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A Comparative Study of Influential Factors Impacting Women's Activities in Traditional and Modern Neighborhood Spaces in Tehran, Iran

By Maryam Mohammadi¹ and Arezoo Rafiee²

Abstract

Neighborhood spaces are regarded as the main arenas for women's social interactions. Thus, women should be completely comfortable in these spaces. Nonetheless, some studies have indicated that women's presence and activities in such spaces are both prevented or decreased, and accordingly gendered space is established. Gendered spaces play a significant role in gender identity and roles. Thus, it is necessary to identify the factors which formed various spaces. It seems that physical factors which make spaces non-responsive for women, along with socio-cultural factors such as attitudes and social norms can influence women's activities and their presence in neighbourhood spaces. To better understand this phenomenon, this paper reports on a study of two neighborhoods in Tehran, Iran: Imamzadeh Yahya, which is governed by dominant religious norms and the Zargandeh neighbourhood, where modern, non-traditional norms dominate. In order to evaluate physical and social factors, observations and semi-structured interviews were employed. First, the researchers recorded the type of women's activities and presence in formal, public streets in the selected neighborhoods throughout the day, in the morning, afternoon and evening. Collected data were analyzed data using qualitative methods. Subsequently, 20 women's personal narratives from each neighborhood were collected and analyzed. The results indicated that both physical and socio-cultural factors play a significant role in the times of women's presences, the types of activities they engaged in and specific places where women gathered. In addition, observations indicated that the expression of social norms about gender identity prevented women from gathering in the neighborhoods in traditional spaces. In Imamzadeh, the presence of men who accepted traditional women's roles such as motherhood lead to a decrease in women's presence. However, the reverse results were obtained in the modern space.

Keywords: Iranian women, gendered spaces, traditional neighborhoods, modern neighbourhoods, urban spaces, Teheran.

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Introduction

Public spheres are the domains which allow individuals to congregate and engage in face-to-face encounters and interactions. Urban spaces are designed to meet social communication needs as spaces sustain people both mentally and emotionally, providing some opportunities for face-to-face interactions. All human beings should have access to such opportunities in urban societies, irrespective of their differences such as gender, age, race, or ethnicity. Thus, urban spaces should be regarded as places where women can see others, be seen, and establish social interactions with other people living in their neighborhoods. Women should not be prohibited from the right of their presence and engaging in activities in public spaces. In contemporary Teheran, women are not such beneficiaries on par with men. Therefore, the main objective of the current research was identify those factors which play a role in increasing or decreasing women's presence in their neighborhoods, and to compare and contrast both a traditional and modern neighbourhood.

In general, the nature of physical features of neighborhoods, combined with social norms, are regarded as two influential factors which limit the presence and women's activities in such spaces. Thus, in the present study, the main hypothesis is that the women's behaviors in traditional and modern spaces can be greatly affected by socio-cultural and physical patterns, which contribute to the construction of gender identities and roles. In order to test the hypothesis, a brief overview of the related theoretical foundations including, those factors which limit and encourage women's activities is discussed. The case studies follow, outlining the influential factors defining women's presence or absence in the two neighborhoods.

Review of related literature

Marginalization of Women in Urban Spaces

The term "marginalized people" largely refers to the dynamics between two categories of social analysis: the centre and the margins. The former is related to domination, privilege, and power, while the latter is associated with partial disability. Marginalization means being placed in a position of marginal importance so that the individual occupying such a status is deprived of the privilege and sources of power obtained from occupying the centre. The centre and the margins exist for categories of identity including gender, culture, language, race, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, socio-economic status or class, and geographic location. According to Badshah (1996), marginalized communities include women occupying an informal sector, both in terms of the economy and social spaces.

Gendered Space and its impact on Gender Inequality

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, feminists addressing women's spatial marginalization have sought the inclusion of feminist planners and geographers in designing urban spaces. In the 1990s feminist geographers such as Massey (1994), Rose (1993), Spain (1992), Lindmann (1996), and others analysed the concept of gendered spaces adopting critical cultural perspectives, in the field of geographical science. Gendered space is formed as the results of the limited access of women to space and their limited presence within in spaces where they are permitted (Brady, 2005: 158; Wellman, 2009). Women's feelings of insecurity have been stressed, as the result of the male gaze control over women's bodies (Rose, 1993). Gendered space is influenced by several factors such as power relations, discourses of patriarchal expectations (Cuthbert, 2006), priority given to men's needs and requirements, the plurality of male architects and policymakers (Nes & My Nguyen, 2009: 2) and historical attention to social roles (Rendell, Penner & Borden, 2000), as

contributing factors to gender inequality. For example, the impact of gendered space on gender inequality has been discussed by Rendell et al. (2000), who has argued that the relation between gender and power in social, cultural and spatial dimensions leads to the production of gendered space. In addition, spatial relations plays a significant role in forming the concept of gender, leading to the emergence of gendered inequality. According to Cuthbert (2006), the structure of a city is based on patriarchal expectations, and gender inequality is associated with the social status of users in work and society. Palen (2008) has asserted that historical attention to women's and men's differences, rather than similarities, has contributed to the production of gendered spaces and gender inequality. Wellman (2009) has examined the contribution of historical and traditional attitudes toward gendered spaces, rendering public spaces as masculine and private spaces as feminine. In addition, according to Castells (2003), men's economic superiority over women influences gender and social inequality in public spaces.

Influential Factors on the Production of Gendered Spaces: Factors Limiting Women's Presence

According to Kristen Day (2000), gendered space limitations can be divided into four main categories including 1) resource limitations such as financial constraints; 2) negative emotions such as stress and fear; 3) the role of inhibiting responsibilities such as housework and child care; and 4) social constraints and cultural norms (Day, 2000). Garcia et al. (2004) concur, emphasizing time limitations imposed by domestic work requirements.

Regarding the experiences in Iran and Islamic countries, Ali Naghiyan (2016) identified three factors which may influence the reduction of women's presence in Tehran, Iran including men's control over women's bodies and high safety risks on public streets. In another study conducted by Tehran Municipality (2015), several factors were identified, including ignoring women's needs in urban planning, applying zoning laws in the city preventing women from creating a balance between household responsibilities and their personal interests; inattention to the special facilities for children; feelings of insecurity in urban spaces; and ignoring women's public transportation needs.

Above all, the design of spaces based on men's needs rather than women's, women's roles as wives, and their low participation in socio-political activities are considered to be the primary reasons why women are not inclined to join public spaces in some Islamic countries (Shokouhi, 2015: 91).

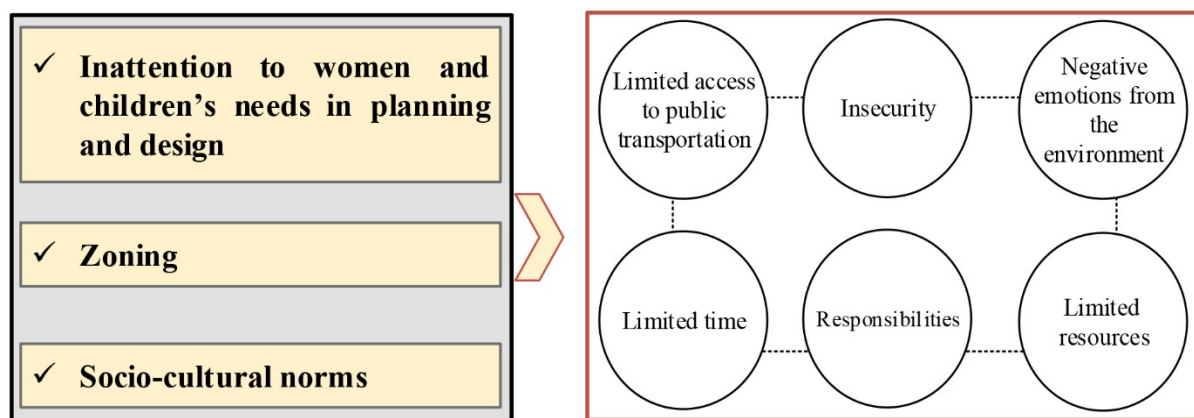


Figure 1. Factors limiting the women's presence in urban spaces

Factors affecting the Production of Womanly Space: Encouraging Presence Factors

Some factors encouraging women's presence in urban spaces include the existence of enclosed spaces, attention to women's comfort and peace of mind and the reputation of the space reputation (Khosla, 2006). Other factors include a sense of belonging to the environment; the environmental responsiveness to women's needs; feelings of being a valuable member of society; scale, size, access, safety, and security of spaces; mixed land use patterns; and the presence of others in the space (Toronto City Planning, 2011). Figure 2 illustrates the factors encouraging women's presence in urban spaces.

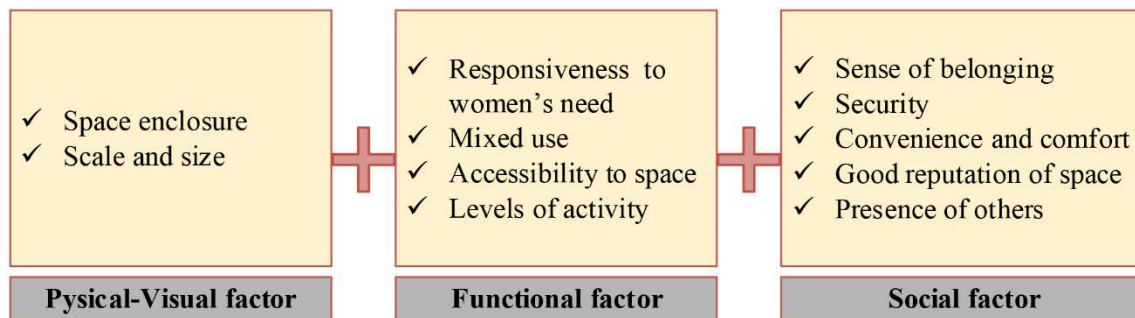


Figure 2. Factors encouraging the women's presence in urban spaces

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on the definition of gendered space and productive criteria of this space, Table 1 displays the indicators related to gendered space. This space is measurable through the rate of women's presence and the types of activities, as the dependent variables. Physical and socio-cultural factors which can create "womanly spaces" are considered as the independent variables. In addition, the indicators and sub-indicators related to physical and social factors are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors and Indicators Related to Responsive Space among Women

Variable	Indicators		
Independent variable	The amount of presence and necessary, optional and social women's activities		
Dependent variable	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Result
Physical factors	Visual dimensions	Landscape and Vegetation/ desirable facade	Gendered space, womanly space Gender inequality, Gender equality Traditional female identity, modern female identity
	Functional dimensions	Space enclosure / Size of Space /Access to space / Mixed land use/ services and amenities	
Socio-cultural factors	Social dimensions	Suitable and responsive public spaces for women. peace, security, sense of belonging, presence of other	

		women, presence of other groups	
	Cultural Dimensions	Men's judgment, family prevention in attending in public space, housework and home responsibilities.	

Case Studies

In order to collect the related data, two neighborhood spaces in Tehran were selected for a comparative study. Neighborhood space was selected above other forms of space, because it is the first space where women conduct their daily activities. To this aim, *Imamzadeh Yahya neighbourhood*, reflecting a traditional and organic texture and *Zargandeh* with a modern and semi-checked texture were selected as the case study. It is worth noting two structural streets in both areas were chosen as the main place for assessing the behavioral patterns of women, including *Imamzadeh Yahya Street* in the traditional neighborhood and *Zafar* and *Dastgerdi Street* in the modern district.

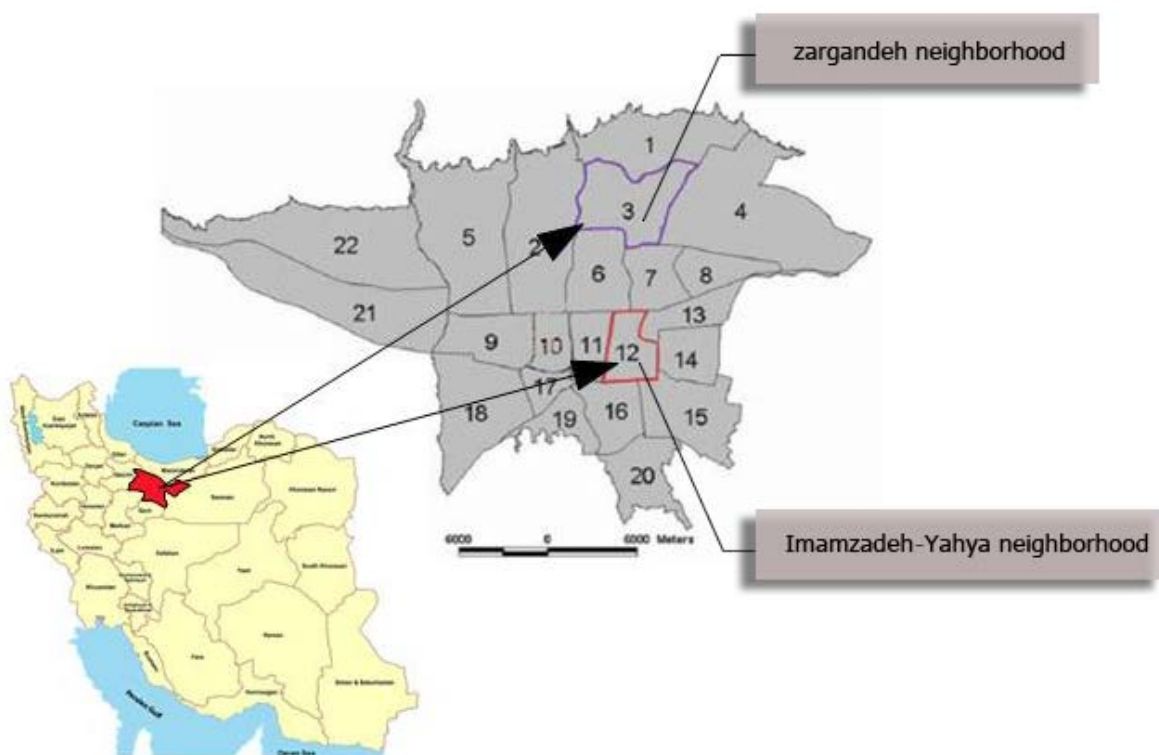


Figure 3. Location of two neighborhoods in Tehran, Iran

Imamzadeh Yahya Street: A Traditional Case

Imamzadeh Yahya Street is a structural north-south street located in District 12 of Tehran Municipality, including most of the major services, a neighborhood centre and small shops, and public open spaces, as the main elements or features of this texture. These elements meet daily requirements, such as the Imamzadeh Yahya shrine and the 900-year old tree, as the oldest plantain

tree in Tehran, leading to the presence of indigenous inhabitants and sometimes non-indigenous users. Due to the impermeability of the local context, the street has some qualities such as traffic safety. However, the noise of motorcyclists on the street occasionally prevents the comfort of the residents, especially women. Unsuitable sidewalks for women are regarded as another problem in this regard. Narrow side streets result in creating feelings of insecurity among women. In terms of its visual quality, spatial and physical inconsistencies can be observed in the street, such as weak lighting, leading to the reduced presence of women at night. The street lacks suitable flooring for pregnant women and women with baby carriages, as well as benches for resting.

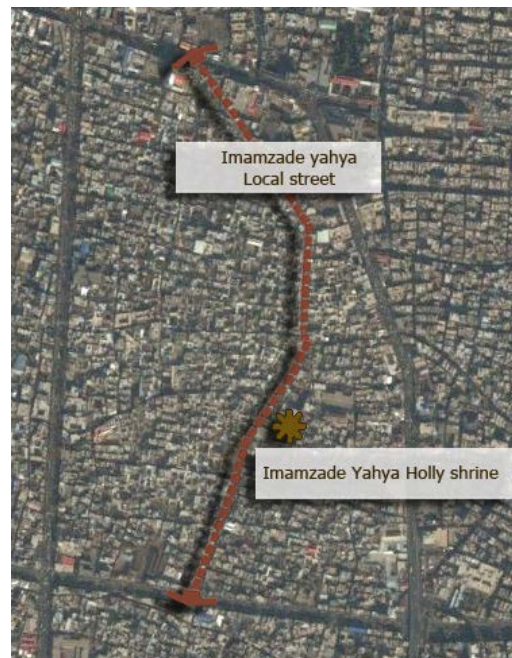


Figure 4. Location of Imamzadeh Yahya Street



Figure 5. Images of Imamzadeh Yahya Street

Dastgerdi (Zafar) Street in Zargandeh Neighborhood: A Modern Case

This neighborhood is located in the northern part of Tehran in District 3. As a structural street, Shahid Vahid Dastgerdi (Zafar) Street is an important part of this district with regional land uses, so that the high volume of medical-administrative buildings leads to the presence of non-residents in the space in the intermediate parts of this axis. On the other hand, small daily activities lead to the presence of residents, especially women throughout the day. Tall and green trees along

the axis, give the environment a sense of freshness and vitality. In terms of the network hierarchy, Dastgerdi Street, as a collector street, carries a high volume of traffic from Shariati Street to Madras Highway and the local streets. The lack of pedestrian safety can be observed while walking on Zargandeh Street. The attractive and high-quality materials used on the façades of new buildings can be considered as an advantage for enhancing the level of physical quality of Dastgerdi Street, compared to the entire neighborhood.

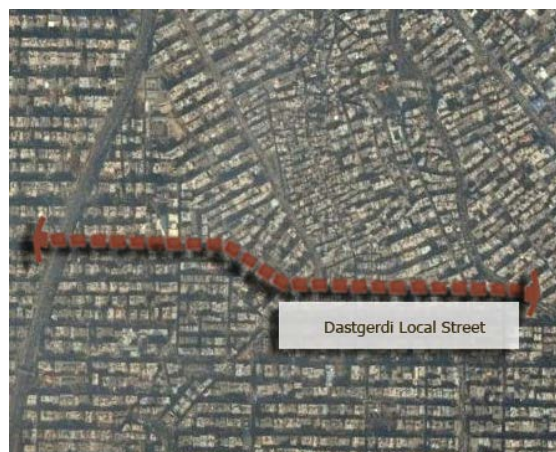


Figure 6. Location of Dastgerdi Street



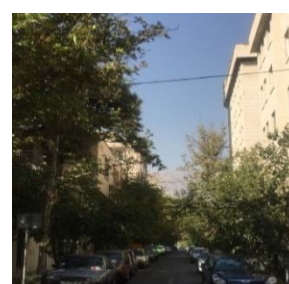
▪ Omrani street



▪ Guyabadi street



▪ Aghazadeh street



▪ Ladan street



▪ Tabrizian street



▪ Shams Tabrizi street



▪ Kazerun street



▪ Nesa street

Figure 7. Views from the junction of Zafar Street and the side streets

Methodology

Zeisel (1984) describes five methods in his book *Inquiry by Design: Tools for Environment-Behavior Research*, such as observing physical traces and environmental behavior, focus interviews, standardized questionnaires, and archival analysis (Wen & Chang, 2014:45).

Undoubtedly, several methods are preferred to examine women as the target group. Further, since women's behaviors are affected by contexts such as socio-cultural factors, in addition to physical factors, i.e. the traditional and modern nature of neighborhoods, Table 3 displays the most desirable methods of examining women's behaviors in neighborhood types.

Table 3. The effect of different methods for studying women's behaviors in traditional and modern neighborhoods

Method	Traditional Neighborhood	Modern Neighborhood
Observation	In these neighborhoods, direct observation may lead to changes in behavior, due to the prevalence of conservative socio-cultural norms. Thus, the method of tracking and recording behaviors is taken into consideration.	In these neighborhoods, due to the prevalence of modern approaches and the acceptance of women's presence in spaces, observation has less impact on behavior.
Interview	Deep and semi-structured interviews seem to be more logical because structured interviews fail to reveal the hidden aspects of women's lives.	Interviews of three types are desirable: deep, semi-structured and structured. However, the deep interview technique provides better information for researchers.

Thus, in order to collect data for the selected case study, an analytical survey research method was employed. In addition, the field survey was used through observations and interviews. First, the data on the two structural streets in the selected neighborhoods were recorded to identify the activities on April and May 2016 for seven days (four consecutive Tuesdays and three consecutive Fridays) through observations. Since the activities were different from morning to evening, three intervals including morning (8-10), afternoon (13-15) and early evening (18-20) were selected. After the data collection, the activities identified were analyzed in the two districts.

The researchers used interviews in order to validate the observed data. The semi-structured interview method was preferred to the questionnaire method. To this end, twenty female residents over 20 years were interviewed in each space. In order to explore the respondents' perspectives, respondents were asked questions about the type of activities in the area, leisure time activities, attractive features of the environment, and the factors reducing women's presence and activities. The interviews were analyzed using a contextual framework and subsequently quantified.

Analyzing Women's Behavior Patterns and Activities in the Case Studies

Women's behavior patterns in the selected spaces were analyzed based on *observations* in order to identify women's activities in both streets at different hours of the day, and *interviews*, to identify the types of activities and the causes for women's presence or lack of presence. Figure 8 outlines the process of data collection

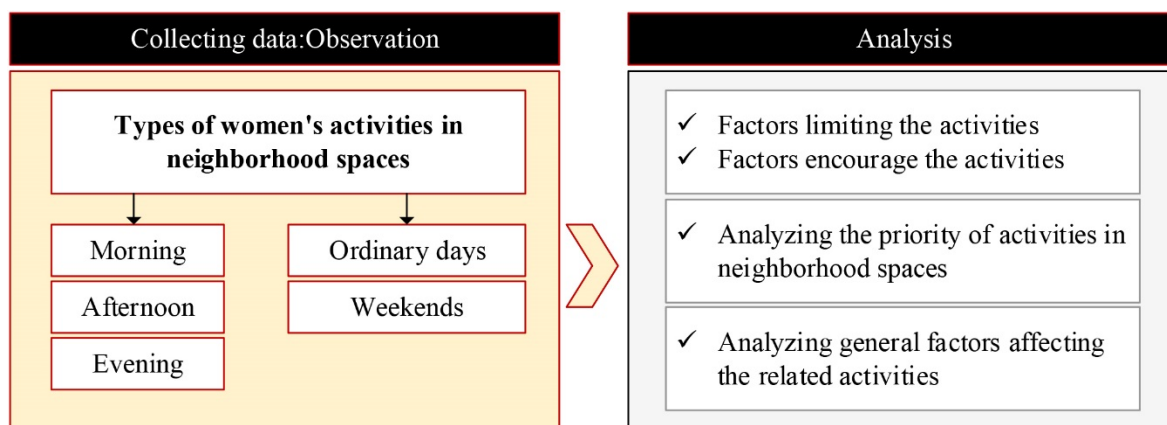


Figure 8. Process of collecting and analyzing the data

Table 4. Assessing women's behavior patterns in the two structural streets

Context			Modern Neighborhood	Traditional Neighborhood
			Dastgerdi Street in Zargandeh	Imamzadeh Yahya Street in Imamzadeh Yahya
Observing Women's Behavior Patterns	Ordinary days	– The interval 8-10 am	– This interval is used by women for necessary activities such as daily shopping, taking and bringing children to nursery school, withdrawing or depositing cash at the ATM, doing administrative and medical tasks, and by some women to perform optional activities like walking, standing, and talking.	– Mid-week mornings account for the highest percentage of women's presence for daily shopping and necessary activities. – The holy shrine of Imamzadeh Yahya is the most important element in encouraging women's participation in optional activities (worship), which is mainly performed by resident and non-resident women at the initial Interval.
		– The interval 13-15	– Gathering women talking in front of nursery school, in groups of 2 or 3. – The least presence of women can be observed at this interval.	– The lowest presence of women can be observed in the street.
		– The interval 18-20	– There is a stronger presence of women among the groups of several people, and one can see different activities in the street such as walking, strolling, and meeting friends, walking with dogs, and standing in front of restaurants and cafes.	– The levels of necessary activities (shopping) increase at noon, sometimes along with some social activities such as meeting neighbors and friends in the neighborhood. At this interval, increasing numbers of women gather in Imamzadeh Yahya and its surroundings, due to the presence of street vendors around the Imamzadeh.
	Weekends	– The interval 8-10 am	– At morning intervals, women are much less present in the middle of the week and necessary activities (daily shopping) are performed by residents using personal vehicles or on foot.	– At morning intervals, women are only present in the local street for necessary activities such as purchasing needs which are done even to a lesser extent in the middle of the week.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The interval 13-15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Activities at noon are at their lowest rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduced number of necessary activities such as purchasing needs in the local street at morning intervals; – Women are present in the courtyard and inside of Imamzadeh Yahya
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The interval 18-20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Levels of optional activities increase on Friday evenings, and the presence of women socializing with others can be seen in front of shops and restaurants. One can see the most durable presence of women at this time because they are present along with the friends and family in these spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The busiest hours of the day, the presence of women socializing with others is observed in the courtyard and inside of Imamzadeh Yahya.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Factors encouraging the presence of women 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Small commercial land use; – Land uses relate to women's needs, women's clothing stores, restaurants, and so on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Physical element of Imamzadeh Yahya; – The non-local women attracted by Imamzadeh Yahya leading to the presence of women; – The existence of small commercial land uses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Factors limiting the presence of women 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of a sense of security and fear of stealing bags. – Lack of a sense of safety, due to heavy traffic at evening intervals – weak lighting at night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The square is a gathering place for men, especially in the evening and night when there is a low presence of women. – Weak lighting at night – The presence of addicts in the neighborhood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Types of activities in the space in order of priority 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shopping, walking alone and standing – A smaller percentage of women are engaged in activities such as sitting, walking, chatting and roaming. – There is a balance between necessary and optional activities of women during the day. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Going to the Imamzadeh, shopping, walking alone, standing, eating and drinking. – A small number of women are engaged in social and optional activities such as roaming in Groups of two people, talking, and sitting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Causes for activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mixed land use and the existence of land use related to women's needs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mixed land use and the existence of land uses related to women's needs

Based on the results, women are present in the local street only at morning intervals in the traditional neighborhood, either in the middle of the week or on the weekend, for doing necessary activities such as shopping, walking alone, standing, eating and drinking, respectively. However, the strong presence of women going to the Imamzadeh cannot be ignored at all-time intervals. As shown in Table 4, Imamzadeh Yahya was identified as the single most important element in encouraging women to do an activity on the local street.

Like the traditional district, in the modern district, women participate in activities on the modern structural street at morning intervals for necessary activities such as shopping, walking alone, and standing. Based on the observations, the optional activities increase at evening intervals

in front of shops; and restaurants. Therefore, there is a balance between the necessary and optional activities in the modern neighborhood during the day.

Interviewing Women

In this section, the type of behaviors and places of women's activities are first defined through semi-structured interview (20 women in each space). Then, physical and contextual factors which influence the women's behavior are analyzed (Figure 9).

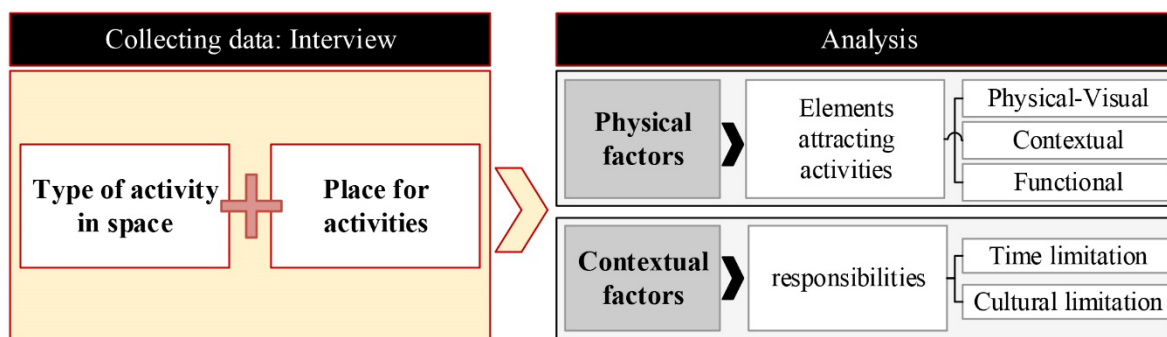


Figure 9. Process of collecting and analyzing interviews

Different Types of Outdoor Activities and their Locations

Interviews began using the semi-structured techniques to define the factors influencing women's activities, and general questions were asked about the types of activities, women's leisure time, the factors attracting women to the environment, and the factors decreasing their presence and activities (as the main concern of this study). Subsequent codification of the data provides the opportunity to compare the differences in these neighborhoods (Table 5).

Table 5. Defining different types of women's outdoor activities and the spaces for spending leisure time

Context			Modern neighborhood Dastgerdi Street	Traditional neighborhood Imamzadeh Yahya Street
Type of activity	Necessary Activity	Daily shopping	80%	75%
		Work	35%	5%
		Taking and bringing children to school	15%	20%
	Optional Activity	Walking	55%	20%
		Eating and drinking	10%	5%
	Social Activity	Meeting friends	30%	25%
		Spending Leisure time	30%	35%
spaces of spending	Cultural and sports centre		30%	10%
	Park		45%	35%
	Street		20%	5%
	Gathering in front of homes		5%	5%
	Shopping		35%	20%
	Imamzadeh Yahya		-	70%

	Square	-	5%
	Restaurant	5%	-

In both traditional and modern neighborhoods, over 70% of the women are present on the streets for necessary activities, and optional activities are less than those of social ones. However, compared to the traditional street, the percentage of women's optional activities such as walking, tripled in the modern local street, due to the unfavourable and poor conditions of the traditional local street and the low level of security.

Identifying the Factors Affecting Different Types of Activities and their Place

As already mentioned, the elements which increase the presence of women in neighborhoods are divided into two physical and contextual categories. According to residents and non-resident women, Imamzadeh is an important element in encouraging women to be present in a local street in the traditional area, based on the observational analysis. In the modern local street, various types of landscaping and vegetation such as trees and flowers are the most important elements in attracting women to the environment, because the street is a beautiful green corridor with old trees. However, regarding both traditional and modern neighborhoods, the presence of different groups in the streets is regarded as the factor encouraging women to be present in the local street.

Table 6. Elements attracting women to the environment

Types of elements	Elements	Modern neighborhood Dastgerdi Street		Traditional neighborhood Imamzadeh Yahya Street	
		Percentage	Priority	Percentage	Priority
Physical-Visual	Facades	15%	4	20%	3
	Vegetation and landscape	50%	1	20%	4
	Bagh-e-Pesteh Bak Square in Imamzadeh Yahya	-	-	5%	6
Contextual	The presence of others	30%	3	25%	2
	Imamzadeh Yahya	-	-	60%	1
Functional	Stores	40%	2	20%	5
	Restaurant	15%	5	-	-

Contextual Factors Affecting Women's Presence and Activities

Based on the results of observational analysis, women are often present in the traditional and modern streets for necessary activities. The interview survey indicated that more than 50% of women are engaged with necessary task-level activities such as housework and daily shopping. However, in the modern neighborhood, women tend to work more outside the home than those in the traditional neighborhood. Women in both traditional and modern districts believe that housework is the most important assigned responsibility and accordingly it is considered as a major factor in limiting their presence in outdoor spaces. Regarding the women in Imamzadeh Yahya neighborhood, men are considered as an obstacle for women to be on the street. However, the

opposite is true in the Zargandeh neighborhood. In the modern space, home responsibilities were observed as the most important factor limiting the presence of women on the street. Fear and tension were identified as an important factor on the traditional street, due to the presence of the addicts and thugs in the neighborhood. Finally, the root of every limiting factor lies in the fear of being judged by others due to social norms, which represent the prevailing traditional ideas in the society in the traditional neighborhood.

Table 7. Responsibilities and constraints affecting women's presence

Responsibilities and constraints			Modern neighborhood Dastgerdi Street		Traditional neighborhood Imamzadeh Yahya Street	
			Percentage	Priority	Percentage	Priority
Responsibilities	Housework		70%	1	60%	1
	Working outside		80%	3	25%	3
	Daily shopping		65%	2	60%	2
	Child and patient care		15%	4	20%	4
	Elderly care		5%	5	5%	5
Constraints	Inhibiting responsibilities	Home responsibilities	40%	1	40%	3
		Job responsibilities	25%	3	10%	7
	Financial constraints	Financial constraints	15%	5	20%	4
	Negative emotions	Fear and tension	30%	2	40%	2
	Physical constraints	Lack of beautiful facades	15%	4	15%	6
	Social norms and obstacles	Judgment of others	5%	7	25%	4
		Presence of others (the presence of drug addicts)	-	-	20%	5
		Presence of men	10%	6	60%	1

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that women's behaviors and activities in neighborhood spaces are influenced by both physical and contextual factors. However, some differences exist between the type of women's activities, place of presence, and limiting factors between traditional and modern neighborhoods, due to the gender identity of women established in the society, which introduce them more as traditional women in a traditional neighborhood. However, it is clear that women have increased opportunities to be in public spaces in the modern neighborhood. As illustrated in Figure 10, the difference between these two neighborhoods are presented.

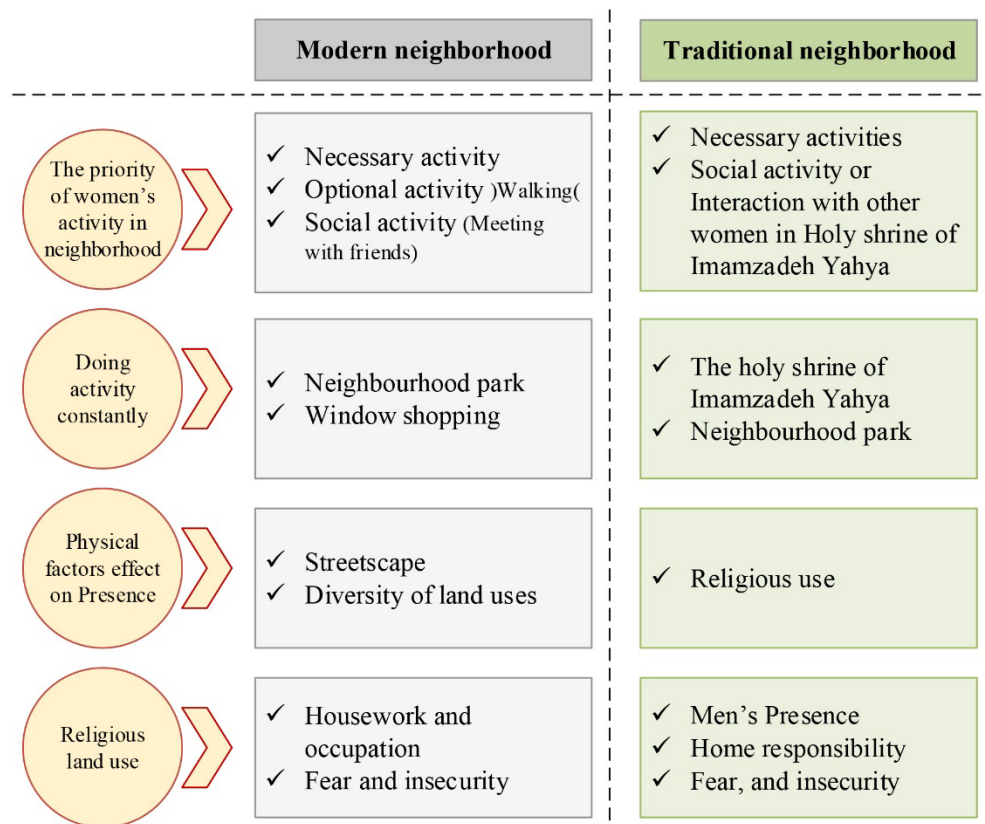


Figure 10. Difference between the types of women's activities, place, and limiting factors between traditional and modern neighborhoods

Based on the survey results, women are often present in neighborhoods for necessary activities, irrespective of any socio-cultural differences. However, there is a relative balance between women's necessary and optional activities in the modern neighborhood. The most important factors for women's activities and presence in the local street are poor physical and social conditions under the rule of religious ideas and beliefs, i.e., fear of being judged by others because they believe that the home environment (private space) belongs to them and the public spaces are related to men. Social norms are the most important factor in limiting women's presence on the traditional local street. According to 60% of women, the presence of men and young people on the local streets is an important factor preventing their attendance. However, women in the modern neighborhood do not consider men as an obstacle for their attendance on the streets.

- In addition, the results showed that the place of activities is different in both neighborhoods. Traditional women are more present at the Imamzadeh holy shrine (as a secure and womanly space), while women in modern neighborhood are more present in the park and street.
- The visual quality of the street, is considered as the most important factor for the presence of women in the modern neighborhood.
- Responsibilities and housework are considered to be the most important factors inhibiting women's presence. The women in Imamzadeh Yahya Street usually prefer to go to Imamzadeh as a gathering place, while friends' houses, restaurants, and cafes are considered as some suitable places for social interaction in Dastgerdi Street.

Interestingly, none of the two groups prefers to be present on the street as a way of spending their leisure time. Housework, the assigned responsibilities, fear and tension are the factors limiting women's presence on the two streets.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the factors affecting the strong presence and activities of women in urban spaces. A commitment to women's presence in urban spaces, ensures the notion of citizenship rights, as well as justice. Based on the present approach, urban planners, designers and policy-makers are responsible for creating spaces that address women's needs. Neighborhood spaces are undoubtedly the most important and necessary spaces for women's, where they can be present due to their responsibilities towards the groups under their care. Recommendations for improved neighbourhood spaces increasing access and comfort levels include:

- Improving mixed land uses related to women's needs to provide daily necessities;
- Creating safe spaces for women and the groups under their care in order to provide a context for social interactions;
- Increasing the quality and functional aspect of local streets such as the continuity of sidewalks, improving the flooring conditions, as well as lighting and designing unsafe corners;
- Improving the visual quality of the local street such as increasing vegetation, improving landscapes and beautifying the façades;
- Planning spaces for the presence and activities of women in order to meet their needs and develop women's capabilities;
- Highlighting those activities which increase women's participation in neighborhood affairs permitting involvement and awareness of local issues and changes affecting them;
- Raising women's awareness of their incontrovertible rights, especially in the traditional neighborhoods, as well as raising men's awareness of women's rights to move freely as equal members of society;

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