EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PARKS OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING THE GENDER EQUALITY IN CITIES CASE STUDY: MADAR PARK OF WOMEN IN THEHRAN 15th MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, masculine urban planning and urban undesirable environments has reduced the women’s share of the public spaces and this has led to a type of inequality in the society. This research aims to study the performance of the parks of women in promoting gender equality (as a subcategory of the social equality) in Iranian cities in general and the case of Madar Park of Women locating in Tehran 15th municipal district in particular. Methodology of the research is evaluative-correlative based on questionnaire, whose data has been analyzed in SPSS software (factor analysis, Spearman’s correlation coefficient test, and Friedman’s test). Moreover, we have used Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine the priority and weigh of the chosen criteria. The results show that the most important factors of gender equality for the women are the access, freedom of presence, and security; and there is a significant relation between these factors and the performance of the parks of women (PWs). Besides, we found that the most important sub-factors are the type of coverage, readability, and the rate of crime and obtrusion respectively. According to the findings of this research, the establishment and development of environmentally attractive PWs is effective on the increased share and presence of the women in the urban spaces and social interactions because they can create a suitable ground for women’s active leisure times and provide a feasible solution for women’s access to the gender equality, especially in Islamic countries.

KEYWORDS: Gender Equality, Parks of Women (PWs), Social Equality, Women

As the densest human settlements, the cities contain different elements, but they are generally considered as a resultant of sets of buildings and spaces. Among the available spaces, urban spaces have tied to the people and their living environment and so it plays a vital role in the citizens’ identity and their sense of peace. Despite their more facilities than ever, the new cities fail to meet this need of their residents. Nowadays, high density of the population and hyper-scaled human activities has banished the peace and security from the urban spaces. Undesirable design of the urban spaces along with the socio-cultural factors has made these spaces not only disturbing, but aggravating social damages. Many experts believe that the security of the cities depends on using the urban spaces by all gender and age groups of people; that is, age and gender differences has to be considered in the urban structures. Unsuitable urban planning and constructions affect the use of urban spaces by different groups of the society so that sometimes the lack of enough attention to the children, women, and elderly and disabled people has made them deprived of an urban healthy and proper life. In Islamic countries, due to their social and cultural limitations, the women generally fail to enjoy urban spaces. On the other hand, such spaces are mainly masculine spaces and the presence of the women in these spaces is not secure due to the physical characteristics of the spaces. In such a situation, the planning and establishing some spaces like the parks of women (PWs) can be a solution for the available problems relating to the women’s presence in urban spaces. This article tries to study the role and position of these spaces in providing gender equality in Islamic countries (regardless of the ability of such spaces in supplying the social needs of women). The article is presented in two parts: first section deals with a review on the social equality theories and the theories on the presence of women in urban spaces leading to selecting a suitable approach for this research; and in the second section, we first describe the methodology of the research and review the available literature and then we will present the results of our questionnaire-based data collection and statistical analyses. At the end of the second section, the conclusion and some suggestions will be offered.
METHODOLOGY

This research is evaluative by purpose that is a process for data collection and data analysis to come to a decision. Based on the method, this research is descriptive and specifically correlation as one of its subsets. Descriptive researches include collecting the needed data for testing the hypotheses or responding to the questions about the current state of the research subject (Khaki, 2008: 210). Moreover, the main objective of the correlation research is to specify whether there is a relation between two or more quantifiable (measurable) variables, and if yes, how strong is such a relation. The objective of a correlation study would be to establish a relation and to apply these relations in doing the predictions (ibid. 218).

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the performance of PWs in the promotion of gender equality in the cities. The subsidiary objectives of the research is to identify the most effective factors on the access to the social equality in the eyes of the women and to study the performance and role of PWs in meeting such factors. This research emphasizes on the presence of the women in urban spaces and to investigate the relevant effective social-practical factors; so this research is descriptive in nature and evaluative-correlation with regard to its method. The main approach of the research is to focus on the correlations. In other words, this approach focuses on independent and dependent variables. The strategy of the research is field-based, case study and demographic-oriented (based on Marshall and Rossman, 2007: 59). Considering the objectives of the research and its main concept (i.e. space performance and gender equality) some factors and sub-factors (independent variables) were selected in order to evaluate the performance of PWs in the promotion of the gender equality (dependent variable) (Table 1).

This research has been conducted on Madar PW in Tehran. Madar PW is the first exclusive park of women in Tehran with 27Ha area located in Tehran 15th municipal district. The park is open to women every day since 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM while its working time is reduced 1 hour in winters due to the darkness. Any type of photography and filming is forbidden there by any device including the mobile phone devices. Moreover, it is now allowed for male children upper than 7 years old to enter the park.

The target population of this research includes all women who use the park (1800 women daily) while the sample size was equal to 180 women using Cochran’s sample size formula. The sampling was administered based on random sampling method.

Prepared based on the Likert scale, the questionnaire of the research included 30 questions. Its reliability coefficient was obtained as equal to 84% based on Cronbach’s alpha coefficient that is desirable for the current research. After doing the factor analysis on the results of the questionnaires, the results were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient in SPSS software and then the Friedman test was used to rank the sub-factors. Finally, the factors and sub-factors were prioritized using Analytic Hierarchy Process in Expert Choice software.

MAIN CONCEPTS OF THE RESEARCH

Public Space

Space is the conscious perception of the environment by the human where the affection of the human activities changes it from mass to space. Although the space includes diverse and heterogeneous elements with regard to its identification, but the system of establishing those elements and their interactions which direct toward a totality, form a uniformed homogenous body which makes sense to the space and its identity. The men’s interest in the space is very long and deep. This interest comes from the human’s perception of his/her social relations for acquiring the control and governance over the incidents and events. Basically the humans make relations between his/her surrounding things/environment and themselves; i.e. the men make relationship to their physical surrounding objects things. This interaction is happened in a ground which is called space with regard to its effects on the human (rafeian, 2002).

Several researchers and experts have offered different definitions for the concept of urban public space, some of which are as follow:

- A place for the gathering of different groups with different interests and whises (Beraza, 2003)
- A place with unconditional access for all people (Habermas, 1984)
- An open accessible place (Chelkoff & Thibaud, 1992)
• A surrounded part of the city (Krier, 1979)
• Buildings, infrastructures, landscapes and land uses (Carmona, et al, 2008)
• Parts of the natural and artificial spaces the people can access easily (Rafeian, 2009)
• A place without accessibility limitations, a place for the social interactions, and controlled by a public organization in order to meet the public interests (Madanipour, 2000)
• Places that belong to the public citizens, not limited to the physical aspects of the city, and indeed finds its meaning by the presence of human and his/her activities

In this research, we consider the public urban space as a space implying the routine life of the citizens where the public can have physical and visual access to it and where the practical activities (that tie the members of society to each other) take place.

Table 1: Factors and sub-factors of the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Sub-factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space performance</td>
<td>Duration of the presence, times of presence, scale of doing social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of presence</td>
<td>Type of coverage, ease in behavior, peace, independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Ease of movement, readability, public transportation to/from the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Ability to stay, time of presence, incidence of crimes and harassments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPACE PERFORMANCE

The physical dimension of the spaces includes two aspects: how the space works, and how the urban planners can create better urban spaces. These two aspects are in turn affected by the social and visual dimensions. Social dimension refer to how the people use the space, while the visual dimension refers to the aesthetical principles.

Most theories on the application of the public space are based on observations: Jane Jacobs on the North American cities (The death and life of great American cities, 1961), John Gehl on the Scandinavian cities (Life between buildings, 1971), and William H. Whyte on New York city (Social life and the small urban spaces, 1980) are some these theorists. Of course one can add the followings to the mentioned theories: Clare Copper Marcus and Vendy Sarkissian (Housing as if people mattered), Public Space Project (How to change the surrounding environment) and A guideline for how to create successful public spaces (1999). All these theories root in the relation between the performances and the spaces. As the Public Projects of Space (PPS, 2001) states, we have to ask how the space is used in reality (Carmona, et al, 2009: 328).

Based on the results of their research and the ideas being used in planning and exploiting public spaces, Carr, et al. (1992) state that the public spaces have to be meaningful (let the people chose their strong relations between their private life and the bigger space), democratic (to respect the rights of all users and the accessibility of the spaces for all groups of people, and provide their freedom there in practice), and above all, the public spaces have to be responsible; that is, they have to be planned and manage so that they can meet the needs of the users. These spaces have to be responsible for 5 basic needs: comfort, peace, and inactive involvement in the environment, active involvement in the environment, and possibility of discovering new environments. Good spaces usually meet more than one of the mentioned needs (Carr, et al, 1992).

THEORIES ON GENDER EQUALITY

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

BLUMBERG’S THEORY

Blumberg’s theory is a Marxist one. He explains the position of women compared to men from the very initial societies to the sophisticated societies of the late 20th century. Blumberg’s gender stratification is based on the women’s control over the production tools and the amount of assigning added values to them compared to women. Such a control grants the women an economic power and this power in turn affects the political power of women, their status, and other resources of power. According to Blumberg, gender inequality exists at different levels: at the relation between the men and
women in families, local communities, and the governments (Dehnavi and Moeidfar, 2005: 61).

Blumberg believes that the economic power is formed by what he calls the scale of the reduction during which the power of women is reduced. If the men control wider realms, then the power of the women in families will be reduced. In contrary, if the women have more economic activities, they will have more power. The political impact of the women will increase with the increase of their economic power. Thus the possession of economic control over the production tools and assigning them to the women themselves is a critical condition for the women’s status in society (Turner, 1997: 233). Without the economic power, according to Blumberg, the women will have a low status and little control over the fundamental issues such as their pregnancy, marriage, divorce, pre-marriage relationships, home activities, level and type of education, freedom of movement, and ability to follow up their wants and to access the opportunities. Thus it is only through the economic power that the women can reduce the gender inequality.

**CHAFTEZ’S THEORY**

Chaftez is among those theorists who have developed their scientific explanations for the gender stratification. Most of Chaftez’s attempts have been directed toward the gender equality. Her theory includes a set of patterns and plans for illustrating two fundamental problems:

- Surviving forces in an gender unequal society
- How a stratification system can be changed

Indeed she proposes a theory about the preserve and reproduction of gender systems and a theory of change (Dehnavi and Moeidfar, 2005: 62-3).

Chaftez divides the transformation of inequality system and gender stratification into two groups: conscious and unconscious. There are several processes for the first type of gender stratification among which one can refer to the long-term changes in the resources distribution or the short-term changes in the women’s opportunities. Some variables such as the technological variables, demographical variables, economic variables, and geopolitical variables (e.g. war and immigration) can put a pressure on the gender inequality systems. Chaftez call this process as unintentional change process (Turner, 1994: 238).

Conscious change of the gender stratification includes the attempts of the elites and the women themselves. The elites of the society support the change of gender inequality for several reasons. This support could be due to the fact that the gender stratification threatens the position and statues of the elites in the society. On the other hand, gender inequality can neutralize the plans and goals of the elites; or they may support the changes of the gender stratification to obtain the women’s support in their competition to other elites of the society.

Some factors such as the industrialization (which increases the scale of non-home-based jobs), urbanism (which leads to the women’s centralization), and the development of urban middle class (whose women looks for outdoor jobs more than the women of other classes) has made the women interested in work outside the home and so the mentioned factors have increased the expectations of the women. When these expectations face some obstacles in the current stratification system and the women fail to meet their wishes, then they collectively feel the inequality. According to Chafez, this process will be accelerated when the women have a place to gather and share their experiences. On the other hand, the ideological mature of the individuals can transform the current gender definitions in the society. all these factors create a sense of relative inequality in women and can in turn lead to new motivations for changing the gender stratification system. This process is the positive result of the sense of gender inequality (ibid, 239).

**FEMINIST THEORIE**

Like many other philosophical theories that have several versions, feminist is diverse with different readings. Each of these versions of feminism is a partial answer to the woman’s problem with an exclusive viewpoint and with weaknesses and strengths in its methodology.

**LIBERAL FEMINISM**

Because so much of contemporary feminist theory defines itself in reaction against traditional liberal feminism, liberalism is as good a place as any to begin a survey of feminist thought. This perspective received its classic formulation in Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1975) and in John Stuart Mill’s “The Subjection of Women,” (1970). Its main thrust, an emphasis still felt in contemporary groups is that female subordination is rooted in a set of
customary and legal constraints that blocks women’s entrance to and success in the so-called public world. To the extent that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace. As liberal feminists see it, this discrimination against women is unfair. Women should have as much chance to succeed in the public realm as men do. Gender justice, insist liberal feminists, requires us, first, to make the rules of the game fair and, second, to make certain that none of the runners in the race for society’s goods and services is systematically disadvantaged.

MARXIST FEMINISM

Marxist and socialist feminists claim it is impossible for anyone, especially women, to achieve true freedom in a class-based society, where the wealth produced by the powerless many ends up in the hands of the powerful few. With Friedrich Engels (1972), Marxist and socialist feminists insist women’s oppression originated in the introduction of private property, an institution that obliterated whatever equality of community humans had previously enjoyed. Private ownership of the means of production by relatively few persons, originally all male, inaugurated a class system whose contemporary manifestations are corporate capitalism and imperialism. Reflection on this state of affairs suggests that capitalism itself, not just the larger social rules that privilege men over women, is the cause of women’s oppression. If all women—rather than just the “exceptional” ones—are ever to be liberated, the capitalist system must be replaced by a socialist system in which the means of production belong to everyone. No longer economically dependent on men, women will be just as free as men.

RADICAL FEMINISM

Radical feminists claim the patriarchal system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition. It cannot be reformed but only ripped out root and branch. It is not just patriarchy’s legal and political structures that must be overturned on the way to women’s liberation. Its social and cultural institutions (especially the family and organized religion) must also be uprooted.

Radical feminist literature is very wide and diverse, but a common theme in most feminist text is the masculine physiological effect on the women’s perception of themselves, their status and their functions in public and private areas. In order to avoid any confusion, we have to distinguish this feminist movement from the known anti-feminist manifest that considers the woman’s destiny and nature absolute and unchangeable. When the conservatives claim that the physiology is the human’s destiny, they mean that (1) the human is born by male or female hormones, chromosomes, and parts of body, (2) the women’s destiny has pushed a heavier duty on them in reproduction, (3) in normal conditions, the men have male psychological traits (braveness, aggressiveness, hard-working, rationality, logical reasoning, analytic reasoning, and controlling their feelings) while in the normal conditions, the women have some female psychological traits (flexibility, gentleness, humility, support, sympathy, compassion, kindness, intuition, sensitivity and selflessness), and (4) the society has to preserve this social order in order to assure that the men will remain men and the women will remain women. But despite the conservatives, radical feminist are not willing to keep such a natural or physiological order that makes the women subordinated, and they want to challenge the concept of the natural order to overcome ant negative effect of the physiology which has made them subordinated.

PSYCHOANALYSTIC FEMINISM

Sexual desire plays an important role in psychoanalytical feminism but this role emerges in very different form. For radical feminists, the sex is a central issue because the feminist’s activities are based in different areas around diverse subjects such as abortion, pregnancy adjustment, sterilization abuse, domestic violence, rape, incest, sexual harassment, prostitution, sexual enslavement of women, pornography, etc. But psychoanalytic feminists focus on Sigmund Freud’s work, looking within it for a better understanding of sexuality’s role in the oppression of women. According to Freud, in the so-called pre-Oedipal stage, all infants are symbiotically attached to their mothers, whom they perceive as omnipotent.

Psychoanalytic feminists believe that the women’s oppression has to be searched in their psyche. De Beauvoir’s Second Sex (1974) is probably the most important theoretical text in the feminist literature of the 20th century. She provides an existentialist explanation of the women’s position. She believed that the reason for the
women’s oppression is their difference or otherness. Woman is other because she is not a man. The man means the man, that is, the man is a free entity which finds its meaning in itself, and the woman means other, who has to find its meaning in relation to something else. If the woman wishes to be the object, she has to release herself from the labels that has stuck to her identity and has limited her being’ she has to go beyond the prototypes and creates herself as she is.

**APPROACHES TO WOMEN AND URBAN SPACES**

**NON-INCLUSIVENESS APPROACH**

Before the industrial revolution, there was to gender-based realms in Europe and America: the women belong to home spaces or the spaces near their settlement, while the men belong to far spaces from their home; and the places where the other people gather there (Krenichyn, 2004: 117). In other words, the men’s duty was defined in terms of the heavy works distant from their homes, and so the ideal society was planned and designed in favor of them. But after the industrial revolution the home and production were separated and two spaces were distinguished: home space and public space. The home is a place for peace, resting, love, spiritualities, without any work and activity. The women not only had to create a desirable space for the rest and relaxation of their husbands, but they had to care their husbands and children and their spiritual values. Such perceptions led to some ideologically binary concepts: private/public, home/work, man/woman, urban/rural, etc. The idea of separate spaces was both ideal and ideologically justified. Although the women were generally perceived as belong to the homes, but many of them were willing to enter public realms like the routine works. They protested the discriminations and consequently their tasks extended to include some male duties. Consequently the idea of gender separation in the spaces and activates was formed in urban planning. For example, in case of the public transportation, the economic role of the men was accepted as a role and so the planning for transportation without considering the women’s occupation and the daily responsibilities and works (Franck, 2002: 353).

**WOMEN’S INCLUSIVENESS APPROACH**

The separation of production and home, the realms of home and public spaces found new identity and personality. Since the suitable place for women is historically the home and its surrounding places, then the women were present in the public spaces more little than the men, especially when there was no need to go out for doing their routine tasks such as shopping. For example in England, the presence of the women in the streets was considered as impudence for a long time, and this is the case for the women in many contemporary Islamic countries. The involvement of the women in different jobs and occupations opened the public spaces to them, although the fear of sexual harassment and insecurity still exists (Mohammadi, 2008: 79).

With the pass of the time and the development of the concept of citizenship, political freedom and the social production of the spaces was paid more attention. Indeed the women invoked the concept of citizenship to claim for their own rights from the city. Emphasis on the spaces with different capabilities includes two main directions:

- Ask for changes in the urban planning process regarding the women’s right of expression;
- Women’s inclusiveness through creating institutionalized structures and reinforcing the gender approach in the urban governance.

Organizations of women (as half of the citizens) usually include the subjects of realm and space; so that the women stress their locational strategies in order to define new political spaces for themselves. Meanwhile, some other important issues arise among which one can refer to the movement, security, settlement, and urban services especially for those women who have been marginalized in the urban spaces (ibid. 80).

Nowadays the women challenge a very vital question: who develops the cities? This is while a very little number of the women form the architecture and urban planning communities. In 1992, a residential complex with 350 flats was built in Vienna that was very sensitive to the gender issues. The architecture of the mentioned building was a woman who built different flats, open public spaces, vital streets for the children in the mentioned residential complex. Then the female architectures that had never been considered as the elites of the city were encouraged to establish a community for the female architectures and planners. Consequently, the community was formed and the women’s wish for restore their right of inclusiveness in the city emerged as an organization. Today, several attempts are being done to form the women groups in some local governments such
as Frankfurt and Hamburg, women’s committees and associations in some other local governments such as USA and Britain, and some Especial Committees in urban governments to fight against the women’s harassment and their settlement; and in many cities, the gender planners are now the members of urban planning groups (Wekerle, 2000: 210-212).

THE ETHIC OF CARE MODEL

This model restricts the women’s use of the public spaces by the caring responsibilities of women and by developing the ethics of the caring duties. Simultaneously, this framework considers some facilities for women to their right of receiving more cares by others and creating some facilities for them to be cared with regard to their use of the public spaces. The principles of the ethic is indeed a model ethical and spiritual development in which the ethical and necessary needs of the women are considered in relation with their need for stable care and communication. In behavioral-environmental studies one can find several caring-ethical principles referring to the women’s limitations in the public spaces. This model points to the positive aspects of the women’s communications in the public spaces and suggests new opportunities for increasing the welfare in such spaces. In fact, the ethic of care model is a source for expressing the women’s limitation in using public spaces focusing on two dimensions: preference, and fear of the crime (Day, 2000: 103-105).

The principles of ethic of care are considered both as a limitation and as a possibility for women to use public urban spaces. The mentioned limitation contains some characteristics that cause a gap between the women’s activity in public spaces, their experiences, and their satisfaction with using the public spaces. These issues can be summarized in 4 groups: limitation of resources (time, financial resources, movement, social interaction, services, and opportunities); restrictive feelings (fears and concerns); restrictive duties (working at home and caring the children); and restrictive social norms (gender norms, unfair social conditions, and unfair and unsuitable planning of the spaces) (ibid. 106-107).

By contrast, the facilities of the model include all ways of helping women in their activities and experiences with regard to the public urban spaces. Being cared by the friends, being cared by the family, being cared by the strangers, self-caring, being cared by the public spaces, and being cared as base for ideal feminist environment are some dimensions of the model that emphasize the facilities of the women in using public spaces (ibid. 106-107).

A point to be mentioned in this research is that since the idea of establishing parks of women is based on the gender separation of the spaces in Islamic countries and cities, so we have to stress that such an idea is not compatible with the American and European social equality theorists (both in public and global aspects). Indeed it may be the case that no non-Muslim feminist accept the gender separation for fulfilling the social equality (in using urban public spaces) but when the target society is a Muslim semi-traditional society (like Iran) then the case will be very different from whatever the western feminists think.

Although the idea of establishing PWs may not be an ideal solution for fulfilling the social equality in the cities, but considering the current conditions of the Islamic cities, such spaces can emphasize on the ethical principles of caring, the increase of the optional activities of women in some free spaces without the concern of the men’s presence (for example without the concern about their coverage and the fear of physical and verbal harassment), their increases use of the urban spaces, and so the increase of the gender equality in Islamic cities.

FINDING OF THE RESEARCH

In factor analysis of this research, we used the analysis of main components, i.e. space performance, accessibility, freedom of presence, security, and gender equality in order to estimate the correlation matrix. This method is a technic for determining the dimensions of the assessment and fundamental concepts of different scales.

Moreover, the factors were rotated by Varimax method. Based on KMO and Bartlett’s test, the significance level was obtained equal to 0.000, and since this value is lower that the error level (i.e. 0.05), thus the data were suitable for factor analysis test. Moreover, the early estimations of the level of similarity of each question to the factors are provided. Since the early estimations of the similarity level of each question to the five factors was equal to 1 and the explained variance ratio was higher than 0.3, we conclude that all questions have the highest level of correlation with the factors.

Factor analysis showed that the Eigenvalues of the five factors has the highest level in the Scree Chart of
the Eigenvalues and thus the five mentioned factors are the most important ones.

In order to test the hypotheses of the research on the basis of the statistical results, each hypothesis was divided into three sub-hypotheses. Since in the first hypothesis, the accessibility, freedom of presence, and security was the most important and effective factors on achieving the gender equality in the eyes of the women, thus in three sub-hypotheses, the significant relation between the three mentioned factors (i.e. accessibility, freedom of presence, and security) and the gender equality. In these sub-hypotheses, $H_0$ implies the lack of significant relation and $H_1$ implies the significant relation. Based on the results of Pearson test, since the significance level (on the basis of Pearson correlation coefficient) is less than 0.05, for all three sub-hypotheses $H_0$ was rejected and $H_1$ was confirmed (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Err.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Confirmed hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility and gender equality</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of presence and gender equality</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and gender equality</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Results of Pearson test for sub-hypotheses of the first hypothesis

Considering the confirmation of the above-mentioned sub-hypotheses we can claim that the main hypothesis of the research is confirmed; that is, the accessibility, freedom of presence, and security are the most important factors in achieving gender equality for women.

The same test was conducted for the second hypothesis relating to the performance of PWs in providing the most important factors of achieving gender equality for women. In this regard, three sub-hypotheses were defined implying the significant relation between accessibility, freedom of presence, and security on one hand and the performance of the PWs on the other hand. Similarly, the confirmation of $H_1$ implied the significant relation between the mentioned three sub-hypotheses and the performance of the parks of women. Since these sub-hypotheses are confirmed, so the second main hypothesis of the research is confirmed as well (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Err.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Confirmed hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance of the park and the accessibility</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of the park and the freedom of presence</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of the park and the Security</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>$H_1$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Results of Pearson test for sub-hypotheses of the second hypothesis

After confirming the hypotheses, we used Friedman test to determine whether the effective factors of achieving gender equality are equally important. Friedman test is used when the statistical data are ordinal and we can arrange them in a two-way ranking. In this analysis, $H_0$ implies that the criteria are equally important while $H_1$ implies that the criteria are not equally important in the opinion of the respondents. Based on the results of this test we found that the scale of the $X^2$ statistic is equal to 2119.89 with freedom degree 8 and significance level of 0.000. Since the significance level is lower that the first-type error level at 0.05, thus the equal importance of the ranking of factors of achieving gender equality ($H_0$) is rejected and the factors are not equally important. Most important factors related to the type of coverage (average rank 8.45), independence (average rank 6.60), readability (average rank 4.95), ease of behavior (average rank 4.92), Ability to stay (average rank 1.69) and the time of presence (average rank 1.31) respectively.

In the final step, after building the Analytic Hierarchical Process (AHP) model in Expert Choice
software and entering the pair comparisons matrixes, we obtained the weight of the factors and sub-factors according to which, the factor of freedom of presence was the most important factor with 54% relative weight following by the factor of accessibility with 30% relative weight. Moreover, the incompatibility rate of the pair comparisons was obtained as equal to 0.06 and since this value is lower than 0.1, thus the compatibility of these comparisons is acceptable.

Considering the factor of freedom of presence, the type of coverage (with the weight 0.423) obtained the highest priority higher than the factors of the peace, independence, and ease of behavior respectively (the rate of pair comparisons incompatibility: 0.004).

Considering the accessibility factor, the readability sub-factor with 0.669 and 0.256 weights had the highest rate of importance compared to other two sub-factors, i.e. the ease of movement and the accessibility to public transportation in the park respectively (the rate of pair comparisons incompatibility: 0.008). Among the sub-factors of the security, incidence of crimes and harassments with 0.553 had the highest priority compared to the time of presence and the ability to stay respectively (the rate of pair comparisons incompatibility: 0.007).

**CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Parks are subsets of the urban public spaces and they are places for the routine daily activities. These places are more important than many other public urban spaces for their recreational facilities that are offered for different age groups of the society. Among the different social groups, the women, especially those household women who cannot usually attend in urban spaces will need some public spaces with desirable and suitable cultural and normal characteristics. In other words, the presence of the women in urban public spaces is usually restricted and their right of citizenship is reduced due to the unsuitability of the public spaces and the lack of security there. Compared to the facilities provided for the men in the cities, it seems that the women are suffered from inequality just for their gender.

Urban public spaces are places for meeting the public needs in the cities. Regardless of their optional or obligatory activities, these spaces are considered as a place for the social events as well. Historically, the architecture and urban planning are considered as male activities and up to 1970s the urban planning was somehow blind to women. In other words, the women’s use of these spaces was very limited if not impossible. Afterwards, the women claimed spaces for their ordinary life as part of their right (as a feminist claim). Interestingly, the effect of the public urban spaces on women is higher than the men due to their closer and more relation with such environments. Thus, regardless of their general functions for all citizens, the public urban spaces are very important for their effects on the women. If the use of such spaces is a subject of gender discrimination, then we social equality and gender equality have to be challenged. In the countries as Iran where the women are legally and religiously face more social and cultural limitations the problem of public urban spaces is even more important. Indeed the Iranian women face several obstacles and restrictive factors for using public urban spaces. Considering the conditions governing the Iranian society, it seems that the creation of some urban spaces such as the parks of women can provide a ground for the women’s presence in the society and help them establish a type of gender equality in Islamic cities. This research intended to find whether the establishment of the parks of women as an urban space can be effective on the promotion of gender equality in the cities. As a case study we focused on Madar Park of Women locating in Tehran 15th municipal district. In this regard, first we assessed three factors (access, freedom of presence, and security) as the main important factors for achieving gender equality for women, and then based on the statistical analyses of the questionnaires (filled by the women who have referred to this park) our hypotheses were confirmed. Then similarly we assessed the performance of the parks of women in meeting the mentioned factors and we obtained positive result. In other words, we can claim that the parks of women can be a solution for promoting the gender equality in Islamic cities with regard to the current conditions of such societies (emphasizing on the normal and cultural- not religious- limitations).

With regard to the main objective of this research that is to study the performance of PWs as a urban space in the promotion of the gender equality in the cities, and with regard to the theoretical foundation of the research, available literature, research factors, and the results of our statistical analyses, the following solutions are suggested for reinforcing PWs in order to promote the gender equality in the cities:
a. Solutions for strengthening the factors of the freedom of presence:
- Providing sport and recreational facilities
- Reinforcing the women’s participation in the development and improvement of the park
- Establishing some centers for the women’s exclusive activities outside the homes, especially for the household women (such as the charitable markets)
- Creating suitable herbal coverage and landscape in order to increase the peace of the space
- Informing the women about the necessity of their presence in the social interactions taking place in urban spaces such as the parks of women
- Reinforcing the women’s sense of belonging to place in the parks
- Improving the physical qualities of the space in order to encourage the women to attend in the parks
- Installing desirable surrounding walls in the park space in order to reinforce the sense of reclusiveness in the space
- Creating a space for the groups of women in the park

b. Solutions for strengthening the factors of the accessibility
- Providing easy access to the space of the taxi or public bus lines
- Providing the facilities for easy and unhindered passage of the children carriers
- Suitable connectivity of the path in the parks

c. Solutions for strengthening the factors of the security
- Suitable distribution of lights in the spaces, sidewalks, etc. and avoid keeping any dark parts in the parks
- Removing all visual obstacles and making the space completely visible by the women inside the parks
- Increasing the public supervision by attracting more population to the park
- Promoting the environmental security in order to increase the optional activities in the park

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