

A Discussion on the Residential Needs of Three-Generation Family Households: A Case Study on Sanchong District, New Taipei City

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I. Intent and Purpose

As Baby Boomers are gradually getting older, the aging population structure has led to an influx of products ranging from senior residence to retirement homes and nursing homes. Nevertheless, such products focus only on the hardware needs of aging and may overlook the senior citizens' conventional needs for social interaction and psychological needs during the process of aging. Statistical data from the Ministry of the Interior, R.O.C. on scheduled senior citizen status surveys have indicated that senior citizens in Taiwan commonly reside in three-generation family households, and the ideal residential arrangement for senior citizens is to reside with their own children. In this survey, 66.93% of the senior citizens have stated that they are reluctant to utilize retirement or nursing homes while they can still take care of themselves. These phenomena indicate that a family-oriented senior residential model would provide special cultural and psychological meanings that surpass hardware needs for senior citizens in Taiwan.

Demographic estimates from the National Development Council indicate that the birthrate will be lower than the mortality rate in Taiwan, and the senior population will continue to increase while the number of infants and children will continue to decline. In addition to growing caretaking needs and increasing pressure on the young and middle-aged groups to take care of their elderly, the increase in average lifespan, the utilization rate of nursing homes, the real estate prices, and the over concentration of job opportunities, educational and medical resources will also create more opportunities for cross-generational family households. Nevertheless, a residential environment without adequate overall planning will lead to conflicts among members of such families, thus lowering their willingness to reside together under one roof.

Alternatively, both Japan and Germany have developed 'mixed-generation community' to correspond to the growing needs for senior residence due to an aging society as well as diminishing workforce from the low birth rate. To better plan for suitable residence for both young and old members of society, such communities have regulations for the ratio of elderly, young, and middle-aged individuals in a household as well as criteria for application. Public areas including kindergartens and common rooms have been set up in these neighborhoods and are operated by members of these communities to increase the flexibility of the workforce and to lessen the burden on the younger generation from child-rearing or elder care. On the other hand, senior citizens can satisfy their need for self-recognition, social participation, and generational interactions through being a part of the workforce, lessening notions of marginalization from aging. The operations of 'mixed-generation community' helps alleviate the responsibility of the 'sandwich generation' in this era of low birth rate, helps maintain the interactions and liveliness of each age group in the community, and improves the phenomenon of institutionalization of senior citizens. Thus, while aging and obtaining facilitative hardware, senior citizens can also possess the possibilities of social interactions and residing with their children.

Based on above observations, this study will be focused on the traditional three-generational household family and construe a residential environment that fits the cultural environment and needs of individual members in these households in modern society by surveying the needs of such family members. Based on these findings, this study will provide more diverse residential alternatives for three-generational families that enhance the quality of their living. As a satellite city of Taipei City, Sanchong District in New Taipei City has similar population density, transportation volume, and regional factors to Taipei. Therefore, this area has been chosen as the target of this study and will serve as a reference in construction of multi-generational households in metropolitan areas.

II. Research Design

- (A) Design survey questions (Table 1) based on reviewing and understanding domestic and international social policies to correspond to problems related to the aging society and factors that senior citizens and other generations value in the residential environment. The survey will be used to collect statistical data on various preferences.

Table 1- Structure of Questionnaire

Part	Main Content	Details
I. Status	Personal Information	Gender, Age, Health Condition, Living Types
II. Experiences	Ideal living arrangement of three generation family members	Family members reside: under the same roof (Type 1), in the same building (Type 2), in the same neighborhood (Type 3), in the same district (Type 4)
	Satisfaction degree of three generation family members among different living types.	Classified the satisfaction level into: “highly satisfied”, “satisfied”, “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”, “dissatisfied”, and “highly dissatisfied”
III. Needs	Needs of indoor environment	Mobility needs, Spatial needs, Quality needs, Safety needs, and Cultural needs
	Needs of neighborhood environment	

- (B) To expand the scope of the survey samples, surveys will be distributed through an outward expansion of the researcher’s local social network, such as friends, neighbors, and members of neighborhoods, and through referring members of other three-generation families.
- (C) Survey targets should be members of three-generation family households in Sanchong District, New Taipei City. Other conditions include the following:

- a. Family type: Based on the proximity of residence between family members, the three-generation family households will be classified into the following types: Family members reside together, reside in the same building, reside in the same neighborhood, and reside in Sanchong District.

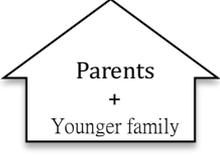
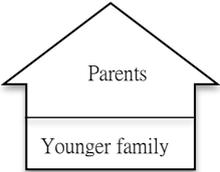
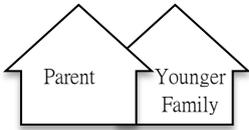
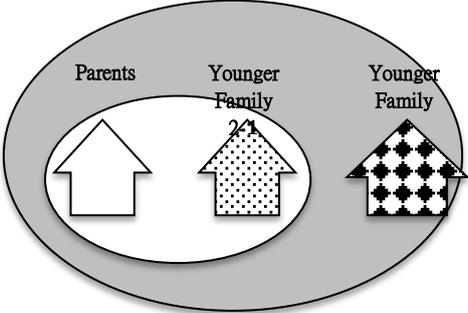
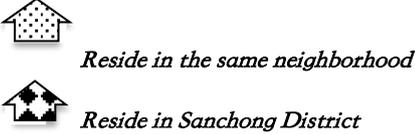
Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
Reside in the same roof	Reside in the same building	Reside in the same neighborhood	Reside in the same district
 <p><i>Younger family and parent family live under the same roof.</i></p>	 <p><i>Reside in adjacent floors</i></p>  <p><i>Reside in adjacent houses</i></p>	 	

Table 2- Definitions of types among three-generations family

- b. Family members' ability to take care of themselves and behavioral capacity: to avoid comprehension, illnesses and other psychological factors from influencing the responses, respondents will be limited to households where the person filling out the survey and all family members can independently take care of themselves and exclude children and incapacitated individuals.

III. Survey Results and Analysis

(A) Analysis of Ideal Residential Model of Members of Three-Generation Family Households:

a. Ideal Residential Model of Three-Generation Family Household – Family members reside in the same building.

This research has classified three-generation family households into four types based on the proximity of residence among family members. Most such families reside next door or in the same building; therefore, this is the most popular and commonly seen residential model of three-generation family households in the metropolitan area.

The number of individuals who currently reside in a three-generation household who chose 'A three-generation household is not my ideal type of residential choice' is zero, showing that members of such families are still very willing to either live with or live close to their family members.

Table 3- Ration of Current type of three-generations families and their ideal living choices.

Household Types \ Item	Residing under the same roof	Residing in the same building	Reside in the same neighborhood	Reside in the same district	Three-generation household is not a ideal choice.
Current living types	18.64 %	61.01 %	0	20.33 %	--
Ideal choice of living types	13.56 %	54.24 %	18.64 %	13.56 %	0

b. Comparison of acceptance of actual and ideal living arrangement – ‘Families who reside in the same building’ have the highest acceptance ratio to their current arrangement; meanwhile, this is the ideal living arrangement of all types of three-generation households.

Table 4- Ration of Current type of three-generations families and their ideal living choices.

Item \ Types of household	Ideal living types				Percentage of members who want to change their living arrangement
	Residing under the same roof	Residing in the same building	Reside in the same neighborhood	Reside in the same district	
Residing under the same roof	-	55%	36%	0	90.90 %
Residing in the same building	19%	-	17%	8%	44.44 %
Reside in the same district	0	50%	8%	-	58.33 %
Total	12%	20%	19%	5%	55.93 %

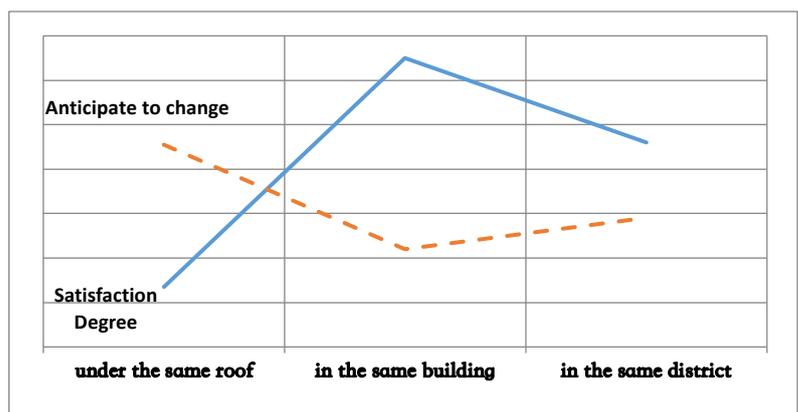
According to the statistic shown by table 4, of the members in a three-generation household ‘who live together under one roof,’ 90.90% wish to change their current living arrangement; alternatively, only 44.44% of those who reside next door or in the same building gave this response, showing that they can better accept their current living arrangement. Additionally, ‘residing next door or in the same building’ is the most ideal living arrangement among all three-generation family households.

c. Members of three-generation family households who ‘reside next door or in the same building’ show the highest level of satisfaction to their living standard.

Satisfaction of living standard is classified as highly satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and highly dissatisfied. Those who ‘reside next door or in the same building’ gave the highest rating in terms of satisfaction.

d. Proximity of residence between family members will influence the members’ satisfaction and acceptance of the current living arrangement, demonstrating a positive correlation to the law of marginal utility.

Observations of changes in satisfaction for living arrangement have found that when residing either ‘next door or in the same building,’ family members’ satisfaction will increase as there is more distance between each of the members. This proves some



past studies that have brought forth the importance of independence, autonomy, and privacy in the daily lives of family members who reside together. Alternatively, when the distance exceeds ‘next door or in the same building,’ as the members live farther from each other, satisfaction of living arrangements will also decrease accordingly, showing that the benefits of having a certain amount of distance have declined.

A noteworthy point is that when the distance increases such that ‘family members all reside in some part of Sanchong District,’ the ratio that anticipates change has increased, while satisfaction with the living arrangement has declined. This demonstrates that this distance could be a barrier to family interactions, and cohabitation costs may have risen. From this point, it can be inferred that the quality of life and satisfaction level of three-generation family households is not merely dependent upon distance.

(B) Analysis of Residential Environment Needs of Three-Generation Family Household

This analysis has been classified into ‘indoor environment needs’ and ‘neighborhood environment needs’ and further categorized into mobility needs, spatial needs, quality needs, safety needs, and cultural needs, which are analyzed in correlation with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Results from the survey for both indoor and neighborhood environment needs have ranked quality, spatial, and safety needs on top. Moreover, the requirement for the neighborhood environment all exceed indoor environment needs:

Needs of indoor environment			Needs of neighborhood environment		
Article	Importance	Detail	Article	Importance	Detail
Mobility needs	0.39 ★	Elevator (2.31) Live in Ground floor (1.75) Smooth route (1.75)	Mobility needs	0.31 ★★	--
Spatial needs	1.63 ★★★★★	Personal Space (2.34) Party Space (1.59) Bath Room (1.36)	Spatial needs	1.71 ★★★★★	Facilities for daily life (1.78) Facilities for leisure (1.59) Necessary facilities (1.58)
Quality needs	1.90 ★★★★★★	well ventilated (1.81) plenty of light (1.58) age of building (1.24)	Quality needs	2.17 ★★★★★★	Fresh air (1.63) Quiet environment (1.63) Nasty Facilities (1.32)
Safety needs	1.49 ★★★★	Security (2.29) Aids for movement (1.85) Emergency systems (2.29)	Safety needs	1.56 ★★★★	Emergency systems (2.08) Security guards (2.03) Aids for movement (1.68)
Cultural needs	1.07 ★★	Geomantic (1.17) Housing patterns (1.63)	Cultural needs	0.25 ★	--

a. Research has indicated that three-generation family households have the highest needs for quality, space, and safety for both indoor and neighborhood environments. The fundamental ‘basic needs’ are still primary concerns for the members of three-generation households, showing that there is still room for improvement in basic living conditions. Consequently, these family members do not see a present need to pursue ‘developmental needs’ such as esteem and self-actualization.

- b. The three-generation family household places more emphasis on neighborhood environment than indoor environment. This may have to do with the fact that residential environment planning often focuses on indoor needs and tends to overlook the needs for neighborhood facilities.
- c. Improving the quality of the community environment by referencing international experiences will not only help satisfy the needs of individual family members but also help fulfill senior citizens' needs for social participation and improve their ability to take care of themselves, which may decline as they age. Additionally, appropriate and comprehensive public space and systematic community operations planning will also help lessen the pressure of elder care, social participation, and childcare for members of three-generation family households.

IV. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the results of this research, below is a comparison of the ideal living arrangement of three-generation family households and the current policy:

(A) Policy and Actual Needs

a. Policymaking is Not Linked with Senior Citizens' Preferred Living Arrangement

Though policies regarding senior citizen welfare is meant to be localized, senior citizens are treated as an individual group rather than a family member in legal regulations pertaining to residential environment for the elderly. This overlooks the preferences and needs of Taiwanese senior citizens who wish to live at home with their children.

b. Environmental Reform and Maintenance is Focused on Indoor Environment

Assistance and financing for environmental reform for senior citizens in Taiwan tends to focus on the indoors. However, results from this study have indicated that three-generation family households have higher needs for their neighborhood environment. Reformation of the neighborhood environment is hard to be accomplished by a single household, and due to the immobility of households, it is difficult for these families to move to satisfy their external environmental needs. Hence, the neighborhood environment and family needs should be better integrated in new residential construction, and policymakers can also consider aid for environmental maintenance and reform of existing communities.

(B) Gap in Supply and Actual Demand

a. Real Estate Often Targets Nuclear Families.

Currently, products in the housing market primarily target nuclear families, and residential units are planned to serve one family (one generation) and attempt to solve cross-generational family needs through providing more space. Currently, the planning of such housing products does not correspond with the needs of the three-generation family households to 'reside either next door or in the same building' or emphasize the neighborhood environment.

b. Senior Residence and Retirement Homes See Senior Citizens as Individuals.

Most senior residence and retirement homes take in only senior citizens aged 65 and over and their spouses. Such product restrictions force senior citizens to reside away from their families and children to receive better service. This is also in stark contrast to Taiwanese senior citizens' preferences for living with their children at home.