

The Impact of Traditional Iranian Architecture on Citizens' Quality of Life: Examining the Relationship between Space, Culture, and Social Well-Being (A Case Study of Yazd, Kashan, and Tehran)

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Detailed abstract

Introduction

Traditional Iranian architecture is the result of centuries of lived experience, adaptation to climatic conditions, cultural beliefs, and social patterns, manifested through human-centered and meaningful spatial configurations. This architectural tradition has not only provided functional responses to human needs but has also played a significant role in fostering psychological security, mental comfort, social interaction, and a strong sense of place. In contrast, many contemporary urban architectural patterns, particularly in recent decades, have focused primarily on physical and economic dimensions, often neglecting the psychological and social aspects of space.

With the growing challenges faced by modern cities—such as declining residential environmental quality, weakened social interactions, spatial alienation, and increasing dissatisfaction with living environments—the concept of quality of life has gained heightened importance as a multidimensional indicator. Quality of life extends beyond material well-being and encompasses psychological, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Within this framework, architecture and the spatial organization of residential environments play a decisive role in shaping citizens' lived experiences.

This study focuses on traditional Iranian architecture to investigate how its spatial and physical characteristics influence residents' quality of life and to examine whether these principles can be reinterpreted and applied within contemporary architectural design. The cities of Yazd and Kashan, as prominent examples of historic urban fabrics, along with Tehran as a city dominated by modern construction, constitute the empirical context of this research.

Materials and Methods

This research is applied in nature and adopts a descriptive–analytical methodology, employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The statistical population consists of residents living in traditional urban fabrics and contemporary residential neighborhoods in the cities of Yazd, Kashan, and Tehran. Data were collected through a questionnaire designed based on established quality-of-life indicators and relevant literature in environmental psychology and vernacular architecture.

The questionnaire assessed various dimensions, including psychological comfort, level of social interaction, satisfaction with environmental conditions, perceived security, sense of place attachment, and spatial quality of housing environments. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 120 valid responses were selected for final analysis after data screening. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, complemented by descriptive and comparative analyses between traditional and contemporary urban fabrics to more accurately interpret differences in residents' perceptions.

Findings

The findings indicate that residents of traditional urban fabrics in the studied cities reported significantly higher overall satisfaction with their living environments. Key elements of traditional Iranian architecture—such as central courtyards, inward-oriented spatial organization, human-scale design, the use of natural materials, spatial hierarchy, and climate-responsive strategies—were found to have a direct impact on enhancing psychological security and reducing everyday stress.

The results further reveal that semi-private and shared spaces within traditional architectural settings provide suitable conditions for the formation and strengthening of social interactions, thereby reinforcing residents' sense of place attachment. Additionally, the effective adaptation of these spaces to climatic conditions contributes to improved thermal comfort and environmental satisfaction. In contrast, despite access to modern facilities, residents of contemporary urban areas reported lower levels of place attachment and social interaction.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that traditional Iranian architecture possesses valuable capacities for enhancing citizens' quality of life—capacities rooted in the harmonious integration of space, culture, and human needs. Unlike purely form-oriented or physically driven approaches in contemporary architecture, traditional architectural patterns have evolved through an integrated consideration of the psychological, social, and environmental dimensions of human life.

The main conclusion of this study is that revisiting traditional architecture should not be understood as a literal imitation of historical forms. Rather, it requires a creative reinterpretation of its fundamental principles and concepts in accordance with contemporary needs and conditions. Conscious and informed application of these principles can contribute to the development of sustainable, identity-oriented, and human-centered residential environments in modern Iranian cities, offering effective responses to current social and environmental challenges.

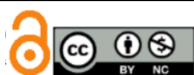
Declarations

This study is an independent work of the author and involves no conflict of interest.

The research did not receive financial support from any specific organization or institution.

All ethical principles related to research were observed throughout the processes of data collection and analysis.

Keywords: Traditional Iranian Architecture, Quality of Life, Environmental Psychology, Sustainability, Cultural Identity, Social Interaction, Human Scale



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