
RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION AFTER RESETTLEMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS OF CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract

Increasing instances of displacement caused by development projects, natural disasters and climate change, resettlement has become a widely adopted intervention. Residential satisfaction among resettled populations is still debated, influenced by a complex interplay of physical, social, psychological, and institutional factors. This review explores and brings together existing conceptual models and assessment frameworks of residential satisfaction, with a particular focus on post-resettlement contexts. Following PRISMA guidelines, 40 peer reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2024 were selected from four major academic databases. Thematic synthesis reveals that while physical housing conditions dominate most models, emerging frameworks increasingly integrate social relationships, emotional well-being, and governance dimensions. Significant gaps persist in terms of standardized measurement tools, context sensitivity, and longitudinal assessments. The review emphasizes the importance for multidimensional, participatory and adaptable frameworks that better reflect the lived realities of resettled communities. By bridging fragmented theoretical perspectives, this review provides insight for future research, policy design, and practice aimed at enhancing housing outcomes and social resilience in post-resettlement settings.

Keywords: Residential satisfaction, Resettlement, Housing models, Displacement, Conceptual frameworks, Systematic review, Post-relocation housing

1. Introduction

In the wake of rapid urbanization, climate-induced displacement and large-scale development projects, resettlement has become an increasingly common response to housing vulnerability and land insecurity. While such interventions aim to offer safer and more stable living environments, they often disrupt the socio-spatial fabric of displaced communities,

triggering complex challenges related to residential satisfaction (Cernea, 1997; Oliver-Smith, 2009). Residential satisfaction, a multifaceted construct that reflects individuals' perceived quality of their living environment has emerged as a critical indicator of the success and sustainability of resettlement initiatives (Mohit, Ibrahim & Rashid, 2010; Amerigo & Aragones, 1997). Understanding how resettled populations experience satisfaction with their new housing conditions is essential for informing equitable and effective housing policies.

Over the past few decades, numerous theoretical models and assessment frameworks have been proposed to conceptualize residential satisfaction. These models integrate a range of physical, social, psychological and institutional factors, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the concept (Hur & Morrow-Jones, 2008; Mohit & Azim, 2012). A critical synthesis of these models specifically within the context of post-resettlement settings remains limited. Most existing literature either focuses on general urban contexts or approaches resettlement as a marginal subset without addressing its unique socio-economic and psychological implications. (Choguill, 2007; Jansen, 2020). There is a lack of consensus on the components and operationalization of residential satisfaction in the aftermath of forced or planned relocations, leading to fragmented findings and inconsistent methodological applications.

Given this gap, there is a pressing need to systematically review, analyze, and synthesize the conceptual models and assessment frameworks of residential satisfaction that are relevant to post-resettlement scenarios. This article bridges this gap by critically examining existing models, identifying key theories, categorizing assessment dimensions, and evaluating their applicability to resettled populations. The primary objective is to develop an integrative understanding of how residential satisfaction is conceptualized and measured in resettlement contexts, thereby offering guidance for future empirical research and policy design.

By foregrounding the experiences of displaced and resettled communities, this review seeks to contribute to a more inclusive, context-sensitive discourse on residential satisfaction. It emphasizes the importance for frameworks that account for socio-cultural displacement, loss of place attachment, livelihood disruptions, and institutional trust all of which are central to the post-resettlement experience.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

The goal of this study is to critically examine and synthesize existing conceptual models and assessment frameworks related to residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts. In this way, the review identifies theoretical foundations, common dimensions, and methodologies.

.1 Research Objectives The specific objectives of this systematic review are: 1. To identify and analyze conceptual models that explain residential satisfaction, with a focus on those applied in resettlement or displacement contexts.

1. To map and categorize the key dimensions and indicators used to assess residential satisfaction after resettlement.
2. To evaluate the methodological approaches employed in existing studies to measure residential satisfaction among resettled populations.
3. To highlight theoretical and practical gaps in current frameworks and propose a synthesized understanding to guide future research and policy.

2.2 Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the review addresses the following research questions:

1. What conceptual models have been proposed to explain residential satisfaction and how are they applied in post-resettlement settings?
2. Which key factors and dimensions are commonly used to assess residential satisfaction after resettlement?
3. What methodological patterns can be observed in existing studies, including tools, scales and data sources?
4. What are the limitations and gaps in current models and frameworks and how can they be addressed to better reflect the realities of resettled populations?

3. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) approach guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework (Page et al., 2021). The review ensures methodological transparency, reliability, and rigor in synthesizing existing conceptual models and assessment frameworks of residential satisfaction after resettlement.

3.1 Review Protocol and Scope

The review protocol was developed to systematically identify, select and analyze peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and grey literature relevant to the conceptualization and assessment of residential satisfaction in resettled communities. The scope includes both theoretical models and empirical applications, with no geographical or disciplinary restrictions.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy A comprehensive search was conducted across the following major academic databases:

- ❖ Web of Science
- ❖ Scopus
- ❖ ScienceDirect
- ❖ Google Scholar

The search primarily focused on English-language publications from 2000 to 2024. However, seminal and foundational studies published prior to 2000 were also included to provide theoretical grounding for the analysis.

A combination of simple and advanced keywords were used :

Searchstring: (“Residential satisfaction” OR “housing satisfaction”)AND(“resettlement” OR “relocation” OR “displacement”) AND (“model” OR “framework” OR “conceptual”) AND (“assessment” OR “measurement” OR “evaluation”)

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies focusing on residential satisfaction in post-resettlement or displacement contexts	Studies not related to resettlement or relocation
Articles proposing or applying conceptual models or assessment frameworks	Opinion pieces, editorials, or purely descriptive case studies
Empirical studies using measurable indicators	Non-English publications or articles of satisfaction without accessible full text
Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, book chapters	Duplicates or preliminary working papers

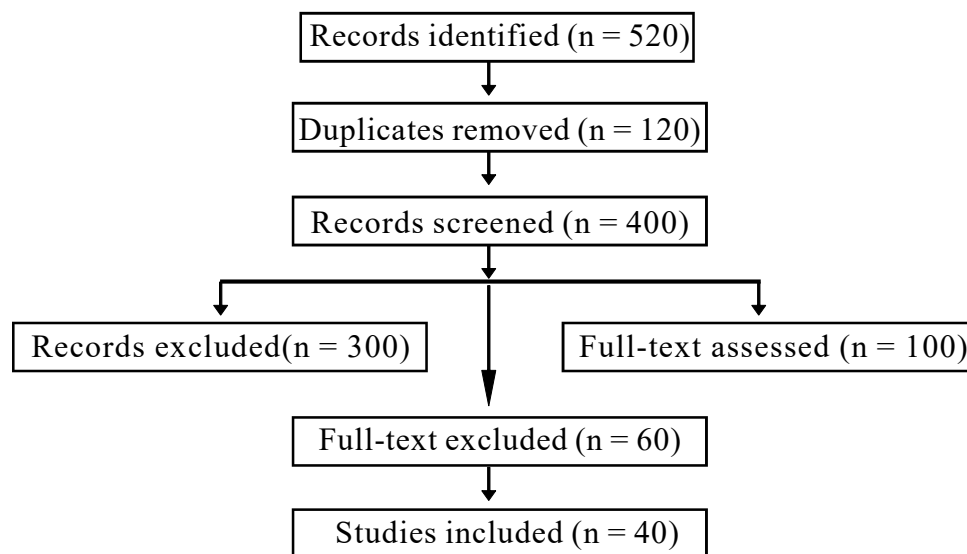
3.4 Screening and Selection Process

The review followed a three-stage screening process:

- Title and abstract screening to remove irrelevant studies.
- Full-text review to assess methodological rigor and relevance.
- Quality appraisal based on criteria such as conceptual clarity, methodological robustness, and relevance to resettlement contexts.

To ensure transparency and methodological rigor, the quality of included studies was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). This tool allows for the evaluation of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies within a single framework. Each study was appraised based on criteria including appropriateness of research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, analytical rigor, and clarity of reported findings. Studies were not excluded solely on quality grounds but were critically interpreted during synthesis.

The selection process is summarized using the **PRISMA** flow diagram



3.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

A standardized data extraction sheet was developed to capture the following:

- Author(s), year and region of study
- Type of resettlement context (e.g., disaster, development, conflict)
- Conceptual model/framework used
- Assessment dimensions and indicators
- Methodological approach and instruments
- Key findings and conclusions

The extracted data were then thematically analyzed and categorized into:

- Theoretical frameworks
- Assessment dimensions (physical, social, psychological, institutional)
- Methodological trends

This approach enabled both descriptive mapping and critical synthesis of the literature

4. Literature Review and Thematic Findings

4.1 Conceptual Foundations of Residential Satisfaction

The concept of residential satisfaction has evolved over decades, originating from environmental psychology and later expanding into urban planning, housing studies, and social sustainability. Early models, such as those by Amerigo and Aragones (1997), emphasized subjective well-being and person-environment congruence, while later scholars introduced multidimensional perspectives integrating physical, social, and institutional elements (Mohit et al., 2010; Hur & Morrow-Jones, 2008).

In resettlement contexts, residential satisfaction is not just about housing features but also about how residents adapt to new spatial, social, and emotional environments following displacement. This has necessitated new frameworks that account for loss of place attachment, community disruption and institutional trust (Jansen, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2009).

4.2 Physical and Environmental Dimensions

Most empirical studies highlight the physical characteristics of housing such as space, layout, construction quality, infrastructure, and access to utilities as core components of residential satisfaction (Mohit & Azim, 2012; Choguill, 2007). In resettled environments, these dimensions often fall short due to rapid construction timelines, cost constraints or lack of user participation in design.

Environmental considerations such as exposure to natural hazards, climatic suitability and the inclusion of sustainability features are increasingly shaping residential satisfaction. Berardi(2013) expands this discussion through the idea of sustainable housing satisfaction, highlighting how elements like green design and energy-efficient systems contribute to long-term comfort and livability.

4.3 Social and Community Dimensions

In the context of resettlement, satisfaction is also deeply tied to the strength of social networks, community cohesion, and the overall sense of belongingness (Cernea, 1997; Dempsey et al., 2011). A recurring observation in the literature is that even well-constructed housing may not translate into high satisfaction if relocation disrupts long standing social ties.

Jansen(2020) further points out that issues such as social fragmentation, cultural displacement, and the erosion of collective identity are often underestimated in traditional housing assessment models. Frameworks that account for these social and cultural dimensions tend to provide a more comprehensive understanding of residential outcomes, particularly in involuntary resettlement contexts.

4.4 Psychological and Emotional Well-being

Recent studies increasingly highlight the role of subjective well-being, perceived safety, and the degree of control residents feel over their new surroundings. These psychological dimensions are particularly important for understanding post-trauma resilience in contexts of disaster-related or conflict-driven resettlement(Oliver-Smith, 2009;Ha, 2010).

Place attachment, autonomy, and emotional adjustment have also become central components of contemporary satisfaction models, reflecting a shift from purely objective housing indicators toward residents' lived experiences and personal perceptions

4.5 Institutional and Governance Aspects

Trust in institutions, satisfaction with how resettlement is implemented, and the overall transparency of planning processes all play a significant role in shaping residential satisfaction (Cernea,

1997; Patel et al., 2002). A number of studies note that top-down relocation strategies, limited stakeholder engagement, and instances of corruption can undermine residents' trust and diminish long-term satisfaction with resettlement outcomes.

More recent frameworks increasingly emphasize the importance of participatory governance, secure legal tenure, and effective grievance-redressal mechanisms. These components are now viewed as essential for comprehensive assessments of post resettlement satisfaction (Jha, 2010; Koenig, 2006)

4.6 Integrated and Composite Models

A growing body of research proposes integrated models that bring together physical, social, psychological, and institutional dimensions (Mohit et al., 2010; Ha, 2010). These approaches typically employ multi-dimensional scales and draw insights from interdisciplinary as well as participatory research practices. However, despite their breadth, many of these frameworks continue to face challenges such as inconsistent operational definitions and the absence of standardized measurement instruments. This review underscores the need for harmonized, context-sensitive assessment tools that can be adapted to a wide range of resettlement settings

Based on the thematic synthesis, this review proposes an integrated conceptual framework of residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts (Figure 1).

The framework illustrates the dynamic and bidirectional interaction between four core dimensions physical, social, psychological, and institutional which collectively shape residential satisfaction outcomes. The model also incorporates feedback loops, recognizing that changes in one dimension may reinforce or weaken outcomes in the others over time. For example, inadequate institutional support may reduce psychological well-being and social cohesion, while stronger community networks may positively influence perceptions of housing quality and governance effectiveness. A summary of the selected studies is provided in Appendix A.



Figure 1. Integrated framework of residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts showing dynamic and bidirectional relationships among physical, social, psychological, and institutional dimensions.

5. Discussion

This review has systematically examined the major conceptual models and assessment frameworks used to understand residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts. The findings indicate that although the field has advanced considerably over the past two decades, there remains substantial fragmentation in how residential satisfaction is conceptualized, measured, and applied to resettled populations.

5.1 Towards a Multidimensional Understanding of Satisfaction

The thematic synthesis reinforces that residential satisfaction is fundamentally multidimensional, encompassing not only physical housing conditions but also social relationships, psychological well-being, and institutional experiences. Nevertheless, many existing frameworks continue to prioritize structural adequacy and access to services, often overlooking subjective and community oriented dimensions. This limitation is especially concerning in resettlement contexts, where satisfaction is shaped by experiences of trauma, loss, and broader systemic disempowerment (Oliver-Smith, 2009; Jansen, 2020).

5.2 Gaps in Current Conceptual Models

A key insight from this review is the lack of unified, context-sensitive models designed specifically for post-resettlement populations. Many of the frameworks examined were originally developed for general urban settings or are adaptations of western paradigms, offering limited consideration of the cultural, emotional and livelihood-related dimensions of forced relocation in the Global South (Cernea, 1997; Koenig, 2006).

In many Global South contexts, residential satisfaction is also shaped by culturally embedded practices and livelihood systems that are insufficiently reflected in existing frameworks. Factors such as communal land tenure arrangements, dependence on informal economies, kinship-based neighborhood structures, and traditional occupation patterns particularly among fishing, agricultural, or indigenous communities significantly influence how residents perceive housing adequacy and social well-being. For instance, relocation away from coastal zones may disrupt occupational routines and weaken community-based support systems among fisherfolk communities, thereby affecting satisfaction beyond the physical quality of housing itself. These context-specific realities highlight the need for culturally responsive and livelihood-sensitive assessment frameworks

The review also reveals that psychological and governance dimensions, while increasingly acknowledged, are still underrepresented in operational models. For instance, emotional adaptation, sense of control, or trust in the resettlement process are rarely quantified despite their profound impact on satisfaction outcomes.

5.3 Methodological Limitations in Existing Research

The majority of empirical studies rely on cross-sectional survey methods, often using unstandardized or locally developed scales. There is limited use of longitudinal designs, which are essential to capture changes in satisfaction over time as residents adapt to their new environments, few studies employ mixed methods or participatory approaches that can better reflect community voices and lived realities. However, conducting longitudinal research among resettled populations presents significant logistical challenges, particularly where households experience secondary migration, seasonal mobility, or unstable tenure conditions. Future studies may address these difficulties through the use of digital tracking methods, community-based enumerators, mobile phone follow-ups, and periodic participatory assessments that enable continued engagement with displaced populations over extended periods. Such approaches can improve data continuity while remaining sensitive to the vulnerabilities of resettled communities.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

There is a clear need for the development of integrated, scalable, and adaptable frameworks that combine objective housing metrics with subjective, community-defined indicators. Future research should focus on:

- Designing contextualized measurement instruments that reflect cultural, livelihood, and emotional realities of resettled populations.
- Testing composite models through longitudinal and cross-cultural studies.
- Incorporating participatory design to ensure that assessment frameworks reflect resident priorities, not just planner perspectives.

5.5 Policy and Practice Implications

From a policy standpoint, the findings urge governments, NGOs, and housing agencies to move beyond technical housing provision toward more holistic, human-centered planning. Resettlement success must be evaluated not just by infrastructure delivery but also by social integration, emotional well-being, and institutional trust.

A key recommendation is the implementation of **longitudinal Post-Occupancy Evaluations (POE)** to monitor residential satisfaction over time. These evaluations should be conducted at multiple stages, including:

- **Short-term (3–6 months post-resettlement):** to assess immediate housing adequacy, access to basic services, and initial adaptation challenges
- **Mid-term (1–2 years):** to evaluate social integration, livelihood restoration, and community cohesion
- **Long-term (3–5 years):** to examine sustained satisfaction, place attachment, and overall well-being

interventions accordingly. Effective POE frameworks should incorporate both quantitative indicators and participatory feedback mechanisms, ensuring that the lived experiences of resettled communities inform ongoing planning and policy refinement.

Effective post-resettlement frameworks should:

- Include psychosocial support mechanisms,
- Emphasize community rebuilding, and
- Foster transparency and participation throughout the planning and implementation process.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review critically examined the conceptual models and assessment frameworks of residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts. The findings underscore the complexity of residential satisfaction, which extends far beyond physical housing conditions to encompass social connectedness, psychological well-being, and trust in governance systems. While the literature offers diverse theoretical contributions, it remains fragmented and uneven in addressing the specific challenges faced by resettled populations. Many existing models fall short in capturing the emotional, cultural, and livelihood related disruptions that often accompany forced relocation. There is also a noticeable lack of standardized, context-sensitive measurement tools, limiting the comparability and generalizability of findings across studies.

To advance both theory and practice, future research must move toward integrated, participatory frameworks that genuinely reflect the lived realities of displaced communities. Such frameworks should employ multidimensional indicators, remain adaptable across diverse cultural settings and be evaluated longitudinally to capture changes in satisfaction over time. From a policy standpoint, this requires a fundamental shift from viewing resettlement merely as a one-time provision of infrastructure to recognizing it as a complex, ongoing process of rebuilding lives, identities, and communities.

By synthesizing existing models and highlighting key conceptual and methodological gaps, this review lays the groundwork for a more inclusive and holistic approach to assessing residential satisfaction in post-resettlement contexts. Such an approach is vital not only for improving housing outcomes but also for fostering long-term social equity, resilience, and human dignity among populations affected by displacement.

Appendix A

Table A1 summarizes the key characteristics of the 40 studies included in this systematic review, including their resettlement context, geographic focus, and primary assessment frameworks.

Table A1: Summary of Selected Studies

Author(s) & Year	Resettlement Context	Geographic Focus	Primary Assessment Model
Amerigo & Aragonés (1997)	Urban	Europe	Residential Satisfaction Model
Cernea (1997)	Development-induced	Global	IRR Model
Choguill (2007)	Development	Global South	Housing Policy Framework
Oliver-Smith (2009)	Disaster/Forced	Global	Displacement Framework
Mohit et al. (2010)	Development	Malaysia	Housing Satisfaction Model
Hur & Morrow-Jones (2008)	Urban	USA	Neighborhood Satisfaction Model
Mohit & Azim (2012)	Development	Maldives	Housing Indicators Model
Ha (2010)	Urban	South Korea	Life Satisfaction Model
Berardi (2013)	Sustainability	Global	Sustainable Housing Framework
Dempsey et al. (2011)	Urban	UK	Social Sustainability Model
Jansen (2020)	Forced Relocation	Europe	Affective Model
Patel et al. (2002)	Resettlement	India	Participatory Framework
Koenig (2006)	Development-induced	Global	Livelihood Model
Jha (2010)	Disaster	Global	Reconstruction Framework
Cernea (2000)	Development-induced	Global	IRR Extended Model
Scudder (2005)	Resettlement	Global	Four-Stage Model

de Wet (2006)	Development	Africa	Displacement Theory
Terminski (2013)	Forced Migration	Global	Displacement Typology
Ager & Strang (2008)	Refugee Resettlement	UK	Integration Framework
Downing (2002)	Development	Global	Risk Assessment Model
Mathur (2013)	Development	India	Policy Framework
Fernandes (2012)	Urban Resettlement	India	Social Integration Model
Zhang (2015)	Development	China	Livelihood Framework
Wang et al. (2019)	Development	China	Satisfaction Index Model
Li & Song (2016)	Resettlement	China	QoL Model
Nguyen et al. (2018)	Disaster	Vietnam	Recovery Framework
Das (2015)	Urban Resettlement	India	Housing Index Model
Ibem & Aduwo (2013)	Housing	Nigeria	User Satisfaction Model
Ukoha & Beamish (1997)	Housing	Nigeria	Satisfaction Framework
Varady & Carrozza (2000)	Urban	USA	Neighborhood Quality Model
Lu (1999)	Urban	USA	Residential Satisfaction Theory
Parkes et al. (2002)	Urban	UK	Perception Model
Sirgy & Cornwell (2002)	Urban	USA	QoL Satisfaction Model
Marans & Rodgers (1975)	Urban	USA	Environmental Satisfaction Model
Francescato et al. (1989)	Housing	Europe	Residential Framework
Weidemann & Anderson (1985)	Housing	USA	Behavioral Model
Guggenheim (1996)	Development	Indonesia	Social Disruption Model
Cernea & Mathur (2008)	Development	Global	IRR Extension Model
Colson (1971)	Resettlement	Africa	Adaptation Model
Khoso et al. (2018)	Development	Pakistan	QoL Framework

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