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HOUSING AND HEALTH

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Introduction. The topicality of the theme. Nowadays the topic on the relationship between housing and health indicators is among the heated debates. So what does this topic research? It looks at a social problem of people who suffer from health problems triggered by the inadequate housing conditions.

Why did I choose this topic for my research? The aim of my research is to convey to the audience the impact of housing problems on our health and to try to find out the key ways of avoiding housing problems. The past years proved us that conception of housing is tightly connected with the health problems, because adequate housing can help us to prevent a wide range of diseases and lots of injuries. This kind of message was referred by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva in 2010. It means our strength; health and safe future directly depend on the housing conditions.

The research question of my paper is “How can we build a better quality of life, improving health and reducing the health problems caused by inadequate housing in our country?”

My research theme was chosen not in vain. I would dwell on the subject that we encounter every day. Through my research I want to make my voice heard by construction companies who are in charge of building adequate and sustainable housing. Moreover, it would be better if our government improves the regulatory and legislative acts concerning “adequate housing”.

The objectives of my research are:

- 1) to prove the topicality of the theme, and the importance of housing problems;
- 2) to research the relationship between housing conditions and health problems;
- 3) to analyze different aspects of my subject;

1. Existing research about housing and health.

The problems related to housing have not appeared in one day. This is a long-term process of seminal studies and research.

Engels was one of the earliest scientists who researched the subject of housing which impacts on people’s life. He noted that “the dwellings of the workers in the worst portions of the cities, together with the other conditions of life of this class, engender numerous diseases, is attested on all sides” [1].

The first studies concerning environment and health were explored by Faris and Dunham in 1939. Their research proved that the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago, and bad housing system influence on the health of local people, i.e. there was increasing and disproportionate high rate of mental illness [2].

The researches on this topic were conducted in the US and some European countries, for instance, in Sweden. Sundquist and Ahlen, Berube and Katz discovered 4.5 million Swedish women

and men got psychiatric therapies once in 2 years. The study results show that the government should enhance mental health in low-income neighborhoods [3].

The table below of Howard University Center for Urban Progress research results, which were conducted in Columbia in 2008. The table presents the most frequent health diseases caused by the bad housing conditions. As you see, the list consists of unalterable sicknesses. Also, the types of diseases are quite different, it includes both physiological (asthma) and mental ones, like nervousness or anxiety (see table 1).

Table 1. Health problems (frequency and %) [4]

Health Problem	Frequency	Percentage
High blood pressure	50	40.9
Arthritis	42	33.1
Asthma	34	14.2
Diabetes	32	25.2
Nerves/anxiety	16	12.6

The more comprehensive and accurate studies of the impact of housing on physical and mental health developed by the analysis of the Moving to Opportunity Program (MTO) in the US. Under this program lots of families, who suffered from poverty, were relocated to more adequate dwellings.

During the New Hope interviews, an alias for the actual public housing development, the respondents mostly report that they are highly depressed of being emotionally upset because of their housing or having trouble sleeping, and even some of them are feeling helpless in these cases. And the average score - 2.74 - was for “being worried”, and the lowest one - 1.74 was for “being helpless”. We see that people do not just complain, but they do suffer from it really [5].

2. How do the housing conditions influence on health of Kazakhstani population?

To be healthy or catch a disease are reflex of social, economic, and environmental conditions. The statistics show that the social and economic conditions impact on citizens’ mental and physical health. There is no doubt, that the companies are constructing new apartments of high quality, considering all details of comfort for people’s health. However, the problem is non-affordability of the price of such adequate housing. Moreover, low-income dwellings have the problems as below. And these problems pose a threat to people’s health. These problems include not only sanitation problems, but also physical pitfalls of housing (such as need for capital repair) and other discomforts. For instance, 11.1% of respondents answered that they live in a very cold dwelling, it means 1.9 million citizens of Kazakhstan are exposed to diseases like flu, pneumonia, highmoritis, and purulent meningitis. What about high dampness? We know that the over humid buildings are a place for rats and other insects. Thus, they are very dangerous for people. High noisiness is also serious damage for our health, especially in terms of mental health. People who live near the manufactories have their own terrible stories. Because of the fume and other chemical components like uranium, plumbum, hydrargyrum their immune system is getting weak and injured. Water and electricity are among the top needs for every individuals of our society. Indeed, everything depends on these resources from cooking to washing. Talking about the lack of WC it is even hard to imagine what a big stress people face every day. This problem gets worse, when we talk about disabled people, who really need for comfort. Almost quarter of whole Kazakhstani population do not have basic facility such as WC (see table 2).

Table 2. Types of housing problems, Kazakhstan [4].

1	Housings that need capital repair	41,4%
2	Housings that need light repair	35,8%
3	Very cold	11,1%
4	High dampness	9,3%

5	Darkness in houses	6,4%
6	Narrow rooms	36,5%
7	High noisiness	6,9%
8	Suffering from fume (near the manufactories)	8,4%
9	Criminal district	2,1%
10	Water problems	9,2%
11	Electricity problems	7,3%
12	Lack of WC	22,5%
13	Discomfort	21,8%
14	Others	2,7%

Another point is how many people are satisfied with their health in Kazakhstan. Only quarter of total respondents do not have any complains with health, while remaining 75% of them do have problems (see table 3).

Table 3. People health reports, Kazakhstan [4].

The total number of respondents	100%
People who have health problems	74,4%
People who do not have health problems	25,6%

Also, according to the research, among the people who have chronic illnesses, 60.6% of them are living in urban areas, whereas almost 40% are dwelling in rural areas. Thus, the statistics indicate the extent of the housing-related problems we have to solve nowadays.

4. Conclusion. Sometimes we pay our attention on those things, as we find them the most important: how to earn more money, where to travel, and so far. However, unfortunately, we do not clap our eyes on some more significant things, that impact on our everyday life.

Existing researches and statistical data demonstrate the importance of housing conditions in reflection of our healthy life. The foreign scholars works discussed indicate health conditions can be improved by providing adequate housing conditions. Moreover, the paper discusses the diverse negative factors like water and electricity pitfalls, criminal districts, high dampness which also contribute to social problems such as unemployment, security and crime, mental diseases, and physical health problems. But it is highly possible to prevent this kind of problems. For example, by launching a new policy advocating for “adequate housing”; implementing new projects aimed at providing better housing for low-income population; and organizing various scientific contests for young scholars on “the sustainable housing construction” to reveal some scientific ways to improve housing conditions.

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