CO-DESIGNING QUITE ROOMS FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH. A PARTICIPATORY PERSPECTIVE ACROSS FIELDS

Arianna Mazzeo, Canadian University of Dubai

ABSTRACT

The mental health of youth has become a critical focus in educational and community settings. Quite rooms, co-designed with students and artists specifically to provide a tranquil environment, play a significant role in supporting the mental well-being of young individuals. This article explores the design principles, benefits, and implementation strategies of quite rooms, emphasizing their positive impact on youth mental health and in particular students of university across the world.

Keywords: Co- Design, Quite Rooms, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

Youth today face unprecedented levels of stress and anxiety, driven by academic pressures, social challenges, and digital distractions. Creating safe and calming environments within schools and community centers is essential for fostering mental well-being (Ulrich, 1984). Quite rooms offer a sanctuary where young individuals can decompress, reflect, and regain emotional balance. This article examines the theoretical foundations and practical applications of designing effective calm rooms (Kaplan, 1989).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Psychological Benefits of Quite Spaces

- Reduced anxiety and stress levels
- Enhanced emotional regulation and coping skills
- Improved concentration and academic performance

Theories of Environmental Psychology

- **Attention Restoration Theory (ART)**: Natural environments can restore cognitive functions and reduce mental fatigue.
- **Biophilia Hypothesis**: Human beings have an innate connection to nature, which can be leveraged to improve psychological health.

Design Principles of Quite Rooms

- Location and Accessibility
- Strategically placed within schools or community centers for easy access
- Ensuring privacy while maintaining safety

Interior Design Elements

- **Color Schemes**: Use of soft, muted colors to create a soothing atmosphere
- **Lighting**: Incorporation of natural light and adjustable soft lighting
- **Furniture**: Comfortable and flexible seating arrangements
- **Nature Integration**: Use of plants, natural materials, and nature-themed decor
- **Sensory Considerations**
- **Sound:** Soundproofing to reduce external noise; inclusion of calming soundscapes or white noise
- **Smell**: Use of subtle aromatherapy with calming scents like lavender or chamomile
- **Touch**: Textured materials that provide tactile comfort, such as soft fabrics and stress-relief objects

Technological Integration

- Minimal use of technology to avoid overstimulation
- Availability of mindfulness and relaxation apps

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Stakeholder Involvement

Engaging students, teachers, parents, and mental health professionals in the design process.Gathering input through surveys and focus groups

Training and Education

Providing training for staff on the purpose and use of calm rooms.Educating students about the benefits and appropriate use of the space

Maintenance and Evaluation

Regular maintenance to ensure the room remains a clean and welcoming space.Ongoing evaluation and feedback collection to assess effectiveness and make improvements

CASE STUDIES

Example 1: Dubai University

Description of the design and implementation process
Student feedback and observed benefits

Example 2: Canada Hospital

Integration of community resources and collaboration
Impact on youth engagement and mental health outcomes

DISCUSSION

Challenges and Solutions

- Addressing budget constraints through community partnerships and grants
- Overcoming stigma associated with using mental health resources
- Future Directionsuch as libraries and hospitals

CONCLUSION

Quite rooms represent a valuable addition to the toolkit for supporting youth mental health. Thoughtful design, informed by psychological theories and stakeholder input, can create spaces that significantly enhance the well-being of young individuals. As the need for mental health support continues to grow, calm rooms offer a promising approach to fostering a healthier, more resilient youth population. This article outlines the essential aspects of designing quite rooms, emphasizing their importance for youth mental health. By incorporating evidence-based design principles and involving stakeholders, these spaces can provide significant benefits, helping young people navigate the complexities of modern life with greater ease and resilience.

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association. (2020). Stress in America 2020: Stress in the Time of COVID-19.

Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). The experience of nature: A psychological perspective. Cambridge university press.

Kellert, S. R., & Wilson, E. O. (1993). The Biophilia Hypothesis. Island Press.

National Institute of Mental Health. (2021). Mental Health Information for Children and Adolescents. *Science*, 224(4647), 420-421.

Ulrich, R. S. (1984). View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. *science, 224*(4647), 420-421.