Social Factors of place and creating attachment to the dormitory (A case study: Semnan University dormitory)

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ABSTRACT

Place attachment is one consequence of 'human interacting with place' that creates a meaningful and acceptable space for the person experiencing it. Living separated from their families and losing parts of social capital causes a sense of loneliness and lack of attachment to the new environment of dormitory among students. In this analytical-descriptive research social factors influential on place attachment have been conducted. The results show that there is a significant relation between social factors and place attachment. Personal territory, facilitated social interactions, private space and security in the stated order are the main social factors impactful on creating place attachment.

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Introduction

Leaving hometown to start higher educations in college in another city is associated with changes in student's lifestyles (Berry, 1990). Together these changes can lead to disruption in the inner balance of individuals and outer desires (Van Vliet, 2001). Coming to dormitories, students get apart from family and friend groups and meet a new social environment with variable responses to diverse needs (Zaki, 2010) and missing much of their social support their generally experience a sense of isolation and lack of belonging to the new environment. (Fritz et al, 2008). Considering the factors responsible for the sense of attachment in the new environment can help students to bond and adapt with their dorms and consequently leads to improved emotional and functional statues in students sense of place attachment attach the individuals to the place so they consider themselves as a part of it, and the placed will be important and respectable to them (Falahat, 2005).

One of the main aspects of place attachment is social aspect (Low & Altman, 1992). Most of the time a desirable level of place attachment in spite of poor conditions has been explained by social factors of place (Bonaiuto et al, 2002). Hence this study attempts to find the social factors contribute to place attachment in dorms and find answers for the following questions:
1. What is the definition of place attachment?
2. What are the social factors that contribute to place attachment?
3. What is the relationship between social factors   and place attachment in college dorms?
4. How to take advantage of social factors involved in place attachment for designing college dorms?
According above and in order to answer these questions, we will first define the issue and review the literature, then we will examine the method to collect data and measure the variables and finally we will analyze the data to achieve results.

Place attachment

Place attachment is one of the main aspects of the relationship between man and place. Place attachment is considered as some sort of emotional attachment that can cause the individuals to be a part of the place's identity. This happens in the context of the social and psychological process between man and place and its result is a sense of affection towards the place (Bonaiuto et al, 1999). Place attachment is a higher level of sense of place that plays an effective role in user's satisfaction (Falahat, 2005). Sense of belonging to place, place attachment and sense of commitment to place are three main degrees of the sense of place that has seven levels including indifference to the place, awareness of being in a place, place attachment, sense of belonging to a place, attachment to place, uniting with the goals of place, being in place, and sacrifice for the place (Shamai, 1991).

In the process of attachment to a place the man-place relationship gains meaning and space becomes a "place" (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992) (Figure 1). In fact, place attachment is an emotional chain between man and the environment (Low & Altman, 1992). Emotional connection with place can cause responsive and committed behaviors towards the place and enhance environmental behaviors (Vaske & Korbin, 2001).

Place attachment has a major role in enhancing sense of responsibility and can present more efficient ways to improve living conditions and solve the problems. Socially place attachment provides an appropriate context for individuals to engage more intensively in social matters around them (Perkins & Long, 2002). This is especially important in college dorms.

Several factors have been considered by experts to be effective in developing place attachment that can be categorized as individual factors, memories and experiences, social factors, activity factors, physical factors, place satisfaction, participation in design, and time (Daneshpur et al,

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2009). This study has examined social factors of place and their impact on developing Place attachment. In the following social factors of place are briefly described.
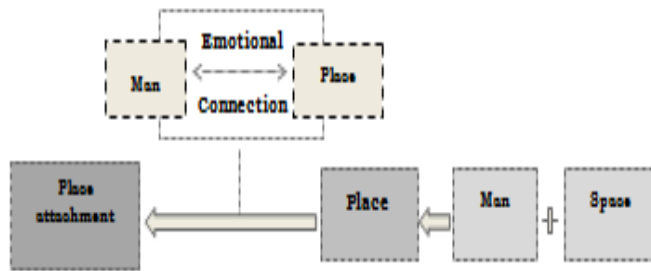

Fig1. Place attachment according to Rubinstein & Parmelee (source: authors).

Social factors of place

Experts in the field of place attachment consider social factors to be effective in place attachment development (Fried, 1963; Marris, 1996). Fried, Bonaiuto and Lewicka emphasize the role of social interactions in developing the sense of attachment to place (Fried, 1963; Bonaiuto et al, 1999; Lewicka, 2010). According to Rapoport, personal territory and privacy in place are two other factors contribute to place attachment development (Rapoport, 1982). Besides, Austin and others suggest that security of place is a main factor in developing place attachment (Baba & Austin, 1989). Based on the review various studies conducted in this field, the components of the social factors can be classified as the following:

Privacy factor

As stated above, according to Rapoport, sense of privacy is considered to have an important role in developing place attachment (Rapoport, 1982). The concept of privacy represents the human's need solitude and loneliness, and it becomes perceptible usually when the person has to spend a long time in a limited space with other people (Motazavi, 1988). It is a quite important matter in students' dorms. The need for privacy is common in human and leads to satisfaction of other needs such as security, affiliation, and esteem (Altman, 2003). Privacy sets a boundary between individuals and determines how they interact with others (Altman, 2003).

According to westin's classification of privacy, solitude (being away from others), anonymity (being lost in the crowd), and introversion (psychologically detached from others) are three forms of loneliness caused by personal tendency to avoid interactions with others. The fourth form of privacy is the closeness and intimacy of a group of people who want to have in-group interactions closed from others (Westin, 1970). In the dorms, roommates are the main groups that partly meet the need for family and require private space. According to westin, personal autonomy, emotional discharge, self-evaluation and providing limited appropriate communications are four functions of privacy (Westin, 1970). Providing appropriate conditions for privacy and loneliness can helps man to keep clear of triggers and events and set to self- evaluation. These settings feel safe to be in. If the need for privacy is not satisfied as other needs, tension and conflict will arise (Motazavi, 1988) and it's an important point to be considered in dormitory design.

Personal territory factor

Rapoport points to the role of personal territory in the development of place attachment (Rapoport, 1982). Personal territory is an area around an individual, demarcated by an invisible boundary, which no uninvited people are allowed to enter (Altman, 2003).

According to Sommer personal space is a portable territory. Edward hall supposes personal space as a small bubble in physical space with the man at the core of it. He calls personal space a "protective bubble" which its radius depends on cultural data (Motazavi, 1988).

Hall grades the inter-personal distance into eight degrees that are far and near situations of intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance (Gifford, 1999). In first sight, student dorms seem to be competent spaces for social interactions, but in fact, sometimes mandatory interactions and lack of solitude and opportunity for loneliness can cause problems (Heilweil, 1973). Privacy and self-territory along with flexibility of space are features expected by the users to be considered in dorm's design. Room's arrangement, public space qualities, the use of furniture, technology and adequate lighting may be appropriate means to reach these goals (Curtin, 2008).

Social interaction factor

Impact of connections and social interactions on place attachment is a significant one among social factors (Lewicka, 2010). Attachment to place develops based on attachment to people (Marris, 1996). Cross believes that place attachment is created and developed through various connections people make with the place (Cross, 2005). Place can shape the sense of attachment due to the opportunities it can provide for social connections and common experiences among people (Pakzad, 2009). According to Marcus, attachment to a place depends on people's social participation, rate of involvement in social networks and cultural interactions in that place (Marcus, 1992).

The positive interaction of man and place is in relevant with social relationships occurred in the place (Chavis & Pretty, 1999). As result of positive impressions of social communication, a world is created for man which is stressful to forsake. This positive feeling of social communications in place justifies the attachment to place in adverse conditions (Bonaiuto, 2002). Social interactions also help developing place attachment by giving meaning to the place (Fried, 1963). People engage in interactions in social opportunities and provide emotional support to each other (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Constant face-to-face contact leads to emotional dependence and bilateral friendship boosts social trust (Chalapi, 1996) (Chalapi et al, 2004). Creating social events contributes to social interaction and presence of people in place. Opportunities for participating in social activities may lead to promote a sense of belonging to place (Lennard, 1984). With the growth of positive interactions and social adjustment, the sense of attachment is developed as well (Mesch & Manor, 1998).

Security factor

Another social factor contributes to place attachment is the sense of safety in place (Lewicka, 2010). The need for safety is one of the basic human needs in regard to place (Carr et al, 1992). People have more attachment to places they feel safe in; at the same time, people who are more attached to place show more readiness to deal with the crime (Comstock et al, 2010). Developing sense of security among people in a community will result in the growth of individual's talents and thus the spatial and local characteristics of the place will be nurtured. Safe social environments pave the way to healthy fearless behaviors (Baba & Austin, 1989).

Summaries of social factors of place

As mentioned above, experts in the field of place attachment consider several social factors involved in it. Based on the literature review and various studies carried out in this field, we can categorize social factors related to place attachment as below:

Table1. Social factors of place according to experts (Source: authors).

Social factors of place	Experts
Privacy	(Rapoport, 1982)
Personal territory	(Rapoport, 1982)
Social interactions	(Lewicka, 2010)(Marris, 1996) (Cross 2005)(Pakzad, 2009) (Marcus, 1992) (Chavis & Pretty, 1999)(Bonaiuto et al, 2002)(Chavis & Wandersman, 1990) (Chalapi, 1996) (Chalapi et al, 2004)(Lennard, 1984)(Mesch & Manor, 1998)
Security	(Lewicka, 2010)(Carr et al, 1992)(Comstock et al, 2010)(Baba & Austin, 1989)

Research method

The research method of this study is descriptive – analytical method and data were collected documentary. Firstly, social factors of place related to place attachment were extracted from literature review and then the factors were examined by means of questionnaire in Semnan university campus dormitory as the case study. Using random sampling method, 70 questionnaires were dealt out in the area. Regarding to the dorm's common restrictive rules, 67 questionnaires were took back which represents the rate of return as 95%.

Table2. Statements of William and Vaske's study (Williams & Vaske, 2003).

Statements
I feel "X" is a part of me.
"X" is very special to me
I identify strongly with "X"
I am very attached to "X"
Visiting "X" says a lot about who I am.
"X" means a lot to me.
"X" is the best place for what I like to do.
No other place can compare to "X"
I get more satisfaction out of visiting "X" than any other.
Doing what I do at "X" is more important to me than doing it in any other place.
I wouldn't substitute any other area for doing the type of things I do at "X"
The things I do at "X" I would enjoy doing just as much at a similar site.

In this study the components of social factors of place including social interactions, personal territory, security and privacy have been examined in association with place attachment as the dependent variable. In order to measure place attachment as the dependent variable, various studies have been conducted in terms of research method. In 2003, Williams and Vaske carried out a research to assess place attachment using psychometric method, which the outcome was 12 designed statements. The study has become the basis for many later studies. The measurement method of the studies was based on survey research method using areas of likert - scale questionnaire as the research tool (Williams & Vaske, 2003) (Table 2). This study used the statements obtained from Williams and Vaske's study to measure place attachment in dormitory with the difference that some literary changes were applied to the statements in order to make more illustrative (Table 3).

Table3. Statements examined in this study (Source: authors).

Statements
This dorm is one of my favorite places to live in.
My dorm is as good as a dormitory should be.
I have many memories of this dorm.
I'd stay longer here if it was possible.
I miss the dorm when I leave it.
I feel a sense of belonging to this dorm.
The dorm is a part of me.
I'm ready to do anything I can do for its maintenance.

Case study

The study area was Semnan university dormitory which is located on the campus of the university. Currently, the girls dormitory consists of 3 blocks, which blocks 1 and 2 (Farzanegan 1&2) (Figure 2) were built in 2002 and block 3 (Farzanegan 3) (Figure 3) was built in 2010. Farzanegan 1&2 dorm is an example of double-landed corridor accommodation and Farzanegan 3 dorm has been designed around a central courtyard as old type schools.

Fig 2. Blocks 1&2 typical plan (Source: Technical department of Semnan University).

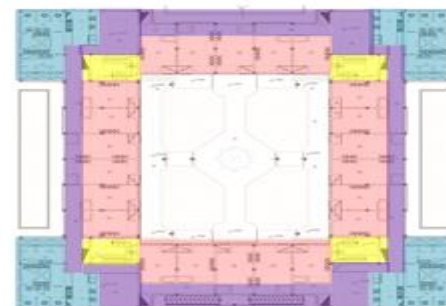|		
Rooms		Vertical circulation
Rooms service (kitchen &W.C)		Horizontal circulation

Fig 3. Block 3 typical plan (Source: Technical department of Semnan University).

Results

As mentioned above, questionnaire was used as the tool to collect data. 70% of respondents were in the age range of 18 to 22 and 30% in the range of 23 to 27 years. 70% of responders were under graduate, 20% were graduate students and 10% were Ph.D. students.

Thus the highest frequency of data was that of under graduated respondents. 40% of respondents were engineering students, 30% were basic sciences students and 30% were humanities students (Table 4).

Table4. Demographic information of respondent (Source: authors).

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-22	47	70 %
	23-27	20	30 %
Educational level	Under graduate	47	70%
	Graduate	13	20%
	Ph.D.	7	10%
Study field	Engineering	27	40%
	Science	20	30%
	Humanities	20	30%

According to literature review, place attachment in dormitory was measured via 8 statements of likert scale and the impact of each social factor of place on developing attachment to the dormitory was examined (fig 4). As seen as table 5, the mean value of attachment to the dormitory is in the low range of likert scale.
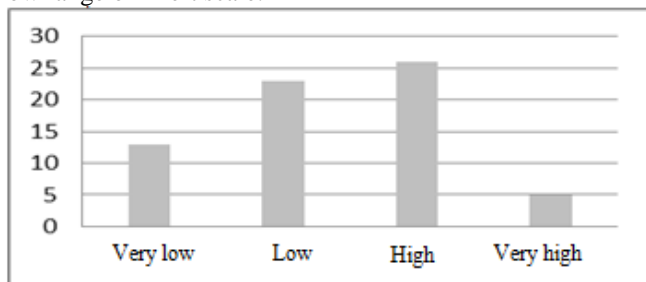

Fig4. Measuring the attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors).

Table5. Mean value of attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors).

Variable	Mean value	Quality
Level of attachment	2.43	Low

Table6. Mean value of social interactions factor on developing attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors).

Variable	Mean value	Quality
Social interactions	3.79	Very high

Table7. Suggested policies to develop social interactions in dormitory (Source: authors).

Policies related to social interactions
- Creating a sense of calm and intimacy yet vitality and present ability in public spaces of dorm.
- Providing a variety of spaces and facilities for different groups living in dorms.
- Providing stopping areas for individuals and groups in different parts of the dorm.
- Improving social activities by integrating sidewalks and pavements with natural settings and public spaces in dorms.
- Easy access to public open spaces of the dorm.
- Using low-rise residential buildings with direct access to the outside can enhance the use of outdoor spaces and facilitate the presence of users in public spaces.
- Developing physical comfort of users in public open spaces using porches and shaded spaces in order to shading and protection from rain.

The result also indicates that from the respondents' point of view, the impact of privacy and personal territory factors on place attachment development is also high (Table 8). In order to obtain personal territory and privacy, following policies are recommended in table 9

Table8. Mean value of personal territory and privacy factors on developing attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors).

Variable	Mean value	Quality
Personal territory	3.85	Very high
Privacy	3.37	Very high

Table9. Suggested policies to develop personal territory and privacy in dormitory (Source: authors).

Policies related to personal territory
- Observe the hierarchy of public, semi-public, semi-private and private accommodation in all categories (the site, neighborhood, residential apartments).
- Establish clear boundaries between the public, semi-public, semi-private and private areas using signs, walls, fences, landscaping, specific flooring and ...
- Appropriate zoning of functions in the dorm (sleeping, working, living, kitchen, service zones etc.)
- The establishment of residential blocks in the higher level above the road level in order to prevent visual dominance.
Policies related to privacy
- Creating appropriate spaces in the courtyards, terraces and green roofs of the complex to achieve privacy.

Also according to the mean value of the security factor, results show that respondents consider security factor to be highly effective in the development of place attachment (Table 10). According to the results, the dorm's security seems to be satisfactory. In order to increase security in the dorm, suggested policies are derived in table 11.

Table10. Mean value of safety factor on developing attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors).

Variable	Mean value	Quality
Security	2.97	High

Table11. Suggested policies to develop security in dormitory (Source: authors).

Security Policies
- Proper space lighting of dormitory at different hours of the day.
- Mix of activities in spaces at different times to enhance liveliness.
- Continued presence of users in the dorm's space.
- Supporting social clubs and communities to increase informal control in the dorm.
- Creating different social focal areas in order to facilitate the visual Prospect over several spaces and events (visibility and transparency of space).

In the next step, the association between social factors and place attachment has been investigated. Pearson correlation test was used in order to measure the effect of social factors in the development of place attachment in the dormitory. The results show that all components of social factors of place (security, privacy, personal territory, social interaction) have a direct significant correlation with place attachment, while the most correlated factor is personal territory (significant at 0.05 level) (Table 12).

Table12. Mean value of social factors on developing attachment to the dormitory (Source: authors.

Variable	Significant	Pearson correlation
Personal territory	0/000	0.894
Privacy	0/000	0.714
social interaction	0/000	0.871
security	0/000	0.645

Note: All are significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, place attachment is one of the aspects of the relationship between human and place that creates emotional bonds between people and place. In the process of attachment to place, the individual's connection with place becomes meaningful and "space" turns into "place". This issue is of a great importance in college dormitories. Sense of attachment to place in dorms helps students to become more easily adapted to the new environment and enhance their inclination to live with others. This study examined the social factors of place and their impact on developing sense of attachment to place in a college dormitory.

The results indicated that personal territory, facilitated social interactions, private space and security have significant correlation with the students' level of attachment to dorms and the highest correlation was respectively related to personal territory and social interaction. It can be interpreted that entering the dorm, students start to experience the sense of loneliness and lack of belonging to the new environment due to being away from family and friends and need to establish new social relationships within their dorms. These social interactions can also make a beneficial contribution to social control in dorm's spaces. Along with meeting this social need, providing convenient personal territory must be considered to prevent unwanted social contacts. There also must be adequate opportunities for solitude and loneliness which eventually help students to settle down gladly in the new environment.

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