

AicE-Bs 2011 Famagusta

Asia Pacific International Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies, Salamis Bay
Conti Resort Hotel, Famagusta, North Cyprus, 7-9 December 2011

Baby Care Room in Shopping Malls: Accessibility to Malaysian Public

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Abstract

A Baby Care Room is a room for the use of carers to attend to personal needs of infants, toddlers, and even younger children. It is a space allocated for nappies change, fluids and solids preparation, feeding, breastfeeding, also breast pumping for mothers. In Malaysia, the numbers of BCR in shopping malls have shown positive growth lately. However, the efficiencies in benefiting its users are still a question raised by many. This paper attempts to review the current design standards of BCR in shopping malls, and its design efficiency to improve the quality of life among Malaysian public.

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Keywords: Baby Care Room; breastfeeding; diaper changing room; shopping malls; Malaysian public

1. Introduction

In recent years, many noble efforts in upholding the rights of women and children have been taken by Malaysia's most dedicated women leaders, private bodies, NGOs and support group associations. The Government, in fact, has seriously initiated early childhood education and care project in providing a quality environment for all children starting from young. The history of women's rights movement was marked in 1993 when breastfeeding policy was developed, followed by the formation of the

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Breastfeeding Hospital Initiative Recognition committee in promoting breastfeeding among Malaysian mothers. Ministry of Health Malaysia adopted the WHO-UNICEF Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative aimed to increase breastfeeding among all women in Malaysia in line with the WHO recommendation of at least six months of exclusive breastfeeding (International Breastfeeding Journal, 2011). According to World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (2011): breastfeeding rates for the recommended period of 6 months is less than 15% in Malaysia compared to the global average of over 30%. It is everyone's role and responsibility to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding in this country including young people. World Health Organization (2000) has promoted supportive environment and policies as well as providing facilities at the workplace so as to continue breastfeeding among working mothers.

Realizing the importance of breastfeeding especially in providing safe and adequate nutrition among infants, breastfeeding practice should be at any time and any place. Numerous attempts have been made to inculcate the holistic practice among Malaysian mothers through campaigns, prenatal classes, and training intervention within the antenatal care team and child health centre. Malaysian public is now moving towards tolerating the practice of breastfeeding in public even with the existence of many cultures and beliefs. More mothers with infants and children are often seen in public spaces nowadays indicating that it is possible for a mother to breastfeed while out from home. Breastfeeding little infants and care needs of younger children has led shopping mall managers to consider having such facilities for mothers. Breastfeeding room is frequently referred as 'Lactation Room' or Nursing Mother's Room in hospitals, healthcare and office buildings where mothers are facilitated to express milk. However, breastfeeding rooms in shopping malls are often termed as Baby Room, Baby Care Room, Diaper Changing Room and even Mother's Room, where mothers may also attend to any needs of their younger children besides having a corner to breastfeed their babies.

2. Literature Review

The importance of breastfeeding in most US states now have resulted to the existence of laws. A mother may breastfeed her baby anywhere she is allowed to be. Some commercial establishments do provide breastfeeding rooms although laws specify that mothers may breastfeed anywhere without requiring them to go to another area (L. Kaplan, D., 2010). In Australia, a survey of restaurant and shopping centre managers concerning breastfeeding in their facilities was conducted by McIntyre et al in 1999. The result shows only 37.1% of the shopping centers provided a baby room and almost half 48.1% had no breastfeeding facility at all. McIntyre also suggested that there should be a rule for shopping centers and other public spaces requiring suitable breastfeeding rooms in their facilities.

2.1. Breastfeeding in Public

A media analysis in 1998 clearly shows that British society as a whole is not breastfeeding friendly and breastfeeding in public remains a concern for many women. Therefore, the decision to breastfeed might have social implications for the women, such as fear of disapproval in public and social isolation for the period during which the baby is exclusively breastfed. It is necessary to tackle breastfeeding barriers and provide adequate resources at the individual, institutional, community, and policy levels so as to make breastfeeding a norm (Kaplan, 2010).

Another Australian qualitative study identifies environmental barriers to breastfeeding in a low socio-economic area in Adelaide, and the problem of breastfeeding in public was raised spontaneously by all participants. It transpired that breastfeeding in public was seen as embarrassing for mothers and their partners. Fathers felt uncomfortable about their partner's breastfeeding in public, but they did not mind

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