

Prioritization of Young Women's Housing Choices: Focus on Spatial and Environmental Factor

Seyede Fereshteh Ehsani Oskouei¹, Shayeste Farahani², Jamal- E-Din Mahdinejad Darzi^{3*}

- 1- Ph.D, Department of Architecture(Corresponding Author), Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran.
- 2- Ph.D Student,Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran.
- 3- Professor, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran.

* Mahdinejad@sru.ac.ir

Date of submission: 2025/09/17 Revision: 2025/11/18 Acceptance: 2025/11/22

Detailed abstract

Introduction

Given the nature of housing, individuals are inevitably required to make decisions and choose based on their needs and preferences. In this process, both internal and external factors influence it. While external factors are constraints such as economic factors, internal factors pertain to the expectations and ideals of individuals about the house environment.

Among family members, due to their more dominant presence and longer hours spent at home, women are influenced by their residential environment more than others. The lifestyles of women can be characterized as a multidimensional combination of housekeeping, child care, work, and other responsibilities. Besides, according to the gender differences, cultural, and religious features of Iran, women have different perspectives, desires, and behavioral and psychological needs towards housing as the most private and intimate surrounding space (Kazemi et al., 2014).

It seems there is currently no clear understanding of women's needs and preferences regarding housing characteristics. Thus, even if changes in housing design are intended, there is no precise data about the ideals. Accordingly, this research seeks to take a step toward filling this gap and answer the question: What are the key components influencing women's preferences in choosing a dwelling? Moreover, how is the prioritization? It is worth noting that, while various economic, social, and cultural factors influence house selection, this study focuses on identifying the most important physical and environmental features in housing design from the perspective of female residents.

Materials and Methods

Since this research is exploratory and the aim is to capture a diversity of perspectives and interpretations related to the phenomenon under study, the qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews have been utilized for data collection. The statistical population includes young women residing in

Tehran, who were selected purposefully from various parts of the city with different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to ensure variation in opinions.

The interviewees varied in marital status, number of children, education level and field of study, employment status, and dwelling size, but all fell within the age group of 20-40 years, which was assumed to reflect shared concerns and characteristics. Sampling was continued until theoretical saturation was reached. During the interviews, the following questions were asked:

- a) What factors or characteristics are more important when you're buying or renting a home?
- b) How satisfied are you with your present residence?

The interviews were audio-recorded, and notes were taken simultaneously with participants' permission. Data analyses were made by coding the notes in MAXQDA software according to the meaning of the statements into three categories: »Physical characteristics of the neighborhood«, »Physical characteristics of the residential building«, and »Environmental perception«. The main shared patterns were extracted using these codes. A total of 27 young women participated.

Findings

The analysis shows that codes referring to "physical characteristics of the residential building" constituted 56.3% of all statements, which means that their impact was much stronger than "environmental perception" (32%) and "physical characteristics of the neighborhood" (12%).

Among the elements of the "physical characteristics of the residential building," the most repeated factors were: Natural lighting (n=33), Area/ house size (n=19), Number and size of bedrooms (n=18); Following these, geometry and layout of the residential unit, shared/common spaces, and their amenities were noted.

Those with higher education emphasized the presence of a workspace/ home office more. Among married women with children, the priority order after natural light was balconies/terraces, private yards, and the Number of rooms. For married women without children, area/house size was the next priority after lighting, while single participants identified the Number and size of rooms as the most influential factor. In terms of ownership status, owners after natural light emphasized house size and Number of rooms, while renters emphasized house size (Table 1).

Table 1- Frequency of the Components of the Physical Characteristics of the Residential Building

Residential Building Characteristics	Education Level				Marital Status			Ownership Status		Total
	Diploma/Associate	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Single	Married (No Children)	Married (With Children)	Owner	Tenant	
Sound Insulation	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	2	2	4
Floor Level	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Kitchen	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	3
Building Age	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	2	3	5
Elevator	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	3	3
Furnishing	1	1	5	0	4	1	2	2	5	7
Connection to Nature	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Ventilation	1	1	4	0	1	1	4	3	3	6
Materials & Finishes	0	1	3	0	0	2	2	3	1	4
Windows	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	3	4
Spatial Connectivity	0	1	6	3	4	1	5	2	8	10
Color	1	1	4	1	1	1	5	3	4	7
Architectural Style	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
Bedrooms	0	2	5	5	4	3	5	2	10	12
Heating & Cooling	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	2	3
Structure & Skeleton	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	3
Parking	0	1	2	3	2	3	1	0	6	6
Kitchen	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2
Storage/Closets	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	3	4	7
Living Room Size/Shape	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	1	3
Unit Geometry/Layout	2	3	4	6	4	7	4	4	11	15
Number and Size of Bedrooms	3	1	4	10	6	6	6	5	13	18
Entrance	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Size and Number of Bathrooms/WCs	0	0	0	4	1	3	0	0	4	4
Area (Floor Space)	2	4	5	8	2	11	6	6	13	19
Number of Units per Floor & Building Scale	0	2	3	5	0	8	2	4	6	10
Facade	0	2	1	2	0	2	3	1	4	5
Natural Light	4	5	14	10	9	14	10	12	21	33
View & Outlook	1	2	3	7	4	4	5	5	8	13
Shared/Common Facilities	1	2	3	8	4	7	3	4	10	14
Balcony / Terrace / Private Yard	0	1	2	8	1	4	6	2	9	11

Comparing the environmental perception features showed that privacy ($n=35$) was the foremost constituent for a young woman in selecting a house. Aesthetic attractiveness was most emphasized by participants with lower educational attainment, while those with higher education emphasized functionality and efficiency, as well as privacy.

Single women regularly emphasized the importance of zoning and privacy. Childless married women focused on functionality, while married women with children considered child-friendliness and privacy/zoning as equally important. In contrast, renters emphasized aesthetics first, whereas owners emphasized functionality after privacy (Table 2).

Table 2 – Frequency of Components of the Environmental Perception Characteristics

Environmental Perception	Education Level				Marital Status			Ownership Status		Total
	Diploma/Associate	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Single	Married (No Children)	Married (With Children)	Owner	Tenant	
Sociability	2	2	4	4	1	7	4	7	5	12
Cleaness & Hygiene	2	2	2	2	0	5	3	5	3	8
Safety & Security	0	2	4	3	4	3	2	4	5	9
Child-Friendliness	2	0	3	7	2	0	10	3	9	12
Efficiency&Functionality	1	2	12	14	8	12	9	5	24	29
Aesthetic	5	4	8	6	5	10	8	9	14	23
Flexibility	0	0	2	4	3	0	3	0	6	6
Privacy	0	5	12	18	14	11	10	7	28	35

Among the neighborhood-related factors, crowdedness/quietness of the neighborhood (n=18) followed as the most important factor for young women—constantly across all educational, marital, and ownership groups (Table 3).

Table 3 – Frequency of Components of the Neighborhood Physical Characteristics

Neighborhood Features	Education Level				Marital Status			Ownership Status		Total
	Diploma/Associate	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Single	Married (No Children)	Married (With Children)	Owner	Tenant	
Neighborhood Greenery	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Neighborhood Services	1	2	1	0	2	1	1	2	2	4
Neighborhood Crowdedness / Quietness	6	7	5	0	5	10	3	12	6	18
The weather	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	2
Neighborhood Prestige	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Accessibility	1	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	5	9

Discussion and Conclusion

Some of these findings are in accordance with Mokhtari et al.'s (2025) work, which also underlined that natural lighting and house size are the spatial preferences of households in Tehran. Because of the dense urban fabric, the prevalence of vertical development, minimum distance between building blocks, and internal light wells, few housing units enjoy adequate natural light. Therefore, natural lighting is the most significant criterion for the choice of dwelling among young women in Tehran.

Another finding along the perceptual dimension was that zoning and privacy were top priorities, followed by functional performance and aesthetic appeal. The issue of privacy had been stressed in previous studies, and it would seem that such is still a prime concern among young women today. Due to the changing roles of contemporary women and their diverse and continuous activities, zoning and delineation of private and public space becomes all the more imperative.

At the neighborhood scale, crowdedness and quietness proved to be the most influential variables in shaping women's housing preferences. The results from this study—and future related research—can be used to contribute to the design and planning of high-quality housing that aligns with residents' expectations. At the macro scale, this can enhance urban spatial quality and improve citizens' satisfaction.

Keywords: Dwelling; Housing Selection; women; prioritization; Physical and environmental factors.