**Small-Scale, Personalized and Innovative Daycare Centers in Taiwan**

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Abstract

Faced with the problem of an aging population, the Taiwanese government is actively promoting long-term care insurance for the elderly. Daycare centers play a crucial role in this approach, and this study focuses on the provision of appropriate care services and the enhancement of the social status of the elderly by daycare centers in Taiwan.

The researchers undertook a literature review and examined this issue from an active aging perspective. A good care center should possess the following three characteristics: small-scale care units, personalized care services, and varied lifestyles. The objective of this paper was to conduct a participant observation experiment in 32 newly established daycare centers in Taiwan for a period of three years so as to examine how these centers provide appropriate care services and promote the welfare of the elderly in the community.

According to the research results, most of the daycare centers examined in this work towards the following goals: (1) to help the elderly construct new social networks and obtain social support, (2) to encourage the elderly to help one other, (3) to encourage autonomy in the elderly, (4) to provide supportive and personal care, (5) to enhance the quality of life for the elderly, (6) to provide a variety of options and activities for the elderly, (7) to preserve the cultural heritage and build a sustainable community for the elderly, and (8) to create awareness of cultural issues in the community.

In conclusion, daycare centers can play a critical role in improving the quality of life of the elderly, helping them earn respect and recognition from others, and enhancing their social status. Most importantly, the government should allocate more resources to daycare centers so that they can help more senior citizens to age successfully in their own communities.

Keyword: aging in place, elderly, daycare, community care.

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**Introduction**

Like many other countries, Taiwan has an aging population. In 2008, the birth rate in Taiwan was the lowest globally, at 1.06 percent (Statistics from Ministry of Internal Affair, 2009). With regard to family structure, after 1980 the majority of family units in Taiwan are essentially nuclear in nature, rather than the traditional extended family. However, there are still many families in which a couple live with their offspring and the husband's parents. This arrangement not only meets the needs of the senior generation, but also honors the spirit of filial piety.

As the oldest members of the family get older, a number of problems may arise due to their declining social, physical and mental abilities. However, as many married women now work outside the home, they are unable to serve in their tradition roles as roles as care-givers to the elderly. This social transformation had lead to often inadequate care for the elderly at home.

These changing conditions mean that the government should provide more support to help the elderly to continue living in their original communities. The provision of daycare centers can enable senior citizens to remain in their communities and have a healthy and positive image, thus promoting their social status..

This research is based on examining the interaction between the social structure and the resources available to it, as well as the various ways that have been adopted to help the elderly. It also discusses the functions that daycare centers can provide, as well as the physical layout of such facilities. Based on the results from 32 daycare centers which were designed and established with the assistance of a government institute called the old person welfare state from 2008 to 2010, and using both observations, participation and in-depth interviews, this study presents some environmental design suggestions which can benefit users of such centers, promote active lifestyles, and raise the social status of the elderly.

**Literature Review**

1. The changing social structure

A social structure is influenced by five major factors, namely population, morality, resources, characters and status (Tsai, 2010). Among these factors, the most significant is the demographic composition of the population In the past, the elderly population accounted for small portion of the whole in Taiwan, and the elderly often faced discrimination based on stereotypical images of being physically, mentally and financial weak. Historically, this has meant that the needs and rights of the elderly with regard to the development of social policies and institutions were overlooked (Tsai, 2008).

However, as the proportion of elderly people in the population has begun to increase in many countries, this has started to change the public’s attitude toward this group (Cumming and Henry, 1961). The elderly are now seen as a constituency that cannot be ignored, either financially or politically.

2. Investment of social resources

The support of social resources directly influences the viability of life management for elderly people and the quality of service provided in daycare centers. However, the distribution of such resources are always influenced by factors like politics, social equity and technological innovation (Binstock, 1991). Among these, government policies have the most significance in an aging population. When the government wants to use daycare centers to keep the elderly within their original communities, a number challenges arise, such as how to deliver the new services and integrate them into the wider and community.

This involves not only changes in the method of care, but also in the perceptions of senior citizens and their families. In addition, new services, such a community daycare, suffer from a lack of experience when they are first implemented, and the associated benefits of service can only be seen after a considerable time. The amount of social resources input more often than not depends on the related policy guidelines, and thus, in order to have constant resource input, service delivery has to be maintained at a high-quality level and later transformed into tangible administrative performance. In this way, more senior citizens within a society can receive continuous assistance and service in an aging society.

3. Connection between social structure and social resources

The composition of society directly impacts the distribution of social resources. With an aging population, the elderly will become more important participants in future social developments, as well as more important consumers of social welfare. The results of using social resources can directly influence those whose affected by them, and raise their status in society. When employing social resources in senior welfare, the benefits not only affect their living quality and social status, but also help decide whether this group can play and active and important roles in the whole social structure. In short, there is an interaction between the social structure and social resources, and if this interaction works well then community daycare can be successfully implemented (see Fig. 1).

Swiftness of social structure

demographic composition, morality,

resource distribution,

role in labor division,

social status

Investment of social resources

government policies,

social equity

technological innovation

Figure 1 Connection between social structure and social resources

4.The Development and Challenges of Daycare Centers in Taiwan

In the 1980s, senior citizen welfare policies were promoted in Taiwan on the basis of solving various social problems. Although the original policies only aimed to provide elderly people with financial difficulties with some assistance, due to the political involvement of many senior citizens these policies have gradually been expanded.

The reinforcement of senior citizens’ care service program was enacted in Taiwan in 1988, putting considerable emphasis on the following aspects: reinforcement of localized living care, maintenance of health, a guarantee of financial security, promotion of social engagement, and the delivery of care services. The program only provided home care services in the initial stage due to the difficulty of providing sufficient care for the disabled and those with dementia. The third phase of the program focused on the establishment of community care service centers and encouraging the social engagement of senior volunteers (Lin, 2009). This program has helped the elderly and local residents to continue community life collaboratively, although it still has some weaknesses, such as how to help the disabled and those with dementia engage in more social interaction.

In response to the practice of long-term care insurance, the Ministry of Interior has tried to promote community care services actively since 2008. As part of this move, daycare centers are seen as the most important way for the elderly to reduce dependence on their family, increase their chances of remaining involved in community life, and obtain social resources. However, there were only 38 daycare centers in Taiwan at the beginning of 2008, with most in urban areas, like Taipei and Taichung. In addition, these centers did not have a unified standard and the quality of service was thus uneven. In order to establish more daycare centers and provide the elderly with appropriate services, such centers need a plan for an integrated mechanism of establishment and counseling assistance.

5. Development of Daycare Centers’ Planning Design Concept and the Principles of Planning and Establishment

Active aging research believes that people need to continue to live actively in their old age, and should also maintain their social status. By actively engaging in social interaction, the elderly are able to live diverse and creative lives which help boost their satisfaction and strengthen their sense of self-affirmation. (Havighurst, 1936, 1968)

(1) The Daycare Centers’ Planning Design Concept

a. Communitization and Minimization

Providing the elderly with localized and communitized care services can help them acquire such services easily in their original communities, and thus grant them the opportunity to continue their family lives. By integrating daycare centers with community activities, the elderly will begin to understand the importance of preventive health care. At the same time, daycare centers can be important areas where the users share their lives together.

However, it is not easy to acquire the land to establish large-scale daycare centers in existing communities, due to the negative image that such facilities have. Therefore, daycare centers should be planned and established according to the concept of minimization. Furthermore, the number of users, operating costs, and sustainable management practices should all be taken into account when operators and designers plan new daycare centers.

b. Deinstitutionalization

The concept of inclusion in society helps the elderly and the disabled to live their daily lives with dignity, as they will no longer be taken care of by a collective care service. Care services should thus be personalized to help the elderly arrange their daily lives, granting them maximum autonomy and helping them live their lives with dignity, rather than solely providing medical care, meals, basic services, and traditional group activities (Chen, 2009).

The spatial design and the pattern of service provision at daycare centers have been affected by the principle of deinstitutionalization. Moreover, the provision of care services needs to be elderly-centered and personalized in order to help them to adjust and arrange things for their own pace of life.

c. Unit Care

The concept of unit care stems from the aim of elevating the quality of care services. To provide different care services according to different situations, unit care sorts services by different attributes to form different individual units, and then supplies varied and appropriate care to boost the overall quality (Chuang, 2008; Lee, 2004).

Social welfare organizations in Taiwan have been paying increasing attention on the concept of unit care since 1980. The needs of the elderly in daycare centers are not merely short-term medical care and care services, but more often long-term life care. Daycare centers should thus focus on small-scale design, and view nine to 12 people as a unit. Each care unit should become a place where the residents are able to manage their collective and personal lives. In addition, the spatial composition needs to be taken into account in order to deal with the public and private spheres. Different care units also need an area that allows for daily interactions between the elderly. Furthermore, the connective interactions between daycare centers and outside communities require a public space with different attributes (Chen, 2009). In recent years, the concept of unit care has focused on how to help the elderly establish new social networks and social support, thus giving them the chance to maintain or rebuild independent lives.

(2) The Principles for Setting up and Planning Daycare Centers

The basic principles for setting up a new daycare center are based on the important concepts mentioned above, and these can be summarized as follows, and are shown in Fig. 2. (1) Providing small-scale unit care spaces that assist the elderly in creating the core places of their daily lives. (2) Providing amenities that are autonomous, convenient, and safe for the elderly to use on their own, and carrying out personalized care services. (3) Providing places or environments for the elderly to engage in a variety of activities in order to continue their family and community lives.

Small-scale unit

Daycare centers

Personalized care services

Innovative lifestyle

Figure 2. The design principles of daycare centers

**Methodology and Subjects**

1. Research Method

(1) Research Literature

The research investigated the development background and trends of elderly community care centers by reviewing the related literature, and put forth small-scale care units, personalized care services and diverse lifestyles as the reference framework for the related design principles.

(2) Participant Observation

The author took the 32 daycare centers which were set up with the assistance of the author and the research guidance team as the observation subjects in order to understand the essential characteristics of daycare centers for the elderly. The on-site participant observation started in January, 2008, and ended in December, 2010, lasting for three years in total.

2. Research Subjects

(1) Daycare Centers for the Elderly

The daycare centers studied in this work are places that provide the elderly with care services and necessary assistance in their daily lives. The services include those related to daily care, self-reliance training, promoting health, leisure activities, provision transport services, family education, counseling, nursing, rehabilitation, and food preparation (Lee, 2009).

(2) Classification of the Elderly Daycare Centers in Taiwan

In Taiwan, daycare centers mainly aim at providing care services for the disabled elderly and those with dementia. According to the regulations for the qualification and service of senior citizens welfare service providers, produced by the Ministry of Interior, daycare centers can be separated into institutional subsidiary daycare centers and community daycare centers. Institutional subsidiary daycare centers are attached to nursing homes, and the floor area for each individual must be at least 10 square meters. Community daycare centers are set up individually in the community, and the area for each individual must be at least 6.6 square meters.

3. Case Study

The research subjects are 32 daycare centers which were established with the assistance of an architectural, social work and cross-field counseling team over a three-year period. The duration of the project was from 2008 to 2010.

Among the 32 daycare centers examined, five of them aim at taking care of the elderly with dementia. These five centers can serve a total of 122 people, and account for 38.5% of the 13 dementia daycare centers nation-wide, while the number of hospital beds they have accounts for 37.5% of the total in all dementia daycare centers. There are also 27 daycare centers which are able to accommodate 684 disabled users and those with dementia, accounting for 45% of the 60 regular daycare centers, and 42.4% of the total hospital beds in such centers .(Table 1).

Table 1 The Planning and Establishment of Elderly Daycare Centers in Taiwan

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The number of daycare centers  /The number of hospital  beds  Type | 73 daycare centers in total | | | | | 1,937 beds in total | | | | |
| Established with counseling assistance | | Established without counseling assistance | | The total number of daycare centers | Established with counseling assistance | | Established without counseling assistance | | The total number of hospital beds |
| The  number of daycare centers | Percentage | The  number of daycare centers | Percentage | The number of hospital beds | Percentage | The number of hospital beds | Percentage |
| Dementia daycare center | 5 | 38.4% | 8 | 61.6% | 13 | 122 | 37.5% | 203 | 62.5% | 325 |
| Regular daycare center | 27 | 45% | 33 | 55% | 60 | 684 | 42.4% | 928 | 57.6% | 1612 |

The research analyzed daycare centers according to the characteristics of their locations. There are four daycare centers in urban areas (accounting for 80% of the total), and 1 in the countryside (20%), and all five were established with the assistance of the counseling team. There are seven dementia daycare centers in urban areas (87.5%), but only one in the countryside (12.5%). The eight dementia daycare centers were established without the assistance of the counseling team. On the other hand, there are 17 regular daycare centers which were set up with the help of the counseling team in urban areas (62.9%), and 10 in the countryside (37.1%). Finally, there are 30 regular daycare centers which were set up without the help of the counseling team in urban areas (90.9%), but only three in the countryside (9.1%). These statistics clearly demonstrate that with the assistance of the counseling mechanism, daycare centers can be established efficiently, and thus distribute the resources related to care services to various areas, rather than centralizing them in urban areas. In general, how to reinforce the planning and establishment of daycare centers in the countryside is a priority that daycare center managers and authorities should pay more attention to in the future (Table 2).

Table 2 Location of Elderly Daycare Centers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The number of  daycare centers  Type | 73 daycare centers in total | | | | |
| Established with counseling assistance | | Established without counseling assistance | | The total number of daycare centers nation-wide |
| The number of daycare centers | Percentage | The number of  daycare centers | Percentage |
| Dementia daycare center |  | | | | |
| Urban area | 4 | 80% | 7 | 87.5% | 11 |
| Countryside | 1 | 20% | 1 | 12.5% | 2 |
| Regular daycare center |  | | | | |
| Urban area | 17 | 62.9% | 30 | 90.9% | 47 |
| Countryside | 10 | 37.1% | 3 | 9.1% | 13 |

This research then analyzed daycare centers according to the planning and establishment of care units. Among all dementia daycare centers established with the assistance of the counseling team, there are three (accounting for 60% of the total) with more than two care units with spatial planning, and two with one care unit (40%). However, the dementia daycare centers which were established without the counseling assistance have no spatial planning with more than two units. On the other hand, with regard to the planning and establishment of regular daycare centers, there are 11 of them with more than two units with spatial planning (accounting for 40.7% of the total), and 16 of them with only one unit with spatial planning (59.3%). There are only two regular daycare centers established without the assistance of counseling that have more than two care units with spatial design, and the rest of the 31 centers (87.5% of the total) have only one care unit and were designed in traditional ways. The statistics show that the concept of unit care is able to be realized in spatial planning with the active assistance of the counseling mechanism. Furthermore, the concept of unit care can also meet the demands of the elderly (Table 3).

Table 3 The Units at Daycare Centers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Quantity  Category | A total of 73 day care centers in Taiwan | | | | | | | |
| Established with counseling assistance | | | Established without counseling assistance | | | Total |
| Quantity | Percentage | Quantity | | Percentage |  | | |
| Two or More Units | 3 | 60% | 0 | | 12.5% | 4 | | |
| Single Unit | 2 | 40% | 8 | | 87.5% | 9 | | |
| Two or More Units | 11 | 40.7% | 2 | | 6.1% | 13 | | |
| Single Unit | 16 | 59.3% | 31 | | 93.9% | 47 | | |

**Discussion and Analysis**

1. The specialties that a daycare center should possess.

This study adopts small-scale units, personalized autonomy in life, and diverse lifestyles in order to examine the specialties that a daycare center should possess.

(1) Small-scale unit

a. Build up new social network and social support

With the active promotion of unit care and the aid of an assistance mechanism, no matter whether in dementia or general daycare centers, the traditional care mode of large-scale care-receivers has been gradually transformed into small-scale care mode of 10~15 care-receivers, and the elderly can have the opportunity to construct a new and much more familiar social network. In addition, through long-term interaction and companionship with other members of the small-scale unit, the elderly can also have the opportunity to receive more social support.

b. Promoting the mutual aid among the elderly

With the promotion of group activities in individual units that small-scale care units in daycare centers provide, the elderly are more likely to develop relationships that support a network of mutual assistance. Based on the observations of this research, the elderly people in the same unit would help with water-delivery, feeding, or walking.

(2) Personalized care services

a. Encourage autonomy in the elderly

The spatial arrangement and design that enable a daycare center to connect care units with public spaces can increase the autonomy of the elderly users. Each daycare center examined in this work is equipped with a living room, dining room, multi-functional room, open-plan kitchen, and one or more disabled restroom. This combination of facilities can enable the elderly to live as independently as possible. In addition, space in the daycare centers is also set aside for for rehabilitation work and a yard, which can also help the elderly to become more autonomous.

b. The provision of open and supportive care-service

The results of this research can assist in the design and arrangement of daycare centers by promoting spatial and visual openness. For example, the arrangement of the open-plan kitchen should be in the main location of a daycare center, as it can be more easily controlled in this way. This kind of design and arrangement can help the elderly make their own choices and manage their lives in a comfortable environment, while the care-givers could just watch over them without interruption or constraint. However, whenever the elderly need any assistance or any accidents happen, the care-givers could be aware of the problems quickly and give the necessary assistance.

c. Re-construct the rhythm of life of the elderly

Through the arrangement and practical observation in the daycare centers examined in this work, we found that the users' lives in the centers would change at different times and locations, and each person has different rhythms of life and habits, which are all allowed at these centers. Care-givers would also get acquainted with an individual's habits in the care unit, and provide them with any necessary warnings or help. This re-construction of the basic rhythms of life would help stabilize the physiological and psychological health of the elderly, and also decrease the problems caused by patients with dementia. Meanwhile, working in coordination with the family lives of the users would lead to much more appropriate arrangements, thus extending the time that the elderly could keep living either at home or in the community and receiving care services there.

(3). Diverse lifestyles

a. Provide the elder with various lifestyle choices

With the arrangement and design of multi-level spaces or different care units in a daycare center, various lifestyle choices can be facilitated. For example, a daycare center with two or more units can offer different activities at the same time. Even in a center with single unit, we also found that, during an activity, some people would choose to stay in their familiar places and drink tea and chat with friends. In addition, some people would also like to help in food preparation in the open-plan kitchen. This means that the elderly are able to choose how to spend their time, and this can help to enrich their lives.

b. The introduction and continuation of original community life

We observed that many daycare centers have introduced elements of local community life into the planning and design of their spatial environments, and have developed mechanisms to provide various care services. For example, the day care center in Taitung's St. Mary Hospital has introduced the images of rural life into the spatial design, and has actively guided the elderly to adopt healthy diets and lifestyles. Yilan's Hong Ren Daycare Center has also started to make the center become a model of a traditional community, and introduced the concept of community life so that the elderly could enjoy the various interactions in different situations during each activity. Finally, Tainan's YMCA Daycare Center has introduced images of the urban surroundings, which enables the elderly to enjoy the traditional family life of Tainan city. This emphasis on the living culture of the local community not only enables the individual daycare centers possess their own local characteristics, but also leads to greater identification by local community residents and care-receivers, which would help the elderly to continue to take part in their community lives and culture.

c. Create a care culture in the local elderly community

In this research, we found that the daycare centers would regularly invite family members or residents in the community to help the elderly during festivals and activities, which makes the elderly feel a sense of their original lives in the community, and increases the stimulation and variety in their daily lives. Therefore, the arrangement and operations of a daycare center not only effect the care-receiver, but also the local community's concepts and attitudes of care service and assistance for the elderly. Once a daycare center is highly valued by local residents, this would help them understand the benefits it provides for to the elderly. The residents would also eventually be more likely to offer assistance or seek help from the centers in their community, maintaining interaction with their friends and acquiring more varied and healthier lives. In this way, daycare centers can help transform a community into one that is friendlier to the elderly.

2. The role of a daycare center

The results of this research show that, with the assistance provided by the counseling team, the design of a daycare center can be enhanced from simply meeting basic needs, to promoting a much wider notion of geriatric health within the community, as well as increasing the independence, social-connectedness and overall well-being of the elderly users. Assisting the elderly in the self-management of their lives not only preserves and enhance their self-dignity, but also is an act of empowerment for them.

The results of this research showed that the design of a daycare center could actively assist the elderly in acquiring more autonomy in their communities, and that the provision of health rehabilitation and action improvement programs can enable them to re-gain a “normal” life. Moreover, in this way the elderly might also acquire the opportunity of being recognized for their abilities by other community residents, thus boosting their social status.

In addition, daycare centers should also actively assist the elderly in re-constructing their rhythms of daily life, and in the future should coordinate with the provision of home services, as this would help the elderly to better manage their family lives and greatly decrease the burden on care-givers within the family, while still enabling relatives to fulfill their traditional filial duties.

The help that daycare centers can provide for the disabled or those with dementia who wish to continue with their original family and community lives mean that they have an important role in Taiwan's long-term care-system.

3. The changes and interaction of social resources and structures

This research shows that elderly people with disabilities or dementia do not need to be confined to their homes or institutions if daycare centers are widely adopted, and that such centers can also help the elderly to maintain an active role in their communities.. As many countries now have aging populations, it is important to find ways that can help the elderly to keep their social connections and status, and thus combat the discrimination and prejudice that they now often face.

**Summary**

Although daycare centers have been set up by local governments in Taiwan, they have not been seriously examined. With the investment of social resources and interdisciplinary assistance provided by the elderly welfare league, thirty-two day care centers has been set up over three years, accounting for 44% of the total. With careful construction of the spatial environment, much better lives with local characteristics can be provided to the elderly, which also enable the care-givers to offer services more efficiently. This can also increase the independence and autonomy felt by the elderly care-receivers.

In addition, the positive effects of such daycare centers can extend to the wider society, as people in the local community would change their ideas about aging, thus increasing the social status and connectedness of elderly residents. In addition, the government should give the counseling team that has been assisting in constructing daycare centers increased funding.

With regard to the continued investment of social resources, the key issue is whether the investment can change the existing situation and the inferior social status that the elderly generally suffer from then they become disabled or develop dementia. In light of the aging populations that many countries now have, providing a better environment for the elderly is now a pressing concern for many governments, and daycare centers can be one way to provide support within the community

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