

Urban Planning and Quality of Life: Exploring the Connection Between the Built Environment and Residents' Well-being in an Island with Mediterranean Climate Characteristics

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between urban design, and residents’ quality of life, focusing on the city of Corfu. The aim is to explore how various aspects of the built environment—such as urban mobility, a sense of safety, aesthetics, and social cohesion—affect both personal and collective well-being. The research adopts a quantitative approach using a modified version of the Flanagan Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) and is based on a representative sample of 300 permanent residents.

Findings indicate that green spaces play a pivotal role in promoting physical and mental health. However, participants expressed low satisfaction with the availability and maintenance of such spaces. Urban mobility and access to essential services were also identified as critical factors influencing daily well-being. Traffic congestion and the lack of alternative transport options negatively impact residents' overall life satisfaction. Moreover, safety and opportunities for social interaction are closely linked to the usability of public spaces, while green infrastructure enhances the sense of belonging and reduces feelings of isolation.The analysis shows a strong positive correlation between economic well-being and overall quality of life, confirming that material security serves as a foundation for broader psychological and social well-being. The aesthetic quality of the urban environment and the preservation of cultural identity are also emphasized, as they foster satisfaction and pride in one's place of residence.Special focus is given to the role of neighborhoods and local communities, particularly in insular settings like Corfu, where proximity and social bonds hold greater significance. The research also highlights the detrimental effects of urban isolation and social inequality, which limit access to quality infrastructure and deepen exclusion.

Overall, this study demonstrates that urban quality of life is a multidimensional construct shaped by a complex interplay of material and intangible factors. Enhancing public and green spaces, encouraging community participation in urban planning, and integrating smart city technologies Add to this section.emerge as key strategies for sustainable and socially just urban development.

Introduction

This study investigates the connection between the built environment and personal well-being in island areas focusing on the urban environment of the island of Corfu.

Aiming to determine how the urban fabric affects the quality of life as well as which practices and principles can be considered to promote the well-being of residents and visitors.

Methodology

To develop the topic, a combination of bibliographic research and questionnaire research is used.

In the first part, the factors related to the urban environment that affect the quality of life such as urban mobility, adequacy and quality of public spaces and green spaces, etc. are explored and defined. Then, questionnaires are used to collect data based on the experiences, habits, and beliefs of a satisfactory sample of residents of Corfu and the aim is to record the relationship of the above parameters with quality of life using the Flanagan scale (Quality Of Life Scale-QOLS). Finally, all of the above data are analyzed and evaluated using statistical methods.

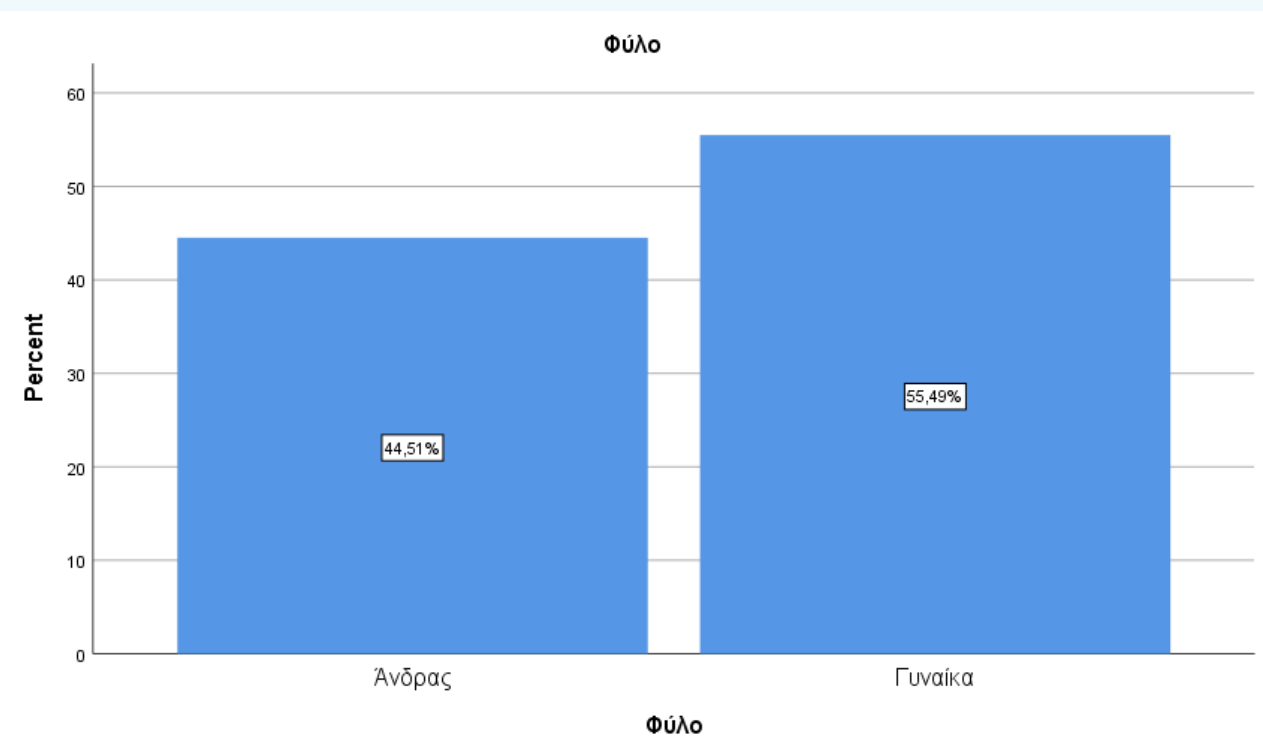


Image 1:Distribution of participants by gender

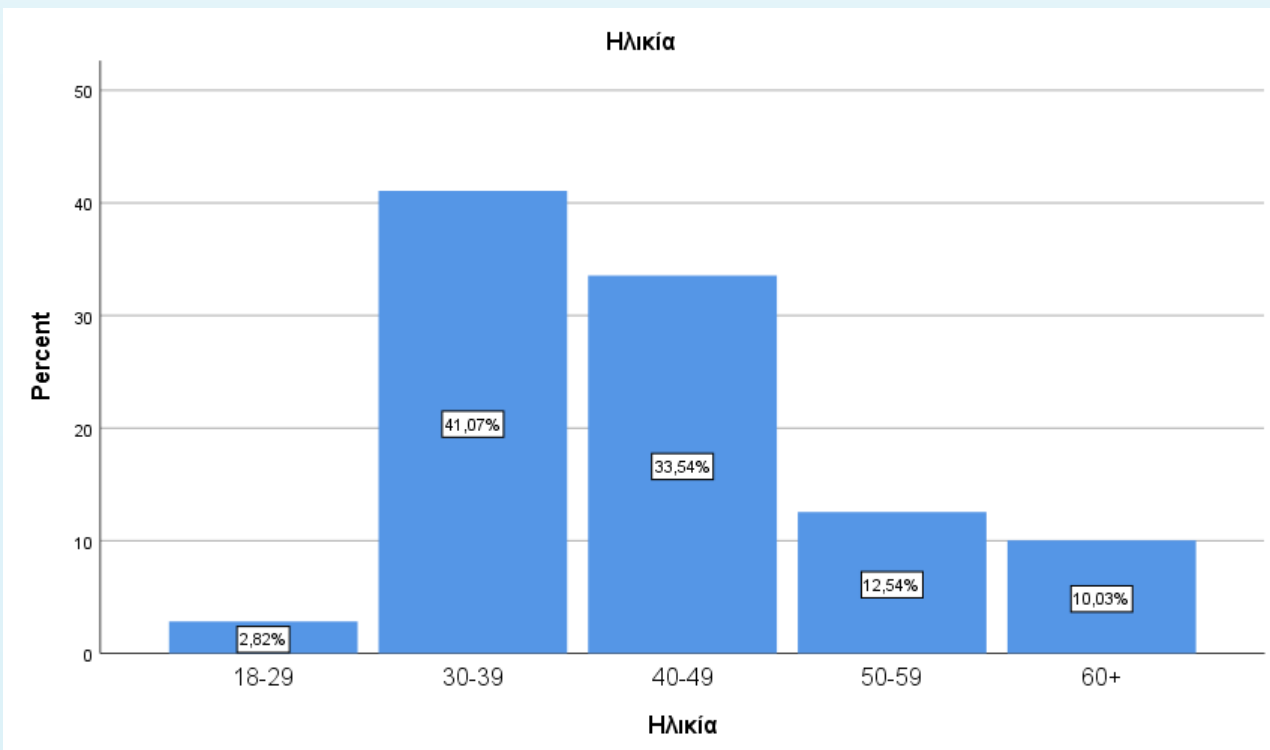


Image 2:Distribution of participants by age

Results

This research has highlighted the dynamic relationship between the urban environment and the quality of life of the residents of the city of Corfu. The conclusions that emerge do not simply reflect the shortcomings or advantages of the local environment, but lay the foundations for a broader reflection on the quality of the urban experience and the conditions for a functional and humane urban design.

1. Green as a necessity and not a luxury

Green spaces are crucial for the mental well-being of residents, as documented by the high average of relevant statements.

2. Urban mobility and the failures of an unplanned space

The dominant image that emerges for daily travel in Corfu is that of dysfunction and congestion. The need for a new transport planning framework, based on the principles of sustainable mobility, becomes imperative.

3. Aesthetic degradation as a reflection of broader problems

The strong disappointment of citizens with the cleanliness, maintenance and aesthetics of public spaces reveals a structural deficit in urban culture. Restoring the public image must be a priority for cultural and social policy.

4. Place identity and social capital: Relationships with dynamics but also limits The sense of belonging and identification with the city are at low levels. Despite the strong presence of long-term residents, a deep bond with the urban environment does not seem to have been cultivated, constituting a critical point for further investigation and intervention.

5. Safety: more an internal feeling than a social issue

Although concerns are registered about phenomena such as stray animals or petty crime, the individual sense of safety does not seem to be seriously threatened. However, the observed gender differences in the perception of safety (with women feeling less safe) demonstrate that safety remains a socially unbalanced experience.

6. Quality of life as a product of a multifactorial composition

The overall quality of life of residents is recorded as satisfactory, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships, autonomy and emotional stability. However, the multifactorial nature of the concept is revealed through statistical analysis, which indicates that the highest level of quality of life depends to a large extent on economic security, a sense of social responsibility and the functionality of the natural and social environment. Quality of life is not independent of living conditions: it is, on the contrary, a dynamic product of interactions between social, environmental and individual parameters.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how sustainable urban polices including the adequacy and quality of available public, green spaces and infrastructures, sustainable mobility, accessibility the sense of safety, and the cleanliness of the urban environment etc. are associated with higher rates of quality of life reported highlighting the importance of adopting sustainable and development strategies in island regions where tourism pressures are creating increasing challenges in the management of the urban environment.

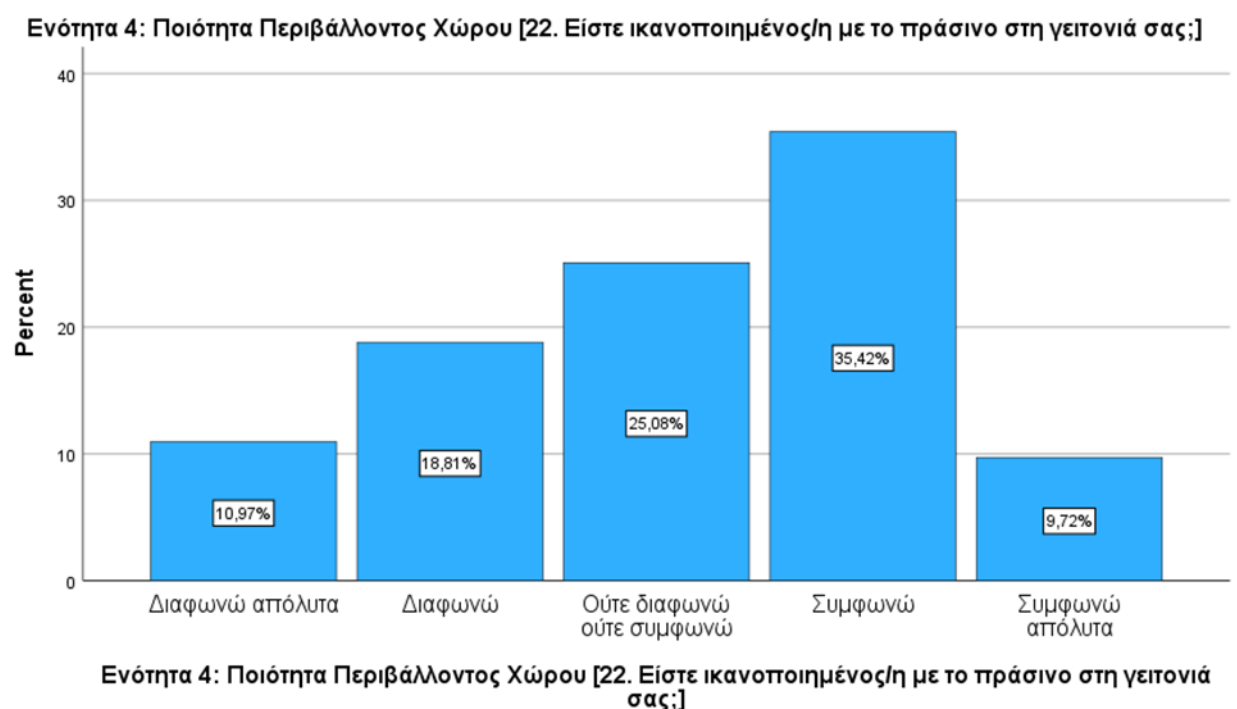


Image 3:Participants' satisfaction levels regarding the presence of green spaces in the neighborhood

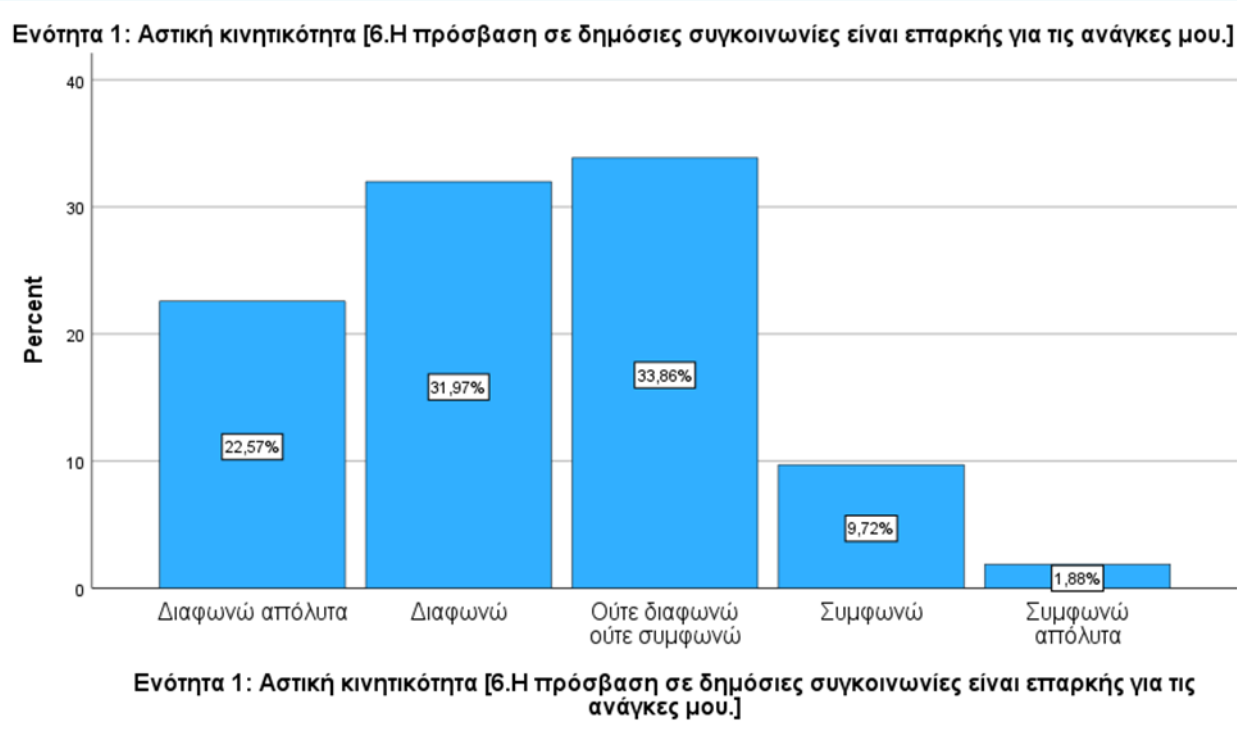


Image 4:Participants' agreement levels on whether access to public transportation meets their needs

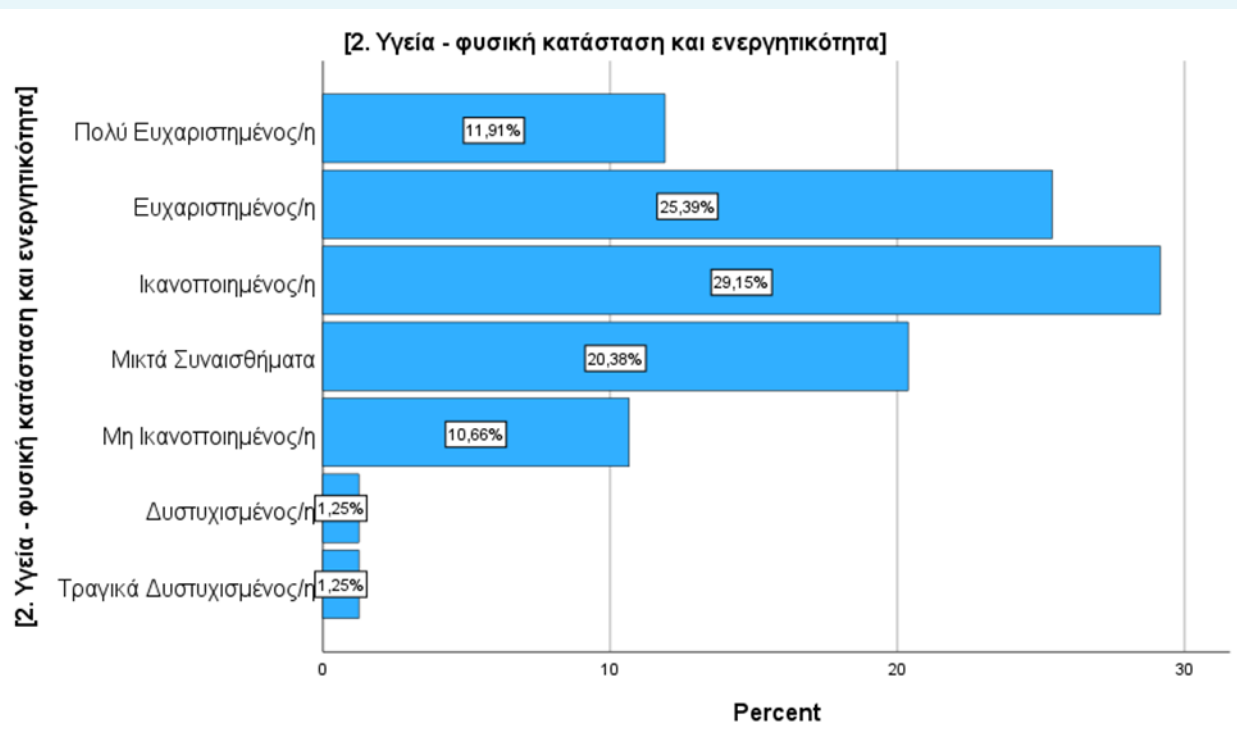


Image 5: Participants' self-reported satisfaction with their physical condition and energy levels

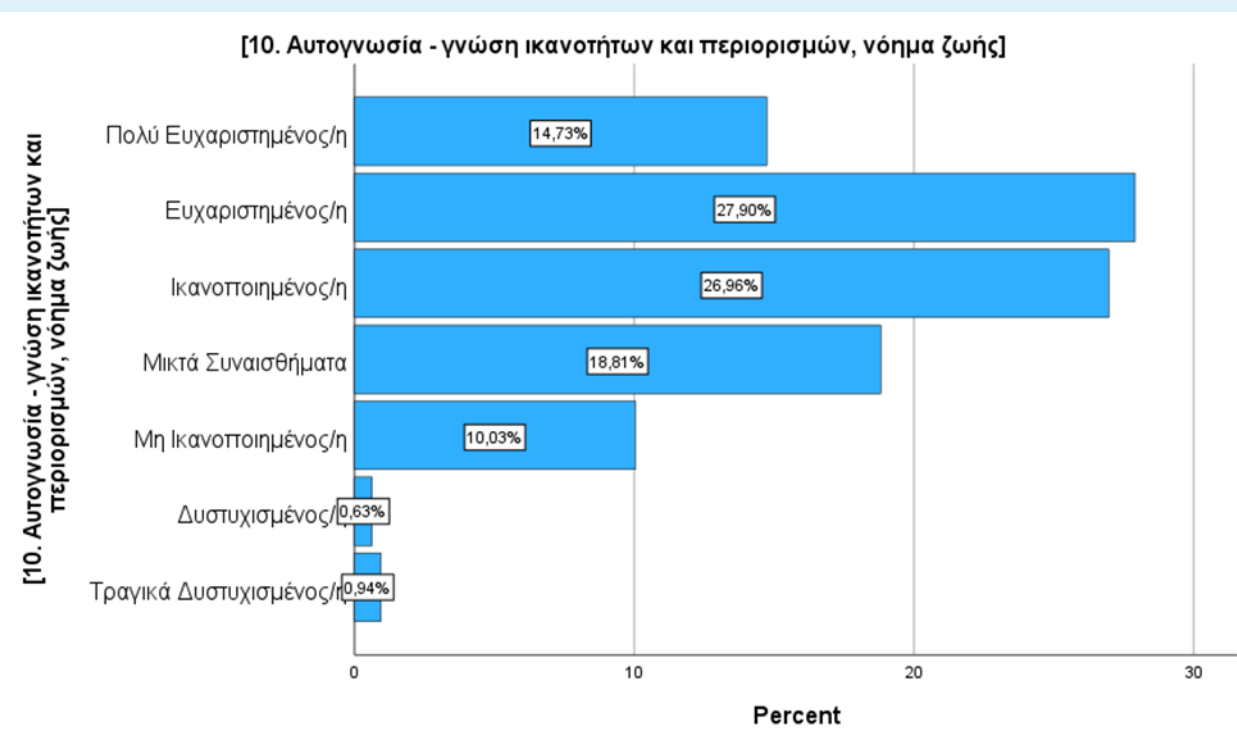


Image 6: Participants' satisfaction regarding self-awareness including recognition of capabilities and limitations.