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A Review on Environmental Characteristic that Influence Children Physical Activities in Low Cost Housing

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Abstract

Children living in high-density low-cost housings are less likely to spend time outdoors. Issues regarding low physical environment quality, which are common among low-cost housings, may limit or hinder children’s outdoor physical activities. The objective of this paper is to review the impact of physical environment of low-cost housing, upon children’s physical activities. To address the objective, published articles related to the subject matters are reviewed. Findings revealed that four distinguished physical characteristics namely, poor safety, crowding, inadequate facilities and poor neighborhood relationship, were found to be the major contributors in less physical activities among children.

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Keywords: Physical activity; low-cost housing; neighborhood relationship; poor safety

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1. Introduction

Rapid urbanisation in the recent years has increased the demand for low-cost housing. Expensive and acute shortage of low-cost landed properties due to the urbanisation that seen as the main factors. However, low-cost housing is commonly associated with inadequate infrastructure maintenance and poor quality.

A study states that the 60% of the people living in low-cost housing are from low-income families with many children (Currie & Yelowitz, 2000). Due the high number of children living in there, proper facilities that support their growing needs should be considered. Physical activity among children contributes to physical and mental health, and that affects their overall development. Poor access to a good physical environment that is responsive to their physical activity needs is detrimental and causes many later problems. Children are our future generation. Therefore, investment in the physical environment to maximize their potential to grow properly is crucial.

1.1. Parents and technology

Technology impacts people's life in different ways. Despite the so many benefits of using technology, the negative effects of it were also reported. Technology is used to provide assistant and improve efficiency. Unfortunately, some parents misused technology on their children and that they are not aware of the negative impacts that the technology has, in their children's life. A common example is interactive video technology such as computers, mobile phones and video games. For some parents, to keep their child contented and to be at home, such gadgets provide the solution. This situation imposed many later problems on children. It reported that children who spend most of their time being sedentary at home playing video games or watching movies were prone to have several health issues such as obesity, hypertension, insulin resistance, dyslipidemia. It also causes a problem in their developmental process as they are not trained to be physically and socially active (Boldemann et al., 2011; Carver, Timperio, & Crawford, 2008; Harmon et al., 2014; van Loon, Frank, Nettlefold, & Naylor, 2014).

1.2. Living in low-cost housing

Besides the technology issue, the physical environment is also reported to have effects on children physical activities. Low physical activities among children are common in low-cost housing especially the high-density high-rise. Forcing children to stay inside the house will ensure their safety especially for those living in a low-cost public housing. With the multi-level design and high density of people living in a same building, it is hard for the parents to keep their eyes on the children activities outside the house. Thus, keeping them indoor is safer for most parents. As a result, children spend less time playing outdoors (Karsten, 2005). It shows that the physical environment in low-cost housing will restrain children's freedom to play outdoor, thus contributes to several health issues and childhood diseases amongst children (van Loon et al., 2014; Vandivere et al., 2006).

High-density low-cost housing poses a serious challenge, even in this modern age. Limited physical space is usually inadequate for a family with children to live. This paper aims to explore and highlight the aspects of the physical environment that can affect children living in high-density, low-cost high-rise areas, and how it influences their physical activities. In-depth understanding of this matter able to apprehend the issues that hinder children's physical activities. This will help the researcher to find ways that could enhance children's physical activities as it will promote more physical and social interaction that could help their development process.

2. Methodology

Literature from various disciplines be it qualitative or quantitative, were selected and reviewed. Theoretical, review and empirical article are reviewed for the purpose of gaining better understanding of low-cost public high-rise housing condition, children physical activity, children development, physiological, psychology, and the environmental characteristic that hinders the physical activity of the children. Literature was searched using databases available online (Science Direct, Scopus and Web of Knowledge). Keywords such as neighbourhoods, crowding, safety, facilities, low-cost housing and children physical activity were used to direct the search. Findings revealed that the environmental characteristics do influence children's physical activity and their overall outcome.

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