The Relationship between Elderly People with Depression and Built Environment Factors

Authors : Hung-Chun Lin, Tzu-Yuan Chao

Abstract : As the population aging has become an inevitable trend globally, issues of improving the well-being of elderly people in urban areas have been a challenging task for urban planners. Recent studies of ageing trend have also expended to explore the relationship between the built environment and mental condition of elderly people. These studies have proved that even though the built environment may not necessarily play the decisive role in affecting mental health, it can have positive impacts on individual mental health by promoting social linkages and social networks among older adults. There has been a great amount of relevant research examined the impact of the built environment attributes on depression in the elderly; however, most were conducted in the Western countries. Little attention has been paid in Asian cities with contrarily high density and mix-use urban contexts such as Taiwan regarding how the built environment attributes related to depression in elderly people. Hence, more empirical cross-principle studies are needed to explore the possible impacts of Asia urban characteristics on older residents' mental condition. This paper intends to focus on Tainan city, the fourth biggest metropolis in Taiwan. We first analyze with data from National Health Insurance Research Database to pinpoint the empirical study area where residing most elderly patients, aged over 65, with depressive disorders. Secondly, we explore the relationship between specific attributes of the built environment collected from previous studies and elderly individuals who suffer from depression, under different socio-cultural and networking circumstances. To achieve the results, the research methods adopted in this study include questionnaire and database analysis, and the results will be proceeded by correlation analysis. In addition, through literature review, by generalizing the built environment factors that have been used in Western research to evaluate the relationship between built environment and older individuals with depressive disorders, a set of local evaluative indicators of the built environment for future studies will be proposed as well. In order to move closer to develop age-friendly cities and improve the well-being for the elderly in Taiwan, the findings of this paper can provide empirical results to grab planners' attention for how built environment makes the elderly feel and to reconsider the relationship between them. Furthermore, with an interdisciplinary topic, the research results are expected to make suggestions for amending the procedures of drawing up an urban plan or a city plan from a different point of view.

Keywords : built environment, depression, elderly, Tainan

Conference Title : ICSHC 2018 : International Conference on Sustainable and Healthy Cities
Conference Location : Sydney, Australia
Conference Dates : January 29-30, 2018