

Physical barriers and risks in basic activities of daily living performance evaluation in state housing for older people in Chile

Marcela Pizzi, John Chalmers, Daniel Bunout, Paulina Osorio, Viviana Fernández, Macarena Cusato, Valentina Avendaño and Karen Rivera

Marcela Pizzi and John Chalmers are based at the History and Heritage Institute Faculty of Architecture, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile. Daniel Bunout is based at the Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology (INTA), Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile. Paulina Osorio is based in the Department of Anthropology, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile. Viviana Fernández is based in the Department of Urbanism, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile. Macarena Cusato, Valentina Avendaño and Karen Rivera are based at the History and Heritage Institute Faculty of Architecture, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile.

Abstract

Purpose – *This paper aims to describe an evaluation instrument designed to detect physical barriers and risks in basic activities of daily living (BADLs) performance by senior citizens and presents findings obtained in a representative sample of older persons living in housing programs provided by the State of Chile. Its aim is to develop an objective instrument which can serve as reference point for housing adaptations and improvement or for the use in new designs, appropriate to the changing functional capacities of this age group.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The research is broadly framed in an ecological perspective. It draws on an empirical study, observing older people's BADLs performance in selected State provided housing in the Santiago area. The approach includes some quantitative but mainly qualitative aspects from a descriptive, explanatory and cross sectional perspective. Objective observation of functional BADLs performance, as well as subjective users' perspectives, is compared.*

Findings – *State housing design is significant in BADLs performance, limiting functionality in one third of associated operations observed. These mainly concerned demanding reaching requirements associated with height, but also extended to other inadequacies in design or lack of elements in different situations, which act as barriers or bring potential risks.*

Research limitations/implications – *Heterogeneity in the functional conditions of older people regardless of age and gender, as well as different housing types makes it difficult to develop standardized recommendations, requiring a tailored approach in the case of adaptations, thus limiting coverage. Further research should be carried out after performing corrective adaptations to evaluate the impact of these interventions.*

Practical implications – *The paper prompts a reassessment, by State housing providers, of the architectural design of housing types for older people as well as the adaptation of existing units to extend independence in time rather than undermine it.*

Social implications – *The study of the effects of architectural design of housing on older people's independence when performing BADLs is underdeveloped and should be increased in order to promote a better quality of life for this age group through a more friendly and inclusive environment.*

Originality/value – *This research attempts to generate an objective instrument, useful to provide evidence for architects, designers and policy makers and suitable to be applied in other housing contexts in order to improve the habitat and older people's quality of life.*

Keywords *Barriers, Risks, Housing, Ageing (biology), In/dependency, Quality of life, Improvements, Chile, Social care, Older people*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

Ageing and urbanization are two global tendencies which will characterize our twenty-first century society as an unprecedented demographic transformation (WHO, 2007).

Chile's Scientific and Technological Development State Research Funding Program, (FONDECYT) grant No 1110063 and MAPFRE Foundation of Spain.