

Planning Green Spaces in Poverty Line Areas

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Abstract: The urban poor, residing in slum and squatter settlements place a high priority on gaining access to basic services for improving their quality of life. The study aimed to explore possibilities for providing green spaces to the people living in these areas. A survey was conducted to study potential role of green spaces in daily life of the people and ascribed health and social benefits. Sixty eight percent respondents reported health benefits, those perceived psychological benefits were 42% and social benefits entailed by 40%. Seventy eight percent pledged to participate in the development of green spaces in the form of cash, provision of labor and supervision.

Key Words: Sustainability, Quality of Life, Green Spaces

Introduction

Faisalabad is a third biggest city of Pakistan where massive industrial activity is seen during last three decades. It is home to nearly 2 million people. Urbanization is evident of excessive population inflow causing demand for housing that results in establishment of squatter settlements (Katchi abadies) approximately 52 slum areas and about 129 squatter settlements (Alam and Zahid, 2001). There communities were living without access to the basic municipal facilities. World wide are the sustainable development initiatives for the establishment of modern environment quality of life is given a high priority. People need to choose those proximities where there is greater social interaction, economic stability and environmental hygiene and provision for community mobilization.

There is both qualitative and quantitative evidence to suggest that park development initiatives have been hugely beneficial to the communities. A well-planned landscape enhances the beauty of a home and moderate the climate. For example closed canopy trees plantation absorb more solar radiation and thus reflect less heat back into the atmosphere (Anonymus, 1992). Presence of green spaces can increase a home value health, well-being: beautification for recreation as well as beneficial for personal psychology and shaping behaviour.

The main theme of the study was to investigate role and value of green spaces as perceived by the peoples preferably those living in socially deprived areas. This paper especially highlights the importance of participation of local residents in the planning process for the improvement of their areas.

Materials and Methods

Out of total 52 slums and about 129 squatter settlements (Katchi Abadies) of Faisalabad. Three representative areas namely Shadab Colony, Noor Pura and Chak No-7 were selected for study having all the characteristics of slum areas and squatter settlements or socially deprived areas. Peoples living in these areas were combating for the development of open spaces, where neighboring community members were keeping their buffaloes and calling the right of possession. These sites were used as dumping sides for local solid waste disposal. Faisalabad Area Upgrading Project (FAUP) in collaboration with local Multipurpose Community

Organizations (MPCOs) activists and Government agencies raised an awareness campaign against the various encroachment groups and eventually these groups were forced to vacate the allotted spaces.

Sampling Size: The samples were selected in three replicates of 50 respondents from each locality designated as study area. List of male and female (MPCOs) were taken from (FAUP) and members of (MPCOs) and other representatives of areas were interviewed.

Interview Schedule: Fifty representatives from each locality were selected randomly for the interview. The data was collected in regular intervals and each interview took 15-20 minutes. Structural questionnaire was used for data collection comprises personal information about respondents, public perception of green spaces and potential for community participation. Data collected were arranged, coded, recoded and groups based on age, gender, profession and marital status were identified. Chi Square test was used for non-parametric population and nominal variables.

Results and Discussion

Potential Role of Green Spaces: To study the potential role and importance of green spaces in community living areas and their substantial role in making the ambiance clean and healthy living environment and that how people value these places in their daily life. The respondents were asked how often they visit nearby open spaces. Results of survey showed that from the total population 69% visit spaces of which only 10% females visit parks and open spaces.

Frequency of visit to open spaces was also discussed with the respondents. In keeping with pattern, only 6% visit open spaces weekly from adult group along with 4% weekly and occasionally visitors. Details are illustrated in Fig. 1. A large number of respondents from adult mature group are weekly visitors (25%). It is important to add that monthly visitors are only 14% along with daily visitors 4%.

Comparison of frequency of visit to open spaces among the visitors of three selected areas had shown differences. In Shadab colony 95% respondents visit open spaces whereas only 67% respondents visit in Noor Pura followed by Chak-7 where percentage of visitors was 54.

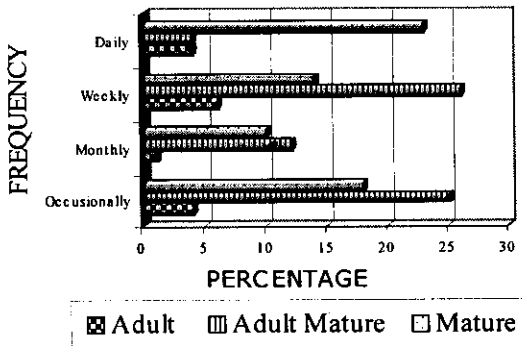


Fig.1: Frequency of Visit to Open Spaces

Loudon (1835) defended the commons and argued the case for public parks. In 1835, the year in which he designed England first Public Park, and made the following plea "The preservation of some of these chases is as essential to the poorer classes of the metropolis as to the rich. The former they afford health, exercise and amusement; in the latter they produce the cherish that love of the country, and of rural sports so important in a constitutional point of view.

Probable Reason for Visiting Parks: People were asked to give their reasons for visiting parks. Purpose of this question was to find out reasons for visiting parks and to relate them with potential benefits being ascribed with their visit. Survey results showed that 30% respondent come to enjoy fresh air, 24% coming for picnic while 20% for children outing along with 11% for gossiping, 10% for walking and three percent to fresh with greenery.

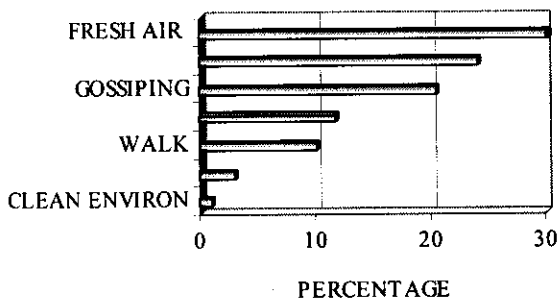


Fig. 2: Reason for Visiting Parks

Further statistical analysis on the basis of age groups gives significant difference ($P < 0.05$) among groups. Detail analysis of the results shows that all the groups were visiting parks however those who had mentioned enjoying fresh air and walk as the main purpose of

coming to parks were from employee group community where among business class enjoy picnic, gossiping and greenery were the common reasons. As reported above main reason mentioned by different groups of peoples were walk, exposure to fresh air, clean environment and enjoying greenery. All these factors relate potential benefits of environment created by developing green spaces and presence of plants. Bernatzky (1978) reported that green spaces have an important role in providing the much-needed standards of good life. They should therefore be situated where their specific effects are most needed especially in socially deprived living areas. This might be a step forward in provision of quality of life to peoples living in congested conditions of slums and squatter settlements.

Public Role in Management and Maintenance of Open Spaces: In this respect, respondents were interviewed and discussion was made. A good percentage of the respondents nearly 78% gave positive response for their contribution, 38% showed their interest in cash contribution further 22% had shown their interest in physical work, they were mostly unskilled labor. Thirteen percent offered their garden adjacent to their houses for holding meetings and discussion. Five percent respondent offered their services to supervise the developmental work. While answering to the question how much they can pay in terms of monthly contribution for the management and maintenance of the green spaces, Respondents suggested that Government and semi-government agencies like Municipal Corporation Faisalabad (MCF) and FAUP assist the local MPCOs regarding their needs in organizing and management, funds raising, and their distribution and auditing, technical support/ assistance and coordinate the MPCOs concerned regarding organization and management of the parks with lead agency by arranging informal and formal trainings workshops and in the provision of living materials. FAUP with the collaboration. Parks and Horticulture Cell (PHC), local MPCOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) started work in shadab colony on equal share basis and develop open spaces into public parks. The provision has added in cleaning the environment for healthy living and enhances community mobilization, peoples also reported health and social benefits ascribed with open spaces.

Turner (1998) argued that green spaces are the places where workers could be taken into squad to be revived by science and art. These facilities enable workers to rest their limb, cleanse their bodies and improve their minds. Taking the example of associated health, psychological and social benefits of the green spaces this model can be replicated to the other part of the city.

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