



HUMAN BEING AND ENVIRONMENT – PSYCHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

The relationship between man and his environment is basically two-way in that man is affected by the environment and yet he also the capacity to modify the environment. Man's capacity to modify the environment is clearly a dynamic one, varying in both time and space. It is our duty to create a good and healthy environment for human being and also save our environment as far as possible. Not only this, one has to keep in mind that changes will happen in each and every moment.

Keywords: nature, environment, human, human being, psychology

Since the twilight zone of his infancy a man learns to enjoy the presence of others and to achieve his goals with others' help and cooperation. These goals may be physical comforts, protection, survival etc. In fact, the drive to belong or associate oneself with others is fundamental in man and it motivates him to live together. Thus, "man alone always seeks to increase his contacts" (Doxiadis, 1970). Learning may take place through the process of operant conditioning or by imitation. The beauty of human life is that he plans and designs his environments not only for self but also for the welfare of his descendants. Man can claim a special credit to help nature for the erection of a prop to hold human civilization, since bygone days until now. Along with the changes in the social ambience or socialized ecological setting, new and new social problems arise and of them a few continue as the constant companion of civilized life. The relationship between human being and his environment is very complex. Each shapes and is shaped by others. Not only this, environment is not static. It is dynamic and changes occur even if there is no interference. Environment often changes after sometime and therefore many organisms have ability to adapt to these changes. The environment of any living species is multidimensional and extremely complex. Natural environment refers to places and geographical features, such as mountains, valleys etc.; environmental conditions such as temperature and rainfall etc; on the other hand, built environment refers to the results of people alterations of environments, e.g. houses and buildings, cities, communities etc. Environments are not merely the existence of natural and/or built up settings but also signify the relationships between people and people, people and things and things and things. The characteristic feature of human life is his effort to make a wholesome community life where reciprocation and sharing is the key concept. A person can be characterized on the basis of specific kind of response to a given class of environmental settings. The quality of the environment is particularly critical to human's health, wealth and happiness. The quality of the environment is also

influenced by the activities which take place within the settlement, while the efficiency with which the activities are performed, which in turn, is influenced by the environment also. Environmental psychology sees that man not as a passive product of his environment, but as a goal-directed being who acts upon his environment and who in turn is influenced by it. In changing his world, man changes himself. This is the dynamic interchange between man and his milieu. Environmental psychology is also concerned with social problems. It adopts a humanistic orientation in recognition of fact that in dealing with his environment, man is crucially affecting not only the earth on which he lives, but others who share it with him. At the one extreme, we explore the behavioral implications of urban living, with its relation to housing patterns, crowding, stress factors and social identity. At another extreme, the natural environment is studied as both a problem area, with respect to environmental degradation and as a setting for certain recreational and psychological needs. A growing trend in environmental psychology is directed towards the immediate living environment of the individual. The idea of environmental man is integral to an understanding of the process of change – man not as a passive receiver of stimuli, nor as psychologically autonomous, but man in dialectical tension with his milieu, interacting with it, shaping it and being shaped by it. The boundaries of such a concept are broad, with implications for urban planning, the design of office and living space, the conservation of natural resources and the building of institutions, such as schools and hospitals where environmental form is intimately related to the educational and treatment purpose. Man has made his life bio-socially programmed for a healthy social symbiosis – interdependency in social and community life – to share, to serve, to think and to feel for others around him. Man enriches his environment through efforts and hard work. Thus, it can be said that life and environment are correlates. Their relationships are extremely intimate and reciprocal. Man is found to change his social behavior through ages in



satisfying his never satisfied wants in relation to his physical world and social world because he is most adapted biologically to his unsophisticated natural or physical environment than the modernized and industrialized sophisticated living environments. Thus, a person's environment consists of the sum total of the stimulation which he or she receives from his conception until his death. Environment comprises various types of forces such as physical, intellectual, economic, political, cultural, social, moral and emotional. Environment is the sum total of all the external forces, influences and conditions, which affect the life, nature, behaviour, growth, development and maturation of living organisms. Environment includes the surroundings conditions that affect an organism (Gifford, 2007). People tend to seek out places where they feel competent and confident, places where they can make sense of the environment while also being engaged with it. Preserving, restoring and creating a preferred environment are thought to increase sense of well-being and behavioural effectiveness in humans. Besides, some common environmental stressors, viz., noise, climate, etc. may create problem especially due to failure of preferences, prolonged uncertainty, lack of predictability and stimulus overload. There are numerous behavioural and cognitive outcomes which include physical illness, diminished altruism, helplessness and fatigue. Coping with stress involves a number of options. Humans can change their physical or social settings to create more supportive environments (e.g. smaller scaled settings, territories) where they can manage the flow of information or stress inducing stimuli. People can also endure the stressful period, incurring mental costs that they deal with later in restorative settings (e.g. natural areas, privacy and solitude). They can also seek to interpret or make sense of a situation as a way to defuse its stressful effects, often sharing these interpretations as a part of their culture.

Place is an important concept of environmental psychology. Sense of place can be described as a collection of symbolic meaning, attachment and satisfaction with the spatial setting. A place is a centre of meaning or field of care, based on human experience, social relationship, emotions and thoughts. Place includes the physical settings, human activities and human socio-psychological processes (Brandenberg & Carroll, 1995). Place-identity is a sub-structure of self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define day-to-day existence of every

human being. At the core of such physical environment related cognition is the 'environmental past' of the person, a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological and cultural needs (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky, Nelson-Shulman & Kaminoff, 1979; Proshansky & Kaminoff, 1982). Place-identity may be assumed as a cluster of positively and negatively valence cognitions of physical settings. Place-identity is the source of meaning for a given setting by virtue of relevant cognitive clusters that indicate what should happen in it, what the setting is supposed to be like and how the individual and the others are supposed to behave in it. In this context it can be said that place-attachment rests on symbolic meanings. All settings are in varying degrees with multiple meanings. Greder and Garkovich (1994) emphasized common meanings based on shared or similar experience. Bonding and the emotions associated with it are central to the concept of attachment. Fried (2000) explained that attachment to a community can be understood in terms of the deeper meaning of experiencing close local relationships with people and by extension to places of relational interaction. Gustafson (2000) suggested that place-identity is a cognitive structure which contributes to global self-categorization and social-identity processes. Hence place-identity develops from acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts throughout daily routines as well as during exceptional circumstances. Place is an extensive concept with physical, geographical, architectural, historical, religious, social and psychological connotations (Canter, 1997). The three components – place-attachment, place-identity and sense of place are important for psychological well-being for each and every individual considering their living environment. Housing is meant to address basic human needs for shelter and security by providing protection against climatic conditions (excessive heat and cold) and unwanted intrusions from insects, rodents and environmental nuisances (such as noise) that may be harmful for healthy living and well-being of human being. The housing environment can also be considered in terms of a wide range of architectural, economic, social and cultural factors. Billing and Churchmen (2003) found that physical boundaries affect the attitudes and behavior of residents. A residential area is a type of land use where the predominant use is housing. The individual living in residential environment is affected both physically and psychologically by the way they perceived the changes in their living surrounding. Health, well-being and satisfaction are highly influenced in the way the inhabitants' perception about residential environment. Housing actually contributes to the accumulation of the health capital of individuals and



communities (Easterlow & Munro, 2003). Quality of life, environment and community in which one lives are the yardstick used to determine human happiness. Neighbours adjust and adapt to the social and physical components of their community in order to optimize outcomes. Sense of community is associated with the social environmental characteristics of a place although resident's perception is important factor regarding the physical features of the built environment. The built environment has direct and indirect effects on mental health. Poor quality housing appears to increase psychological distress. The environmental and social conditions in specific residential environment create impact on human relations, induce stress and can have positive and negative impact on physical and mental health of individuals. We can consider about the concept of quality of urban life. It emerged during the late 1960's and early 1970's when the environmental crisis became a major national issue around the world. Since then the environmental psychologists are interested in the patterning of relationship between the human behaviour and the experience in relation to physical settings. The very nature of urban life, its people, social groups, institutions, activities, objectives and goals, requires that the concept of quality be a multidimensional one which subsumes a host of specific definitions varying in meaning and the extent of their application to the city and the inhabitants.

Environment being a life-support system, its management would consist of plans and projects aimed at defining environmental standards, control of environmental conditions and assessment of the impact of human activities on the environment. Environment in a layman's understanding implies everything around him, which affects the living of human beings. Environment has everything to do with the quality of life. It is difficult to make an exhaustive list of the elements which constitute the environment. It depends on what basic unit is taken to evaluate its environment. The environment of a human settlement as the unit may involve much macro considerations than the environment of a locality. If human being is considered as nodal point, then the environment may consists of : his shelter and living space, his neighbourhood, the city, the surrounding habitation areas etc. The relationship between man and his environment is basically two-way in that man is affected by the environment and yet he also the capacity to modify the environment. Man's capacity to modify the environment is clearly a dynamic one, varying in both time and space. It is our duty to create a good and healthy environment for human being and also save our environment as far as possible. Not only this, one has to

keep in mind that changes will happen in each and every moment. Concerted approach may help to maintain congenial man-environmental relationship in the near future. One generation may face perceptible environmental stress but the succeeding generation may be found to overcome that to a great extent. Nature has made some provisions in the physiological and psychological systems of man to absorb or to cope with environmental stress, if that is required for survival.

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