

Accessible Facilities in Home Environment for Elderly Family Members in Sri Lanka

Authors : M. A. N. Rasanjalee Perera

Abstract : The world is facing several problems due to increasing elderly population. In Sri Lanka, along with the complexity of the modern society and structural and functional changes of the family, "caring for elders" seems as an emerging social problem. This situation may intensify as the country is moving into a middle income society. Seeking higher education and related career opportunities, and urban living in modern housing are new trends, through which several problems are generated. Among many issues related with elders, "lack of accessible and appropriate facilities in their houses as well as public buildings" can be identified as a major problem. This study argues that welfare facilities provided for the elderly people, particularly in the home environment, in the country are not adequate. Modern housing features such as bathrooms, pantries, lobbies, and leisure areas etc. are questionable as to whether they match with elders' physical and mental needs. Consequently, elders have to face domestic accidents and many other difficulties within their living environments. Records of hospitals in the country also proved this fact. Therefore, this study tries to identify how far modern houses are suited with elders' needs. The study further questioned whether "aging" is a considerable matter when people are buying, planning and renovating houses. A randomly selected sample of 50 houses were observed and 50 persons were interviewed around the Maharagama urban area in Colombo district to obtain primary data, while relevant secondary data and information were used to have a depth analysis. The study clearly found that none of the houses included to the sample are considering elders' needs in planning, renovating, or arranging the home. Instead, most of the families were giving priority to the rich and elegant appearance and modern facilities of the houses. Particularly, to the bathrooms, pantry, large setting areas, balcony, parking slots for two vehicles, and parapet walls with roller-gates are the main concerns. A significant factor found here is that even though, many children of the aged are in middle age and reaching their older years at present, they do not plan their future living within a safe and comfortable home, despite that they are hoping to spend the latter part of their lives in their current homes. This fact highlights that not only the other responsible parts of the society, but also those who are reaching their older ages are ignoring the problems of the aged. At the same time, it was found that more than 80% of old parents do not like to stay at their children's homes as the living environments in such modern homes are not familiar or convenient for them. Due to this context, the aged in Sri Lanka may have to be alone in their own homes due to current trend of society of migrating to urban living in modern houses. At the same time, current urban families who live in modern houses may have to face adding accessible facilities in their home environment, as current modern housing facilities may not be appropriate them for a better life in their latter part of life.

Keywords : aging population, elderly care, home environment, housing facilities

Conference Title : ICSHUD 2018 : International Conference on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : July 26-27, 2018