

Abstract

On an aging society, it has become an important issue that how people live in their old age. For a long time, “living with children,” to Taiwanese people, has been the best way of living arrangement in later life. However, with the enhancement of autonomy and the upgrading of educational level, more and more elderly tend not to live with their children, and some of them choose to live in congregate housing. From the viewpoint of the elderly living in congregate housing, this study aims to understand their interaction with the living environment, their emotional attachment to it, and how to make the environment feel like a home. Accordingly, the purposes of this study are as following: first, examine the decision-making processes of older adults relocating from home to congregate housing; second, analyze the interactive relationship between the elderly residents and their living environment; third, explore the emotional attachment of the elderly residents to their living environment; forth, based on research findings, provide suggestions for the elderly housing policy and the practitioners.

This study employs qualitative research approach, and data collection is gotten from a congregate housing in Taipei, including semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirteen elderly residents aging from 71 to 92. The study findings are listed below:

First, relocation is a series of process, including the demand for initiation, information acquisition, comparison, consideration, and the final decision. In this process, the more participation and the more autonomy the elderly have, the more positive their comments for the new residence will be.

Second, in physical environment, a wide range of space is the most prominent feature of congregate housing. The elderly residents could engage in independent activities in the individual dwelling units. They would have more interpersonal contacts in the public space. As for outdoor activities, the elderly might be restricted by their mobility, for fear of the potential dangers of the external environment, or falling accidents. Besides, the elderly get many benefits from the leisure and social activities in congregate housing. In the social environment, the interactive relationship between the elderly is influenced by the vicinity of the functional distance and the homogeneity of residents. Staff members of congregate housing help the elderly maintain independence, and original social support networks provide main emotional support to them.

Third, most elderly residents are fond of and satisfied with their living environment.

Nevertheless, not all of them consider this environment as their home. Viewing it as a home depends on how they define the meaning of home and whether they have self-owned housing. Overall, the attachment type of these elderly residents can be divided into three categories: (1) I found an ideal place to stay throughout my lifetime; (2) this is a suitable place for me to live, and it can help me maintain independence; (3) I have no affection for this place. If given the opportunity, I will try to rearrange my dwelling place.

Keywords: elderly, congregate housing, place attachment, meaning of home

