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## Student Residential Satisfaction in an On-Campus Housing Facility

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**Abstract:** This research reports the results of residential satisfaction in students' housing in an on-campus housing facility. The study examined how satisfied students were in terms of the six (6) dimensions of living environments under two (2) subcategories which are: 1) physical attributes comprising of students' living condition, community facilities and services, and neighborhood physical surroundings; and 2) social/financial/management attributes including students' social activities, cost of living, and students' preference. Aside from determining the level of satisfaction in the objective attributes of the student housing facility, feedback in terms of other facilities/services to be provided, counseling needs, programs and workshops/seminars to be offered were also solicited from the participants. Data were obtained from questionnaires distributed to a sample of 38 respondents. The results showed that residents' appraisal of the over-all conditions of their living environment both in the physical and social, financial, and management attributes do not meet the students' needs and expectations. Recommendations were forwarded to be able to improve the living environment of the residents and promote student development in the student housing facility.

**Key Words:** student development; student residential life; student residential satisfaction, university

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The establishment and development of student housing facility (SHF) is a challenge for many universities as a result of the continuing extension of higher education institutions and rising student numbers (Muslim, Karim & Abdullah, 2012). Student housing facility presents a unique opportunity for student affairs administrators to contribute to and support the educational experience of the university student. Self-esteem, relationship with significant others, socioeconomic status, and housing condition predict student life satisfaction (Chow, 2005). Housing condition, as a contextual factor, can be divided into living environment, such as the physical condition of the residence, and living arrangements, such as the people being lived with

(Chow, 2005). Muslim, Karim and Abdullah (2012) have noted that in recent decades, the interest in research on living environment has risen, and various approaches, concepts and viewpoints have been applied by housing researchers from an extensive range of disciplines.

#### 1.1 *Student Housing Facility (SHF)*

Student housing has long been regarded as an essential component of the facilities provided by the higher learning institutions in assisting students to expand their intellectual capabilities. According to Hassanain (2008), well planned SHF promotes desirable educational outcomes and help to achieve the broader objectives such as social cohesion and responsible citizenship. Student housing comprises of basic bedroom units with other shared facilities such as bathrooms, toilets,



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laundry, kitchens, common lounges and cafeterias located either per floor level, per block or for the whole student housing accommodation (Amole, 2009a). Furthermore, secure and well-maintain SHFs that provide students with privacy combined with creative residence life programs support the admissions or recruiting process and greatly assist the university in attracting highly qualified students (Roche et al., 2010).

Velasquez-Garcia and Garcia (2016) noted that in the Philippines, majority of the universities caters to commuting students, and very few other offer on-campus residential facilities. Living arrangements for Filipino students can vary from staying with parents to living in a boarding house. Most dormitories and boarding houses in the Philippines are privately owned and that the quality of the facilities and living conditions are variable and mostly unregulated.

Each dwelling unit has the following furniture for each student: bed with used cushion, study table and chair, and locker for storage. Toilets, study, dining, and recreational facilities are communal. Students can bring in their personal equipment (e.g., computers, electric fans, electronic gadgets) but they pay for additional charge for use of electricity. The ratio of toilet facilities and student users are insufficient. Often students have to line up to use the facilities (Velasquez-Garcia & Garcia, 2016).

According to Brillantes et al. (2012), proximity and affordability are the two most important factors in considering a dormitory or boarding house among Filipino university students. Living in the university dormitories provides great convenience to the students. All the dormitories are strategically located near facilities offering basic services for university students related to dining, printing, health, banking, religion, and basic necessities.

### 1.2 *Student Residential Satisfaction (SRS)*

Kotler and Clarke (1987) define satisfaction as a state felt by a person who has experience performance or an outcome that fulfill his or her expectation. Satisfaction is a function of relative level of expectations and perceived performance. The expectation may go as far as before the students even enter the higher education, suggesting that it is important to

determine first what the students expect before entering the university (Palacio, Meneses & Perez, 2002). In contrary, Carey, Cambiano, and De Vore (2002), believed that satisfaction actually covers issues of students' perception and experiences during the college years.

Meanwhile, the term student residential satisfaction (SRS) refers to the student's appraisal of the conditions of their residential environment, in relation to their needs, expectations, and achievements (Amérigo, 1990; Amérigo & Aragonés, 1997; Anderson & Weidemann, 1997; Weidemann & Anderson, 1985). It focuses on the perspective of students as customer. Even though it is risky to view students as customer, but given the current atmosphere of higher education marketplace, there is a new moral prerogative that student have become "customer" and therefore can, as fee payers, reasonably demand that their views be heard and acted upon (William, 2002). Researchers argued that SRS must be assessed based on the actual student experience during the residency period on campus student housing (Hassanain, 2008; Amole, 2009a; Riley et al., 2010).

Amole (2005) has defined satisfaction with SHFs as a pleasant feeling when the students' housing needs have been fulfilled especially with the existence of superiority physical features. Amole (2005) also affirmed that satisfaction with SHFs is students' impression when their privacy needed in a room has been met. Another meaning of satisfaction with SHFs is a good response from the students towards their house environments which promotes positive socialization process, encourages study mood, and has adequate amenities.

### 1.3 *Significance of SRS*

Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Unlike service industries, which hold satisfaction as a goal in and of itself, colleges and universities typically perceive satisfaction as a means to an end. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts, and fundraising (Amole, 2009b). Price et al. (2003) related student interpersonal growth to adequate SHF and Fay



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(1981) highlighted the importance of students' satisfaction in the SHF as a strategy to enhance student development.

Amole (2009a), Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) and Sirgy et al. (2007) claimed that SRS will contribute to overall life satisfaction. Thomsen (2007) argued that greater SRS can be attained through a less institutional housing atmosphere that promotes a homelike environment. If the institutional environment is welcoming, students will be highly satisfied with the surroundings in general (Billups, 2008). Satisfactory environments in student housing is conceptualized where it can stimulate a silent, less crowding, private and suitable room sizes (Cleave, 1996).

Some universities have been using SRS data to better understand the university student life, change the campus environment, and simultaneously create a campus more conducive to the development of students (Nayor, 2009; Survey Unit, 2008; Thomsen, 2008).

#### 1.4 Models to Measure SRS

A synthesis of 20 studies from 1997 to 2012 gave rise to the model that student living satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that has six (6) dimensions under two (2) subcategories which are: 1) physical attributes comprising of students' living condition, community facilities and services, and neighborhood physical surroundings; 2) social, financial, management attributes including students' social activities, cost of living, and students' preference (Muslim, Karim, & Abdullah, 2012). Students' living condition consists of type of accommodation, location/proximity, architectural aspects, internal dwelling facilities and features, usability and arrangement of space, size and physical condition of dwelling, dwelling densities, storage and furniture, and maintenance. Community facilities and services indicates accessibility to campus, city center, health services, shopping and municipal services, availability and maintenance of social, recreational, and educational services, 'Institutionality Facilities' in student housing, and availability of public/neighborhood facilities. Neighborhood physical surroundings are about personalization and identity, privacy, security, safety, and health. Students' social activities describe housemate/roommate social interaction, neighborhood interaction, students' leisure activities, acceptance of student by local resident,

and students' participation on neighborhood activities. Cost of living means financial status, financial behavior, and living expenses. Finally, students' preference consists of source of information and advice in choosing accommodation, time taken to search for accommodation, length of lease/contract, understanding about preference for private house, building social network and developing friendship, freedom to choose where to live, preferred accommodation features, getting connected and staying safe; and living together 'in real home'. Consequently, for this research, the model proposed by Muslim, Karim, and Abdullah (2012) was applied in order to determine the SRS as a result of the student experience living in the SHF.

Institutions which want to deliver quality programs and services to students must be concerned with every aspect of the students' experience on campus. In other words, education quality is not only limited to the lectures and notes received in class or advice and guidance given by lecturers during the consultation hours, but it also includes students' experience while interacting with the various non-academic personnel and components in the university, as well as the physical infrastructure provided by the university more specifically it's student housing facility.

Developing an understanding of SRS is necessary in determining the effect of living environment to students. Further, it will help to determine the extent to which satisfaction with the living environment affects student development. With the various foreign literatures cited regarding student housing and residence life, universities in the Philippines with a SHF needs to explore on the SRS index and impact of the SHF in the student life as well as its contribution to the overall education and formation of their graduates. Currently, there are limited local studies focusing on the quality of living environments among Philippine universities and colleges. This study will be able to provide information on this area of research in order to contribute to the improvement of the current living environments provided to the Filipino college students.



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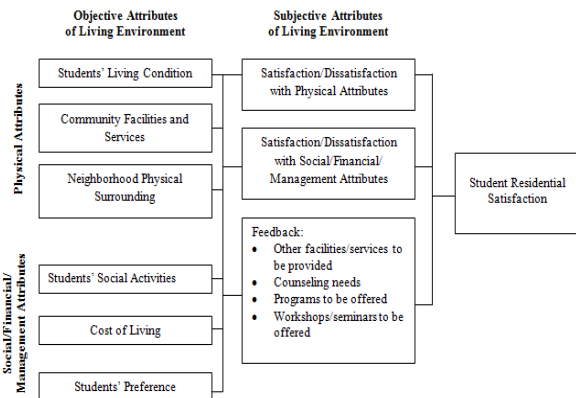


Fig 1. Conceptual Design of the Study

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

The study made use of a descriptive survey design. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated). This study utilized the descriptive survey method in order to obtain information concerning the current status of the quality of experience of the student as measured by the degree of the student residential satisfaction. Through this, participants' thoughts, opinions, and feelings related to their student living environment will be identified.

### 2.2 Participants

The participants of the study were residents of a university dormitory. They are all college students enrolled during AY 2015-16. All the 38 residents were included in the research because they were required by the Executive Director of Student Affairs to participate in this study. Despite their mandated participation, informed consent was requested from all of the participants since data that will be gathered from them will be communicated and shared to the reading public and to those who will benefit from the results of this study.

### 2.3 Research Instrument

In order to answer the questions posted in this study, a survey instrument was developed by the researcher. In the writing of the items in the survey questionnaire, previous studies were first reviewed in order to determine the framework from where the items will be based as well as the categorization of the survey items. The researcher utilized the categories identified by Muhammad Hilmy Muslim, et al. (2012) in coming up with the items for the survey instrument. The first draft of survey questions consists of 64 items. The items were subjected to content validation through the expertise and assistance of three (3) reviewers to determine which items will be considered, revised, or permanently removed from the pool of survey questions. After finalizing the items, only 52 survey questions were subjected to pilot testing.

The survey instrument consisted of 52 close-ended, 5 point Likert-scale items. Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions (Bowling, 1997; Burns, & Grove, 1997). Likert-type was chosen to be the response format for this study because these ordinal scales measure levels of agreement/disagreement which will then determine the level of residential satisfaction among the participants.

There are also five (5) open-ended, qualitative questions which include the other facilities/services to be provided, suggestions for dormitory improvements, counseling needs, programs and workshops/seminars to be offered in order to answer the problems stated in this research.

### 2.4 Procedure

In order to gather the needed data for this research, the survey method was applied wherein participants were asked to answer a survey questionnaire. The researcher visited the dormitory and personally distributed the survey questionnaire to the residents. The purpose of conducting the survey was explained to the participants and that they were informed that the research intended to gain their thoughts and opinions about the dormitory services/experiences so that results and recommendations can be forwarded to the concerned units/offices in the University. The survey took about forty five (45) minutes to accomplish. The researcher also asked



the assistance of the dorm manager in the distribution of the survey questions for those who were not around at the time when the survey questions were personally distributed to the residents. Two (2) weeks were allotted in the collection of the accomplished survey questionnaires.

### 2.5 Ethical Considerations

The rights of the participants were stated and enumerated in the study. It explained that they can withdraw at any time without any disadvantage. The results are confidential, however, in the event of presenting or publication of the said research, it was reiterated that no personally identifiable information will be shared.

### 2.6 Data Analysis

For the quantitative part, analysis was done using descriptive statistics specifically mean, standard deviation, and percentage in describing and interpreting the data. The interpretation of the responses on the survey is done using the scale:

Score	Interpretation
4.5000 and Above	Very Satisfactory
4.00 - 4.49	Satisfactory
3.50 - 3.99	Unsatisfactory
3.00 - 3.49	Very Unsatisfactory
2.00 - 2.99	Needs Improvement
1.99 and Below	Poor

For the qualitative part, data were analyzed by the researcher by means of summarizing and coming up with a common theme based on the responses given by the participants. The common themes were also checked by an external auditor in order to check the consistency of the themes.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Every academic institution who aspires to deliver quality programs and services to its students must be able to address each aspect of the students' experience on campus. Quality education is not only limited to the classroom experience but it also extends to the students' interaction with the different non-academic personnel and components in the university. In this study, an on-campus

university student housing facility (SHF) was evaluated in order to determine the quality of experience of the students as measured by the degree of the student residential satisfaction. This study serves the purpose of identifying the extent to which the SHF meets the expectations of the residents which will contribute to continually improve the learning environment for students, demonstrate institutional effectiveness, and promote student development.

Table 1 show that dorm residents have an unsatisfactory rating on the Students' Living Condition criteria of physical attributes of the student housing facility with a mean score of 3.48 and a SD of 1.08. The present students' living condition in the dormitory seemed not to be able to meet the standard requirements of a student housing facility as mentioned in previous studies. Researches have supported that dormitory facilities are built to generate greater degrees of active and collaborative learning, potential for increased interaction with other students of diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and easy access to the campus programs which directly support the educational and social goals of the university (Brandon et al., 2008; Hassanain, 2008; Willoughby et al., 2009).

Table 1. Residential satisfaction of the students according to specific attribute

Category	Mean Score	SD
Students' Living Condition	3.48	1.08
Community Facilities and Services	2.63	1.18
Neighborhood Physical Surrounding	3.72	0.94
Students' Social Activities	3.32	1.10
Cost of Living	3.76	0.98
Students' Preference	2.92	1.05

Residents perceived that they were unsatisfied with the community facilities and services with a mean rating of 2.63 and a SD of 1.18. The absence of personal development, social, educational, and sports programs contribute much to the low degree of satisfaction as perceived by the residents. Residence life and development programs are part of the expectations of the students residing in the dormitory. This was



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stressed in the studies made by Astin (1984) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) that residence hall living influences students' satisfaction with the college experience. Roche et al., 2010 also noted that a secure and well-maintain SHFs that provide students with privacy combined with creative residence life programs support the admissions or recruiting process and greatly assist the university in attracting highly qualified students.

The neighborhood physical surrounding is evaluated as unsatisfactory with a mean score of 3.72 and SD of 0.94. Among the items, privacy living is also unsatisfactory among the residents. Each of the rooms is shared by four (4) dormers. With this arrangement, it will be a challenge for the residents to achieve privacy because the rooms are occupied by a group of people. Research has forwarded that satisfactory environments in student housing is conceptualized where it can stimulate a silent, less crowding, private and suitable room sizes (Cleave, 1996).

For the students' social activities dimension, residents gave an unsatisfactory rating with a mean score of 3.32 and a SD of 1.10. Students in the dormitory noted that there is very limited social activity that provides opportunity for them to bond and relate with their dorm mates. Residents were also unsatisfied with the social and leisure activities as well as the fact that activities that will improve the relationship of dormers were not made available. However, the relationship among roommates seems to be going well as indicated by the result. These data supports that peer relationships had a strong effect on student satisfaction (Survey Unit, 2008). The peer relationships could be manifested in many ways, including satisfaction with the behavior of other students on one's hall, liking fellow hall mates, and satisfaction with one's roommate (Survey Unit, 2008).

The cost of living component got an unsatisfactory rating with a mean score of 3.76 and scores vary by 0.98. The difficulty in budget management among the residents may indicate the need to provide them with the necessary skill in effective budgeting so that this will ensure a satisfying dorm life experience. Mugenda et al. (1990) stated that financial satisfaction is associated with overall satisfaction of quality of life. Financial domain is important for college students since they are going through a transition period from financial dependence to independence when

they are in college. Transitioning from financial dependence to independence is one of three top criteria of becoming adulthood perceived by emerging adults (Xiao, Tang & Shim, 2009).

An unsatisfactory rating is observed in the students' preference dimension having a mean rating of 2.92 and a SD of 1.05. It was noted that over-all adjustment and concerns about health given that there is no available clinic in the dormitory and the presence of pests entering their rooms contributed to the dissatisfaction in their residential experience. These issues related to the students' preference criteria may have been influencing their development as students residing in the dormitory. Previous studies have noted that adequate SHF is related to student interpersonal growth (Price et al., 2003) and that the importance of students' satisfaction in the SHF is a key strategy to enhance student development (Fay, 1981).

In general, the dimensions under physical attribute and social/financial/management attributes both got an unsatisfactory rating from the residents having a mean score of 3.51 and 3.83 respectively. The over-all student residential satisfaction rating of the dormitory is 3.67 interpreted as unsatisfactory (see Table 2). The results also showed that residents' appraisal of the over-all conditions of their living environment both in the physical and social/financial/management attributes do not meet their needs and expectations. The residents of the dormitory have recommended additional facilities and services that are positive predictors to the student residential satisfaction. Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts and fundraising (Amole, 2009b). Amole (2009a), Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) and Sirgy et al. (2007) claim that SRS will contribute to overall life satisfaction.



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Table 2. Over-all residential satisfaction of the students

Category	Mean Score	SD
Physical Attributes	3.51	1.07
Social/Financial/Management Attributes	3.83	1.04
Over All Satisfaction	3.67	1.05

The students identified some of their counseling needs to assist them in the psychosocial adjustments they are experiencing as they live away from home. College students living in a student housing facility also experience this psychosocial transition especially that this can be the first time they are living independently away from their parents and that there are many psychosocial adjustments that they have to make. As a student's success in their university career is largely affected by their campus experiences, administration ought to support initiatives designed to help students succeed (Miranda, 2011). It is crucial for counseling and educational personnel to assist students to adapt to the campus life. Thus, counseling is a necessary service that can be provided especially to students living in an on-campus housing facility.

Aside from counseling, creation of learning programs and offering of learning sessions that will enhance students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies can also contribute to achieving a satisfying student residential experience. Research supports the conclusion that to contribute significantly to student success, residence hall environments should be structured intentionally (Amole, 2005; Thomsen, 2007; Brandon et al., 2008). Chen (2008) suggested universities should initiate learning programs that fit the needs of students and foster the learning atmosphere in the dormitory to provide students with an environment of co-operative learning in both academic and interpersonal relationships.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Results of the study revealed that the students' living condition does not meet the current needs and demands of the residents in terms of a learner-centered and quality-driven student housing facility wherein active and collaborative

learning is encouraged, meaningful interaction with other students of diverse backgrounds and beliefs is present, and easy access to the community facilities and services is made available which directly support the educational and social goals of the university. The absence of residential life program that focuses on and sports development that contribute to the richness of student residence life is not yet evident. Concerns related to privacy living is also unsatisfactory among the residents since rooms are crowded and that space for movement is minimal with four (4) residents sharing in one room. Students' social activities are lacking and that residents are looking forward to community building programs and activities. Residents expressed the need to develop life skills such as personal planning (e.g. financial management) so that this will promote a satisfying dorm life experience. The results also showed that residents' appraisal of the over-all conditions of their living environment both in the physical and social/financial/management attributes do not meet their needs and expectations. The residents have recommended additional facilities and services that are positive predictors to the student residential satisfaction. The students identified some of their counseling needs to assist them in the psychosocial adjustments they are experiencing as they live away from home. Aside from counseling, creation of learning programs and offering of learning sessions that will enhance students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies can also contribute to achieving a satisfying student residential experience.

After analyzing the data, the research would like to forward few recommendations that may be considered by school administrators and student affairs personnel. School administration may want to review their current operations, structure, and management of their on-campus housing facility and implement changes that will result to better and satisfactory dorm life experience among its residents. Student Affairs administrators may come up with an integrative, evidence-based residential life programs that will develop life skills and respond to the personal, social, educational, and sports development needs of the students residing in their dormitories as well as identify the university offices responsible in implementing these residential life programs based on the nature and function of the office. Moreover, the Counseling Services Office of the university



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may develop a counseling intervention program for the residents of the dormitory that will take into account the social and emotional learning competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making skills. Counseling intervention program activities may include initial interview, routine interview, crisis intervention, and exit interview. A rubric on Life Skills Assessment can also be developed in order to determine the learning outcomes and student development needs among the residents of dormitory. Creation and implementation of different learning sessions that will assist residents in managing residential life adjustment/transition is also recommended. Residential Life Coordinators may regularly conduct among the residents a satisfaction evaluation of their on-campus SHF by using the instrument developed in this study in order to check on the improvements on the student residential satisfaction rating. Aside from that, Residential Life Coordinator may also conduct his/her own assessment per term of the expected behaviors to be manifested/observed from the residents using a Life Skills Assessment Rubric. For future studies, research may explore on how the residence life of students affect their academic, personal/social, and career development, as well as the relationship of residential life to their subjective well-being.

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