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## PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS FOR SENSE OF PLACE AND PERSONAL SPACE IN PUBLIC AREA

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### **Abstract:**

*Environmental psychology and behavior in built environment is the field that interests the social scientists and environmental designers for many years. In-depth study and research finding are conducted and have discussed in detail the philosophy and the abstract theories on concept of privacy, personal space, sense of place by the people in a given built environment. As per Roger Barker (1951) statement, the paper proposes that the ecological environment does not demand much but permits some behavioral pattern to take place naturally and elucidate that the built environment tends to act as a catalyst in providing space for the users to perform but also act as a despot in making the users to alter their needs and behavior to the built setting. The paper also touches on the important issues in understanding, and translation of these psychological and behavioral theories and concepts into the real tangible substantial world that the architects and designers can imply upon. The fundamental primal need of people to have personal space and a sense of place in public area is reviewed in this paper and concludes for a cohesive way to achieve this ,by means of participation, cooperation and understanding among designers and environmental psychologists with the people.*

**Keywords:** Architecture; Psychology; Built Environment; Personal Space; Privacy; sense of place.

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### **1. Introduction**

The concept of privacy, personal space, sense of place is central to the study of environment and behavior relationships. These aspects has received increasing attention by social scientists and environmental designers in the past decades for somewhat different reasons and with the notion that this aspects may significantly influence the need and use of place and space in future decades to come.

In-depth study and research finding on environmental psychology and behavior in built environment had discussed in detail the philosophy and the abstract theories on behavioral and neuro-science response of the people in the given built environment. The implication or the

significance of these theories in creating of architectural spaces and spatial organizations are few of the aspects that need more insight and review upon. Butterworth (2000) states that , “the built environment provides the setting by which we live our lives, and impacts on our senses, our emotions, participation in physical activity and community life, our sense of community, and general well-being. Meanings are generated by buildings and spaces, which we ‘read’ as we pass through them”. Places are designed and shaped by those by controlling the available resources and with certain concepts, which affects our degree of access to, and the way we use, those spaces. Based on the given stance and in context of public space, be it an outdoor or the indoor types, the perception of people are mixed with range of senses starting from an collective to individual responses i.e ‘a sense of place’ as a collective response to a ‘sense of privacy’ as an individual demand.

## 2. The Phenomenology of ‘Place’

The phenomenological aspect of the ‘space’ can provide understanding to the relationship between man and environment and derive the outcomes from the environment-behavior researches .This perspective can provides useful conceptual language for bridging the researcher's intuitive theoretical approach to understanding with the realistic intellectual approach and rationalized and reconcile the difficult tensions between feeling and thinking and between firsthand lived experience and secondhand conceptual accounts of that experience.

The optimum healthy environment as ‘the conditions which tend to promote or permit an animal optimal physiological, mental, and social performance in its natural or 'evolutionary' environment’ are true as per Tracy, J. (2005) statement. And well-being needs are connected to fulfillment, satisfaction, quality of life, psychological health and positive emotions. Taken as a whole, the research by Boyden and others identifies well-being needs that should be addressed in building design which relates to the place where man lives, more so, in public area:

- Opportunity to engage in spontaneous social encounters.
- Opportunity for relaxation and psychological restoration.
- Opportunity for privacy and for movement between interaction and solitude, as desired.
- Opportunity for connection to the natural environment.
- Opportunity for regular exercise.
- Sound levels not much above or below that of nature.
- Meaningful change and sensory variability.
- An interesting visual environment with aesthetic integrity.
- Sense of social equity and respect.
- Ability to maintain and control personal comfort.
- Making sense of the environment.

According to geographer Jay Appleton, people prefer to be in places where they have good visual access to the surrounding environment (high prospect), while also provide then a feeling of being protected and a sense of refuge or safe. This sense of protection and safety stem from the feeling of the individual to have an collective and individual perception and emotion regarding coexistent ‘sense of space’ and a sense of ‘personal space’.

### **3. The Sense of Place**

Relph (1976) described that place is an interaction of three components i.e. 'physical setting', 'activity' and 'meaning'. Relph also explained that place has different sizes; it can be a small room or a big continent. In dealing with the concept of sense of place, phenomenologists attempted to emphasize the difficulties of this phenomenon. In this regard, Relph argued that the concept of sense of place is not very clear; he explained that we can describe our personal understandings about this concept, but we cannot give a precise definition for it. In parallel, Barker defined the sense of place as one of the most intangible concepts and explained that discovering what makes a factual sense of place is a multifaceted study. Shamai (1991) argued that Sense of place comprised of three levels. Belonging to a place is the first level, the second stage is attachment to a place, and the third is commitment to a place which also is the highest phase.

### **4. Personal Space**

Personal space, privacy is an approached by environmental psychological as a changing self/other boundary regulation process in which a person or a group sometimes wants to be separated from others and sometimes wants to be in contact with others (Davis & Palladino 1997). In other words, privacy is a dialectic process, in which forces to be with others and forces to be away from others are both present, with one force dominating at one time and other being stronger at another time. As a corollary, being alone too often or for long period of time (isolation) and being with others too much for too long (crowding) are both undesirable states.

### **5. Perception in Public Area**

Today designers are primarily using adaptability and participation concepts to increase user control over the planned environments based on their senses of need. Architects and planners are trained to design for many alternative space and arrangement of space which can bring out the best of the user's needs. The public area be it either in outdoor or indoor places, the people have different scale of perception which Stedman (2002) describe as a collection of symbolic meanings, attachment, and satisfaction with a spatial setting aided by an individual or as group namely: Knowledge of being located in a place: in this level people are familiar with the place; they identify the symbols of the place but they do not have any particular emotional connection to the place and its symbols. Therefore, they do not integrate themselves with the place.

Belonging to a place: in this phase, people not only are familiar with the place, but they have an emotional connection with the place. In this stage, people distinguish the symbols of the place and in contrast to the previous stage. Factors influencing the place attachment are on place satisfaction due to socio-demographic characteristics, people's type of involvement with place, degree of familiarity with a place and knowledge about place, culture, activities in the place and the place itself.

For further elaboration of above axiom on the people sensitivity to aspects of 'sense of space' and 'sense of privacy', the contextual reference with respect to the view of the people in the hospital can be looked upon. In hospitals the physiological needs of the people are very essential,

keeping in mind the severe medical and health condition of the patient, the tense emotion of the attender and the stressed work environment for the doctors and paramedic. Hospitals are places where varied kind of people visit who are either sick or fit; also, the work place for the doctors, nurses and paramedics and the place where the patients visit with illness accompanied by able attender. In health care buildings, for a better recouping of the patient, the ‘sense of cure’ and the feeling/ interactions between the occupants are highly correlated with the design elements and architectural features of the built environment.

The responses as seen in the Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1, especially given by the patient and staff respondents, identifies that privacy and dignity is vital for Medicare process in Inpatient area and subsequently valued in the diagnostic area. The patients and relatives had identified the importance of the privacy and dignity in inpatient area to ascertain the atmosphere for private conversation in the bed area and establishing high level of confidentiality (regarding their medical ailment and treatment) during the doctor’s visit, but also required the proximity and availability of staff for security and reassurance

Table 1.1: Mean preference value: Privacy and Dignity

Zone	Patients	Relatives	Staff	Main Average
Out Patient	1.49	1.46	1.43	1.46
Diagnostic	1.49	1.48	1.47	1.48
In- Patient	1.51	1.50	1.48	1.49

The inpatient area in the cancer care facilities requires more emphasis on physical comfort than the control as stated by the patients, relatives and staff respondents because patients felt comfortable by having a choice to control their environment; this response also favored the staff too, by reducing patients’ demands on staff, particularly nurses (Table 1.2 and Figure 1.2). The comfort level is also achieved when collective stimuli response by the respondents are catered to.

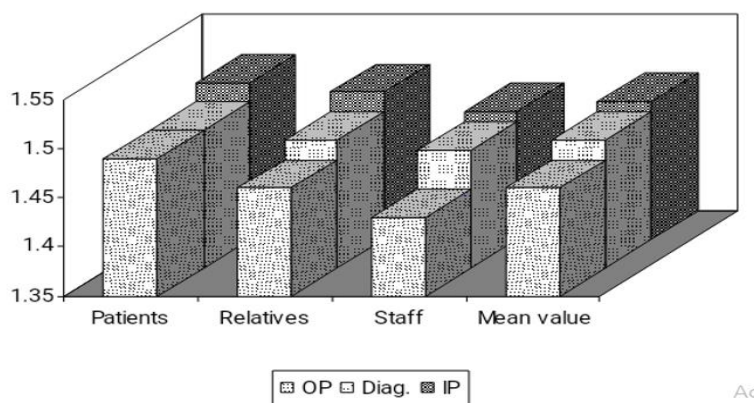


Figure 1.1: Mean preference - value: Privacy and Dignity

Table 1.2: Mean Preference - Value: Sense of Place

Zone	Patients	Relatives	Staff	Mean average
Out Patient	1.40	1.43	1.42	1.41
Diagnostic	1.36	1.33	1.32	1.34
In- Patient	1.54	1.49	1.51	1.51

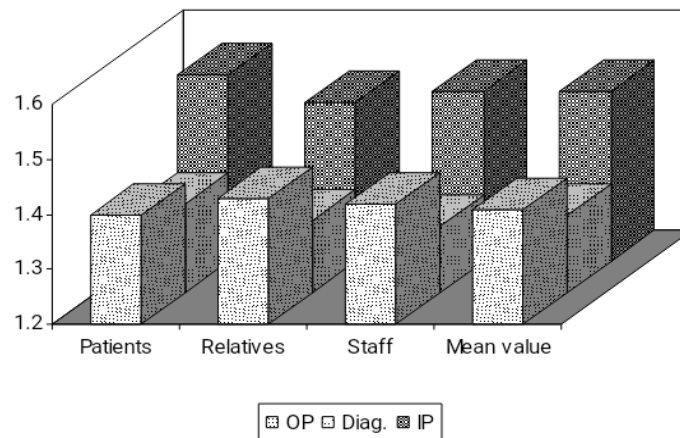


Figure 1.1: Mean preference - value: Sense of Place

Territory is the regulator defining the sense of personal space, which can vary from one person to person and collectively people to people. It can be broadly classified as primary, secondary, and public territories in terms of sense of permanency of ownership and degree of control that occupants have over use of a place (Hall, 1969). The degree of control or awareness of what constitute primary, secondary and tertiary territories by the people can influence the design of planned territories, such that the person or the people have appropriate degrees of control over spaces. Basically, territories serve the purpose of smoothing out social interaction and stabilizing social system. Maslow (1943) refers to human hierarchical needs and their importance in our daily life. One need which is directly related to most of Maslow's hierarchical needs is the need for a place to live or to work.

## 6. Results and Discussions

From the perception of seeing the built environment as an "container" or "box" housing the function and activities, the perspective of looking at the built environment as a vibrant, potential living fabric can allow the people to recognize and extend their perception to use, live and grow in the built space. This involves an understanding of human movement patterns, physical dimensions and above all usability of spaces for territory and settings for interaction among people (Altman, 1975). One should not ignore the fact that the concepts such as personal space, territory and crowding are useful in the understanding of interior spaces, but, they are not the basic units for architectural design. An architect should be able to identify people's needs emotionally and physically, not merely providing space which confines the basic need to function and use the place. The designer has to be able to satisfy the psychological requirements of those spaces also. These psychological requirements are not usually recognized or expressed by most of the people, but the designer or the architects can sense the abstract need of the people through dialogues, interaction and by triangulation through the people in contact. The reason that psychological needs are not identified or comprehended by people is because they are abstract, they are feeling. The way a person can express his feelings about a space is by recognizing that it is an exciting space. It is the architect's responsibility to design required spaces that are exciting and lively.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

A building or a space being designed either for sense of belonging or sense of oneself, it relates and responds to the psychological needs as a criterion. If Robert Sommer statement states, the personal space bubble are a logical unit in architectural design, then the architects and designers should know and understand that this bubble cannot be a limiting tool, confined in the introverted shell, rather understand its significance as a conceptual idea. In other words, a space shall be a neural and flexible entity which can imbibe the sense of commonness and personalization experienced at varied degree by different occupants rather than providing privacy within four wall with no choice or freedom to the people using it; and the suitable means to achieve this in the complex process of designing the built environment is through more participation, cooperation and understanding among designers and environmental psychologists with the people.

For the perception on attachment and sense of belonging, the people's preferences for environmental attributes and the physical attributes can influence the duration and the level of belonging. Understanding of place attachment that brings the physical setting into account would provide some insight into what about place matters to people. Therefore, as Stedman [34] explained place attachment is an evaluative dimension of place and the elevated level of positive emotion which indicate how much the place means to people, thought he stay is for long days and year or for few hours in the place. It describes how much place means to people. Place attachment and sense of belonging motivates and act as a positive catalyst in human lives and also in their care and anchorage to the place. It is expected that there is difference in environmental attitudes between those who feel an attachment to a particular place and those who do not.

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