



A Specific Park for Women or a Public Park: Women's Preferences and Perspectives on Using City Parks, Case Study: Four Parks in Tehran*

Mehdi Khakzand¹, Yousef Gorji Mahlabani² and Saeideh Teymouri Gerdeh^{3}**

¹Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran.

² Ph.D. in Architecture, Associate Professor, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran.

³ Master of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran.

Received 20 September 2013;

Revised 4 November 2013;

Accepted 4 December 2013

ABSTRACT: Iranian women who, in the traditional conditions of the past and norms of the Iranian society, have had a limited access to the public spaces of the city, with the changes taken place in our modern day society and factors such as education, employment and so on. Nowadays, they have distinguished themselves in various fields and introduced their own issues and concerns to the society. However, it seems that their issues concerning the city spaces are part of the aspects of the Iranian society which have remained unchanged and in the dark. Many studies have been carried out on the differences among the Iranian women and their use of city spaces and parks in Iran. The present study aims to express the necessity for caring about the wishes, the behavioral and the psychological needs of women in using the city parks which originate from their gender differences (as a modern phenomenon in the Iranian city spaces). The study further aims to compare the opinions of other women who use the public parks of city of Tehran and investigate their preferences, point of views and reasons for using both types of city parks. The present research is based on the hypothesis that says:

“despite the fact that women's park takes care of a limited number of women's needs which the public parks don't, they still prefer to have access to public parks which are different and more suitable to their needs than the ones that currently exist to build women's park in their neighborhoods”. To achieve the goals of the research, two public parks in Tehran (Razi and Gheitarihe) and two women's park (Beheshte Madaran and Shahr Banoo Complex) were selected as the case studies. A pilot study consisting of 60 women was conducted. Ultimately 400 questionnaires were distributed to women in these four parks and the results were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. The result indicated that most of women who attended the women's park preferred to have a public park with spaces and facilities specifically for women in their neighborhood or near their residence. In addition, those women who were surveyed at the two previously mentioned public parks preferred having and using public parks. Moreover, the ladies from Tehran claimed that their reason and interest in using women's park was their freedom of clothing and Hijab while enjoying the nature and the park space.

Keywords: Women, Women's Park, Public Park, Tehran's Parks.

* This article is extracted from the M.A thesis entitled 'A Park for Women or a Public Park: Women's Preferences and Perspectives on Using City Parks (Study of Four Parks in Tehran) that is written by the third author under the supervision of the second author and the advisory of the first author.

** Corresponding author email: sahar.teymouri@gmail.com



INTRODUCTION

Women possess different biological characteristics, responsibilities and perspectives in comparison with men. These differences affect their relationship with the space. They have certain expectations from the space. These expectations have to be compatible with their physical characteristics, emotional needs and personalities and they also facilitate their daily lives and activities (Tamadon, 2008, p. 21). Men and women needs at different age groups have noticeable social, cultural and lifestyle differences with one another. Therefore, it is natural for them to have difference behavioral patterns from one another in city spaces and locations. As the result, their needs could not be addressed in the same manner. To find suitable solutions, the variety and differences of these needs could be paid attention to. To ensure women's active presence in the society, their needs, goals and conditions should be understood and then the factors and obstacles which limit their presence in the city parks have to be identified and eliminated. City parks can become one of the most popular spaces for women to spend their free time, because due to the responsibilities they have, women come in contact with city spaces more often than men; even though, their relationship with these spaces faces with serious obstacles because of these responsibilities and a set of restrictions. There are various obstacles such as infrastructural factors, designing spaces and dominant socio-cultural norms which restrict women's presence in city spaces. Considering the issue of Hijab for the Iranian women and the dominant culture in the country, they have always faced with serious limitations and hurdles for their activities and use of open spaces, especially the parks. Women, to keep away from such problems, limit their use of these spaces in certain hours of the day. It is interesting to know that despite all these limitations, according to the researchers of this study, women are still half of the users of the city parks. However, rather unfortunately, there has been little attention paid to their special and primary needs such as public transportation and ease of access to the parks, daycare centers, playgrounds, suitable and enough restroom facilities, resting areas, entertainment, educational and cultural services just for women in the city parks. Although building women's park as a new measure that offers a location consisting of cultural, entertainment and sport complexes and provides women with an opportunity and more freedom to use these services in open and natural spaces, these positive points will have negative sociological and psychological consequences. The solution in order to establish better control over the public parks, making them safer and more secure is paying special attention

to design and management of these spaces based on the women's needs and expectations, because according to many researchers, it is not enough just to provide spaces for women and have a safe and suitable location for all the citizens within the community by gender segregation; it is necessary for it to possess features which make it suitable for all those who use it. This study aims to, with full knowledge of numerous features and benefits which make city parks attractive to all of the citizens- especially women as the statistical population in current study- investigate the reasons, preferences and opinions of the Tehrani women in using the city parks. To this end, two women's park (Boostane Beheshte Madaran, located in district 3 and Boostane Shahre Banoo, located on the northern side of Boostane Velayat in district 19) and two public parks (Gheiteriyeh Park, located in district 1 and Razi Park, located in district 11) were selected. What make difference between this research and similar ones are extraction of the viewpoints of women interviewed on the parks in the study. The hypothesis of the study is, "although Women Park fulfills part of women's needs and eliminates certain limitations which they face with using public parks, they still prefer public parks near their residences with different designs". This research aims to answer the following questions in order to test the research hypothesis. What are the reasons of using women's parks? And do women parks fulfill women's needs more than the public parks? Finally, do they agree with building more women parks in the city or not? The methods used to find answers will be analysis and comparison of the answers to the questionnaire filled by women in the two women's and two public parks in Tehran.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Gender Differences and Women's Limitations in Using City Spaces

Gender as a hidden factor in relation to location and space, especially in connection with city spaces, has been neglected. In other words, it has become a lost element in space and its design. Gender includes behavior, actions and social thoughts which the dominant culture in the society leaves it to men and women (Tersisias, 2004, p. 38). Sociologists also believe that the differences between men and women are caused by the behavioral differences which society assigns for them. Two genders do not differ; however, society makes them find different inclinations and lead different paths (Barnet, 1990, p. 94). Key differences between men and women, which



are created by the social issues and development of men and women's individual identities, impact their direction and participation in the environment. For example, Iris Marion Young believes that women, in general, suffer from limited space and lower activity in the space (Rezazadeh and Mohammadi, 2009). Another obvious difference between men and women is using existing elements to define their private spaces (Ganji, 2001, p. 32).

Gender plays an undeniable role in understanding of the environment. Environment as whole and in its various components is understood and perceived differently by women and men. For instance, safety and security of their surroundings is importance in their evaluation and it greatly impacts on their perceptions (Barati, 2010, p. 24). Moreover they divide city spaces into safe and unsafe spaces (Stevenson, 2009, p. 77). Overall, men have more positive feelings towards their environment in comparison to women. For example, both men and women feel unsafe during dark, but the degree of the feeling is higher in women than men (Bemanian et al., 2009, p. 52). Fear of crimes and bullying changes the behavior of people in city spaces. This effect is more severe on women and other socially and economically vulnerable groups and can limit their mobility and, especially, result in not leaving the safe and secure environment of their homes. This, in turn, limits their social, cultural and economic opportunities (Lubuva et al., 2004, p. 16). Along with gender-based social rejections, women are faced with some other factors in the society such as aging, feeling of vulnerability, illness, disability, migration, pregnancy and motherhood (Sadeghi Fasaie et al., 2009, p. 127). Limitations resulting from limited resources (money and low mobility), inhibitive feelings (fear and stress), serious responsibilities (house work and taking care of children) and limiting social norms (such as sexual norms and callus planning (Mohammadi, 2008, p. 65) have brought different methods of presence in the city spaces for women than men. Moreover, the factors of cultural and tribal norms, which results in belonging and not belonging spaces, have led to permitted and not permitted spaces for women in certain cultures (Fenster, 1998, 1999, 2005). All of these limitations make distance between women's activities in public spaces and their experiences and the satisfaction from using these space (including pleasure, preference and participation) (Day, 2000, p. 206). As the result of these limitations, considering the time and the location of women's use of public space, they affects the length of their use of the public spaces, their behaviors in such spaces and their experiences (Crawford and Goodbey, 1987; Day, 2000, p. 106). Ultimately, the fact

is that the differences between men and women are in their emotional needs. Although It is not possible to figure out what each woman needs in a city environment and find the best way to meet these needs; we can gather and categorize a minimal list of women's needs in city setting (Tajdar et al., 2008, p. 31). With regard to public spaces, having access to spaces, crowded spaces and their overlapping functions, presence of others in these spaces and the services which women need, are general issues for women in city spaces (Rezazadeh et al., 2009).

Women and Use of City Parks

Parks are places for relaxation, interaction with nature, interacting with friends and neighbors and engaging in physical activities with them (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 509). Experimental studies on parks reveal that the size of the park (Corti et al., 1996), accessibility of the resources and a list showing the free times of a park (Gordon et al., 2000; Sister et al., 2008), aesthetic factors such as water and trees (Corti et al., 1996), and the level of safety and security of the park (Tinsley et al., 2002) can affect the pattern of activities in the park (Loukatiou-Sideris et al., 2010, p. 90). Parks benefit their users socially, spiritually, psychologically, physically and naturally. The psychological needs of individuals from their environment depend on various factors such as age, social class, culture, past experiences, goals and their daily life styles; thus, the needs of a child and an adult differ. Even if their needs will be the same, the ways of realizing those needs will vary. In other words, no matter what the age of an individual is, he/she wants to have fun at the park. Children's fun is running and making joyful noises; whereas, an elderly person prefers to sit at a quiet corner and enjoy the scenery (Rabbani et al., 2011, p. 121). Women often prefer to sit in a place where it is possible for them to monitor their children, so their preference is to be near the playground, soccer field or the basketball court (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 513).

Therefore, in designing parks, creating spaces for people with different interests such as women and elderly is a great importance, because the combination of different groups and activities always leads to improved quality of the surroundings (Vos, 2005, p. 1058). In other words, parks have to meet the needs of all visitors. Studies show that one of the reasons why people, especially women, avoid being in parks is concern for their personal safety (Kaplan & Talbot, 1984; Wilber et al., 2002; Burgess et al., 1998; Hayward & Weitzer, 1984; Madge, 1997). Jorgensen and colleagues believe that these problems are not local and domestic and many people in England and other places are deprived of benefitting from interacting



with nature just because of their fears (Jorgensen et al., 2002). Fear of using public spaces, especially streets, public transportations and parks deprives women from their citizenship rights. Some women consider parks as a place just for men. It seems that fear is the feeling that makes parks prohibited areas for women especially in certain hours of the day (Fenster, 2005, pp. 224-225). Studies have always shown that boys and men visit local parks more frequently than girls and women (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Floyd et al., 2008), because parents' opinion about neighborhood's safety and security affects the frequency of their children's visit from the local parks. With respect to this point, fear from strangers and possibility of crimes cause more problems for women than men (Gomez et al., 2004). Madani Pour (2000) points out that presence of riff raffs in public places is one of the most important factors in lowering the attraction of these places to the public, especially for women. This, in turn, leads to such places being occupied by certain unpleasant groups. This is why most of the parks are only suitable for certain people and during certain times and they are depriving of others from using them. To this end, such places becoming gender-specific in use which men or women are forced to leave and be deprived of using them. Whereas, using public spaces all citizenship basic right.

Women Parks

Women parks are protected and guarded green spaces where women, in current Iranian society, can move around freely without worrying about legal implications. Considering the dominant culture of Iran, creating women parks could eliminate the limitations and problems which Iranian women are faced with, using public parks. Even though gender segregation makes benefits from certain resources such as playgrounds, athletic fields and specialized activities, it eliminates their social nature and function. The issue of gender segregation in public spaces such as parks is faced with contradictory opinions. Some agree with this idea and others are against it. Some believe that such an action is an insult to women, while others find it useful and socially functional in Iran and Arab countries considering the religious and legal norms (Zanjani Zadeh, 2001). In middle east countries such as Iran, other than clubs and centers for women, the need for creating entertainment spaces just for women should be deemed necessary (Tahmasebi, 2008). Some of the medical reasons for having open-air spaces for Iranian women are benefitting from sunlight, preventing bone density loss, working out and creating secure and safe spaces for them (Tabasi et al., 2009). Kazemi (2009), in

an article titled "an analytical approach to gender issue and its impact on the quality of space (case study: Fajr park in Tabriz), states that building parks for women originates from actions taken by the city hall with the goal of offering a solution to the existing problems with the parks. He adds in a different study conducted by him that such parks despite having some successes in eliminating part of the problems, are not functional solutions to the existing problems (Kazemi, 2009, p. 55). In line with this issue, Habib et al. (1990) in a paper titled, "specialized parks for women with multi-dimensional approach", pointed out that parks for women are places for cultural, social, participatory, leisure, health and economic activities which are founded on the socio-cultural values of women in any society. Therefore, designing and planning of these parks must pave the way for excelling, creating self-confidence, participation and employment for women. In studies it has been observed that in most of such parks for women there is lack of functional planning. They have been created just by putting a secure fence around an orchard or an old park and no effort has been made to bring them up to the needed standards (Habib et al., 2011, p. 75).

Even though separating the spaces for men from those of women is rooted in the traditional societies, there is some new trends in the contemporary which is implemented for different reasons and motives in developed and developing countries. Life style and behavioral patterns of various cultures are different from one another. Different countries have specific parks for women caused by different cultural factors; the reasons, the motives and, even, the objectives and the types of using women parks in different countries are obviously various. Therefore, it can be deduced that creating such parks depends more on culture and life style than the gender. For example, the park for women in Miami in the Florida-US, has been built on a 15-acre lakefront land with spaces for picnic, sites for exhibition and cultural events and even playground for children. In addition, the women's gallery of this park provides a space for historic and art exhibitions. The first park of this kind in the US was a feministic dream which was founded by Roxy O'Neil Bolton. This park, now, is a place for women's interaction for improving quality of their life in the society (www.miamidade.gov, 2012). What attracts every visitor's attention to this park is its slogan, "join us, because we have something to offer for everybody", for all kinds and ages of people and all types of needs and circumstances (Ashkouri, 2007, p. 21). Another example is the eight-acre park for women in Kabul, Afghanistan, which has been closed since 1996, in



Taliban period. (1996-2001). This park, nowadays, has become a worthwhile place for women. It includes shops, a fitness center for women, a basketball court, a daycare center, a restaurant, a mosque, a computer lab and job training center for women. In the other words, it is a place, first, for women to be free from the strict laws governing their presence in public spaces and, second, it is a place for empowering women for interactive in the society. In comparison with this park, the park for women in Miami is a place where women are employed and become familiar with new methods and trends in women management. Although, this park is operated by women, the symbolic idea of empowering women does not get implemented and men are not banned from entering it (as it is the case of parks for women in Kabul and Tehran). Comparing these three parks, it becomes obvious that the parks for women in Tehran places somewhere in the middle as far as their functions go, because they are neither founded for the purpose of empowering women and creating job opportunities nor are they for gaining a modicum of freedom in public spaces. Therefore, if the parks for women get created with the motive of offering women variety in public resources and increasing their options, it could be construed as a positive approach. Only if these parks were to be established based on sound design and planning, they could affect and improve women's presence in the society, increase their interaction, deal with their issues and provide them with security and safety. However, it should never be forgotten that increased safety and security is only achieved in a society if men and women could interact freely and without any fear in public spaces. If mono-dimensional specialized activity sectors are prevented and suitable multi-dimensional activities are encouraged and developed in city spaces, it would lead to reduced crime rate and provide women with more opportunities and increased presence in the society.

METHODOLOGY

In this study an interactive approach was adopted where the opinions of the women who used city parks were obtained. The methodology framework used in this research was a cross-sectional, quantitative-descriptive and inferential statistics approach. First using library research, the related literature was gathered. Then, to obtain the data, field study which consisted of interviews, questionnaires and field observation was carried out. The entire research was carried out using four public parks in Tehran: two parks for women (Beheshte Madaran, district 3 and Shahr Banoo Complex, district 19 in Tehran) and two public parks (Razi, district 11 and Gheitariehe, district

1 in Tehran). To prepare the questionnaire, a five-option Likert scale with 20 close and 3 open questions was used. A pilot study was carried out in which 60 women, 30 who frequently visited the two aforementioned public parks and 30 who frequently used the two parks for women. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha test. The questionnaire benefited from a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.855). Next, using the Cochran's formula, the sample size of 380 was deemed sufficient. To add to the accuracy of the study, the statistical sample size of 400 was considered. Moreover, the questionnaires were distributed on different days, in different periods of the day and to women from all walks of life. In each park, 100 questionnaires were distributed. Once the completed questionnaires were gathered, using the SPSS statistical and Microsoft's Excel programs, the compiled data was analyzed. The findings are provided in the paper in two sections: descriptive and analytical.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

Since this study is based on women's opinion about parks, two types of parks were considered, parks for women and common public parks, therefore it would be possible to properly answer the main research question and prove the hypothesis. The descriptive study and some minor questions were analyzed which the result is reported in the following sections.

Descriptive Statistics

The Reason for Women Visiting the Parks: According to table 1, most of the answers provided by women indicated that they go to parks to be close to nature and enjoy it. A few of them mentioned that accompanying their children and/or elderly relatives were their reasons for visiting parks. According to the women who were interviewed, they use the parks for women much more for group picnics in nature and entertainment than for exercising and walking. Many of them said that they consider going to parks as a short trip to a different place and away from the noise and crowdedness of Tehran. This answer was even more prevalent than "I go to parks to enjoy the fresh air and the sunlight". Contrary to this, most of the women who were asked the same questions in the public parks stated that they go to parks for walking and jogging. Only a few of these women said that they visit the parks because it is safe and free of the disturbances which are observed in the other city parks. This is a clear indication of the fact that women are not pleased with the safety and security level of the city's public parks.



Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Women Based on Their Reason for Visiting the Parks (%)

| The Reason for Visiting the Park | Public Parks | | Parks for Women | |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| To be Close to Nature and Enjoy it | 16 | 8.0 | 97 | 48.5 |
| Social Interaction | 7 | 3.5 | 27 | 13.5 |
| Benefiting from Fresh Air and the Sun | 44 | 21.9 | 76 | 38.0 |
| Exercise | 21 | 20.4 | 59 | 29.5 |
| Picnic | 1 | 0.5 | 34 | 17.0 |
| Waking and Jogging | 45 | 22.4 | 40 | 20.0 |
| Being and Women | 15 | 7.5 | 42 | 21.0 |
| Relaxation | 10 | 5.0 | 58 | 29.0 |
| Entertainment | 1 | 0.5 | 77 | 38.5 |
| Spending Free Time | 6 | 3.0 | 41 | 20.5 |
| Safety and Security and Avoiding the Disturbances in other Park | 0 | 0 | 74 | 37.0 |
| Accompanying their Children and/or Elderly Relatives | 36 | 17.9 | 9 | 4.5 |
| Other reason | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2.0 |
| No Response | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1.0 |

Distance to the Park: According to table 2, most of the answers show that the distance is important or very important for women (it is not possible to go park by foot, so I have to drive or take a taxi). Only, the small number of the women said that the distance is not important or very important to them (I live close enough to walk to the park). Therefore, most of women use women’s parks, because the public parks are too far from their residences. On the other hand, most of answers rate the distance from the public “medium” (it is possible to get here on foot but it takes longer). The small number of the answers said:” little or very little” (it is not too far, so I can just walk to the park). Even though most of people who live near the parks do not use them, many more are deprived from using parks just because they are too far from their residences. The research conducted by Cohen and his colleagues indicates that design of the communities must

be in a way that all the people will be able to benefit from what have been offered to them such as parks (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 513). According to the study carried out by Giles-Corti and his colleagues, people mostly use the facilities and resources which are close to their residences rather than those which are far from their homes (Giles-Corti et al., 2005). In fact, the most valuable city spaces are not only those that are near to women’s residence; but also, familiarity is the determining factor (Burgess et al., 1988). Another study by geography expert (Kwan, 1995) shows that many women, especially Muslim women, travel fewer distances to spend their daily leisure time than men. In addition, they don’t go too far from their homes. However, in case of women in Tehran, the evidence shows that they prefer to travel far distances just to benefit from what parks have to offer. This is due to lack of adequate number of parks throughout the city and their incapability to meet to women’s needs.



Table 2. Distribution of the Percentage of the Women on the Distance Factor

| The Distance of Tje Residence from the Park | Public Parks | | Parks for Women | |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Little or Very Little Importance (Easily Accessible by Walking) | 48 | 23.9 | 17 | 8.5 |
| Meddiom Importance (Accessible by Walking but It Takes Time) | 97 | 48.3 | 69 | 34.5 |
| High or Very High Importance (Not Passible to Walk to the Park and Vihicle is Needed) | 55 | 27.4 | 123 | 61.5 |
| No Answer | 1 | 0.5 | 2 | 1.0 |

Women’s Reasons for Visiting Women Parks: cording to table 3, women believed that freedom in wearing and head covering is the most important reason for going to the women parks. They rated closeness to their residences as the least important reason. It is obvious that because

of the low number of parks for women in Tehran (five parks), the distance of the parks from women’s residence becomes a low priority when they prefer to use one of the women parks. Due to inadequacy of women parks, women have to travel long distances to get to one of them. This issue has forced women to face many problems and dangers.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Participants in the Study Based on their Interest in the Parks for Women and Visiting Them

| Reason for Visiting the Park | Parks for Women | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Freedom in Dress Code | 105 | 52.5 |
| Open Air and Lush Green Surrounding | 53 | 26.5 |
| No Male Presence | 26 | 13.0 |
| Closeness to Home | 2 | 1.0 |
| Variety of Resource in the Park | 43 | 21.5 |
| No Answer | 37 | 18.5 |

Women’s Preference for Having a Park Near their Homes: According to table 4, it is interesting to know that majority of interviewed women in women parks preferred to have public parks with specialized facilities for women within them; whereas, very few of them preferred public parks. Despite women in women parks, another group preferred having access to a public park with specialized facilities suitable for their needs. They believe that public

parks enable them to visit the parks with their family members and enjoy the nature together. Only a few women in public parks stated that they were not happy with the current state of the city’s public parks. Most of interviewed women in the public parks went totally against building more parks for women while they considered that further segregation of men and women is unsuitable and unpleasant for the society. Most of these women had never gone to the women parks or they only had used them once in their whole life. Some didn’t even know such parks exist and they still preferred to use the public parks which are near their homes.



Table 4. Women's Preference for Building New Parks Near their Homes

| Women's Preference for Building New Parks Near their Home | Public Parks | | Parks for Women | |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Park for Women | 33 | 16.4 | 88 | 44.0 |
| Public Parks | 118 | 58.7 | 20 | 10.0 |
| Public Parks with Specialized Resource for Women | 50 | 24.9 | 91 | 45.5 |
| Total | 201 | 100 | 200 | 100 |

Inferential Statistics

To prove the research hypothesis, "women prefer having access to public parks near their homes with different facilities to meet their needs rather than women parks which meet only part of their needs". It is important

to study the association of the following variables with research hypothesis.

To study the correlation of correspondence between women parks and public parks with the needs of the women single T-Test was used.

Table 5a. Single T-Test for Correspondence of the Public Parks with the Needs of Women

| Variable | Sample Size | average (Number of the Question X3) | Mean | Standard Deviation | T Value | Degree of Freedom | T Value |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| Responding Women's Needs and Want - Public Park | 201 | 3 | 2.74 | 0.7752 | -4.98 | 200 | 0.000 |

Table 5a, the mean value of the answers regarding to whether public parks sufficiently meet their needs, shows that the average score of the respondents is significantly lower than the mean value of this variable. This means

that the respondents to this question care less than the average value for this variable. In other words, it could be deduced that women who were interviewed in the public parks don't believe that the public parks adequately meets their needs and wants.

Table 5b. Single t-test for Correspondence of the Parks for Women with their Needs

| Variable | Sample Size | Average (Number of the Question X3) | Mean | Standard Deviation | T Value | Degree of Freedom | T Value |
|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| Responding Women's Needs and Want - Park for Women | 199 | 3 | 3.05 | 1.104 | 0.642 | 194 | 0.000 |

Table 5b, the mean value of the answers to whether parks for women sufficiently meet their needs, shows that the average score of the respondents is significantly

higher than the mean value of this variable. This indicates that from the viewpoints of the women, these parks possess acceptable capabilities in meeting their needs and



wants in comparison with the public parks. Therefore, based on the results displayed in table 5b, it could be said that the parks for women are more successful than the public parks in meeting women’s minimum needs and

wants.

To compare the opinions of the women in both places about their desire to have more parks for women, independent t-test was performed.

Table 6. Independent T-Test to Compare the Opinions of the Women Present in the Parks for Women with the Opinions of those Present in Public Parks on their Desire to Have More Parks

| Variable | Sample Size | Mean | F Value | P Value |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|---------|---------|
| Parks for Women | 199 | 19.67 | 11.415 | 0.001 |
| Public Parks | 201 | 16.69 | | |

Considering the fact that the p-value is lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. In other words, the mean of the opinions of the women in both places are not the same. Therefore there is a significant difference between the type of the park and the degree of women’s desire for more parks for women. According to the mean

values in table 6, the desire of women for more women parks among the women in such parks is higher than those in the public parks.

To compare the opinions of both groups towards adding specialized spaces and facilities to the existing public parks, independent T-Test was performed.

Table 7. Independent T-Test to Compare the Opinions of Both Groups towards Adding Specialized Spaces and Facilities to the Existing Public Parks

| Variable | Sample Size | Mean | F Value | P Value |
|-----------------|-------------|------|---------|---------|
| Parks for Women | 199 | 3.57 | 40.393 | 0.000 |
| Public Parks | 201 | 2.62 | | |

Since the p-value is lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. In other words, the means of opinions both groups towards adding specialized spaces and facilities to the existing public parks are not the same. Considering the mean values shown in table 7, it could be said that those women who were at the parks for women are more satisfied for adding specialized spaces

and facilities to the existing public parks than others. The results displayed in this table are in agreement with the results in table 6.

To study the correlation between the opinions of both groups towards freedom in dress code as their reason for using the parks for women, independent t-test was performed.

Table 8. Independent T-Test for the Correlation between the Opinions of the Women Present in

| Variable | Sample Size | Mean | F Value | P Value |
|-----------------|-------------|------|---------|---------|
| Parks for Women | 199 | 4.31 | 3.168 | 0.076 |
| Public Parks | 201 | 3.26 | | |

Considering the fact that the p-value is higher than 0.05, the research hypothesis is accepted. This means that the mean of the opinions of both groups about their reasons for using the parks for women (more freedom in

their dress code) are the same. From the data in table 8, it could be deduced that majority of the women in both types of parks agree on freedom in dress code being the most important reason for visiting the parks for women.



Even some of the women in the public parks who opposed the parks for women said that if they ever were to visit these parks, freedom in dress code while in public spaces would be their only reason for doing so.

Overall, considering the results of the study, it could be said that despite the long distances that they have to travel from their homes to get to one of the five parks for women in the city, most of the Tehrani women still are interested in using these parks. They consider factors such as freedom of dress code in these parks and benefiting from fresh air while surrounded by lush green environment as their main reasons. However, when asked for their opinions on whether they would agree with building more parks for women, even those women who were at the women parks stated that they prefer specialized facilities and accommodations for women in the existing public parks instead of building new women parks. Therefore, considering all the data and the statistical analysis we can accept the research hypothesis: “despite the fact that the parks for women satisfy some of their needs compared to the public parks, they still prefer adding specialized spaces with resources and facilities which meet to their needs and wants while they prefer to build more parks for women near their residences.” Therefore, in line with the related literature and the opinions of the experts in women’s issues, women who frequently use the city parks also oppose having separate parks for men and women and find it in opposition with the principles of sociology, psychology and dynamism of the environment. The right way to go about this and ensure mental and social health of the society is building many suitable neighborhood public parks so that everybody can use them under the known conditions with enough safety and security for the users.

CONCLUSION

Building parks for women has, in recent years, become a new phenomenon in the field of architecture and city planning in Iran where the authorities have resorted to gender segregation in this kind of parks in order to ensure happiness and safety of women. Even though the parks for women have provided the Iranian women with opportunity to enjoy open spaces and sunlight without the customary dress code and Hijab, according to the opinions of the women interviewed in this study, these parks have not offered any different features rather to what the public city parks offer. Based on the library research, building the parks for women is a temporary step taken by the authorities without any sound and fundamental research and they are capable of

meeting only the small amount of women’s needs in our today society. Women do not find any specific feature in these parks rather than being hidden from the public eye with the help of architectural devices such as concrete fences. According to the findings of this study, the main reason for women for being in such places is being in the nature and enjoying it. They believe that such opportunity is not offered by the existing public parks and they prefer walking in nature with their own choice of clothes and going for a walk and exercising in these parks. The women who were interviewed believe that the parks for women are more capable than the existing public parks to meet their needs and wants. They also should add specialized spaces for women in to the existing public parks. In line with the research hypothesis, the bottom line is that the women, despite the limited and suitable features of these parks, prefer adding specialized spaces to the existing public parks with proper resources and facilities for women. Therefore, it seems that designers, architects and city managers and authorities have to take further steps to improve the functionality, activities and more suitable resources and facilities in than parks for women. They need to stop putting a fence around the existing public parks and calling it the parks for women without making it suitable and equipped to meet the needs of the Iranian women. In addition, we can decrease the possibility of social harms inflicted on women and to the society by building many small neighborhood parks with proper facilities and resources where everybody could use and benefit from. This is wiser than just adding limited number of parks for women to the already existing ones, because the value of open public spaces which are accessible to people from all sects of the society is sociologically, physically, spiritually and psychologically an accepted fact.



REFERENCES

- Barati, N. (2010). Perception of Environment, Role of Psychological Relativity in Perception of Environment. *MANZAR Monthly* in August, 2nd year, 9, 34-35.
- Barnett, A. (1990) *HUMAN*. (Bateni M. and T. Nefrabadi, Trans.), Tehran: Nashre New.
- Bemanian, M., M. Rafiean, and E. Zabetian. (2009). Evaluating the Factors in Improving Women's Security in Urban Spaces (Case Study: Vicinity of Park-E Shahr, Tehran), *Women Research*, 7(3), 49-67.
- Burgess, J., Harrison, C. M. & Limb, M. (1998). People, Parks and the Urban Green: a Study of Popular Meaning and Values for Open Spaces in the City, *Urban Studies*, 25, 455-473.
- Cohen, D. A. & McKenzie, T. L. & Sehgal, A. & Williamson, S. & Golinelli, D. & Lurie, N. (2007). Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity. *American Journal of Public Health*, March, 97(3).
- Corti, B., Donovan, R. J., & Holman, C. D. J. (1996). Factors Influencing the Use of Physical Activity Facilities: Results from Qualitative Research. *Health Promotion Journal*. 6 (1), 16-21
- Crawford, D. W. & Godbey, G. (1987). Reconceptualizing Barriers to Family Leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, 2, 119-127.
- Day, K. (2000). The Ethic of Care and Women's Experiences of Public Space. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20, 103-124
- Eshkevari, F. (2007). *Walls of Women's Park Must be Heightened*. *Women Quarterly* in October, 16th year, 149.
- Floyd, M. F., Spengler, J. O., Maddock, J. E., Gobster, P. H., & Suau, L. J. (2008). Park-Based Physical Activity in Diverse Communities of Two U.S. Cities: An Observational Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 34 (4), 299-305
- Fenster, T. (2005). Identity Issues and Local Governance: Women's Everyday Life in the City. *Social Identities*, 11(1), January, 21-36
- Ganji, H. (2001). *Personal Differences*, Tehran, Iran: Besat Publicaiton. (in Persian)
- Giles-Corti B, Broomhall MH, Knuiman M, et al. (2005). Increasing Walking: How Important is Distance to, Attractiveness, and Size of Public Open Space? *Am J Prev Med*; 28 (suppl 2), 169-176.
- Gomez, J. E., Johnson, A. B., Selva, M., & Sallis, J. F. (2004). Violent Crime and Outdoor Physical Activity among Inner-city Youth. *Preventive Medicine*, 39 (5), 876-881
- Gordon-Larsen P., McMurray, R. G., & Popkin, B. M. (2000). Determinants of Adolescent Physical Activity and Inactivity Patterns. *Pediatrics*, 105 (6), e83-e90
- Hayward, D. G. & Weitzer, W. H. (1984). The Public Image of Urban Parks: Past Amenity, Present Ambivalence, Uncertain Future, *Urban Ecology*, 8, 243-268
- http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/womens_park.asp. (2012)
- Jorgensen, A., Hitchmough, J. & Calvert, T. (2002). Woodland Spaces and Edges: Their Impact on Perception of Safety and Preference, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 60, 135-150
- Kaplan, R. & Talbot, J. (1984). *Ethnicity and Preference for Natural Settings: A Review and Recent Findings*, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 15, 107-117.
- Kazemi, M. (2009). An Analytical Approach to Gender Issues and Its Effect on Space Quality (Case Study: Fajr Park, Tabriz, Iran), *Hoviat-e Shahr Magazine*, 3rd year, 4.
- Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (1995). Urban Form and Context: Cultural Differentiation in the Uses of Urban Parks, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 14, 89-102.
- Loukaitou-Sideris, A. & Sideris, A. (2010). What Brings Children to the Park? Analysis and Measurement of the Variables Affecting Children's Use of Parks. *Journal of the American Planning Association (JAPA)*, 76(1).
- Lubuva, M. & Mtani J., Mtani, A. (2004). Urban Space and Security: A Case of the Dar es Salaam, Safety Audits for Women, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 13-17. *Making Safer Places, Women's Safety in our Cities, National Conference, Conference Report, London*, 18th November 2005.
- Madani Pour, A. (2000) *Urban Space Design, A Review of Social and Physical Processes*. Tehran, Urban Processing and Programming Co. (in Persian)
- Madge, C. (1997). Public Parks and the Geography of Fear, *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 88, 237-250.
- Mohammadi. M. (2008). Gender Equality in the Design of Urban Spaces with an Emphasis on Presence of Women (Case Study: Chizar Neighborhood). Master Thesis of Urban Design, Department of Architecture and Urban Design, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran.
- Nersisias, E. (2004). *Anthropology of Gender*, Tehran, Afkar Publication, 1st ed. (in Persian).
- Rabbani R., Nazari, J. & Mokhtari, M. (2011). Elaborating on Sociological Function of Urban Parks (Case Study: Urban Parks in Isfahan, Iran). *Urban & Regional Studies and Researches*, 3rd year, 10, 111-134. (in Persian).



Rezazadeh R. & Mohammadi, M. (2009). Surveying the Factors That Limit Women in Urban Spaces. *HONAR-HA-YE-ZIBA*, 36.

Sadeghi Fasaee, S. & Mirhosseini, Z. (2009). Sociological Analysis of Fear of Crime among Women in Tehran. *Sociology Magazine*, 152, 17-125. (in Persian).

Sister, C., Wilson, J., & Wolch, J. (2008). *The Green Visions Plan for 21st Century Southern California. Report 17: Access to Parks and Park Facilities in the Green Visions Plan Region*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California GIS Research Laboratory and Center for Sustainable Cities.

Tabasi, I., K. Tabasi, & S. Rezvanian. (2009). *Virtue Look and Virtue Architecture*, Architecture and Women Conference, Tehran: Civilica Press (Marja Danesh).

Tahmasbi, S. (2008). *Women from Attendance to Participation*. Tehran: Sarmaei E-newspaper. 949.

Tajdar, V., Akbari, M. (2008). Women and Good Ruler of the City. *Urban Developing Quarterly*, 24-25.

Tamadon, R. (2008). Women and Urban Spaces, *Urban Developing Quarterly*, 24-25.

Tinsley, H., Tinsley, D. & Croskeys, C. (2002). Park Usage, Social Milieu, and Psychosocial Benefits of Park Use Reported by Older Urban Park Users from Four Ethnic Groups. *Leisure Sci.*, 24, 199-218

Vos, E. D. (2005). *Public Parks in Ghent's City Life: from Expression to Emancipation?*, *European Planning Studies*, 13(7), October

Wilbur, J., Chandler, P., Dancy, B., Choi, J. & Plonczynski, D. (2002) Environmental, Policy, and Cultural Factors related to Physical Activity in Urban, African American Women, *Women Health*, 36, 17-28