

Community Space Supporting Intergenerational Interaction in Aged Societies : Focus on Preferences of Senior based on Gender

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Introduction



In the context of the growing number of elderly people being isolated as aging accelerates in aged societies, this study focuses on the role of communities in supporting the social interaction of various generations for the sustainability of these societies. The model of community space needed for an aged society is shared through a case study of a Korean community with the longest-living elderly women among OECD countries, and the differentiated needs of seniors based on gender are elucidated.

In an aged society oriented toward aging in place, a physical environment that empowers seniors must be created through social interaction in order to maintain seniors' quality of life. In addition, in order to create inclusive spaces for elderly-friendly communities in preparation for demographic changes in an aged society, it is necessary to conduct in-depth studies on the differentiated spatial needs and preferences of seniors according to gender.

This study aims to derive the spatial attributes that define sustainable community spaces that promote interaction among different generations so that the elderly can avoid isolation and realize aging in place. Furthermore, the research has significance as creating an inclusive and sustainable community space can play a role in empowering the elderly.

Methods

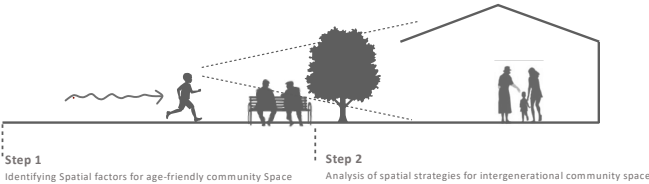
Six community spaces within the old neighborhood of Dobong-gu in Seoul were selected, and interviews, observations, and spatial analysis were conducted. An analysis framework was prepared based on a literature review and interview

In the first step, spatial attributes supporting elderly-friendly community spaces were identified and explored. In the next step, spatial elements that activate intergenerational interaction were analyzed based on gender.

The survey and interviews were conducted between November 2019 and June 2020, with 51 participants. (36 women, 19 of whom were elderly, and 15men, 11 of whom were elderly)



Results



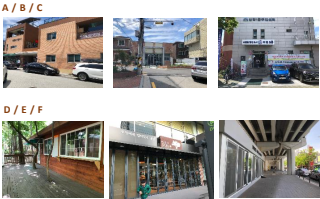
Step 1: Identifying spatial factors for age-friendly community space

	Female	Male
Accessibility	"The center needs to be near the house to get there."	"I'm tired because it takes more than 10 minutes to get to the welfare center."
Safety	"This is a community center, so I feel comfortable. It's a safe zone."	
Comfort	"I'd like a chair with a backrest and cushion."	
Transparency	"I think it'll be easier to get in when you can see the inside of the building." "I want to enter the building when it's bright inside when light is coming into the building."	"The inside needs to be bright light if you want to be interested in getting inside the building. I don't want to go in if it's dark inside."
Convenience	"It's uncomfortable because the toilet is too far away." "The sitting space is uncomfortable to sit on. My knee hurts."	"When I was young, I preferred sitting space, but now I am older, I prefer standing space."
Inclusiveness	"When young people come, they play with each other. It's good to separate the space, but we have to see each other and hear sounds from each other."	"It's hard for children and the elderly to be together, but we need to have a chance to communicate."

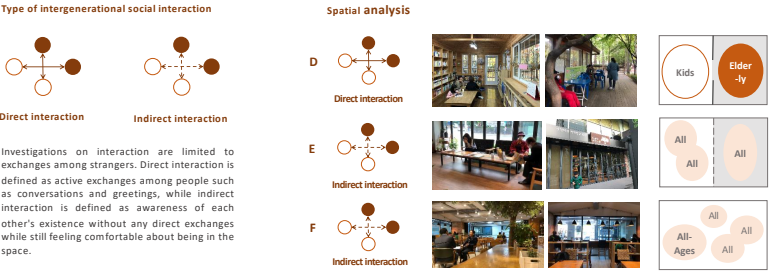
Spatial analysis

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Accessibility	-	O	-	O	O	O
Safety	-	-	-	O	O	O
Comfort	-	O	O	O	O	O
Transparency	-	O	-	O	O	O
Convenience	-	-	O	O	O	O
Inclusiveness	-	-	-	O	O	O

Spaces used by various age group



Step 2: Analysis of spatial strategies for intergenerational community space



- "I think it would be better to be separated than to be in a space with the elderly and children. But it's ok to see each other." _ 30s, Female
- "It's not easy for the elderly and kids to get along. We need to separate the space. But it's possible to interact with each other only when it's built in a way that means communication is possible." _ 60s, Male
- "People can choose where they want to go when it's built to see where the elderly and their children are." _ 80s, Female
- "I hope the elderly come here often. Since it's a sitting space inside, only children come and the elderly sit outside on the terrace. People who come often say hello and talk to each other sometimes" _ 40s, Female

Users of the community space preferred having a separate space for the elderly and children to be together in one space.

In the case of D, where the areas of the elderly and children with parents were separated, users had favorable attitudes toward direct interaction. In this case, the two spaces were close together and there was a window (transparency) allowing direct communication.

On the other hand, in the cases of E and F, where the elderly and children together, users tended to want privacy, and social exchanges among elderly individuals and children as well as adults were not initiated.

Preferences among seniors based on gender

	Female	Male
Main Point of Space	Safety, Comfort Accessibility, Transparency, Convenience, Inclusiveness	Accessibility, Convenience, Transparency, Inclusiveness
Socializing Type	Gathering oriented (Conversation and Refreshment)	Program oriented (Entertainment and Meal, Diversity of choice)
Generation Mix Type	Mixed Generation preferred	Mixed Generation preferred

Conclusion

- In order to create a community space available to all age groups, accessibility, safety, transparency, comfort, convenience, and inclusiveness must be ensured. According to the interview results, people find it difficult to access a place that takes more than 10 minutes to walking. Safety was mentioned mainly by female users. When users talked about transparency, most of them mentioned that the building's facade should be transparent so that they can check the internal environment for easy access and interest. Regarding the issue of comfort, comfortable chairs with backrests and armrests were frequently mentioned, and most of all, users wanted outdoor shelters from the snow and rain. Concerning convenience, users frequently mentioned the standing type seat and conveniently located toilets and vending machines. Finally, regarding inclusiveness, most users had a favorable view of intergenerational interaction, but they believed that a certain degree of separation is necessary. This leads to the content of spatial strategies to promote intergenerational exchanges.
- The strategy to create a good community space for social interaction between the elderly, and children is to separate the space according to age groups. However it is recommended that the spaces be placed close to each other so that they can be seen and allow direct communication.
- The elderly women and the elderly men showed differences in spatial preferences. The females showed sensitivity to safety and comfort, and the purpose of visiting a community space was to "get along." On the other hand, male seniors emphasized accessibility and convenience. They were focused on specific programs, looking for diverse options. On the issue of intergenerational interaction, both elderly men and women showed favorable responses.

Future experiment

In this study, spatial composition and conditions were analyzed to promote intergenerational interaction in the community space inside an existing old city, and users' perceptions and usage patterns were investigated. Future experiments will explore new towns to compare them with old cities in terms of senior-friendly community spaces that promote intergenerational exchanges.

Acknowledgement

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