

Impact of Well Planned Landscape on Producing Quality Environment for Prisoners

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ABSTRACT

Impact of landscape on inmates and jail employees was studied in this study. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS and chi-square test was applied to test the statistical significance of the results. Results indicate that a well-established and well-maintained landscape leaves positive impacts on the livings of prisoners and employees. Results also revealed psychological, recreational, health, social and personal benefits of landscape are ascribed by the respondents.

Key Words: Landscape; Health; Inmates; Jail; Psychological benefits

INTRODUCTION

Landscape is an excellent tool for creating positive responses and its psychological effects are felt universally. People respond more positively to outdoor environment rich in natural elements such as trees, shrubbery, grasses and other vegetation and benefits of human plant interaction include self-reported performance in cognitive tasks and psychological indicators of stress recovery and emotional well being (Roger, 1994). Many effects of viewing plants on emotional states, cognitive functioning, physiological activity, and health related indicators are reported by Parson (1999). Plants provide a positive physical surroundings in which it was more comfortable to live and work by purifying the air, moderate the temperature through shade or wind blocks, reducing glare and noise, removing pollutants from the air, screening unattractive sights and increasing relative humidity (Nighswonger, 1975).

The condition existing in most of the jails in the country can best be described as inhuman. Pakistani prisons suffer overcrowding as well as a lack of facilities that inmates are entitled to under the jail manual. Prisoners, therefore, are facing many mental, psychological and health problems. Plants and flowers play a role to make the abnormal, unnatural, stressful life, normal, natural and free. Ulrich (1985) found that prison inmates in cells with windows overlooking green spaces need less medical care and reports fewer symptoms of stress, such as headaches. Present research was conducted in Boorstal Institute and Juvenile Jail, Faisalabad–Pakistan. A need was felt to establish a diversified landscape system for this newly established jail with following objectives kept in mind.

a) to make the plan and design of the site and afterwards execute the design, b) to study the public perceptions (inmates and jail employees) that how they perceive the landscape, c) to study the public perceptions about benefits ascribed to landscape, and d) to provide a guideline for future planning.

METHODOLOGY

Total area of the Jail is 52 acres. Jail has a beautiful building including residential area for the employees, cells for prisoners, a community center, a hospital and a hall for indoor games. Sheds are also made for visitors. Jail has capacity of 151 prisoners, but presently 401 inmates were accommodating (according to jail record). Prisoners, therefore, were facing many mental, psychological and health problems. Study was carried out in two phases:

1. Planning, designing and installation of plants
2. Studying perception of the people

Designs for the plots selected for study were made, keeping in view, the perceptions of the respondents about the questions they were asked, to provide information, in reference with their needs and requirements relating to landscaping. Two questionnaires were developed for studying perception for whom. Designs were finally executed by getting services of the jail officials. While selecting plants, some other important considerations were also kept in mind regarding soil conditions and local environment of the study area. Data collected were statistically analyzed through SPSS (Statistical package for social sciences) and chi-square test was used to test the significance of results.

In present research, impact of well planned landscape in delivering quality environment for prisoners at Boorstal Institute and Juvenile Jail was carried out and perception of employees and inmates was carried out. For present study, total 225 respondents including 100 employees and 125 inmates were interviewed.

Employees. Three age groups, i.e. 20-30, 30-40, and above 40 years were included. There were three education groups, i.e. Matric, F.A., B.A. and above.

Inmates. Three age groups, i.e. 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 years were included. There were three education groups, i.e. Primary, Middle and Matric.

Information was collected on health, psychological, social and personal benefits.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Health benefits. Perception of the employees was: 90% enjoying fresh air, 82% mental relaxation, 76% curing some disease and 63% mental satisfaction; while inmates perceived as follows in accordance with their preferences: 86.4% enjoying fresh air, 74.4% for both curing some disease and mental relaxation, and 70.4% mental satisfaction. According to the respondents, a well planned and well maintained landscaping refresh the environment and helps in curing of disease. Ulrich (1984) suggested that surgical patients recover faster and need fewer and milder analgesics if they are exposed to pleasant view of trees and nicely landscaped grounds than those who are exposed to a view of another building. Miller (1997) found that green space create a feeling of relaxation. Further results showed that both age and education groups behaved similarly.

Psychological benefits. Among inmates, 80% answered they improved their working efficiency, 87.4% answered they enjoy peacefulness and 56% answered that they enjoy nature. Among employees, 78% thought that their working efficiency was improved, 76% said they enjoyed peacefulness and 53% perceived that they enjoy nature. Results showed that the respondents were well aware about the psychological benefits associated with landscaping.

Landscape scenery is the external stimulus for human thinking and feeling for well being and conflicts (Paquette & Dommon, 2001) Availability of near by nature resulted in less perceived job pressure and job stress, fewer ailments and headaches, greater satisfaction and is a strong positive factor in enthusiasm about work (Kaplan, 1993). Further analysis of the data showed that both age and education groups behaved similarly because the results were statistically non significant.

Social benefits. Among employee's benefits, 74% answered that they enjoy talking to people, 70% enjoy socialization and 68% thought landscaping helps in making friends. Among inmates, 78.4% answered that they enjoy making friends, 76.1% answered that they enjoy talking to people and 71.2% answered that they enjoy socialization. Results showed that the respondents believe that a well established and well maintained landscape helps in improving their social life. Lewis (1992) stated that landscape is one of the facts through which our sense of identity is formed, and healing that landscape through naturalization keeps us reconnect to our communities, the environment and ourselves. MacEachern (1990) reported that people visit green spaces in cities to experience an emotion not found in other environments. People also visit green spaces to meet other people, to make friends, to see new faces, and also talk other people in a good mood.

Personal benefits. Among employees, 84% perceived that they get pleasure, 80% said they spend some good time on thinking and 40% perceived that they spend good time enjoying plants; while among inmates, 82.4% answered that they spend some spare time on thinking, 81.6% answered

that they get pleasure and 46.6% answered that they spend good time enjoying plants. According to the results, respondents perceived that a properly designed and well maintained landscape plays a vital role in their interpersonal and community well being. Thomas (1997) quoted that a "Nature is the one place where miracles not only happen but happened all times". Lewis (1992) stated that landscape is one of the factor through which our sense of identity is formed and healing that landscape through naturalization helps us reconnect to our communities, the environment and ourselves. Results showed that both age and education groups behaved similarly.

Suggestions and Key Findings

- Priority should be given to flowering plants in the establishment of landscape.
- View of plants improves working efficiency of the employees, so proper plantation should be done and indoor plants should be kept in the offices.
- A permanent landscape expert should be appointed to get maximum benefits of landscape because he can manage this landscape better.
- A well established and well maintained landscape is of utmost importance for the jail public to provide them a healthy environment, so this prospective must be kept in mind and services of experts in this field should be made available permanently.

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