

Analysing the Affecting Factors on the “Citizen’s Social Quality of Life” in Contemporary Urban Spaces (Case Study: Farhang Square in the city of Yazd)

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Abstract

Satisfaction with different aspects of life has been defined as "quality of life", which has long been considered by urban designers and planners, and even concerns with other disciplines related to it, including psychology and sociology. Improving the quality of life in urban spaces is highly dependent on the desirability of its constituent components. Contrary to research done in neighborhoods, new cities, etc., there is less research on the concept of social life in urban areas. Farhang Square (Nal-asbi) in Yazd Historical City has always been the setting for various events, so its reasons for being present and examining quality of social life in it that can help improve the performance of existing urban spaces. The aim of this study was to identify and analyze the factors affecting quality of social life in Yazd Farhang Square, focusing on two “objective” and “subjective” dimensions of quality of life. The research method of this study was qualitative strategy and its data were collected through survey and descriptive-analytical method was used in the process of achieving results. The sampling method was simple random and the sample size was calculated by Cochran formula. Then, by analyzing the data through exploratory factor analysis, the factors affecting the quality of social life of citizens in the sample were identified and analyzed. The findings indicate that factors such as: (a) security and cleanliness, (b) greenness, (c) social events and interactions, (d) physical and mental health, and (e) happiness and life expectancy have the greatest impact on quality of life.

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Introduction

The quality of urban life has been one of the first areas of study that, along with urban growth, has been the focus of urban experts since the 1930s (Ali Akbari, Amini, 2010: 122). The term quality is often used to determine attractiveness or superiority of a product (Serag El Din et al., 2012: 87). Quality is also related to the aesthetics of a place, its shape and lighting, the activities it takes and the people it participates in (Abbaszadegan, Vahidian, 2009: 11). Different aspects of quality of life include: physical health, mental health, family, social life, economic status, work, and of course the living environment (Ng et al., 2017: 2). This concept reflects the mental experience of individuals, so individual experience as well as cultural differences must also be considered (Conrad et al., 2014: 2). In this study, Farhang Square of Yazd or Nal-Asbi has been studied as one of the main urban spaces in contemporary field of this city and aims to answer the following three questions: What are the factors affecting quality of life in this case? Which of the "physical" and "social" components are most effective in citizens Farhang Square quality of life? And what are the design strategies for improving the quality of social life in this Square?

Materials and Methods

The research method of this study was qualitative strategy and its data were collected through survey and descriptive-analytical method was used in the process of achieving results. Since the volume of the population is not known, the sample size is 96 by using Cochran formula. Out of 110 distributed questionnaires, 102 were returned. The questionnaires were distributed between pedestrians, shopkeepers and people present at the Case from 20th of May to 14th of June, in the morning from 9 to 13 pm and from 17 to 20:30 in the evening. The results were identified and prioritized factors affecting the quality of social life of citizens in this Case by using SPSS software version 24 and exploratory factor analysis. 63% of the respondents, were men. Age range of 20-30 years with 54 was the highest age of the respondents. Most (44%) were bachelors and students (58%) followed by self-employment (26%) were the dominant occupation among the results.

Discussion and Results

According to Cronbach's alpha test, 0.943 was obtained, because it was greater than 0.7, which had a high correlation between the items and thus the reliability of the instrument was favorable. The numerical value of KMO is 0.763 and greater than 0.6, so the correlation between the data is suitable for factor analysis and the significance level (sig) in Bartlett test is 0.000, less than 0.05, which confirmed the ability to act on data's. According to Kaiser Criteria the eigenvalues of 9 factors are more than one, and these factors account for 77.735% of the data variation. The six factors account for 62.86% of all data changes. Safety and cleanliness comes in first place of factors with pedestrian safety indicato (0.831 factor load), air quality, cleanliness and the existence of a police station. Shown the role of Farhang Square as an urban node.

- Greening factor: The two variables, "vegetation diversity" and "green space", had the most impact on the quality of social life from citizens' perspective, which alone accounted for 35.08% of the cumulative data variation.
- Indicators of rate of events, lack of strife, and rate of social participation in collective activities and events are ranked third in terms of 'events and social interactions'.
- The fourth factor in "physical and mental health" is the indicators of Material prosperity and physical health, which points to the high impact of the physical and mental health of citizens on their quality of life.
- In the last factor, "happiness and life expectancy" with 0.764 factor load, represents mental quality of social life dimension that plays a decisive role in achieving quality of life.

Conclusion

The results of identifying the factors affecting the citizens quality of social life of in Farhang Yazd Square show that "security and cleanliness" is the first factor focusing on pedestrian priorities, their safety and security and the climatic conditions of the location. Along with attention to cleanliness of space, next to the "greenness" factor, which emphasizes the role of green space and diverse vegetation on citizen's quality of social life due to climatic conditions of Yazd. At the same time, there is an appropriate condition for the social relationships in this Square with regard to social interactions and the holding of various religious, cultural and sporting events, under the third factor "Events and Social interactions" have emerged as critical to formation of any dynamic public place in the city. "Physical and mental health" and "Happiness and life expectancy" may be the last factors to be seen by users, but they cannot be overlooked. As is clear, security and cleanliness, greenness, and social interactions and events refer to the objective dimension, physical, mental and happiness and life expectancy to the subjective dimension of citizen's quality of social life this Square. And so social components affect quality of social life more than physical components. According to the results of this study, strategies for promoting these factors in urban squares are presented as follows.

- Paing attention to security and cleanliness;
- Paing attention to greenery of urban squares;
- Anticipating events and social in designing places;

The subjective dimension of the quality of social life that is influenced by economic, social, political, and cultural status, etc., can be pursued in other psychology and sociology studies and their results can be used in future refinements and designs.

Keywords: Quality, Social life, Social relations, Green space, Yazd Farhang Square

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