

ADM1326: Introduction to Statistics Final Project

Group 21

Doruk AKYOL

Eren YANMAZ

İlyas Kayra AK

Taylan KARTAL

Sıla BULANIKLI

Reconfiguring the Dormitories: A discussion of common spaces and overall configuration of student dormitories in METU

Introduction

The configuration and accessibility of common spaces in dormitories significantly influence the daily lives and social interactions of students. This study investigates the functionalities and accessibility of such spaces within the dormitories at Middle East Technical University (METU), focusing on essential areas like kitchens and study rooms. By assessing how these spaces meet the needs of the students, this research aims to shed light on current deficiencies and areas for improvement. The paper is structured to present the purpose of the study, the methodologies employed, the key findings, and the implications of these findings. The paper will conclude with presenting a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of these common spaces, thus improving the overall quality of life for students residing in METU dormitories. Through this research, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the role that well-designed communal spaces play in building a vibrant and interactive student community.

Purpose

The main goal of this research is to improve the general quality of life and the campus environment for Middle East Technical University students by concentrating on the design and accessibility of common areas in dorms. It is well-recorded that a well-rounded campus experience has a major beneficial effect on a number of student well-being factors, including as life satisfaction, academic achievement, mental health, and even physical well-being

(Worsley et al., 2021). The layout and accessibility of the common areas, which are essential for leisure, socializing, and personal development, are crucial to this experience. According to our research, enhancing these areas may have a cumulative impact of advantages over these other fields. Additionally, this research takes a broader look at the overall configuration of dormitories, including the impact of limited private space and the challenges arising from the smallness of rooms. While the primary focus remains on common areas, these issues are intrinsically linked as they all contribute to the daily experiences and satisfaction levels of the residents. By investigating these intertwined factors, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the living conditions within the dormitories.

Through our study, we strive to investigate the sufficiency of these communal spaces and hypothesize **that current configurations may not adequately meet the needs of the student body**. Associated sub-hypotheses include **the potential impact of inadequate common spaces on student isolation, the degradation of community feeling, and the indirect effects on student health and academic performance**. Furthermore, our research delves into related issues such as **privacy concerns and the challenges posed by spatial constraints, which could further elongate the problems stemming from insufficient communal areas**.

Ultimately, this study aims to unravel the satisfaction levels of students with their dormitory living conditions and to articulate potential policy recommendations and solutions. By addressing these critical issues, our goal is to create an environment that not only meets basic living standards but also enhances the overall quality of campus life for all students at METU.

Methodology

Our methodology for investigating the common spaces in dormitories at Middle East Technical University combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather comprehensive insights into the usage, satisfaction, and implications of these spaces on student life.

Firstly, we conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews to explore personal experiences and detailed views on the use and impact of common spaces. These interviews included one group interview with two residents, one from the western dormitories and the other from the eastern dormitories of METU. Additionally, individual interviews were held with residents

from both these geographical divisions of METU dormitories, providing a comparative perspective on the eastern and western living conditions. We also included perspectives from outside METU to broaden our understanding of dormitory living conditions at different institutions. This involved interviewing a current resident of a student dormitory at Bilkent University and another who resided in the dormitories of the Turkish Armed Forces - Foundation of Education. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, with discussions focusing on the utilization of common spaces, their role in facilitating daily life and socialization, and the personal living experiences in their respective dorm rooms. These interviews were designed to delve deeply into the overall satisfaction with and usage of their dormitory facilities.

Secondly, our quantitative analysis was carried out through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, which gathered responses from 70 participants. The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp groups, specifically aimed towards residents in dormitories of METU. The questionnaire was sent through various group chats that are informally associated with the University: ranging from dormitory-specific groups to faculty and department groups. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions aimed at assessing semi-qualitative satisfaction levels: 14 multiple choice questions and 2 open-ended questions for more detailed feedback. The questions were crafted to evaluate various aspects such as the spatial size of kitchens and overall satisfaction with the common spaces. In structured questions, participants were asked to rate their satisfaction/experience on a scale from 1 to 5. This structured approach allowed us to quantify the preferences and discontentment of the students, providing a statistical basis to support our qualitative findings.

By integrating these qualitative insights with quantitative data, our methodology aims to present a well-rounded view of how common spaces affect the dormitory experience at METU, facilitating a holistic analysis of current conditions and guiding our recommendations for improvements.

Findings

In this section the reader can see the report of the responses given to the questionnaire conducted through Google Forms. The insights we gathered from our qualitative interviews are discussed sparsely in the next, *Discussion* section.

In the 1st question, we asked our participants which dormitory they live in. According to the results, most of the participants live in the 5th dormitory, with a rate of 19.4%. Following this, 12.9% of the population lives in the 8th dormitory, and 11.7% lives in the dormitory of Refika Ersoy. Apart from these, the students living in other dormitories are distributed almost equally.

In the 2nd question, we asked our participants how often they use the common spaces. Most of them rated 3 and 4, with a total rate of 67.2%, implying that almost all participants often use common spaces.

In the 3rd question, we asked our participants to what extent they find common spaces spatially sufficient. According to the results, most participants found common spaces “not large enough”. Concurrently, the most common answer is 2 out of 5, with a rate of 37.1%. Additionally, a total of 90.3% of the participants rated 1, 2, and 3, which implies that larger common spaces are needed.

In the 4th question, we asked our participants to what extent they find the common areas in their dorm functional in terms of meeting their needs. Similar to the 3rd question, 87.1% of the participants rated 1, 2, and 3 with almost equal distribution. Only 1.6% find them very functional. This result indicates that common spaces are perceived as not functional at all.

In the 5th question, we asked our participants to what extent they felt that they could bond with other students in the common spaces of their dorm. An important majority of the participants, 69.3%, rated 1 and 2, which implies that they almost do not feel that they can bond with others in the common spaces.

In the 6th question, we asked our participants how close do they feel with their roommates. The results are respectably equally distributed. While those who selected options 3 and 4 were evenly distributed at 29% each, those who selected options 2 and 5 were similarly distributed equally at 17% each. Only 6.5% of the participants rated 1. These results show that almost 75% of the participants feel close to their roommates.

In the 7th question, we asked our participants to what extent do they feel they can bond with other students in different rooms. A vast majority of the participants selected 1, 2, and 3, with a total rate of 88.7% (almost 41% rated 1 out of 5). According to these results, most of the students do not feel that they can bond with other students differently than their roommates in the dormitory.

In the 8th question, we asked our participants to what extent do they refrain from leaving their items unsupervised in the common spaces. This is one of the questions in our survey, in which the results are respectively equally distributed: 24.2% rated 2; 22.6% rated 3; 21% rated 1; 16.1% percent rated 4; and again, 16.1% rated 5. Because of this kind of equal distribution, it is not easy to make a clear inference.

In the 9th question, we asked our participants how often they experience theft in a semester. According to the results, the vast majority of the students experience theft, with a rate of 56.5%. In addition to this, 21% of the participants were exposed to theft more than 5 times in a semester.

In the 10th question, we asked our participants how much they felt that they belonged to their dormitory. Most of the students selected 1, 2, and 3 with a rate of 77%, which implies a lack of sense of belonging to the dormitories.

In the 11th question, we asked our participants if there are regular meetings in their dormitory where dormitory-related issues are discussed collectively. 68.3% of them reported that such meetings were held, whilst the other 31.7% said that there were none.

For those who answered yes, we asked two attached questions, and for those who answered no, we also asked one attached question.

For the former group of respondents, we initially asked if their answer was yes and whether the administrators or the students held these meetings. According to the results, 54.5% of these meetings are solely held by the administrators, while the students hold 45.5% of the meetings. In addition to this, we also asked how effective these meetings were: most participants selected 1 and 2 with a rate of 72.8%, demonstrating that the meetings could have been more efficient.

Also, we asked the participants, who answered no, if they would like such meetings to be held regularly. According to the results, 72.7% of them selected yes.

In the 12th question (open-ended), we asked our participants if there were any personal activities that they previously were able to do at home but cannot now conduct in the dorms. Since the question was open-ended, we received a wide range of answers. Participants gave various answers, mostly about playing instruments, exercising, painting, and attending online meetings. The diversity and intensity of these answers alone reveal the shortcomings of the dormitories in this regard.

In the 13th question (open-ended), we asked our participants their opinions on the newly placed alarms on the fire escape gates. Even though this is an open-ended question, the answers were almost exactly the same: Terrible, unnecessary, useless, etc.

In the 14th question, we asked our participants how comfortable they felt in their room. Options 1, 2, and 3 were selected with a completely even distribution, with 24.2% for each, and in addition, only 4.8% of the participants selected 5. These results clearly show that a vast majority of the students feel uncomfortable in their rooms.

In the 15th question, we asked our participants how often they engage in on-campus activities with their dormmates. 38.7% of them say not at all, while only 1.6% say very much. A vast majority of the participants, with a total rate of 87.1%, almost do not do any activities with their dormmates.

Discussion

The main argument of our research was that the lack of spatial and functional common spaces leads to de-socialized, insecure, and problematic social environments in dormitories. This issue was evident in both the qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires we conducted. However, as we delved deeper into our research, we uncovered a more fundamental problem: the lack of privacy in dormitories. This issue is of the same level of importance as our main argument, which highlights the lack of configuration of university dorms.

The dormitories at METU are configured in a way that heavily compromises privacy. One interviewee highlighted this by sharing that her dorm room was so small (14 square meters) that she had to blindly pick her clothes without being able to fully open the wardrobe. This lack of personal space was a recurring theme in our interviews and questionnaires. When we asked participants about the potential benefits of new, reconfigured, and functional common spaces, their response was often, "First, let me have my own private space, then we will speak about socialization with others!" This response underscores the priority students place on having adequate private space before considering the social benefits of common areas.

Our research initially focused on the lack of common spaces, but it became clear that the issues of common and private spaces are intertwined. Dormitories need a comprehensive reconfiguration that addresses both the expansion of private spaces and the functionality of common areas. Only by tackling both issues simultaneously can we hope to create a more conducive living environment in dormitories.

Possible Limitations

It's also important to put a side note for possible limitations of our research. A significant limitation of our findings is the difference in socialization patterns between male-specific and female-specific dormitories. METU dormitories are gender-segregated, and this segregation may influence social dynamics in ways that are not immediately apparent. For instance, in a group interview, a female participant described her dormitory as "chaotic," where residents would quickly confront each other over noise disturbances. In contrast, a male participant noted that while similar issues occurred in his dormitory, they were generally taken lightly or ignored. To back this insight, we received from our participants, we can lean on the literature: socialization patterns in different gender groups are notably studied, especially on younger groups by investigating their group play activities. (Laff & Ruiz, 2019) This suggests that gender-specific socialization patterns might affect how issues are perceived and addressed in dormitories. Therefore, it is essential to consider these differences when interpreting our findings.

Another limitation is the overarching narrative that suggests, "put people in a functional common space, and they will come to respect and acknowledge each other." While this narrative is compelling, it overlooks the influence of cultural patterns and individual preferences. METU dormitories host a diverse population with various backgrounds, and these differences can significantly impact socialization preferences. Our research does not account for the nuanced ways in which cultural and personal factors might shape interactions in common spaces. Thus, any conclusions drawn should be tempered by an awareness of these diverse influences.

Modernity also imposes an omnipresent lifestyle that may affect socialization patterns. Today's individuals tend to be more individualistic and indifferent towards others and their environment. Modernity is often outlined by urbanization and industrialization, followed by

overt-specialization (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992) Modern environments often become spaces of mere cohabitation, where meaningful interactions are rare. This "ethos of time," combined with cultural preferences, likely plays a role in dormitory social dynamics. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of modern lifestyles on socialization when drawing conclusions from our research.

Finally, the scope of our participant pool presents a limitation. 2022 records showed that METU housed approximately 7.6k students in its in-campus dormitories (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2022). Our questionnaire, with responses from a narrow pool of participants, covers only a small fraction of the entire dormitory population. As with any statistical measure, our results should be viewed with caution, recognizing that they represent a limited sample of the broader student population. This limitation highlights the need for further research with a larger participant base to validate our findings.

Discussing the Responses

The responses to our questionnaire provide insightful data on the utilization and satisfaction levels of common spaces in METU dormitories. The first question focused on the frequency of common space usage. Responses concentrated around 3 and 4, and when combined with those who selected 5, indicate that 76% of participants use common spaces regularly. This demonstrates that common spaces are essential and highly utilized areas within dormitories, highlighting a significant demand among residents for these communal areas. Despite their apparent insufficiency, a large majority of survey participants reported frequent use of common spaces, underlining their necessity and relevance in dormitory life.

However, when it comes to satisfaction with these spaces, the results are less positive. The responses show a clear dissatisfaction with the space available in common areas. A significant 90.2% of participants rated their satisfaction with common space size as 1, 2, or 3, with no participants rating it a 5. This indicates that the current common spaces are not spacious enough to meet the needs and expectations of the dormitory residents. This dissatisfaction extends to the functionality of these spaces as well, with a similar trend in responses indicating that the common spaces do not adequately serve their intended purposes. The data

suggest that common spaces are not only small but also lack the necessary functionality to be truly effective and enjoyable for the residents.

The issues highlighted in the previous questions lead us to another critical problem: the inadequacy of common spaces in fostering social interactions among students. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with their interactions in these spaces, suggesting that the current design and functionality of common areas are insufficient for facilitating social bonds. This indicates a failure of common spaces to fulfil their role as venues for socialization and community building within the dormitories. The results suggest that improving both the size and functionality of common spaces is crucial for enhancing social interactions and overall satisfaction among dormitory residents.

The responses regarding how close dormitory residents feel to each other present an almost equal distribution, indicating that we cannot draw a definitive conclusion from this data alone. This outcome is influenced by various contingent factors, such as the differing relationships in specific rooms, where friendships and dynamics can vary widely from one room to another. However, our qualitative research provides some clarity in this ambiguity. Participants consistently reported that the small size of their rooms created tension and disarray. We believe that increasing the size of the rooms and configuring them to uphold higher living standards will alleviate much of the discomfort among students. Therefore, while the quantitative data shows mixed results, our qualitative findings suggest that improving room conditions could enhance interpersonal relationships.

The seventh question sheds light on a critical issue: an overwhelming majority of students feel they cannot get to know each other well or form meaningful friendships. When comparing this with the previous question, it becomes evident that residents bond better with those they spend more time within shared spaces. This reinforces our argument that common spaces are currently inadequate in facilitating friendships and community bonds. While it could be argued that the discontent between roommates might undermine our findings, we maintain that this issue is largely due to the improper design of spaces within METU dormitories. We argue that these problems can be significantly mitigated by introducing well-designed and commodious spaces that promote better social interactions and reduce tension.

In short, the data suggests that while individual room relationships vary and can impact overall feelings of closeness, the broader issue of inadequate common spaces remains a significant barrier to forming meaningful connections. Addressing both the size and functionality of these spaces is essential for fostering a more cohesive and supportive dormitory environment.

The responses to the eighth question reveal an equal distribution of answers, but nearly half of the participants indicated that they refrain from placing their belongings in common spaces, highlighting a pervasive environment of distrust. This is further reinforced by the subsequent question, which shows that more than half of the residents have experienced theft. This consistent theme of distrust within the dormitories suggests that students feel insecure about leaving their possessions in communal areas. We believe that areas designed to facilitate open discussions and community bonding can help reduce this distrust. Properly designed common spaces can serve as forums where students come together, build trust, and enhance community ties.

The tenth question provides clear evidence that METU dormitories have failed to provide a quality environment for their residents. The configuration of the dormitories appears to undermine bonding and solidarity among inhabitants, as the spaces do not support the development of a cohesive community. The dissatisfaction with living conditions is evident, and the lack of trust among students further exacerbates the problem. As we hypothesized earlier, the current living environment significantly influences students' lifestyles. If students are uncomfortable and distrustful of their surroundings, they are likely to experience greater hardships, ranging from lower academic performance to general unhappiness.

Building an environment of common cause, particularly within dormitories, can significantly improve students' well-being. Properly designed common spaces can foster a sense of community and trust, helping students feel more connected and supported. This, in turn, can lead to happier, more content individuals who are better able to focus on their studies and personal growth. Therefore, addressing the inadequacies in both private and common spaces within METU dormitories is crucial for enhancing the overall student experience and creating a positive living environment.

The eleventh question reveals that students feel they lack a proper arena to discuss issues related to their dormitories. Follow-up questions highlight concerns about the effectiveness and autonomy of existing forums: nearly half of the students reported that these meetings are monitored by dormitory administrators, and the majority felt that these forums failed to effectively address their problems. This indicates a significant gap in the current system, where students do not feel empowered to voice their concerns freely or see meaningful outcomes from such discussions.

Additionally, there is a clear demand for broader, more open platforms for discussion. While organized, monthly discussions are valuable, our hypothesis suggest that allowing students to gather more frequently in common spaces could be more effective. Autonomous, and omni-present gatherings held by students spontaneously at micro level can provide a more flexible and responsive way for students to address and resolve issues.

Therefore, we recommend redesigning common spaces to support these informal gatherings. Creating environments that encourage regular interaction and open dialogue among students can foster a greater sense of community and empowerment. This approach not only addresses immediate concerns but also builds a more robust framework for ongoing communication and problem-solving within the dormitories. By facilitating these spontaneous gatherings, dormitories can become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of their residents, ultimately enhancing the overall living experience.

In the subsequent question, we asked participants about activities they could previously conduct at home but now find difficult to perform in the dormitories. The responses varied widely, from exercising to practicing musical instruments and drawing. While certain activities, such as practicing instruments, might fall outside the practical scope of common spaces, many others could be accommodated with proper design. Activities like studying, drawing, online interviews, video games, yoga and meditation, and reading can all be facilitated in well-designed, accessible common spaces. This question also highlights dissatisfaction with the existing study rooms in dormitories, as many participants mentioned “studying” among the activities they struggle to perform.

A proper dormitory and campus life should prioritize these issues, recognizing that fulfilling students' hobbies and immaterial needs is crucial for a successful university experience. Our

qualitative research further supports this finding, revealing a significant problem with differentiating "dorm rooms" from "spaces of activity" due to the lack of functional common spaces. Participants shared numerous examples of conflicts arising from activities like playing video games in dorm rooms, which often disrupted the sleep schedules of other residents. These conflicts typically stemmed from the absence of designated areas for different activities.

To address these issues, a well-designed dormitory should effectively segregate “spaces of sleeping” and “spaces of activity.” This segregation can prevent conflicts and ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in various activities without disturbing others. Providing functional and accessible common spaces where students can study, relax, and engage in hobbies is essential for enhancing their overall dormitory experience and well-being. By addressing these needs, dormitories can create a more harmonious and supportive living environment, contributing to the overall success and satisfaction of their residents.

The question about the use of fire escape revealed a deeper issue within the dormitories. Our questionnaire responses and interviews indicated that fire escapes have become informal hubs of socialization, particularly among smokers. While these areas have become social spaces, they have also led to several problems. Many dormitories responded by locking the fire escapes and installing fire alarms to detect smoking. Some respondents expressed frustration with the noise from both the alarms and the students socializing there. This situation underscores the failure of dormitories to provide appropriate spaces for socialization, leading to the misuse of fire escapes. Locking fire escapes is unacceptable due to their importance for emergency and health concerns. Some respondents mentioned that the locked doors prevented them from accessing fresh air, further highlighting the adverse effects of this approach. To address this issue, we suggest that dormitories provide proper socialization areas. By creating designated spaces where students can socialize and smoke, the misuse of fire escapes can be reduced. This solution would ensure that fire escapes remain accessible for emergencies and health needs while providing students with appropriate areas to gather and socialize. Properly designed common spaces can mitigate the need for students to use fire escapes as makeshift social areas, thereby resolving both the noise and safety concerns associated with their current use.

The final two questions of our survey provide strong support for our assumptions about the quality of dormitories. The fourteenth question revealed that the majority of participants are dissatisfied with their rooms, which can be linked to the various issues we have discussed in this section. This dissatisfaction encompasses the lack of privacy, inadequate space, and insufficient functionality of the common areas. These factors contribute to an overall negative living experience for students.

The last question further supports our findings by indicating that the bond between roommates is not particularly strong. The persistent problems within rooms can be attributed to the failure to distinguish between "spaces of activity" and "spaces of residence." When activities such as studying, socializing, and relaxation all occur in the same small space, it inevitably leads to conflicts and tension among roommates.

We believe that introducing properly designed common spaces can significantly mitigate these issues. By providing designated areas for various activities, we can reduce the misuse of private spaces and subsequently decrease the frequency of arguments and conflicts among dormitory residents. Proper common spaces would not only enhance the functionality of dormitories but also improve the overall living environment, fostering better relationships and a stronger sense of community among students. This approach to redesigning dormitory spaces is crucial for addressing the root causes of dissatisfaction and improving the quality of life for all residents.

Policy Recommendations

In light of our survey data, we have highlighted that METU dormitories are problematic in many aspects, both physically and administratively, and that many students have expressed dissatisfaction with this situation. In this section, we will discuss the types of solutions we can propose to address these existing problems. At this point, we will discuss our suggestions in two main sections: (1) The physical conditions of the dormitories and (2) The administrative management of the dormitories.

Physical Conditions of the Dormitories

We can divide the physical spaces of dormitories into two categories: (1) Personal spaces and (2) Common spaces. While the primary focus of our study is on common spaces, it is crucial to acknowledge that personal spaces play an equally significant role in fostering students' sense of belonging to their dormitories and in shaping their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to evaluate these two areas independently. An integrative approach that considers both areas in conjunction is essential for a comprehensive evaluation.

Personal Spaces

One of the most frequently mentioned issues in our individual conversations with students is their dissatisfaction with the physical conditions of their dormitory rooms. Rooms that are 14 square meters with four students sharing the space not only trigger tension and problems among students but also prevent them from having opportunities for individual activities and rest. Before engaging in activities in common areas, students who cannot experience a satisfactory personal life in their rooms face fundamental issues such as feeling a lack of belonging to their dormitories and difficulty in socializing, which are core subjects of our study on common spaces. These fundamental issues are the precursors to the problems that form the primary focus of our research.

Sharing a small room with multiple roommates significantly reduces the privacy available to each student. This lack of privacy can make it difficult for students to engage in personal activities such as studying, relaxing, or engaging in personal hobbies. The constant presence of others can lead to a sense of intrusion and discomfort, negatively impacting mental health and overall well-being. Close quarters can exacerbate conflicts and tensions among roommates. Differences in sleeping schedules, study habits, and personal preferences can lead to disagreements and stress. Without adequate personal space, these tensions are more likely to escalate, leading to an uncomfortable living environment.

According to the article of Yusuf Esidir (2017), 78% of students staying in dormitories prefer "one or two bedrooms with private showers/toilets." Constructing private showers and toilets for each room is quite costly and may seem unrealistic under current conditions. However, also 52% of students approve of a 50% increase in dormitory fees to ensure these conditions (Esidir, 2017).

Reducing the number of students per room can alleviate many of the issues associated with overcrowding. Providing more spacious accommodations allows for better privacy and reduces conflicts. Upgrading room amenities and providing better storage solutions can improve the functionality and comfort of personal spaces. Ensuring that rooms are well-furnished and equipped with necessary amenities can enhance the living experience. Incorporating semi-private areas within dormitory rooms, such as partitions or designated study rooms, can provide students with a sense of personal space, even in shared rooms. This can help mitigate some of the negative impacts of sharing a room.

Most of the rooms have only one minibar for four students and one fridge, which needs to be a much bigger size. The limited availability of these essential facilities leads to overcrowding and restricts their usability.

Common Spaces

In our survey, approximately 82% of students reported using common spaces frequently, rating them 3, 4, or 5 out of 5, yet about 90% found these areas needing to be spatially larger. Similarly, about 87% of students described these areas as dysfunctional. The lack of both physical and qualitative aspects of existing spaces, such as kitchens, study rooms, or fire escapes, is a significant issue, while the absence of places like gyms, TV rooms, and socialisation areas creates additional problems. Considering that each dormitory serves approximately 500 students at total capacity, having only two kitchens or extremely small and inadequate study rooms for the entire dormitory is a significant issue. The number of existing facilities such as kitchens and study rooms serving each floor should be increased and their quality improved. Additionally, new structures should be added to these facilities.

Our survey results often describe existing common spaces as dysfunctional. This includes poorly equipped or maintained kitchens, study rooms, and fire escapes that are used for socialisation. Since each dormitory serves approximately 500 students at total capacity, having only two kitchens or extremely small and insufficient study rooms for the entire dormitory is a significant issue. The limited availability of these essential facilities leads to overcrowding and restricts their usability. Also, the absence of facilities such as gyms, TV

rooms, and socialization areas limits the opportunities for students to engage in recreational activities and social interactions. These spaces are crucial for fostering a sense of community and providing students with a balanced living environment. Without them, students may feel isolated and find it challenging to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

To promote a balanced lifestyle, dormitories should include a variety of recreational spaces. Gyms can provide students with a convenient way to stay fit, while TV rooms and socialization areas can facilitate relaxation and social interactions. These spaces can help build a stronger sense of community and improve the sense of belonging in the dormitory. The number of kitchens and study rooms should be increased to accommodate the large number of students. Each floor should ideally have its own kitchen and study room to ensure easy access and reduce overcrowding. Additionally, these spaces should be enlarged to provide sufficient room for all users. In addition to these, the functionality of common spaces can be improved by upgrading the equipment, i.e., increasing the number of mini bars per student or installing a large fridge, etc.

The 2023 financial expectancy report from METU (Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, 2022) highlights a significant gap in student accommodation, with only, speaking of approximate numbers, 7.6k of the 26.5k student body residing in dormitories. This stark disparity underscores a critical issue within the campus housing system, particularly in a major city like Ankara, where the cost of living has soared due to economic fluctuations and the impacts of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake. These factors have caused rents to skyrocket, making affordable housing a crucial need. Given these circumstances, it becomes imperative for the university to prioritize its resource allocation towards expanding dormitory buildings. This would not only alleviate the financial burden on students but also ensure that the university can fulfil its role in safeguarding the welfare of its student community by providing them with stable and accessible housing options on campus.

The necessity for new dormitory construction at METU is clear, but equally crucial is the consideration of the comfort and functionality of these new facilities. Our previous discussions have highlighted the need for dormitories that not only provide shelter but are also designed to meet the highest standards of accessibility and student comfort. The feasibility of such developments is supported by the university's current financial undertakings. For example, the administration's decision to invest in a new amphitheatre next to Devrim

Stadium—projected at around 10 million Turkish liras—raises questions about priority setting. The cost of projects to be undertaken in the year of 2024, including the new amphitheatre, were declared in a mail sent to the students of METU by the Rectorate. Given the ample green spaces and existing facilities like the well-loved Devrim Stadium, the necessity of an additional amphitheatre does not seem to be a top priority. This comparison illustrates that sufficient funds exist that could instead be redirected towards more critical infrastructure needs such as student housing. By reallocating such capital, METU could significantly enhance its residential facilities, directly benefiting the student body by focusing on essential living conditions over supplementary projects.

Administrative Management of the Dormitories

In addition to the issues with physical conditions mentioned above, another crucial topic is the administrative management styles in the dormitories. Effective management is essential for maintaining students' supportive and functional living environment.

According to our survey results, there are significant areas for improvement in the current administrative practices in dormitories. Approximately 68% of the dormitories do not hold meetings to discuss internal problems. This lack of communication between the administration and the residents leads to unresolved issues and a sense of neglect among students. In the few dormitories where such meetings are held, only about 45% of students can participate in these meetings. This limited participation restricts the diversity of opinions and ideas that can be brought forward, reducing the overall effectiveness of the meetings. Moreover, the effectiveness of these meetings could be improved in the dormitories where meetings are held; 91% of students rated the effectiveness of these meetings as 1, 2, or 3 out of 5. This indicates that even when meetings occur, students do not or cannot adequately address their concerns or lead to meaningful changes.

To enhance the administrative management of dormitories and ensure a better living experience for students, regular meetings should be held every month to discuss the problems students experience in their dormitories and to allow them to express their ideas and complaints. All students should be encouraged and allowed to participate in these meetings. The administration can use various communication channels, such as emails, notice boards,

and social media, to inform students about upcoming meetings and invite their participation. Additionally, it is crucial for administrators to attend these meetings, listen to students' opinions, and act accordingly. Transparency in communication between them is vital. The outcomes, decisions, and actions taken during the meetings should be communicated clearly to all students. This transparency can build trust and encourage more students to participate in future meetings. This will show that the administration values student feedback and is committed to making improvements.

Conclusion

The use and effects of common areas in Middle East Technical University dorms have been extensively examined in this paper. The methodology, the goal of the study, the results commentary, the claims we made, and our strategic recommendations formed the framework of the final version of the report. Our approach made it possible for extensive and thorough data to be gathered, which served as the foundation for our study and clarified the complex function that these venues play in student life.

Our main goal was to find out how well these common areas serve the needs of the students and how their accessibility affects everyday interactions and overall wellbeing. We suggested a number of changes based on our research to enhance these areas' usability and accessibility. Among these recommendations, we stressed the significance of well-designed dorms that promote social connections and community development among students in addition to making everyday tasks like cooking and studying easier.

Furthermore, we highlighted the critical need for fresh, open common spaces. Such environments can significantly enhance the quality of life in dormitories, providing essential areas for relaxation and informal gatherings, which are vital for mental health and social engagement. While we discussed the issue of common spaces, we've also touched upon the issue of private space arising due to spatial configuration. We've highlighted that both issues are intertwined, and call for a comprehensive and structural solution. The implications of our study show the broader significance of architectural and administrative strategies in shaping living environments that support academic success and personal growth. By focusing on optimizing the design and use of common spaces, as well as the dormitories as a whole,

institutions can profoundly affect student satisfaction and performance, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant, supportive educational community.

References

Eşidir, Y. (2017). Yükseköğretimde barınma politikalarının değerlendirilmesi ve Türkiye için öneriler. T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, Sosyal Sektörler ve Koordinasyon Genel Müdürlüğü. ISBN: 978-605-2270-03-5.

Haferkamp, H., & Smelser, N. J. (Eds.). (1992). Social change and modernity. University of California Press. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft6000078s/>

Laff & Ruiz, (2019). Socialization and Gender. In *Child, Family, and Community*. Retrieved from [https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Early_Childhood_Education/Child_Family_and_Community_\(Laff_and_Ruiz\)/04%3A_How_Does_Gender_Influence_Children_Families_and_Communities/4.03%3A_Socialization_and_Gender](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Early_Childhood_Education/Child_Family_and_Community_(Laff_and_Ruiz)/04%3A_How_Does_Gender_Influence_Children_Families_and_Communities/4.03%3A_Socialization_and_Gender)

Strateji Geliştirme Daire Başkanlığı, (2022). *2023 Yılı Kurumsal Mali Durum ve Beklentiler Raporu*. Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi.

Worsley, J.D., Harrison, P. & Corcoran, R. The role of accommodation environments in student mental health and wellbeing. BMC Public Health 21, 573 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10602-5>