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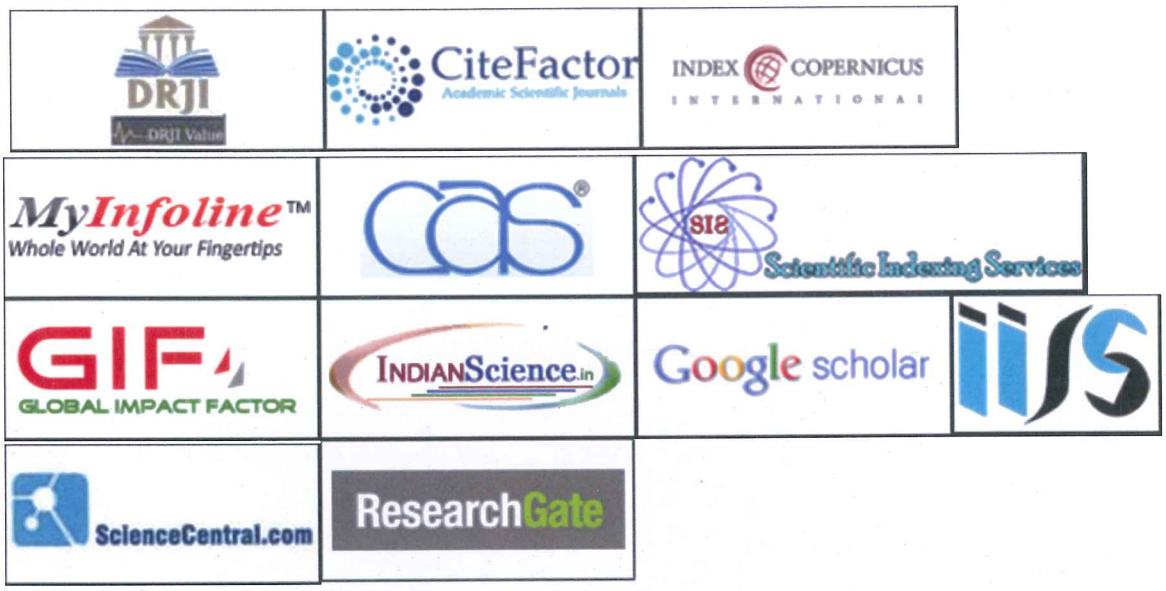
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RETHINKING SUSTAINABLE LIVING FOR THE OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Our planet is graying rapidly, but this demographic change brings about some challenges for the older adults. In particular, sustainable living is one of the ways to deal with these challenges by developing some aging and environmental friendly strategies. Since our natural resources are limited, these strategies gained a great importance to meet the need of the aged facing poverty after they age. For instance, the arrangement of the indoor and outdoor places regarding the aged concerns has been discussed among many scholars. That is because many places were not designed simultaneously with the increasing number of the older adults. Without a doubt, even the idea of sustainable living gives a courage to the state and city administration to initiate the age(d)-friendly strategies to rebuild environment. That is why this study aims at raising a global awareness toward the sustainable developments for the older adults in many areas such as housing and clothing.

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INTRODUCTION

We are going through a time period in which world has entered in a new era of great changes in demographics, environment, technology, climate, etc. These changes create an increasing demand of energy, food, cloths, water, houses and so on (Gallopin&Raskin, 2002). Since world resources are not infinite, humanity are facing new challenges due to limited resources and high demand. Furthermore, older adults are potential victims of environmental problems and changes owing to their vulnerabilities (Laws, 1995). For this reason, one should develop a new life style or policy to help this vulnerable part of humanity. In order to learn to live within our or Earth`s limits in terms of assisting the aged the concept of sustainable living has moved to the front burner in the last few decades.

What is Sustainable Living?

Sustainable living is a lifestyle by which individuals and or societies try to reduce Earth`s natural resources and their own resources (Ainoa *et al*, 2009). One can add environmental responsibility and future generations` needs to this definition. That is to say, sustainable living is not only related to present, but it is also toward the future. That is why when one of its faces looks future generations, the other face takes older adults and poor into consideration.

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Without a doubt, sustainable living means different things to different people or societies. Living more simply, being aware of nature which is feeding us, using Earth`s resources more consciously, changing our consumer culture and so on can be listed as core concepts of many definitions. Let`s take our consumption patterns as an example to understand sustainable living more deeply. The industrial age has brought about a poisonous legacy due to its uncontrollable aspect (Carley&Spapens, 1998). For instance, overconsumption is one of basic features of industrial age-not to mention environmental hazards, including global warming, depletion of the ozone layer and air pollution caused by industrial wastes. Whereas industrialized countries have a problem of overconsumption, the developing world is struggling with poverty and malnutrition which pave the ways serious health problems. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that overeating or overconsumption lead to obesity causing ill-health in the wealthy countries (Carles&Spapens, 1998). For this reason, the culture of consumerism doesn`t only show our unawareness in the world which is partly under the poverty line, but it shows how we have started to destroy the health of our wealthy citizens.

Many people are well aware of the spirit of consumerism which is based on individualism, but we all have a chance to live sustainably by rethinking our consumption patterns. Such an action should be collective action because we can only change our consumption patterns through organizations and collaboration. We should give a high credit to collaboration in building social capital referring to social network (Scarfo, 2009). This means that we need to have a collective decision-making to take action toward a sustainable world. This doesn`t

mean we will completely change our lifestyles and waive our individual decisions or rights. Instead, we will enrich our lifestyle by sustainable products and we will take role in eco-innovations to sustain our future. For this reason, we need to build a consensus around a global sustainable development strategy. One can begin with building a type of sustainable housing conducive to the wellbeing of older adults by considering which materials are appropriate for both inside and outside design. Also, sustainable clothing and its healthy materials can be an example to dig sustainable living more.

Sustainable Housing for the Aged: Indoor and Outdoor Concerns

The type of sustainable housing which is conducive to the wellbeing of older adults can be both independent housing and dependent housing. Whether it is independent housing or dependent housing it should be elder-friendly designed house including eco-friendly aspects, universal design. For example, universal design is sustainable design which is critical for sustainable living. In the houses which are built by considering universal design, sustainable materials that have neutral impact on the Earth are being used. They are close to sustainable transportation systems and market chains as well. Renewable energy, energy efficient windows and solar energy, for example, are used in these homes to reduce utility bills which put older adults under the bus in their later years (Henry, 2016).

The houses built around the concept of universal design are comfortable, safe and accessible for older adults. Six ideas can be put under the category of requirement for inside of the home for the elderly. They are to have easy on the hands, friendly floors, safe stairs, a well-lighted place, landing places and better baths (Henry, 2016). If one needs to pick up one idea among them as an example, better baths can be an interesting example. As it is well known, the risk of fall is increasing with aging. Needless to say, slippery surfaces double this risk. In other words, floor should be made from non-slip materials. For this reason, there should be shower grab bars to minimize the risk of fall. For the aged with arthritis or other chronic conditions, for example, one should even take doorknobs with lever-style hardware into consideration because it is hard for them to grasp. Furthermore, since eye vision lowers with aging, one should consider good lighting in the design of the home for the aged. However, energy consumption becomes a big problem here. That is because the amount of time spending at home increases with age (Davison *et al*, 1993) For example, a person over 65 is spending eighty to ninety percent of his or her time at home. As a results, energy consumption and water consumption increase. That is why sustainable energy and water options gain a great importance.

Without a doubt, many people want to have their parents to live them at home. That is why home design for them is very important. The house materials will be used for inside and outside of older adults` home need to be both elder-friendly and eco-friendly. It should be elder-friendly because older adults are vulnerable and have a great risk of home accidents. It also should be eco-friendly because particular materials using in house affect their health.

There are top tips to consider in designing interior of a home for the elderly and the disabled. These tips can be listed as comfort, lighting, warmth, storage, safety, curtains, bathroom, location, and decoration. First of all, the comfort of home is important aspect of interior design. That is to say, home should have comfortable furniture made of eco-products. For example, carpet should be 80 % made of wool.

Secondly, as aforementioned lighting system is vital for interior design. To me, lighting system should be automatic and body sensitive. Whenever the older adult enters his or her room, it should be on. When he or she leaves, it should be switch off. Otherwise, there will be high energy consumption. Thirdly, arrangement of temperature in the home is vital because older adults might face serious health problems if the temperature in the home is not warm. For example, cold and damp home is related to rheumatism and arthritis. Indeed, older adults need warmer temperature in the home. For this reason, air condition should be well adopted and easily controlled. Finally, decoration of the home is very important. One should use cheerful fabrics and colors in home decoration. In particular, people with poor depth perception have a difficulty in differentiating colors (Dvorsky&Pettipas, n.d.). That is why the color in the wall and floors should be different to be differentiated easily.

It is interesting to note that one should even consider an appropriate design which improves the quality of the sound in the home. That is because when a person ages, his or her ability to hear sound become less acute (Alfred &Robert, 1996). For this reason, one should use soft acoustic materials to balance the frequency of sound inside the home. As seen, to have a good interior design plenty of housing materials are required to be taken into consideration.

Coming to the housing materials for outside of the home one can have a long list. In short, one can provide many tips related housing materials for a home for the elderly. There shouldn`t be many steps for outdoor of the home. That is because it will make difficult for older adults who have to use wheelchairs. Also, porous materials such as asphalt are preferred to hinder water accumulation outside the building. As in the indoor, the outdoor of the building requires energy efficient lighting system. Although it will be useful to benefit from sun by installing solar panels, sun protection is also vital in patios. Green environment makes older adults to feel at ease in the homes or institutional settings. For this reason, one can have a garden in which native trees, shrubs, and plants that require little maintenance were planted. Needless to say, a sprinkler system which uses rain water can be used for irrigating garden.
Home requires a good insulation, too. That is because a good insulation saves the energy and keeps the interior warm during the winter and cool during the summer. However, if one doesn`t have energy efficient windows, insulation will not help much. Also, an outdoor recycling center which is accessible and well designed to drop material is a requirement.

One can enlist more materials for interior and outdoor of a home for the aged, but as it is well known we should also consider about social environments and technology. We all heard about the green house concept, Eden Alternative and Home Free in the U.S. The green house concept is based on three principles, including warm, smart and green architecture. While examining indoor and outdoor materials for a home for the aged I realized that the role of smart technology wasn't mentioned enough. As it is well known, it has become possible to monitor residents through smart technology anymore. For example, an easily accessible alert system in the home or on the aged body can alert when the aged falls.

As seen, the types of materials used for indoor and outdoor of a home for the elderly are increasing day by day. However, the concerns are still the same. For example, being cost effective, healthy, accessible, eco-friendly, elder-friendly, durable are major features of these materials.

Sustainable Clothing for the Elderly

One should choose sustainable clothing for the elderly because they provide physical, psychological and social comfort to them. As it is well known clothes protect people from cold and heat. Also, they should be soft enough to make older adults feel comfortable. For example, the clothes made from eco-fibers such as bamboo, jute, hemp and cotton are more comfortable and healthy (Brown, 2003).

Older adults prefer to use sustainable clothing because they want to feel psychologically and socially comfortable. Since they are aware of what have been used for making regular clothes, they would like to give a message to people that there are always alternatives to save world. As it is well known, plenty of energy and water, for example, are being used to produce regular clothes. This makes older adults feel at uneasy since they are familiar with limited Earth's resources.

When a person ages, the health problems start to pour. That is why they should be more careful about their health compared to young generation. It is important to note that cotton is a material for organic clothes, but with some dyes and addition of other materials it can turn into an unhealthy and non-recycled clothe. Polyesters, nylons and acrylics are not healthy because they made of petroleum. That is why it is not preferred to combine them with natural fibers. Nylon causes skin reaction and acrylic is suspected for carcinogen. For this reason, the clothes made of eco fibers, including bamboo, jute, hemp and cotton are preferable. Soybean fiber is also good choice for healthy clothing of the aged. To me, although I couldn't find exact suggestion for wool products, I strongly believe that it is quite beneficial to keep body warm and healthy in freezing countries.

CONCLUSION

If I had endless monies to construct a sustainable living for older adults, I would construct an elder-friendly, eco-friendly, human-centered, decentralized, technologically well adopted sustainable living atmosphere. The main focus would be cost effective life. Smart technologies would supports older adults life and help them to enjoy their life in the place. Therefore, the place wouldn't be a "prison" for them, it would be a platform to practice the freedom of their mobility. Hopefully, energy efficient technologies and alternative energy seems to help "prisoners of space" to make their dream come true more easily.

As a matter of fact, place is a habitat for all living being. That is why if I had endless monies, I would build a sustainable place include almost all Earth's creatures and being. That is why I believe that we are going toward ecological or environmental citizenship which accepts the rights of all living beings in the biosphere. For this reason, instead of exclusion I would put principle of inclusion to make everybody responsible for their destiny or future. Otherwise, our "common future" will be defined by consumerism which is still eagerly depleting our limited Earth's resources and produce industrial wastes destroying our lone planet.

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