

Air Quality Index, Personality Traits and Their Impact on the Residential Satisfaction and Quality of Life: An Exploratory Path Analysis Model

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Abstract: The environment directly influences the behaviour, experiences, and also the well-being of people. It is not only the outside environment but the indoor environmental quality (IEQ) that also affects the well-being of its residents (Arif et al., 2016). The objective of the present study is to study the relationship between Air Quality Index (AQI), Personality traits, Residential Satisfaction, and quality of life among participants living in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Delhi NCR. A total of 685 residents aged 18-65, living in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Delhi NCR for over 2 years, who responded to the call for participation were selected for the study. Data was collected through online Google forms. Correlation and regression analysis were carried out to understand the strength and direction of the relationship between study variables. SPSS AMOS was used to estimate the measurement model and capture mediation paths. The results present an exploratory model which identifies air quality index and personality traits and their contribution towards the perceptions of residential satisfaction. The study also establishes a link between residential satisfaction and quality of life, the new ecological paradigm, and the dominant social paradigm. The present study highlights the necessity to adopt a pro-environmental approach to improve the quality of life.

Key words: Air quality index, personality traits, residential satisfaction, quality of life.

Introduction

The three primary elements of the psychological construct of residential satisfaction include behaviour, affect, and cognition. In other words, such a construct encompasses people's cognitive assessments of their living spaces, their emotional reactions to those spaces, and the activities that take place in those spaces (Bonaiuto & Fornara, 2004). More recently, planners in urban settings have questioned the importance of personality for planning 'happy neighbourhood's,'

shedding the focus towards more scope for research on the connection between personality and neighborhoods of individuals (Pfeiffer & Cloutier, 2016). Current literature focusses on the objective and subjective attributes of the residential environment as well as on the personal characteristics of residents to understand the multitude of factors that influence residential satisfaction (Chen et al., 2019). Studies suggest that personality traits play a role in the decision to relocate, particularly through their mediated relationship with neighbourhood social cohesion. Studies conducted on

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Kate (2014) and Neal & Brutzman (2022). In a study, it was observed that elevated levels of contentment about physical and neighbourhood aspects are positively associated with an enhanced Quality of Life (Lee, 2021). It was also found that residential satisfaction is a crucial determinant of Quality of Life (QoL) in Kayseri, with residents in low-rise housing areas reporting higher satisfaction compared to high-rise neighbourhoods, prompting a reconsideration of urban development policies (Terzi & Gungor, 2022). Further, a Hong Kong-based study examined the role of residential satisfaction in mediating the impact of dwelling conditions (interior environment and exterior environment) on the psychological well-being of individuals. The study concluded that the role of environmental factors and their subsequent impact on the psychological well-being of the individuals was mediated by their expectations of their residential satisfaction and how far that is met for them. Thereby, shedding light on the importance of residential satisfaction among individuals (Phillips et al., 2005). Research conducted on the environmental influences on the overall QoL of an individual indicated that environmental factors have a direct impact on our quality of life with a mediating effect of sleep and stress (Chang et al., 2020). Quality of life is a multidimensional construct including physical, social, psychological, and environmental health in general thus indicating the well-being of an individual. Being a complicated multidimensional construct, Quality of Life is influenced by a variety of variables which include social, economic, cultural, psychological, and environmental as well. None of these variables act in isolation (Keles, 2012). Quality of life (QoL) can be defined through different philosophical, political, and health-related meanings (Fallowfield, 2009). But in general, it refers to either the environment in which one lives (air and water pollution), or to the attributes or quality of people themselves. The presence of noise and unpleasant smells (air) emerged as noticeable predictors of residential satisfaction. Participants reported more interference and annoyance by noise and air and were less satisfied with their residential situations (Van Poll et al., 2005).

Borthwick-Duffy (2000) gave three perspectives on quality of life defined in terms of the quality of one's life conditions, satisfaction with life conditions, and a combination of both. The studies on urban environmental quality have been gaining a lot of attention due to the decreased levels of the urban environment and the decrease of urban QoL (Senlier et al., 2009). Studies are being conducted on various

Indian cities to analyse the urban environmental changes. The Comprehensive Environmental Index indicated that the overall environmental trends in Indian cities like Chennai and Kolkata showed deterioration. Environmental quality in the newly developed areas such as Bengaluru and Mumbai also experienced degradation and urban land has been deteriorating in the major cities of Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai since 2001 (Lu et al., 2019). Studies in India have analysed dimensions such as opportunities, infrastructure, transport and other urban environmental factors and their pivotal role in defining the overall urban quality of life. Indian cities like Delhi and Chennai had a medium score in the Urban Quality of Life (UQoL) and the role of transportation played a crucial role in defining the quality of life of citizens (Patil & Sharma, 2022). Quality of life and ranking of Indian cities based on multiple factors like safety, air quality, health care, living cost and pollution indicated that tier II cities had a significantly higher ranked quality of life compared to tier I cities like Bengaluru, Chennai and Delhi (Kanti Ghara, 2018). A vast number of studies indicate that Quality of life can also be predicted by the personality traits of an individual (Both, 2019; Chukkali et al., 2022; Wrosch & Scheier, 2019). A self-report study focusing on quality of life and the big five personality factors found that quality of life correlates more with openness to experience and agreeableness (Weber et al., 2015). Also, it was found that individuals when dissatisfied with their environment and extroverted experienced more distress (Zhang, 2019).

The Neo-Ecological Paradigm (NEP) emphasises sustainable living and interconnectedness with the environment. In residential contexts, adherence to ecological principles can enhance environmental quality, fostering a sense of place and ultimately contributing to higher levels of satisfaction among residents studies focussing on the psychosocial aspects of NEP shed light on individual's attitudes about the environment and its relatedness to their ethnic backgrounds (Johnson et al., 2004). Hence, understanding this in an Indian context could highlight these beliefs in tier-I cities of India.

Methodology

The present study explores the relationship between AQI, Personality, Residential Satisfaction, and quality of life among participants living in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Delhi NCR. A quantitative correlational research design was used as it is best suited to enhance the

knowledge of understanding of the relationship between such variables (Curtis et al., 2016).

Participants

A total of 685 participants belonging to the cities of Bengaluru, Chennai and Delhi NCR were selected for the study. Residents who responded to online calls for participation on social media were screened and included in the study. Participants who have been residing in each of these cities for a minimum of 2 years and are fluent in English were included in the study. The participants belonged to the age group of 18-65 years. Environmental activists and individuals diagnosed with chronic mental or physical illness have been excluded from the study.

Measures

Air Quality Index (AQI): The data on the Air pollution index was collected from AQI which is a real-time pollution monitoring platform in India. The Central Pollution Control Board, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India open website provides air quality index (AQI) data across different stations in the cities. Based on the location of the participant, the nearest station was referred to for data.

Residential Environmental Satisfaction Scale (RESS): This is a 16-item questionnaire that contributes to the understanding of the perceived quality of the living situation. The scale measures levels of residential environment satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale from very satisfied (1) to very dissatisfied (2). The coefficient alpha of the RESS was 0.86. (Adriaanse, 2007)

WHOQOL/World Health Organization Quality of Life: This was formulated by the WHO in the year 1995, and revised in 2012. WHOQOL-100 is a reliable tool as Cronbach's alpha is 0.77 and a valid measure as its convergent validity is 0.45, of QOL for use across cultures, whereas WHOQOL-BREF is a 26-item measure comprising four domains: physical, psychological, social, and environment. The present study used the WHOQOL-BREF which consists of 26 items (WHOQOL Group, 1998).

Big Five Personality Inventory: This is a 44-item questionnaire used to measure the five dimensions of personality traits broadly (John & Srivastava, 1999). It includes the personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Validity tests recovered four Big Five

Inventory factors, with factor loadings ranging from 0.573 to 0.803.

New Ecological Paradigm scale (NEP) and Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP): It is a 15-item survey-based metric relying on a 5-point Likert scale, which was devised by Dunlap and colleagues (2005). The scale has 8 items for measuring the New Ecological Paradigm and 7 items for measuring the Dominant Social Paradigm.

Procedure

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for permissions and involved an open online call for participation. Interested participants were screened based on study criteria and thereafter, the consent was taken. The data collection was done using online survey forms with instructions and questionnaires. Informed consent was taken from the participants. The survey included questionnaires on personal detail, residential satisfaction, new ecological paradigm, social dominant paradigm, and personality factors. Based on the participant's location AQI levels were tapped. Following Benfield & Szlemko's (2006) support for online-based data collection, participants were debriefed upon completion.

Data Analysis

Correlation and regression analysis were carried out to understand the strength and direction of the relationship between study variables. SPSS AMOS was used to estimate the measurement model and capture mediation paths.

Results

A total of 685 participants (18-65 years) completed the study from Bengaluru (40%), Chennai (15%) and Delhi (44%). The ratio of females to males was approximately 7:3 belonging to nuclear middle-class families which is exponentially growing in India (Ambwani, 2023).

Table 1 showcases the correlations among the study variables and their significance. Residential satisfaction is correlated with new ecological paradigm ($r = .203$, $p < .001$), overall quality of life ($r = -.309$, $p < .001$), health satisfaction ($r = .247$, $p < .001$), social quality of life ($r = .269$, $p < .001$), psychological quality of life ($r = -.282$, $p < .001$) and dominant social paradigm ($r = -.097$, $p < .05$). All the five personality factors are significantly correlated with residential satisfaction. Among personality factors, only neuroticism has been found to be positively correlated with residential satisfaction ($r = .164$, $p < .001$), others are negatively

correlated. Structural equation modeling was further used to explore the model with personality factors and AQI as antecedents to residential satisfaction. Quality of Life is introduced as an outcome variable while the new ecological paradigm and dominant social paradigm were taken as mediators.

Model 1 which explores the entire path diagram shows a poor fit as shown in Table 2. For Model 2, a good fit has been obtained with AQI and personality traits as predictors of residential satisfaction and social quality of life as outcome variables (Figure 1). The model fit indices with X^2/df ratio of 3.14 showed a good fit.

Table 1: Correlation

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>
1. AQI	163	151												
2. RESS	2.38	0.78	.066											
3. NEP	2.17	0.73	-.048	.203**										
4. SQoL	2.71	0.9	.203**	.269**	.132**									
5. PhQoL	3.18	0.42	-.006	-.047	-.023	.146**								
6. PQoL	3.23	0.55	-.023	-.282**	.010	-.171**	.228**							
7. EQoL	3.06	0.53	.182**	-.067	.039	.153**	.218**	.437**						
8. DSP	3.02	0.7	-.228**	-.097*	-.014	-.105**	-.126**	.040	-.212**					
9. Opens	3.51	0.47	-.132**	-.116**	-.307**	-.190**	.085*	.139**	.031	-.010				
10. Neuro	3.02	0.43	-.019	.164**	-.025	.236**	-.040	-.384**	-.166**	-.010	-.063			
11. Cons	3.35	0.56	-.050	-.204**	-.196**	-.227**	-.035	.281**	.101**	-.011	.307**	-.283**		
12. Agree	3.58	0.56	-.112**	-.168**	-.339**	-.239**	.046	.186**	-.013	.046	.379**	-.147**	.462**	
13. Extra	3.23	0.62	-.075	-.220**	-.103**	-.215**	.077*	.287**	.082*	.091*	.181**	-.216**	.308**	.217**

Table 2 : CFA Results

<i>Model</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Chi Square</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>TLI</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	711	2697.41	0.06	0.81	0.81	0.06	0.79	0.00
Model 2	545	1141.676	0.05	0.91	0.89	0.05	0.90	0.00

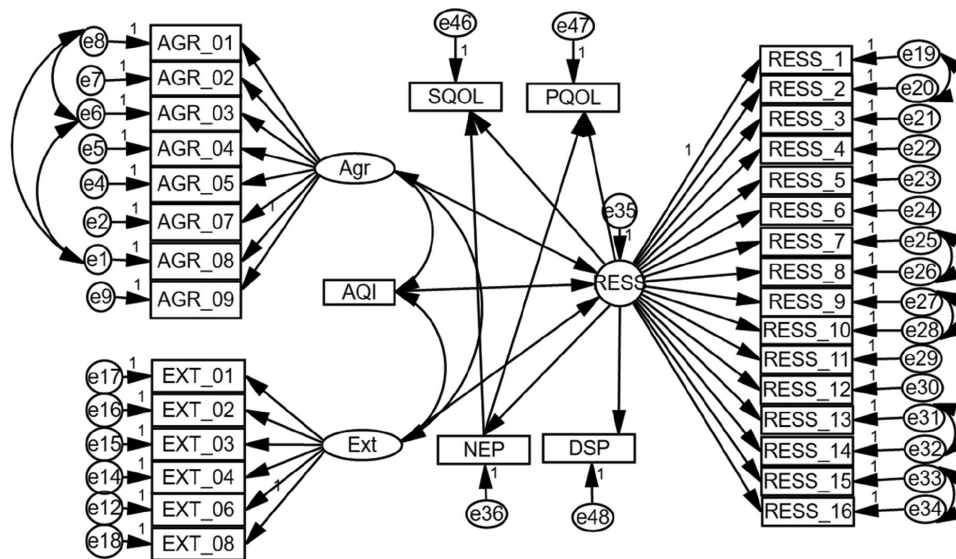


Figure 1: Model 2.

Table 3: Mediation results

		95.0% CI			
		<i>Estimated Effect</i>	<i>LB</i>	<i>UB</i>	<i>p value</i>
Direct Effect	RS – NEP	1.644	1.12	2.18	0.004
	NEP – SqoL	0.013	0.003	0.022	0.03
	RS - SQoL .291		0.25	0.6	0.003
	RS –PqoL	-.218	-0.27	-0.16	0.00
	NEP- PQoL	.010	0.002	0.017	0.01
Indirect Effects	RS - NEP - SQoL	0.022	0.005	0.042	0.03
	RS- NEP - PQoL	0.017	0.005	0.041	0.008
Total Effects	RS – PqoL	-.218	-0.25	-0.14	0.005
	RS –SqoL	.291	0.23	0.4	0.003

Notes: RS - Residential Satisfaction, NEP- New Ecological Paradigm, SQoL - Social Quality of Life, PQoL - Psychological Quality of Life

Regarding the prediction of social quality of life, as shown in Table 3 direct effects from residential satisfaction to new ecological paradigm ($\beta = 1.644$, $p < .001$) and from new ecological paradigm to social quality of life ($\beta = .013$, $p = .02$) were significant. Mediation analysis was also done by bootstrapping procedures with 500 replications and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) was calculated. A partial mediation of the effect of residential satisfaction and social quality of life via a new ecological paradigm was found ($\beta = .291$, $p < .001$).

The indirect effect of residential satisfaction mediated by the new ecological paradigm on psychological quality of life was ($\beta = -.218$, $p < .001$). This proves the hypothesis partially that residential satisfaction can predict both; a new ecological paradigm and social and psychological quality of life.

Discussion

The study aimed to understand the role of AQI and personality on residential satisfaction. Given recent severe Air Quality Index concerns in India, understanding its impact on residential satisfaction is crucial. Residential satisfaction linked to well-being (Mouratidis, 2020) is notably affected by poorer AQI. Beyond an environmental index, AQI's impact extends to physical and psychological well-being, influencing settlement intentions (Feng & Li, 2023). It raises health concerns among youth (Yao et al., 2022).

The results indicate that personality factors (extraversion and agreeableness) have an impact on

residential satisfaction. Highly extroverted residents reported high levels of satisfaction due to their assertiveness, energy and sensitivity to rewarding experiences in nature (Smillie, 2013). Extraversion is often related to person-focussed values, openness to change and self-enhancement. These characteristics require increased mobility within the city on a day-to-day basis to meet their various personal, social, and professional demands. Agreeable individuals show greater residential satisfaction emphasising trust, and benevolence, making them more we-centric than me-centric (Parks-Leduc et al., 2015).

NEP, a contemporary concept rooted in green thinking views that environmental quality is socially constructed. Residential satisfaction predicts NEP and dominant social paradigm with higher satisfaction linked to a preference for environmental dominance over humans. The ecological philosophy extends to responsible consumption and protection of the environment (Daryanto & Song, 2021). These ecological paradigms influence the perception of the natural environment and behave more responsibly when in interacting with the environment. They assume the social responsibility of consuming but in a less harmful way (Fisk, 1973).

QoL, viewed as subjective satisfaction, is explored as an outcome. The living environment impacts well-being (Mouratidis, 2020). Research emphasises residential satisfaction predicting the overall quality of life, health satisfaction, social quality of life, and psychological quality of life. The social quality of life includes personal relationships, support and sexual activity. Residential satisfaction indicates satisfaction

towards the amenities, infrastructure and sense of belonging. These factors also can lead to improved social relationships. Studies showed that perceptions of safety and good social relationships have a positive relationship with social quality of life (Kim et al., 2018; Sirgy et al., 2008). Residential satisfaction also develops place attachment which can enhance family and friend bonding and thereby leading to a good social quality of life (Hernández et al., 2020). Higher residential satisfaction correlates with improved psychological quality of life, fostering positive self-image, feelings, self-esteem, and identity. The present study however could not find significant relationships between residential satisfaction and the other dimensions of quality of life, namely, physical quality of life and environmental quality of life. Similar results were reported in a study by Chang et al. in the year 2020. The mediation analysis further showed that the relationship of residential satisfaction with QOL in the psychological and social domains was partially mediated by the new ecological paradigm. Higher beliefs about respecting Mother Earth and protecting nature seem to reduce the strength of relationships.

The participants for the present study did not include geriatric residents. The residential satisfaction of the elderly in cities is paramount and can be considered for future studies. Employing the survey technique is another limitation in psychological research as it poses the risk of eliciting response bias (Johnson & Wislar, 2012). The present study highlights air quality as an important parameter for the satisfaction of the residents. Further, the study also throws light on the personality profile of residents showing greater residential satisfaction. Extraversion and agreeableness predict residential satisfaction. Residential satisfaction also indicated the overall quality of life and health satisfaction.

Future studies can explore the role of various urban factors like density, type of residence, ease of transport, infrastructure, water, and waste management systems on the residential satisfaction of participants. Studies can also be conducted to explore these factors across various cities in India and their role in enhancing the quality of life.

Conclusions

The study presents an exploratory model which identifies air quality index and personality traits and their contribution towards the perceptions of residential satisfaction. The study also establishes a link between

residential satisfaction and quality of life, new ecological paradigm, and the dominant social paradigm. The model provides a comprehensive framework for improving the quality of life of residents in these metros which are densely populated and are continuously seeing reduced open and green spaces. The present study highlights the necessity to adopt a pro-environmental approach to improve the quality of life. The study also highlights the need for stronger policies on landscape design in urban spaces to improve air quality. Guidelines for residents in the cities to segregate garbage, scrupulously use water, growing kitchen and terrace gardens; the government can bring about air quality improvement. Urban development authorities predominantly focus on infrastructure development; however, interventions in the community to spread awareness and build knowledge and skills to work towards the protection and sustenance of natural resources can have huge implications for the quality of life experienced by the residents thereby also increasing the economic value of the city.

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