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An Analysis on Gender Sensitiveness in Urban Open Space Practice for Girls: A Case Study in Rajshahi, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Gender sensitiveness in urban planning' is considered as a concept. Gender inequalities have been observed in the field of open space practice from an early age. Urban open spaces are valued for their health, social, economic, and environmental benefits. Outdoor physical activity is important for the wellbeing of youth, while playfulness is crucial for creativity and innovation. The study explores the major reasons of deprivation of girls in respect of open spaces practice with the help of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools in Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) area. The restrictions on girls are universal and become more severe upon their accomplishing adolescence. The values of city and local parks as girl-friendly spaces (GFS) and boy-friendly spaces (BFS) have been assessed. The designs for parks and playgrounds are assessed.

Keywords: gender sensitiveness, open space practice, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), girl-friendly space (GFS), boy-friendly space (BFS)

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INTRODUCTION

Outdoor physical activity is important for the wellbeing of youth, while playfulness is crucial for creativity and innovation [1]. Parks and playgrounds are significant to daily urban life as they provide residents with places to socialize, relax, play, and undertake physical activity [2, 3]. This kind of activity includes physical characteristics and the dissemination of activities as the ways in which they are perceived [4, 5]. Open spaces may or may not include green space, children's play space, and sports facilities as typically for some combination of football, cricket, and badminton [5, 6]. Playgrounds may not necessarily have ramped play equipment. Playgrounds are designed to provide recreational opportunities for children of all ages and abilities [2, 7]. Playground features include ramped play equipment, ground level play features,

accessible swings, wheelchair-accessible tables, and drinking fountains [6, 8]. But this open space practice has also become an issue for gender inequality due to negative circumstances i.e. increasing rate of crime, child trafficking, etc. [4, 9].

METHODOLOGY

The study includes two types of data. For primary data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire was prepared and the questionnaire was developed after pilot survey [1]. The final questionnaire was developed to evaluate the causes and effects of discrimination. A simple random sampling method was used to find the respondents and 50 respondents were surveyed from different locations of Ward no-14.

The respondents were both male and female of different ages (10–18) and different

backgrounds (class of people). Primary data collection also includes PRA focus group where number of 8 participants are considered where 4 girls and 4 boys are discussed their problems. In the focus group discussion, two parents of respondents within the focus group were also interviewed.

STUDY AREA

The study is conducted in ward no.14 of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC). The study area was selected due to accessibility in all the residents and having a reliable focus group. The study area covers Upashohor Sector no. 01, 02 and 03. The area is placed between Boalia and Rajpara Thana. The area about 1.85 sq. km is in Rajpara Thana and .55 sq. km is in Boalia Thana. The total population is about 13895. The literacy rate is about 65.3% [10]. A central park Shahid Kamaruzzaman Central Park and Zoo is one of the popular public places of Rajshahi city. A wide area with lush green trees and grasses also houses of different animal species [10]. It is located on the bank of river Padma containing both regular and rare species. There are other parks in the city such as Bhubon Mohon

Park, Captain Monsur Ali park etc [11, 12]. A park which is specially designed for the children's amusement called Shahid Zia children's park, also situated near Cantonment area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describe the existing condition of open space in study area and investigate the major reasons of deprivation of girls in respect of open spaces practice with the help of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools in Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) area.

Existing Open Space

Rajshahi city is growing very fast in last few years. The open space and playground were filled up speedily in RCC area due to rapid growth of urbanization. The study areas consist of four playgrounds but Girls and boys are able to play only in the two playground. Other two playgrounds have been used for storing building construction materials which have been used to construct new buildings (Figure 1) and one playground is already fill up with soil for future building constructions activities (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

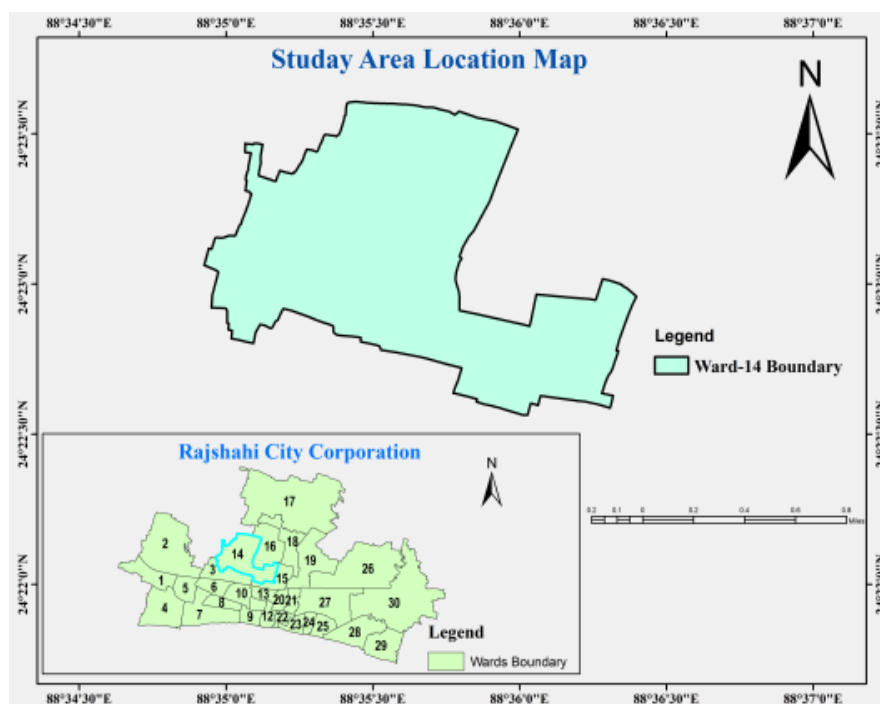


Fig. 1. Study area location map.



Fig. 2. Playground Filled with Construction Materials.



Fig. 3. Playground Fill up with Soil for Future Building Construction.

According to Government of Bangladesh (GoB) report 2004,

In our study area the total population is about 24000. So, the total amount of open space is required about 4.8 acres.

Table 1. Standard for Open Space and Playground.

Facility	Residential (62000 peoples)
Open Space and Playground	12.4

Table 2. Open Space Standard.

	Open Space	Acres/Population	Acres
	Children’s park (local park/mini park)	0.12 acres/1,000	Under 2 acres and avg. 0.25 acre
	Play field (local play area)	.0.24 acre/1,000	3–10 acres
	District Park (within city, intermediate scale)	0.25 acres /1,000	50–75 acres
	Metro Park (urban forests/ natural parks out city or on edge, large scale)	0. 25 acres /1,000	150 + acres

*DMDP Area for Each 1000 People.

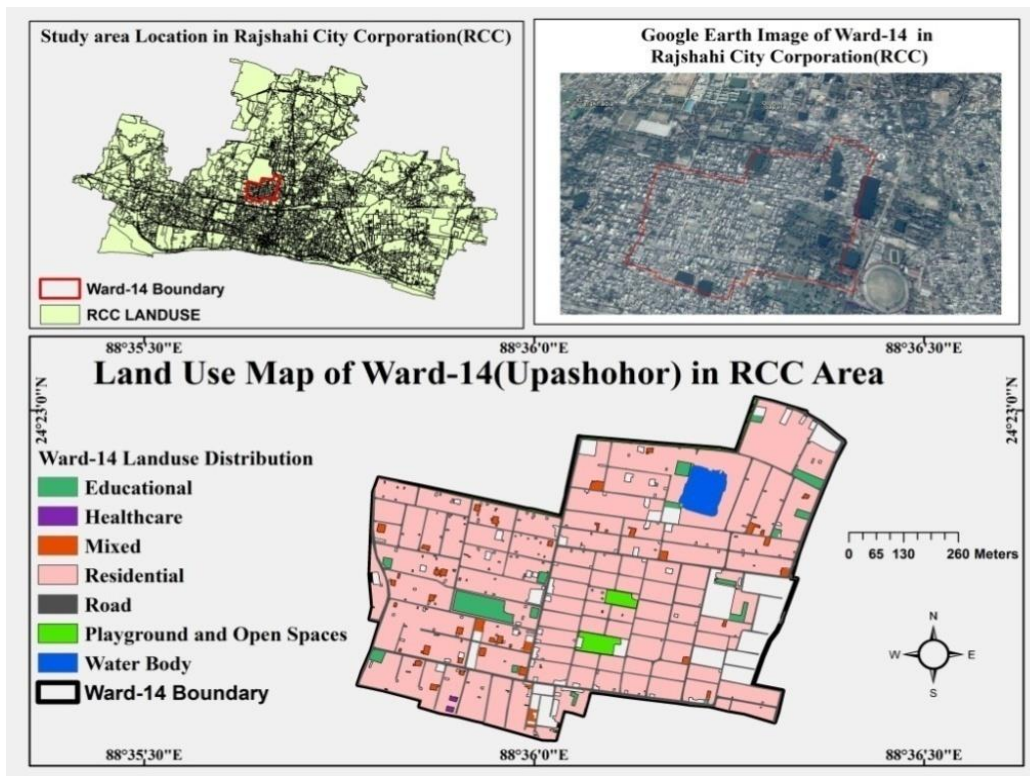


Fig. 4: Land use map of ward-14 in Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC).

Open Space Distribution for Playing Facilities

To know the present situation of girls and boys in our society, distribution of open space facilities is an important indicator. The respondents were both male (50%) and female (50%). The study contains a same number of male and female respondents to represent the differences easily. All of the respondents aged from 10 to 18. The study shows that about 70% of the boys don't face any restriction for open space use and rest 30% of the other boys face a small restrictions

as like, they should use neighborhood open space for playing described in Figure 5(a). On the other hand in Figure 5(b).about 90% of female respondent face restrictions for open space use.

As boys are no longer restricted as like girls, they mainly prefer playgrounds and neighborhood parks as their playing spot. And a girl mostly prefers rooftop as their playing spot. Boys hardly play at home and play only indoor games at home. And girls hardly use playground as their playing spot.

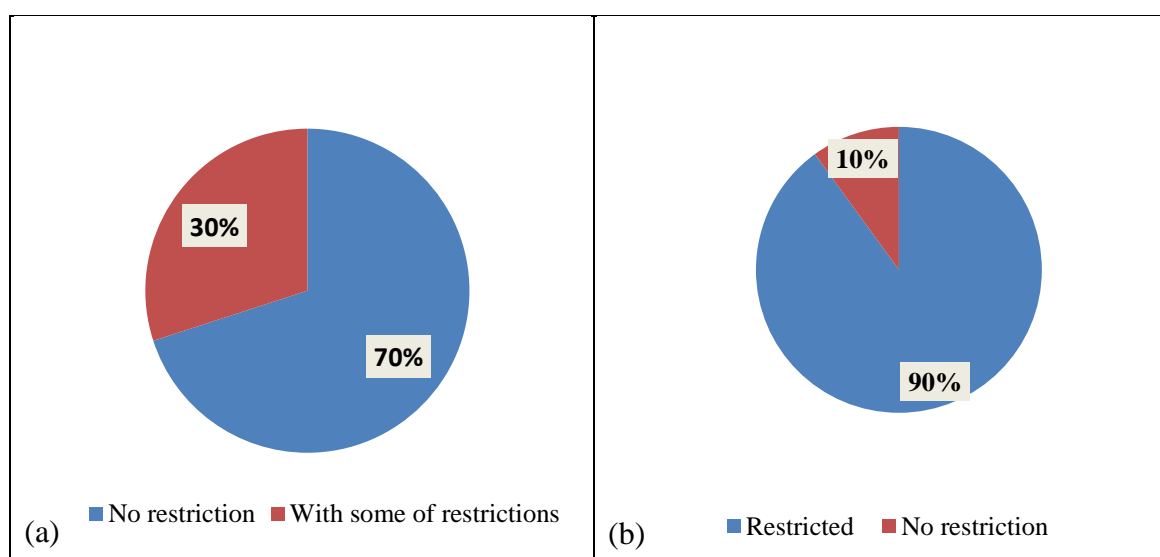


Fig. 5. Restriction on open space practice for boys (a) and girls (b); Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Box 1: Quotes from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The girls from the neighborhood said, “We are unable to play during the morning and evening period, as boys play cricket and football. They say they need the whole space to play. Last month, while we were playing “Bouchi”, they came to us and say we need to leave the space. We were denying leaving the space. The leader of our group “Salma” were arguing with them. They hit Salma for that. We went to the elders for complaining. They blow up boys, but finally told us not play around or to play in the rooftop.”

One parent from the neighborhood said, “Though my daughter is only 9 years old, last week some boy bullied my child. She did not tell anyone. But that night she was crying a lot. After asking many times, she told the matter. I asked who they were. But she could not recognize them. They were not from the neighborhood. After that I cannot let my child go outside to play.”

According to the Box 1, the existing scenario describes why the parents are not willing to let their girls playing in the playground and why the girls are not playing in the playground.

Girl-friendly Space (GFS) and Boy-friendly Space (BFS) in Parks and Playgrounds

GFS and BFS is the term used to identify and assess the quality of urban open space practice which include tangible parameters for the assessment of parks and playgrounds like:

- (1) *Security*: From all types of disturbances including crime, accidents, trafficking, and so on.
- (2) *Safety*: Means that no harm should come to girls and boys in the playgrounds.
- (3) *Leisure*: Parks/playgrounds must have a comfortable environment, with ample supply of sitting places.
- (4) *Accessibility*: Indicates the level of service and the accessibility of the playground from any side where it is not fenced by a high wall/barrier.
- (5) *Provision for Physical Activity*: Means the space should support playing activities to boys and girls.

The summary results of the park assessment and participant observation at the city parks are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Scores as girl-friendly space (GFS) and boy-friendly space (BFS) (% of maximum).

Local Playgrounds and Parks	GFS (%)	BFS (%)
Rajshahi Satellite school Playground	25%	75%
Upashohor Sector#2 Playground	32%	68%
Water Tank Playground	43%	57%
Upashohor Park	10%	90%

Source: Field survey, 2017.

The four playgrounds i.e., Rajshahi Satellite School Playground, Upashohor Sector #2 Playground, Water Tank Playground and Upashohor Park, are observed and mapped for PRA. According to PRA survey, the resource mapping was done with the help of the girls and boys of the area. The resource map includes the space used by the boys and girls for playing. Girl-friendly space and boy-friendly space are described according to the FGD in the resource map. Calculation of the GFS and BFS was calculated through the Google earth mapping on the basis of the information collected from the resource map. According to table-03, in all the playgrounds GFS is less than BFS. Predominant users of the local parks observed in this research, mainly for cricket and some football in the afternoons and evenings on weekdays, and all day on weekends. Girls were not, or rarely, observed at the local parks.

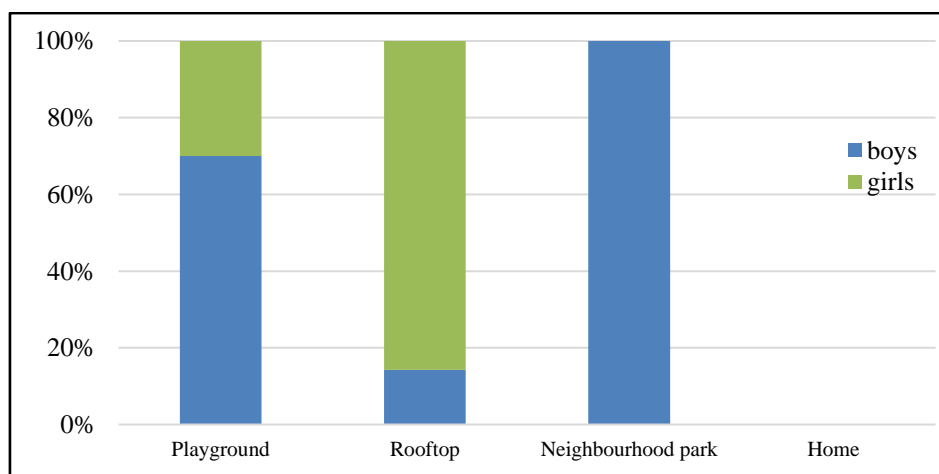


Fig. 6. Comparison of playing spot for boys and girl. Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Conditions for Open Space Practice for Boys and Girls:

According to the respondents’ response, the study shows that most of the time girls face many restrictions and conditions for visiting outside of the home and playgrounds. The conditions vary from age to age group. Different age groups have different types of restrictions. At aged 11–12 are allowed mostly only permitted to leave the home with parents and age group 15–16 are mostly allowed only with friends (Figure 7a). On the other hand almost all the boys at different age group had no restrictions. Only a few restrictions can be seen at the age group of 11–12, age group of 13–14 and age group of 15–16 (Figure 7b).

Reason of Restriction on Open Space Practice for Boys and Girls:

At the sense of restriction on open space practice for girls and boys the percentage of no restrictions for girls is less. Figure 8(a) shows that only girls at the age group of 17–18 can enjoy free life in respect of other age groups. Most of the girls are restricted to play in the playground. Very few young boys are restricted by their parents to play

outside. Boys mainly have no restriction to play in the playground (Figure 8b).

The restrictions on girls playing are about 40% for the ‘risk of “eve-teasing”’ and about 25.71% for ‘parental restriction’ (Figure 8b). The risk of eve-teasing includes the sexual abuse, harassment, bullying etc. The cause of parental restrictions is about security issue. And so parents don’t allow their daughters alone outside the home. Another major reason for the restriction is ‘risk of crime’ for what girls feeling insecure outside the home. So, about 22.85% are unwilling to play in the playground due to ‘risk of crime’ (Table 4).

Table 4: Percentage of Reason of restriction for boys and girls.

Reason of Restriction	Girls	Boys
Risk of eve- teasing/bullying	40%	0%
Parental restriction	25.71%	12%
Risk of crime	22.85%	8%
No restriction	11.42%	80%

These restrictions on girls playing create monotony in their daily life. They are depriving from playing in their childhood.

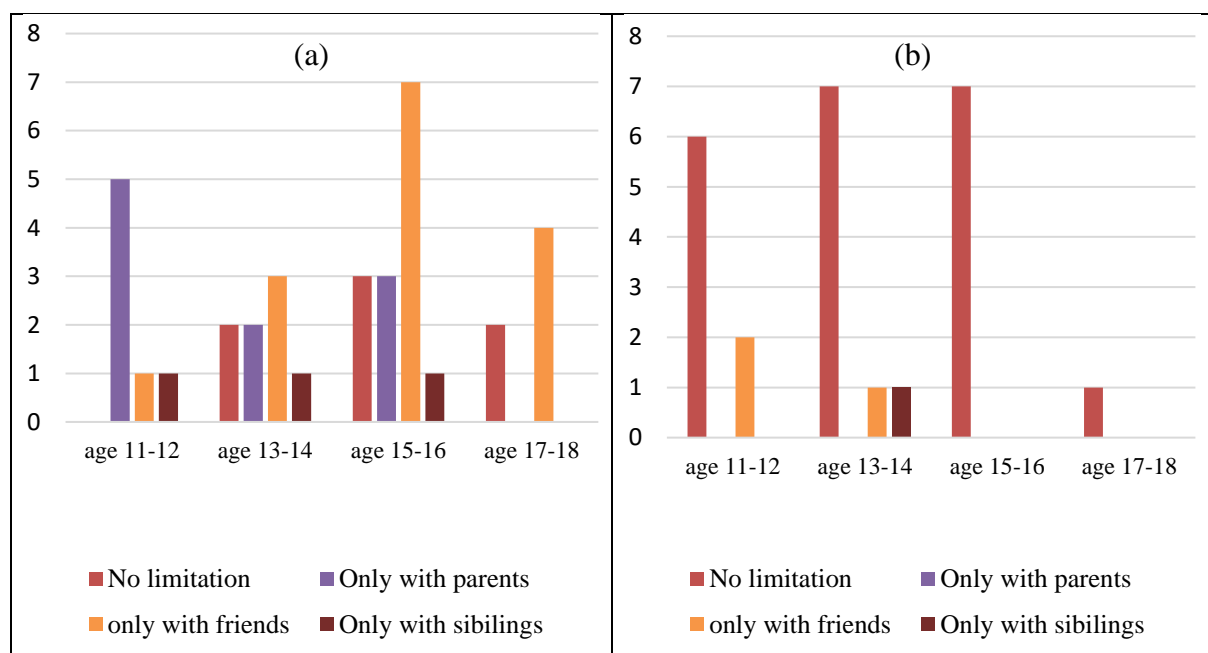
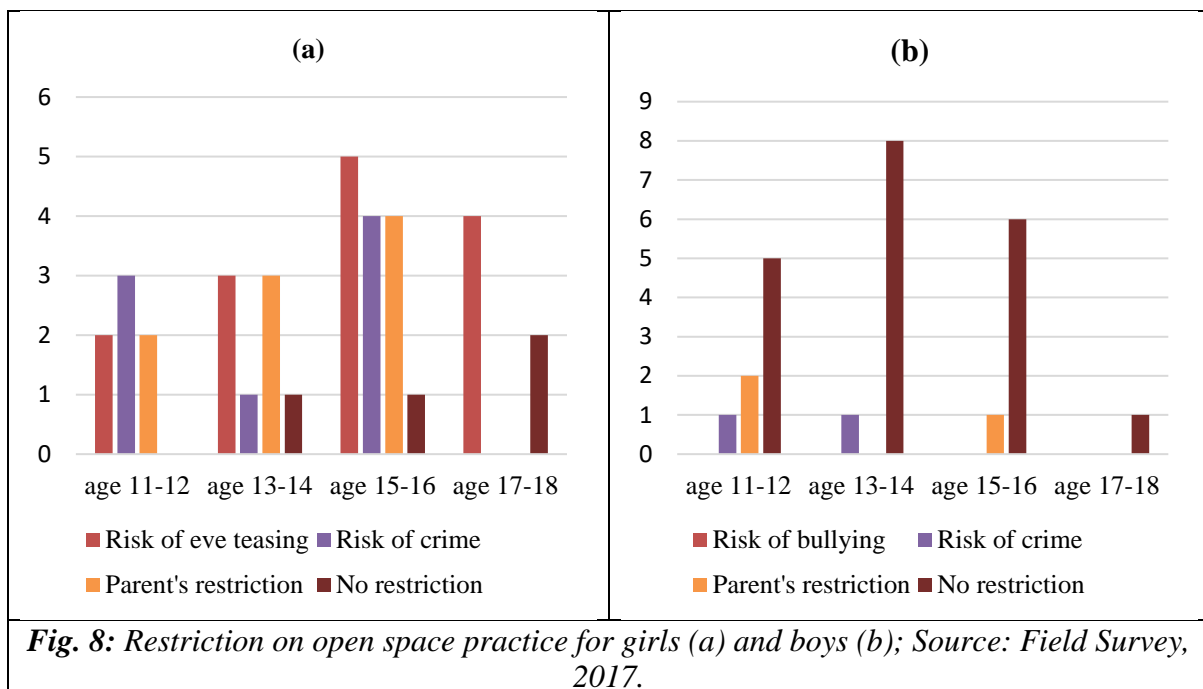


Fig. 7. Conditions for open space practice for girls (a) and boys (b). Source: Field Survey, 2017.



Causes and Impacts of Restriction on Girls Open Space Practice by Cause-effect Diagram

After the questionnaire survey, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), was conducted. Nowadays, Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is tool which is also used in urban context as it is very helpful to derive the problem and propose a solution for the problem. In the study, PRA is used to identify the main reason behind the restrictions on playing of girls. According to the research, Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools i.e., “Cause-effect diagram” and “Pair wise ranking matrix” have used. “Cause-effect diagram” is used to identify the causes and impact of the restriction on the open space practice for girls.

The tabular form of “Cause and effect diagram” has been given in figure-06. The main problems of girls are monotony in daily work, deprives female rights, restricted mental growth, mental and physical weakness, and creating social anxiety and acceptance of male dominance. Cause-effect diagram shows the causes of the problems and Pair-wise ranking matrix describes the ranking of the problems

which defines the leading difficulties behind the girl’s restriction which helps for further analysis.

Pair-wise Ranking Matrix:

Pair-wise ranking is a PRA method that helps to set priorities (i.e. problems, needs, actions, etc.). Ranking can be undertaken with key informants that represents a good mixture of interests. It can also be conducted based on gender to determine different preferences between men and women. Here, “Pair wise ranking matrix” is used for ranking the causes of the restriction on the open space practice for girls. According to the pair-wise ranking matrix, “Risk of Eve teasing”, “parental restriction” and “risk of crime” is the basic three reasons behind girls restriction. The relevant reasons are lack of open space and pressure of study.

Solution for the Problem

Solutions from the PRA surveys associated are mentioned below:

Separated Playing Zone: Separation of playing zone can be a solution to reduce the restrictions of the girls. Most of time parents feel insecure and don’t let their

daughter to play with boys. Separation of the playing zone can be a solution for this problem where parents feel free to let their daughter to play at parks and playground.

Appointment of Watchman at Parks and Playgrounds: About 25 respondents give their view on to appoint several number of watchman to control eve teasing and risk of crime. Watchman can be appointed by social finance of neighborhood. That will help to ensure security for the playing spots. The study contains a SWOT analysis for appointing watchman for Parks and playgrounds.

Establishing Security Office: Establishment of security office for a city through zoning can also be a good solution. These security offices will handle the security of public open space and neighborhood open space. There will have a system of punishment system for those who will compute crime and related to any kind of unsocial activities.

Restricting Unknown Entrance in Park by Security: Parks and open space will be restricted for the entrance of unknown person. That will reduce the risk of crime

and parents will feel secure to send their daughters to go there.

Creating Parent’s Awareness: Creating parent’s awareness means motivating parents them to let the female children to go and play outside the house. This can be done by the local NGO’s and other development organizations.

Creation of More Pocket Parks in Neighborhood: Most of the times parents don’t allow their female children have to go far away for playing or recreation. So creation of small parks can be helpful to solve this problem. These small parks will be accessible from the house and will more risk free zone from other playing zone.

SWOT Analysis for Appointing Watchman for Parks and Playgrounds

SWOT Analysis is a tool designed to be used in the preliminary stages of decision-making, often as a precursor to strategic planning. The acronym SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The study contains a SWOT analysis for appointing watchman for Parks and playgrounds that is shown in Table 5.

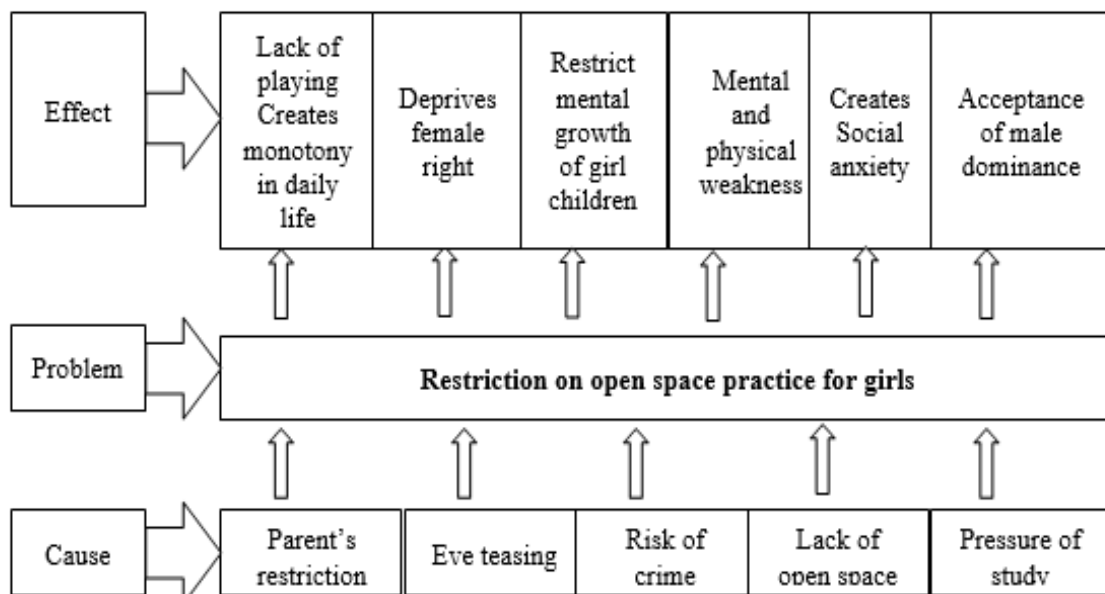


Fig. 9. Cause-effect diagram of restriction on open space practice for girls (Source: PRA Field Survey, 2017).

Table 4. Pair-wise ranking matrix of restriction on open space practice for girls.

Parameters	Parental Restriction (1)	Risk of Eve Teasing (2)	Risk of Crime (3)	Lack of Open Space (4)	Pressure of Study (5)	Score	Ranking
Parental Restriction (1)		(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	3	2 nd
Risk of Eve Teasing(2)			(2)	(2)	(2)	4	1 st
Risk of Crime(3)				(3)	(3)	2	3 rd
Lack of Open Space (4)					(4)	1	4 th
Pressure of Study (5)						0	5 th

Source: PRA Field Survey, 2017.

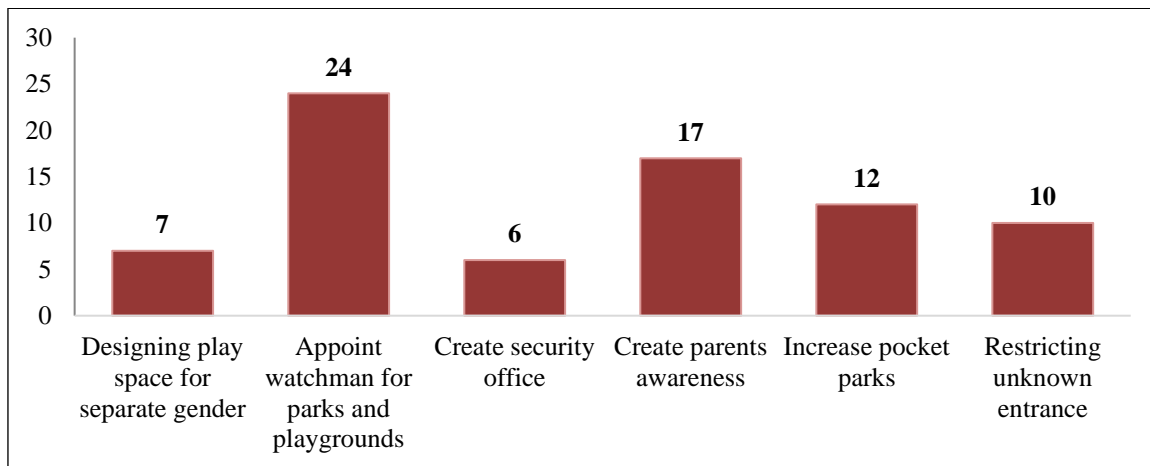


Fig. 10. Solution for the girl's restriction on open space practice.

Table 5: SWOT analysis for appointing watchman for parks and playgrounds.

Internal Factors	<p>Strength</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The solution is from neighborhood 2. Availability of trustworthy watchmen from society 3. Location of the watchman place is defined 	<p>Weakness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boys parent's unwillingness to pay for the watchman 2. Observe the whole park by one watchman
External Factors	<p>Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watchman can be from society's elderly person 2. Society's one member will work for the society with his best effort 3. Gains the trust from parents 	<p>Threaten</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unable to fight against the strong gang of boys

CONCLUSION

Play for all ages of children has become a concern, it is claimed that children are effected positively developments during playing. But due to some restrictions, the girls are not capable to play in the open space. The study helps to identify the hidden cause and effects of girl's restrictions. The causes are basically restrictions of parents, eve teasing, and risk of crime and lack of open space. And the effects are monotony in daily work, deprives female rights, restricted mental growth, mental and physical weakness, and creating social anxiety and acceptance of

male dominance. Through following some solutions as like creating parent's awareness, ensuring security, creation of more small parks in neighborhood and so on can help us to solve this problem. Urban planners, policy makers, and educational professionals in Rajshahi are urged to re-visit the urban development policies and regulations to promote the concept of girls-friendly cities. Our hope is that the girl-friendly-space concept will be mainstreamed in the policies, designs, and programs for urban open spaces, along with broader societal efforts to improve the current situation.

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