lobby area, as well as the placement of trash bins in stairwells, were among the reasons for resident dissatisfaction and conflicts. Actions such as creating dedicated storage spaces near unit entrances for storing items and shoes, allocating space for bicycle storage near building entrances or in parking areas, improving package and cargo management by designing small storage areas near the lobby, and optimizing semi-public spaces for waste management by creating properly ventilated trash rooms seem necessary. Implementing these measures can help reduce resident dissatisfaction and increase order and coordination in the semi-public space.

- Management of crowding in semi-public spaces

Capacity of Transitional Spaces: Congestion in hallways and the placement of elevators next to some residential units were among the problems discussed in the reports, highlighting the need to consider hallway capacity, define pre-entry spaces for residential units, and strategically place elevators. Proper management of human traffic flow in the use of shared spaces and appropriate architectural design can reduce congestion and improve resident comfort.

- Management of pet movement

Impact of Pet Presence on Shared Space Use: It seems that living with pets has become one of the common lifestyle choices in high-rise gated communities. Therefore, the use of elevators by residents accompanied by their pets has become a regular practice. This can create fear and tension among residents and impose

restrictions on elevator use. Given the importance of elevators in high-rise buildings, the need for alternative elevators for specific situations is essential. This action could provide more comfort and reduce conflicts among residents.

- Security facilities and measures

Security Needs and Challenges: In addition to monitoring and controlling access to lobby and parking areas, the presence of security measures in other semi-public spaces was mentioned as a need in the narratives. Factors such as lost pets, changing shopping patterns, the entrance and exit of non-residents, unfamiliarity with new residents, blind spots in parking areas, reported thefts from storage rooms, and inadequate lighting in semi-public spaces were among the issues contributing to the feeling of insecurity among women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Many high-rise gated communities in Tehran are constructed to simultaneously address land scarcity and the growing housing demand resulting from rapid urban population growth. However, these large-scale developments have largely overlooked residents' lifestyles, and semi-public spaces within high-rise gated communities are often treated as mere transitional areas rather than being designed based on residents' activity patterns. In this context, the present study aims to identify women's needs and preferences in the semi-public spaces of selected high-rise gated communities, including Atisaz, Shah Goli, Hormozan, Mahan, and Mahestan. Reports were gathered from participants with diverse household structures, age groups, and occupations. Analyzing women's activity patterns revealed that spatial constraints within private units, limited timeframes for accessing public spaces, and the lack of adequate facilities in semi-public areas have imposed significant challenges on many lifestyle-based activities. These constraints result in time inefficiencies, delays in completing daily tasks, or the complete omission of certain activities. Consequently, utilizing semi-public spaces for integrating daily routines and extending lifestyle beyond private units— along with their role in facilitating spatial connectivity—

can enhance the quality of life in high-rise gated communities at multiple levels.

Findings indicate that seven key factors shape women's needs and preferences in the semi-public spaces of these gated communities: support for social activities, support for leisure activities, support for professional and occupational activities, management of objects in shared spaces, spatial density management and congestion control, regulation of pet movement, and access to security infrastructure and provisions. The intersection of familial roles with variables such as age, household type, and employment status significantly diversifies housing preferences, demonstrating that variations in lifestyle translate into different residential priorities. These distinctions become particularly evident in the design and planning of semi-public facilities within high-rise gated communities. For instance, reports suggest that middle-aged single women, young stay-at-home working women, and homemakers who spend more time at home may require stronger social support networks within their residential environment compared to others. Consequently, for this group, access to social spaces holds greater importance. In contrast, young working women in single-person or two-person households tend to prioritize hosting guests over establishing social connections with neighbors. Additionally, variations in the age and gender composition of household members in multigenerational families, nuclear families with young children, and single-parent households have led to an increased need and inclination for social interactions in spaces outside the home. These groups may seek semi-public areas that facilitate social activities for all family members. The examination of women's leisure needs further indicates that multipurpose sports halls are of greater significance for younger women, particularly those employed outside the home, as they strive to balance work and life while managing their time effectively. Conversely, amenities such as walking paths in semi-public spaces hold greater importance for middle-aged and elderly women, as well as mothers with young children. These individuals, driven by the need for a change in visual environment and the desire

to leave their homes under restrictive environmental conditions such as air pollution or adverse weather, tend to prefer walking paths in enclosed or semi-open spaces during their leisure time. Among the identified factors, congestion management and the organization of shared objects were priority concerns in the Hormozan and Mahan residential towers, while pet movement regulation and support for professional activities were more significant in Atisaz residential towers. Additionally, support for leisure activities held higher priority in Mahestan and Shah Goli residential towers compared to other factors. Moreover, the need for designated open spaces, access to urban views, and the implementation of enhanced security measures were highlighted as key concerns for most participants, contributing to the overall improvement of women's quality of life in high-rise gated communities. This diversity in preferences underscores the necessity of housing design that aligns with the needs of different groups of women, emphasizing the importance of increased choice and enhanced access to various housing amenities to adequately address residential needs.

This study contributes to shifting the perspective of housing policymakers and planners regarding semi-public spaces in high-rise gated communities, emphasizing the redefinition of these spaces and a deeper understanding of residents' actual needs within shared environments. In general, the design of semi-public spaces is multi-layered, and it is recommended that a comprehensive understanding of daily user activities, consideration of the surrounding environment and urban landscape, climatic factors, and cultural contexts in the spatial characteristics of the built environment be incorporated into the planning process.

Declaration of No Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in conducting this research.

Endnotes

1. This research is part of a more comprehensive study that examines the lifestyle of women across three different spatial scales of residential complexes. In this article, the main focus is on analyzing the activities, needs, and preferences of women in the semi-public spaces of residential complexes.

2. List of Initial Codes are described below:

- Support for Women's Social Activities- Neighbor Interaction: Elevator Entry and Exit Disturbance, Accidental - Brief Encounters, Children's Interactions in Shared Spaces, Low Capacity of Elevator Lobby, Accidental - Long-Term Encounters, Interaction - In Front of the Elevator, Avoidance of Hosting - Responsibilities, Interaction in Hallways Between Units, Need for Space to Host Events, Capacity for Pre-Determined Interactions, Avoidance of Hosting - Lack of Intimacy with Neighbors, Avoidance of Hosting - Presence of Family Members at Home, Need for Privacy - Shifting Interaction Outside the Unit, Interaction Between Neighbors in Adjacent Units, Limited Ability to Leave Home Due to Physical Condition, Limited Ability to Leave Home Due to Air Pollution, Limited Time for Leaving Home at Night, Limited Ability to Leave Home Due to Adverse Weather Conditions, Need for Shared Public Space Between Floors, Dissatisfaction with Elevator Waiting Area Crowding, Obstruction of Traffic Flow, Dissatisfaction with Lobby Crowding, Interaction in Front of the Unit Door, Interaction in the Lobby Space, Creating Space for Watching Movies and TV Programs with Neighbors, Various Aspects of Interaction in Shared Space, Low Capacity of Lobby and Sitting Area for Interaction, Common Features in Communication - Importance of Shared Space.
- Support for Women's Social Activities- Interaction with Guests: Limited Indoor Space for Hosting Large Gatherings, Changing Social Needs as Children Grow, Need for Interactive Space for independent young Adults, Reduced Family Interactions at Home - Lifestyle Changes, Dissatisfaction with Neighbor's Party Noise, Sound Issues and Non-Compliance with Building Regulations, Time Restrictions for Hosting Parties, Insufficient Facilities and Equipment for Hosting Celebrations and Events, Inviting Friends in Parents' Absence, Generation Gap in Social Interactions.
- Support for Women's Leisure Activities - Sports Facilities: The need for sports facilities within the building, the ability to exercise at any time of the day or night, creating a suitable space for exercise alongside family members, diverse sports facilities for different needs, the need for a gym, saving time and reducing the need for commuting, the ability to use the gym in unfavorable weather conditions, facilitating access to sports facilities for women with young children, easy access to sports facilities, walking in shared spaces, limitations on walking in polluted air, and the need for a swimming pool.
- Support for Women's Leisure Activities - Private outdoor space: The negative impact of air pollution on outdoor recreational activities, facilitating access to outdoor spaces for women with mobility issues, the desire for exercise and meditation in outdoor spaces, conducting group activities in outdoor spaces, outdoor spaces to increase access to natural light and sunbathing, the need for entertainment and recreation in outdoor spaces, facilitating access to outdoor spaces for the elderly, creating environmental change by offering diverse spaces, comfortable coverage in public spaces, the need for women-only outdoor spaces, facilitating access to fresh air, preserving women's privacy, facilitating access to outdoor spaces without the need to leave the building.
- Support for Women's Leisure Activities - Utilizing Urban Views: Limited access to the roof, watching the sunset from the staircase, photography and capturing landscapes, watching the mountains, observing and experiencing weather changes in different seasons, lack of access to desirable views in various directions, feeling of calm when viewing natural landscapes, utilizing the roof as a recreational space, facilitating access to urban views, watching the sky and clouds, watching traffic and the city.
- Support for Women's Leisure Activities - Children's Play Areas: The need for a space for short-term child care, the importance of children interacting with their peers, preventing isolation and loneliness of children in the apartment environment, preventing noise and disturbance issues in the apartment, the need for a children's play area in shared spaces, helping working mothers manage their time and daily tasks, creating a space for relaxation and recreation for parents with children, the need for a safe space for children's play, providing an environment for children's entertainment and energy release, reducing parents' stress by having a safe space within the building, the lack of indoor play spaces for children, reducing the need to visit spaces far from home.
- Support for Women's professional and occupational activities - Need for Shared Workspaces: The need to separate work from rest, the need for a change of environment, feelings of loneliness and isolation - working from home, the need for a peaceful environment - teaching, teaching sports skills at home, cooking at home, remote work, teaching music at home, family

activities interfering with work at home, online work meetings at home - noise pollution from other family members, limited space for hands-on work, need for an organized and quiet space - presence of students, need for an independent and quiet workspace, need for full concentration during work, teaching language at home, teaching children at home, spatial limitations for private tutoring, lack of family privacy - student visits, limitations on social relationships while working from home, need to leave the house and interact with others, spatial limitations for sports coaching, scheduling restrictions for work activities - presence of family members, need for easy access to the workspace, spatial limitations for doing artistic work.

- Management of Objects in Shared Spaces- Space Organization: Crowded hallways, storing items in shared spaces, accumulation of belongings in the lobby, poor waste management, shoes left outside unit doors, lack of management of packages and deliveries in the lobby, trash bins placed on stair landings, neighbors reminding each other - disorganization of shared space, blocked trash chutes, accumulation of belongings in the lobby.

- Spatial density management and congestion control- Capacity of Transitional Spaces: Dissatisfaction with the crowded elevator waiting area, the noise caused by guests passing through the hallways, dissatisfaction with the proximity of the unit entrance to the elevator.

- Regulation of pet movement - Impact of Pet Presence on Shared Space Use: Non-simultaneous use of the elevator - Presence of pets, fear of pets, pet movement through shared spaces, creation of tension and conflict among residents.

- Access to security infrastructure and provisions - Security Needs and Challenges: The need for monitoring by non-residents in semi-public spaces, dark spots in parking areas, lack of trust in new residents, feelings of insecurity among women, missing pets in shared spaces, reported thefts from storage rooms, delivery personnel entering and exiting shared spaces, the need for surveillance cameras in all shared areas.

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