

# Physical Environment in Nursing Homes and the Psychological Adaptation of Healthcare Providers in Palestine

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**Abstract:** *Background:* A supportive physical environment in nursing homes can lead to positive outcomes, yet it is rarely examined. The purpose of this study was to address this gap and examine the levels and the relationship between the suitability of the physical environment in nursing homes and the psychological adaptation of healthcare providers. *Methods:* We employed a descriptive cross-sectional design using convenience sampling to recruit 140 healthcare providers working in nursing homes in Palestine. A self-reported questionnaire was used to collect data which consisted of the Staff Perception of Residential Care Environments (SPORE) instrument, the Psychological Adaptation Scale (PAS), and select demographic variables. Data collection took place from November to December 2024. Pearson's coefficient was used to examine the correlation between the suitability of the physical environment and the psychological adaptation, and multiple linear regression was used to identify the predictors of psychological adaptation. *Findings:* We observed that a minimally favorable physical environment was associated with moderate psychological adaptation among workers. A positive correlation was found between the suitability of the physical environment and workers' psychological adaptation ( $r = .742, p < .001$ ). The scores of two subscales of physical environment (Resident/Public Facilities [ $\beta = .366, p = .002$ ] and General Care Environment [ $\beta = .628, p < .001$ ]) were positive predictors of psychological adaptation. *Conclusions/ Application to Practice:* Improved physical environments in nursing homes appear to positively influence healthcare providers' psychological adaptation. Policymakers are encouraged to establish and enforce regulations that enhance the physical environments in nursing homes, which could ultimately promote the well-being of both healthcare providers and residents.

**Keywords:** physical environment, psychological adaptation, mental health, long-term care facilities design, healthcare workers

## Background

The number of older adults aged 60 years or more is expected to increase dramatically worldwide (World Health Organization, 2024). There were around 1 billion older adults in 2020, a number projected to double by 2050 (World Health Organization, 2024). By this year, it is estimated that 80% of older adults will be in developing countries (i.e., low- and middle-income countries; World Health Organization, 2024). Therefore, these countries need to ensure that their health and social care systems are prepared to respond to this demographic shift. One strategy to address this need is to ensure the availability of an adequate number of well-designed nursing homes.

Different terms exist to describe nursing homes, including residential or long-term care, assisted living facilities, and care homes. Regardless of the term used, these settings provide residence for older adults along with continuous health and social care services. One of the major challenges facing nursing homes is the shortage and the relatively high turnover rates among healthcare providers, mainly nurses and physicians (El-Hneiti et al., 2020; Low et al., 2025; Yan, Wan, et al., 2024). Thus, supporting the healthcare providers who work in nursing homes is an important issue that warrants investigation.

One important method of supporting healthcare providers is by ensuring a suitable built or physical environment in nursing homes (Shetty et al., 2024). The physical environment includes architectural features (e.g., spatial layout and building materials), ambient features (e.g., temperature, lighting, and sound levels),