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The Influence of Outdoor Environments on the Well-being of Elderly in Senior Citizen Homes

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ABSTRACT: This dissertation investigates the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes, with a particular focus on two case studies in India: Thamarakulam Elders Village in Cuddalore and Eventide Home in Trivandrum. Utilizing surveys, interviews, behavioral mapping, and environmental assessments, the research examines how the design and activities of outdoor spaces affect physical, mental, and social health. The findings reveal that well-designed outdoor environments significantly enhance the quality of life for the elderly, promoting physical activity, mental well-being, and social engagement. In contrast, poorly maintained outdoor areas lead to limited usage and potential health benefits. The dissertation concludes that person-centered design and the continuous improvement of outdoor spaces are crucial for creating age-friendly environments that cater to the needs and preferences of the elderly.

KEYWORDS: Outdoor Environments, Elderly Well-being, Senior Citizen Homes, Environmental Design, India

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes, addressing a gap in literature concerning the unique context of senior citizen homes, especially in India. It explores how outdoor spaces, activities, and design influence physical, mental, and social health, aiming to optimize these environments to enhance the quality of life for the elderly. The research is significant as it can guide the design and management of senior citizen homes, ensuring outdoor spaces are both attractive and beneficial for residents.

Aim

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the impact of outdoor spaces, activities, and design on the physical, mental, and social well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes, with a view to elucidating how these environments can be optimized to enhance the overall well-being of the elderly population.

Objectives

- Evaluate the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of the elderly in senior citizen homes.
- Identify which design features and activities benefit the elderly in such homes.
- Develop practical recommendations to improve outdoor environments in senior citizen homes, thereby enhancing the quality of life for their residents.

Derivation from Existing Theories/Data

This dissertation investigates the influence of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes, addressing a gap in the literature regarding the specific impact of outdoor spaces in this context. By evaluating the impact of outdoor environments, identifying beneficial design features and activities, and developing recommendations for improvement, the study aims to enhance the quality of life for the elderly in senior citizen homes. The research is significant as it provides insights that can guide the design and management of these homes, ensuring that outdoor spaces are both aesthetically pleasing and functionally enriching for their residents.

Scope

This dissertation examines the effect of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes, with a specific focus on how the design and activities of these spaces influence physical, mental, and social health. The research, which is set against the backdrop of global population ageing, aims to improve the quality of life for seniors by providing insights into the optimization of outdoor spaces in senior citizen homes. The findings are expected to be particularly relevant for Southeast Asia and India, where the ageing population is a growing concern.

Limitations

- Limited generalizability: Findings may be specific to the selected senior citizen homes and may not be applicable to all facilities.
- Response bias: Survey responses and participant observations may be influenced by social desirability bias.
- Time constraints: Conducting comprehensive observations and interviews may be limited by time constraints.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review within this dissertation is conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing theories and empirical findings related to the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes. It encompasses wide range of topics, including the benefits of spending time outdoors, environmental psychology, the health and social behaviors of the elderly, the importance of outdoor space, and the environmental features that attract older adults to outdoor environments.

The review is structured to first examine the broad benefits associated with outdoor exposure, such as increased physical activity and improved mental health. It then delves into the specific contributions of environmental psychology to the design of outdoor spaces for the elderly, highlighting the significance of features that support stress reduction and well-being.

The health, habits, and social behaviors of the elderly are explored to understand how these factors influence their interaction with outdoor spaces. The review also emphasizes the critical role of outdoor space in providing therapeutic benefits and enhancing life satisfaction.

Finally, the review categorizes environmental features into domains such as access to nature, outdoor comfort and safety, walking and outdoor activities, indoor-outdoor connection, and connection to the world. These domains are analyzed to determine their relevance to the design and use of outdoor spaces in senior citizen homes, with the goal of informing design practices that can maximize the well-being of the elderly population.

In summary, the literature review serves to establish the theoretical foundation for the dissertation's research, identifying gaps in the current knowledge and setting the stage for the empirical investigation into the influence of outdoor environments on the well-being of the elderly in senior citizen homes.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this dissertation is designed to systematically investigate the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents in senior citizen homes. This is achieved Through the collection and analysis of data obtained from various sources, including surveys, interviews, behavioral mapping, and environmental assessments.

Surveys are used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from residents and staff, providing insights into their perceptions and experiences of the outdoor spaces. Interviews are conducted to delve deeper into these experiences and perceptions, offering a more nuanced understanding of how the outdoor environments are utilized and valued.

Behavioral mapping is implemented to observe and record the interactions of residents with the outdoor spaces, revealing patterns of use and preferences. Environmental assessments are carried out to evaluate the accessibility, safety, aesthetics, and functionality of the outdoor areas, identifying areas for improvement.

The data collected through these methods is then subjected to analysis, which seeks to uncover trends and correlations between the characteristics of the outdoor environments and the health and satisfaction of the elderly residents. This analysis in forms the development to recommendations aimed at enhancing the design and maintenance of outdoor spaces in senior citizen homes, ultimately contributing to the well-being of their inhabitants.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data analysis and findings from this dissertation are derived from a meticulous examination of the information gathered through surveys, interviews, behavioral mapping, and environmental assessments. These methods were

employed to explore the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents within senior citizen homes.

The analysis of resident and staff questionnaires revealed demographic details such as age, gender, length of stay, former occupations, health conditions, and mobility capabilities. It also provided insights into the residents' perceptions of and satisfaction with the outdoor spaces, the frequency and duration of their outdoor activities, and the factors that deter them from using these areas.

Behavioral mapping was utilized to document the activities and interactions of residents within the outdoor spaces, offering a visual representation of how these areas are utilized and the behaviors they support.

Environmental assessments allowed for the evaluation of the outdoor spaces' design, including their accessibility, safety, and overall attractiveness, which are critical factors influencing their use by the elderly residents.

The findings indicate that well-designed and maintained outdoor environments significantly contribute to the physical, mental, and social health of the elderly. They promote physical activity, reduce stress, and facilitate social interactions, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for senior citizens in residential care settings. Conversely, poorly designed or maintained outdoor spaces were found to be less utilized and to offer fewer health benefits.

In summary, the data analysis and findings from this dissertation underscore the importance of creating outdoor environments that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functionally enriching for the elderly population in senior citizen homes.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section of this dissertation presents a detailed examination of the data collected through various methods, including surveys, interviews, behavioral mapping, and environmental assessments. This section is pivotal in elucidating the impact of outdoor environments on the well-being of elderly residents within senior citizen homes.

The results are presented in a manner that highlights the demographic profiles of the residents, their health conditions, and mobility capabilities. The data also reveal the residents' perceptions of the outdoor spaces, their frequency of use, and the activities undertaken. The findings shed light on the factors that either encourage or discourage the use of these spaces, such as the design, maintenance, and the presence of amenities that support various activities.

The discussion interprets these results within the context to existing literature and theories, providing a deeper understanding of how the outdoor environments contribute to the physical, mental, and social health of the elderly. It emphasizes the significance of person-centered design and the continuous improvement of outdoor spaces to ensure they remain relevant and beneficial to the residents.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the research into actionable insights for the design and management of outdoor environments in senior citizen homes.

The conclusions drawn highlight the significant positive influence that well-designed and maintained outdoor spaces have on the physical, mental, and social well-being of elderly residents. It is noted that these environments can promote physical activity, reduce stress, and facilitate social interactions, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for the elderly.

The recommendations provided are grounded in the research findings and are aimed at improving the outdoor spaces in senior citizen homes. They advocate for person-centered design approaches that consider the needs and preferences of the elderly, as well as the continuous evaluation and adaptation of these spaces to ensure they remain relevant and beneficial.

In summary, the conclusions and recommendations section underscore the importance of investing in the development and maintenance of outdoor environments that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functionally enriching for the elderly population in residential care settings.



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