

# COMMON ILLNESS THAT AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN HALLS OF RESIDENCE: A CASE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Eke, C.C<sup>1</sup>, Aigbavboa, C. O<sup>2</sup>, Thwala, W. D<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Construction Management & Quantity Surveying, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

caigbavboa@uj.ac.za

**Abstract.** Sophiatown residence is one of the residence in University of Johannesburg and this paper present a findings of common illness that affects the performance of the students in the residence. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the common illness that affects the students' performance. The data were collected during October and November 2012; and was with the aid of a structured questionnaire. Out of the 150 questionnaires that were distributed, 135 were received back from the students that reside in the residence. Findings from the survey reveal that fatigue/tiredness was the commonest illness students experience and was ranked first from the mean item score table while nausea was ranked last.

**Keywords:** Common illness, performance, residence

## 1 Introduction

Most of the illnesses or sicknesses experienced in the residence are caused by poor indoor environmental quality (indoor air quality, lighting, thermal comfort, noise, ergonomics). Poor indoor air quality is a serious health risk factor and causes diseases such as cancer, respiratory diseases, and so on. Incorrect temperatures may have serious consequences for the occupant's body because different people have different body metabolism and if not addressed properly and timely, it may affect the occupant's performance, which may drop significantly as a result of constant tiredness due to a too high temperature; or through shivering and coldness caused by a too low temperature in the residence (Eke, 2014). Special interventions are required, as the poor-quality indoor air environment has serious health implications for the lives of resident users. The poor indoor air

quality increases the chances of sick-building syndrome, and respiratory illness, resulting to sick students being absent from school, which in turn may lead to a reduction in the residence and also affect their academics (Antikainen, 2008). If the indoor air quality is not taken seriously, it may affect the occupants by causing irritation of eyes, noses, throats, headaches, dizziness and fatigue. These effects may be made worse by an inadequate supply of good-quality indoor air (Hassainain, 2008). The common illness that can be experienced in the residence are headache, cough, fever, nausea, fatigue or tiredness, common cold, influenza, dizziness and others. The bad aspect of some of these illnesses is that some of them are contagious like cough and influenza and it will affect the students' performance both academically and otherwise. If the residential building offers poor resting conditions, it will affect the health of the occupants, which will ultimately reduce their performance. A poor resting environment will affect the occupants' lives and those of their families, because when a student is affected by a serious illness, their family members will have to take care of them or obtain medical assistance for the patient (AL-Anzi, 2009). The study place is critical to the occupants' lives because they spend the most part of their day studying. It is of vital importance that the institution creates an environment that is healthy for users of the building. Occupants may be affected by health hazards that are harmful to their bodies and even their lives. These study-related illnesses have many effects on the occupants' lives and will ultimately result in loss of concentration in academics, pain and suffering (AL-Anzi, 2009).

Health issues are the big worry of all institutions around the globe in terms of effective academic excellence; therefore institutions must take this health problem very seriously so as to avoid poor quality of work because of unhealthy occupants (students). Institutions have to make provision for resources that will cater for periodic visits from health specialists to come and determine whether occupants are still healthy and fit. If diseases are diagnosed at an early stage, corrective action can be taken to ensure that occupants stay healthy (AL-Anzi, 2009:39).

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted between the months of October and November 2012 and a quantitative research approach was used in this research. A 150 well-structured questionnaire was sent out in the collection of the data from the occupants of Sophiatown residence and 135 were received and are useable. The 135 useable questionnaires represent a 90% response rate which is considered adequate for this analysis.

### 3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the usable 135 questionnaire revealed that 33% were female, while 67% were male. The majority of the respondents (76%) were within the age group of 20-29, followed by (24%) of the respondents who belong to the age group below 20. The ethnicity that comprises the majority of the respondents was blacks (97%), followed by (3%) whites. Majority of the respondent status (97%) were full time and (3%) were part time. Majority of respondents level of study were (34.1%) first year, followed by (30.4%) second year and the minority were (2.2%) fifth year. Majority of respondents highest education qualification were (76%) grade 12 (matric), followed by (11%) post graduate degree(s) and the minority were (2%) diploma or certificate. The respondents were asked how long they have been living in the Sophiatown residence; the results of the study indicated that the majority of the respondents were (44.8%) less than 1 year, followed by (38.8%) 1 year and the least was (16.4%) more than 1 year.

Respondents were asked the health frequency of the students. The result from the questionnaire indicated that fatigue/tiredness (MIS= 2.90; R= 1) was ranked first, followed by headache (MIS= 2.61; R= 2) which was ranked second, common cold (2.36; R= 3), cough (MIS= 2.18; R= 4), influenza (MIS= 1.95; R= 5) dizziness (MIS= 1.94; R= 6), fever (MIS=1.92; R= 7), and nausea (MIS= 1.73; R= 8) was ranked last.

**Table 2: Student illness frequency**

<b>Critical factor</b>	<b>MIS</b>	<b>Rank(R)</b>
Nausea	1.72	1
Dizziness	1.61	2
Influenza	1.58	3
Cough	1.40	4
Common cold	1.29	5
Headache	1.21	6
Fever	1.20	7
Fatigue (tiredness)	1.19	8

Respondents were also asked the illness experienced from the residence. Nausea was ranked first (MIS= 1.72; R= 1), dizziness was ranked second (MIS= 1.61; R= 2), cough was ranked forth (MIS=1.40; R= 4), and common cold was ranked fifth (MIS= 1.29; R= 5), while fever was ranked second to the last (MIS= 1.20; R= 7), and fatigue (tiredness) was ranked last (MIS= 1.19; R= 8). Literature reviewed indicated that occupants may be affected by health hazards that are harmful to their bodies and even their lives. These study-related illnesses have many effects on the occupants' lives and will ultimately result in loss of concentration in academics, pain and suffering (AL- Anzi, 2009).

**Table 2:** Student illness frequency

<b>Critical factor</b>	<b>MIS</b>	<b>Rank(R)</b>
Nausea	2.90	1
Dizziness	2.61	2
Influenza	2.36	3
Cough	2.18	4
Common cold	1.95	5
Headache	1.94	6
Fever	1.92	7
Fatigue (tiredness)	1.73	8

## 8 Conclusion

The findings from the study revealed that occupants experience all the common illness that affects the students' performance. However, fatigue (tiredness) is the most commonly health frequency (MIS= 2.90; R= 1) and also affect the students' performance. In the aspect of illness experience, findings from the study revealed that majority of the occupants frequently had nausea (MIS= 1.72; R= 1) more than other common illnesses that affect the students' performance. Recommendation is that the institutions have to make provision for resources that will cater for periodic visits from health specialists to come and determine whether occupants (students) are still healthy and fit because unhealthy students produces poor academic performance.

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