Women and Social Sustainability: A Critical Parametric Evaluation of Urban Settings in Developing Countries

Asmita Yadav\textsuperscript{1} and Rashmi Kumari\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Student, Department of Architecture, National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur, H.P., India
\textsuperscript{2}Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur, H.P., India
Email: asmita@nith.ac.in

Abstract. Attainment of social sustainability became a focused agenda ever since the United Nations general assembly (UNGA) adopted SDG goals in 2015. Sustainability is an umbrella concept cutting across public, commercial, and environmental domains. However, the idea is still perceived and seen as very narrow and synonymous with eco-friendly only. Gender issues still remain ignored in both academic and applied research as a contributing parameter towards sustainable development. Barely any field of knowledge is working on those concerns. Women empowerment and counterbalancing rigid patriarchy are still perceived as a research area for social sciences rather than holistic understanding and application by other academic disciplines. Urban planning needs a multidisciplinary approach that integrates with various other domains. It demands an amalgamation of analysis and application from multiple perspectives and considerations. The critical phase for urban planning, especially women's sensitivity, is mostly missing in developing nations like India. Despite women having a more generous and vital contribution toward a city's growth in cultural and economic terms, they have been under constant subjugation of brutality and suppression. Thus, the city planning process is perpetuating gender disparity, if not promoting explicitly. This study starts with a hypothesis, i.e., "ill-conceived urban planning has a huge stake in prevailing urban crime against women." The research would later analyze and determine the flaws and loopholes in the planning process, which are in practice. Such lacks in the framework will create cities/urban areas that pose a severe safety and security threat. So, the gender layer during those planning processes may increase gender sensitivity toward women. The research will also explore essential concepts such as universal design and crime reduction through environmental design (CPTED) to assess women-friendly cities' applicability. Thus, this approach can help deduce planning strategies to create inclusive cities, including urban social sustainability.

Key words: Women's Empowerment; Social Sustainability; Women Safety

1. Introduction
Today, a large percentage of the world's population lives in cities. Due to such accelerated urbanization, cities and towns are expected to expand rapidly in developing nations such as India, China, etc. (UNHabitat, 2010)\cite{1}. In this regard, urbanization is not an isolated, standalone phenomenon. It is instead a complex one with various factors added to it. Primarily, rural to urban migrations occur due to suitable economic activities in urban centers. This reason acts as a significant pull factor and supplementary to other push factors like agrarian distress, conflicts, natural disasters, etc.

Urbanization and gender feminist studies started to understand the significant interaction between urbanization and gender issues. Social structures define specific gender aspects and relationship dynamics in society and thereby the city. Hence, urbanization trends and migration patterns are also largely influenced by these social directives and vice-versa. Various scholarly works suggest that males and females view the city and interact differently. The same public space responds differently to different genders in a different form. Urban settings are implicitly biased towards in favor of men. Socially, women are subjected to harsh gender-based discrimination day in day out across multiple...
facets of daily life. Each day they have to face gender-based brutality and various discriminations like the lack of governance and socio-economic participation by limiting their individual movement.

Academic research has been limited to just understanding the issues and reasons for the same. However, there is a strong scope of the study to understand the role of the city in gender disparity. Thus, city planning and policy shall dictate the social sustainability of a city. These socially sustainable cities shall have a larger impact on the overall sustainability goals at the global level. To establish these socially sustainable parameters within a city that focuses on gender safety shall be inclusive in nature. Lack of sense of belongingness and liability factor shall perpetuate the gender gap and this gap can be filled using urban policy guidelines.

2. Research study

2.1 Research problem:
As argued by various gender and urban scholars, social problems and gender discrimination in society led to flawed urban planning. In return, urban issues pose furthermore socio-economic problems to women. This forms a vicious cycle and deprives women of their rights. To understand this cycle, there is a strong need to understand the sources and reasons for the formation of this vicious cycle.

2.2 Research Objectives:
• Identifying challenges and issues being faced by women within urban settings.
• Understanding women's role in socio-economic, political fronts against an urban space and their respective spatial-temporal participation.
• A critical study of female and girls' rights and security in settlements.
• Deducing methods of responsive planning that can help to reduce the urban gender imbalance.

3. Gender-based discrimination
An analysis reveals that in urban spaces, women and young girls face a variety of gender disparity issues, varying from sexual harassment to exclusion from participation. There looks to do an acute necessity to acknowledge precisely the sort of challenges that urban women face. The primary classification of dimensional problems is given below.

3.1 Gender Stereotypes
Women became victims of structural violence and cultural clash, notwithstanding social change agents such as urbanization and technology. The backward-looking cultural norms, narrow mindsets, and rigid patriarchal attitudes remain to be in place. Patriarchal social structures always advocate and carry a notion of restricting women to mere domestic work and family care activities. Men consider themselves as the only breadwinner within the family, excluding women from other productive economic activities. Such social directives led to creating gender stereotypes and the cultural notion helping it to perpetuate further.

3.2 Ineffective legislation and policymaking
There are various national and state laws and policies pertaining to divorce, maternity, inheritance and wage discrimination, etc. Having a rigid law in place is of no use until they are implemented or executed in true spirit. Legal analysis such laws only ensured their existence but lacked strict implementation. These laws also lack in creating a robust grievance redressal mechanism. For just a case, these laws provide equal inheritance, but still, the societal forces prevent women from accessing land. In the 73rd and 74th Indian Constitution Act, 33% of women hold positions in panchayats and urban local authorities [2]. The male domination exists and silences the women's political voice, rendering the constitutional act into a mere nominal representation with no women empowerment, including governmental participation.
3.3 Lack of voice and choice
Sometimes, women keep their subject, thus antagonistic and excluding the upper noises on issues spanning from small organization purchase to national urban development issues. Throughout a patriarchal setup, women's suggestions and opinions do observe as subordinate and sub-standard. Such feelings shall eliminate the gender problems and wishes from a democratic dialogue, resulting in low higher noise and policy formulations. Would like throughout such absence of their voices, and certain demand-driven specific services cannot be thought about Moreover, whereas not such women's illustration and participation in planning, governance, and management, the urban designs and city plans will preserve existing gender disparities and limit women's passage over urban areas resources and services.

3.4 Limitations in land and property holding
There remains some shortage concerning adequate data on women's property rights. According to UN-Habitat, it is evident that most land and property titles are listed beneath the title of men (UNHabitat 2013). UNICEF estimates that only 25% of the landowners; meanwhile, Latin America are women (Chant and McIlwaine 2015) [3]. There begins to have been a firm lack of common title legislation resulting from which women do confront those same housing protection inequalities. Such a realm, including housing titles, ensures that every transition is made by male counterparts' attitude and makes women expose less toward gender-based violence at home.

3.5 Commuting and Transportation
While one study at university, both men and girls ought to have different traveling modes and patterns. Girls ideally opt for public transportation over personal transportation as equated to men. Several would become additional possible to set up a multi-purpose trip than one purpose trip. Though females are still confined over the personal facet, their traveling patterns primarily contain college visits, grocery retailers, care centers, etc. girls are a unit typically most often but in back of the family segment, like kids and older people. If the travel destination is way away and no incidental to the person is feasible, it's similar that the woman's itinerary is canceled. It'd be transport being unsafe and inconvenient such reasons bar girls from seizing jobs wherever the workplaces area unit far-flung from their homes. As per the national urban coming up with a policy framework, there should be accessible and reasonable transportation for ladies.

3.6 Exclusive public spaces
The objectification of women remains engulfed into this concept concerning any gendered division of labor too. Male counterparts largely dominate the construction sector and planning sector. Hence the fate of urban or public places is decided through men. During parallel, women are just confined to private spaces and domestic environments. Here is evidence from the reality and findings that several common spaces do not possess adequate recreation areas and public sanitation facilities for young girls and women. Therefore this insufficiency for ample lighting in public spaces, parks, and highways, was not perceived as a shortage about a gender aspect in designing such public areas. For instance, these shortages of sufficient protected open realm or outdoor areas discourage women's social participation in urban living.

3.7 Gender gap in employment and wages
While there remains some considerable increase in women's economic progress, there have been several challenges associated with women's work. First, women's objectification shifted them only to female type jobs like receptionist, hospitality, and subordinate jobs. The elite and high decision-making designations are still reserved for men. Second, despite similar work prospects for females, women have compensated for much less specific male counterparts. Women's work and contribution are still seen through a patriarchal lens, which considers their work subordinate to men's. Reason for this global gender gap Study regarding the world economic forum, this essence of women's
employment and incomes does a vital purpose of affair concerning any characteristic of gender within economic terms[4].

4. Methodology
The methods used to estimate urban women and social sustainability and the critical parametric evaluation of women in urban settings in developing countries is briefly defined in this study section. The research methodology is explained in several steps; firstly, all the background study we have to do based on background study, formulate the objectives. After framing the objectives, we have to get the data through primary sources and secondary sources. Then we have to analyze those data on a qualitative basis and quantitative basis. After analyzing the data will come up with a conclusion and give some recommendations.

![Image of the methodology](image.png)

**Figure 1.** Image of the methodology

5. Analysis
The growth of any country and city depends upon women's development as a result of empowerment and treat them as equal to men. India is the youngest country with an average age of 29 years, .62% of the population is between the age group of 15-59 years of workforce.

**Table 1.** Global gender gap (2006-2020)

| Particular                  | 2006 score | 2020 score |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Global Gender Gap Index    | 98         | 0.601      | 112         | 0.668      |
India is performing very poorly in economic participation and health survival. The score is increasing from 103 to 150, but in the political sector, the rank is decreasing. (As per gender gap report-2020)[5]. As per the national urban policy framework, we have to provide accessible mobility to women; however, still, 79% of women are harassed by men in the street. If we are talking about the crime rate against women in the city, then it is increasing by 7.3% per year as per NCRB data. India's total population is 1.38 billion. The urban population is 377 million, and it is around 37% of the total population. So, people are migrating to urban areas. In 2050, 800 million people will live in cities.

5.1 Critical evaluations of cities in phases of safety and security
Urbanization is often conceived as an agent of social change, both academically and socially. Urban growth holds an empowering tool for freeing women from rigid patriarchal cultural and social measures. The city provides a new economic and cultural outlook toward ladies and girls. However, while urbanization would not cause gender-based violence, cities' unstable and insecure nature makes urban environments more likely.

5.2 Gender blind urban planning
Reason for urban migration from rural areas is Crop failures, communal clashes, indebted poverty, and class conflicts. We need proper socio-economic infrastructure. Both men and women hold a different set of reasons for their movements in the cities. Simultaneously, in every similar way, their requirements and needs are different from each other. Due to unplanned urbanization and blind urban planning, women conclude up living in places not explicitly designed, including this view of their protection and security. They are not yet recognized as parameters for policymaking and urban decision making.

5.3 Evictions and displacements
Rapid blind unplanned urbanization, under the development title, provided inflation to artificial land prices and made it extremely expensive, which is hitting individuals' affordability. The commercialization regarding urbanization, including urban conveniences, started creating a divide within the cityscape. Slums and squatter hamlets were thus the offshoots of such a substantial dynamic phenomenon. That led to much legal litigation and posed questions to the planners regarding relocation, re-settlement, and re-construction. At times authorities are coming up regarding sudden evictions of those settlements, and during events like a disaster, displacements are ordinary affairs for the dwellers. In these cases, women do suffer a lot from many physical, psychological, and socio-economic problems. So, lack of visionary town/urban planning leads to women's adversities due to deliberate wrong decision-making.

5.4 Lack of gender-responsive public services
As discussed, due to accelerated urbanization, these urban populations and density keep on mounting new scales in an unprecedented manner. Cities are falling into an uncontrollable trap of urban sprawls, conurbation, and constant expansion without a planned master plan. Hence, it remains manifest that this pressure is mounting on subsisting urban infrastructure like public utilities, transportation, recreational spaces, etc. The rural-urban mobility is beyond estimate and seriously harms the city's municipal services supply through this inadequate public monitoring authority. Specifically, females need a particular range of allotted resources that are entirely lacking, such as inclusive public areas, street lighting, transportation, etc. This shows a definite symbol of the deficiency from gender-responsive city services within urban areas [6].
5.5 The changing face of the urban labor

After the information technology (IT) revolution, cities started to provide many economic opportunities to women. The educated sector of women began transferring toward urban hubs looking for one productive economic job. For many women, moving to urban from rural has provided them economic independence. These economic opportunities equip them beside financial security and let them compete with their inhabitants. Women began to contribute mainly to those urban workforces, predominantly from this service area, like teaching, hospitality, corporates, etc. [7].

5.6 The acceptance of sexual violence within cities

Women are unsafe in cities because rural regions are affected by inadequate urban planning. Women accept sexual harassment inside the city, mostly in work areas, dark spots zone, deserted communal areas, and private transportation. Acceptance and tolerance of such acts became normal the rape scenarios and sexual harassment. This attitude towards sexual brutality affects an uncertain, changeable, and inadequately urban environment. Women often face harassment being a consequence of their gender [8].

6. Conclusion

Cities hold a mixed set of gender problems and obstacles in social, governmental, and commercial dimensions. In general, urban life is tough for young girls and women for these coming observations.

- Among the enormous migrations of women to urban areas and urbanization has increased their vulnerability in cities.
- Acceptance of physical violence is seriously hurting women's moral and social evil. This cause gets further weakened by these extensive social barriers.
- While given the dominance of the men on the stage of city planning. During this planning phase, women's safety and security related to sexual harassment are not defined as criteria.
- Inadequate regulations and policies with ineffective policing do create worsened women's situations. If they faced any abuse, then such conditions only increase violence.
- Instead of covering the actual cause, insensitive media dig into the inequalities between men and women. Such practices command to improve social acceptance of disparity and further shame victims rather than mobilize a public opinion about sexual violence in public spaces.

7. Recommendations

- Legislative and executive institutions like parliament and governments require legislating for Crime against young girls and women on public spaces and safe urban norms.
- Governments and other departmental institutions must ensure proper data gathering on sexual violence in public areas. This shall help to interlace toward this comprehensive analysis, problem-solving, policymaking, and actions.
- Public transport authorities should mandate gender-sensitive training for drivers and conductors or ticket collectors. They should accept sexual abuse cases promptly. Required public information for passengers should remain provided, and zero tolerance towards sexual offenses inside mass transport vehicles like buses and trains.
- Public spaces
  - Safety: As in perpetuity about urban planning, women's protection is a non-negotiable criterion. Design interventions and techniques will reduce the effectiveness of Crime and violence. One of those principles of urban planning is crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). Here, important sites should be selected to create a metropolitan area or develop its recessed buildings facing streets and roads. This would ensure protection utilizing social surveillance. Further, sufficient public lighting and adequate sanitation facilities at optimum distances should be labeled.
  - Accessibility: Urban planning must be so that public spaces' construction should have accessible and more adequate recreational facilities. Also, such facilities should be
segregated from vehicular traffic and should have a clear separation of pedestrian paths.

➢ Women's safety audits: The national governments should draft a model women Security audit or make it compulsory for public administrations to timely administer such auditing tasks. Such practice shall ensure that authorities will determine and estimate the city conditions for women's safety and arrive at improvement areas.

➢ Gender equality in governance: Women should remain promoted to active involvement in urban management like public amenities, ensuring urban utilities' effectiveness and efficiency.

➢ Participatory processes: Women cell has to obtain a position in all policymaking institutions, and the cell decision should be analyzed. To accommodate a more vital gender perspective on urban bylaws, government organizations should have included design modules.

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