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Quantitative Analysis of the Realization Requirements of Happiness-Based Urban Public Spaces and Its Impact on Social Vitality Case Study: District One of Shiraz City

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Received:11/10/2024 Revised:02/12/2024 Accepted:05/12/2024 PP. 100-118 Keywords: <i>Urban happiness, social vitality, public spaces, Shiraz Region One.</i>	Introduction: The primary concern of the present study arises from the inconsistency between the spatial potential of public spaces and their social outcomes. This discrepancy suggests that the main challenge is not the shortage of public spaces, but rather the extent to which they can effectively fulfill their role in promoting urban happiness. Evidence from the existing situation indicates that urban planning decisions are often made without sufficient quantitative evidence, and it remains unclear which dimensions of the realizability of happiness-oriented public spaces have the greatest influence on enhancing citizens' social vitality and the magnitude of their respective effects. Accordingly, this study adopts a fully quantitative approach and focuses on District 1 of Shiraz to empirically identify the key dimensions of the realizability of happiness-oriented public spaces and to examine their relationship with citizens' social vitality through statistical analysis. The central research question is to what extent the realizability of happiness-oriented public spaces contributes to the enhancement of social vitality and which of these dimensions plays the most significant role in this process. Addressing this question is expected to provide an evidence-based foundation for future urban planning and design interventions aimed at creating more vibrant and socially sustainable public spaces. The Purpose of the Research: The aim of this study was to quantitatively develop an integrated framework for the realizability of happiness-oriented public spaces and to evaluate its impact on citizens' social vitality in Shiraz. Methodology: This applied research was designed within a quantitative framework using a descriptive-analytical correlational approach to examine the causal relationships between the realizability dimensions of happiness-oriented public spaces and citizens' social vitality. The study population consisted of residents aged 18 years and older who regularly used public spaces in District 1 of Shiraz, Iran. To ensure adequate representation of different spatial functions, five major public spaces with distinct characteristics were purposively selected: Eram Square (central open space), Afif-Abad Street (commercial pedestrian street), Salamat Walkway (recreational and sports promenade), Persian Gulf Complex (semi-open commercial and leisure space), and Derak Mountain Park (natural green space). Based on Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was estimated at 384 respondents. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed using a combination of stratified random and convenience sampling, and 383 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.



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	Data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of two sections: demographic characteristics and research variables measured on a five-point Likert scale. The independent variables included environmental–physical, ecological, socio-cultural, psychological–perceptual, economic, and governance–managerial dimensions of the realizability of happiness-oriented public spaces, while the dependent variable comprised indicators of social vitality, momentary happiness, and long-term happiness. Face and content validity were confirmed by ten experts in urban planning, environmental psychology, and statistics. Internal consistency was verified using Cronbach’s alpha, with all coefficients exceeding 0.70 and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.92. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS. Descriptive statistics summarized respondents’ characteristics, whereas inferential analyses included the Friedman test for ranking dimensions, Pearson’s correlation analysis, multiple linear regression to determine the predictive contribution of each dimension, and path analysis to estimate the direct and indirect effects among variables. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$. Findings and Discussion: The findings demonstrated that the proposed structural model provides a satisfactory explanation of the relationship between the realizability dimensions of happiness-oriented public spaces and citizens’ social vitality in District 1 of Shiraz. Among all dimensions, the psychological–symbolic dimension emerged as the strongest predictor of social vitality, with the highest total effect ($\beta = 0.800$). This finding indicates that place identity, sense of belonging, collective memory, and the symbolic meanings associated with urban public spaces exert a greater influence on citizens’ social vitality than purely physical characteristics. The ecological–environmental and socio-cultural dimensions also showed significant positive effects, highlighting the importance of green spaces, environmental quality, opportunities for social interaction, and cultural activities in promoting urban happiness and strengthening social cohesion. Conversely, the accessibility and economic dimensions exhibited negative effects in highly congested urban spaces, suggesting that excessive traffic, overcrowding, commercial pressures, and spatial inequalities may reduce the positive impacts of public spaces on citizens’ well-being and social vitality. The analysis further revealed that the influence of each dimension varies according to the functional characteristics of different public spaces. Historical and cultural environments were more strongly associated with psychological and symbolic values, while recreational and natural spaces benefited primarily from ecological quality and opportunities for social interaction. In contrast, commercial public spaces were more vulnerable to the adverse effects of economic pressures and functional inefficiencies. Another important finding was the distinction between momentary happiness and long-term social vitality, indicating that these two outcomes are affected by different combinations of spatial factors and should therefore be considered separately in urban planning and design. Overall, the final path model confirmed that the realizability dimensions of happiness-oriented public spaces explain a substantial proportion of the variance in citizens’ social vitality and provide a comprehensive empirical framework for understanding the combined influence of environmental, social, psychological, economic, and governance-related factors. These findings emphasize that evidence-based, context-sensitive urban planning strategies are more effective than uniform planning approaches in enhancing citizens’ happiness and social vitality. Conclusion: The findings confirm that urban happiness is a multidimensional phenomenon in which psychological and symbolic dimensions play a more fundamental role than physical attributes alone. Citizens’ sense of place attachment, identity, and the symbolic meaning of public spaces emerged as the most influential factors in enhancing social vitality, whereas physical, economic, and governance-related dimensions may either facilitate or hinder this process depending on the spatial context. The study demonstrates that improving accessibility or physical infrastructure alone is insufficient unless accompanied by strategies that strengthen place identity, spatial justice, and effective management of urban density. A key contribution of this research is the development of an integrated empirical framework that distinguishes between momentary happiness and long-term social vitality, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how different dimensions of public spaces influence citizens’ well-being. The results offer evidence-based guidance for planners and urban designers seeking to create happiness-oriented public spaces tailored to local urban contexts. Nevertheless, the study is limited to District 1 of Shiraz and relies on self-reported survey data, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to validate the proposed model in other

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	urban contexts, employ mixed-method approaches and emerging technologies to capture real-time social interactions, and investigate the influence of temporary urban events on both short-term happiness and long-term social vitality. Funding: There is no funding support. Authors' Contribution: Authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of the article. All of the authors approved the content of the manuscript and agreed on all aspects of the work AI Usage Declaration: The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. All scientific content and responsibility for the manuscript rest entirely with the authors. Conflict of Interest: Authors declared no conflict of interest. Acknowledgments: We are grateful to all the persons for scientific consulting in this paper.

Highlight

- The overall status of feasibility dimensions falls within the "moderate to favorable" range, with the "psycho-semantic dimension" holding the highest rank among the nine dimensions (mean score = 3.38).
- Path analysis results revealed that this dimension, with a total effect coefficient of 0.800, is the strongest and most decisive predictor of social vitality.
- Furthermore, citizen prioritization showed that "effective social interactions" ranked highest, whereas "feeling of happiness" as a final urban output ranked last.

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تحلیل کمی الزامات تحقق‌پذیری فضاهای عمومی شهری شادی‌محور و تأثیر آن بر نشاط اجتماعی- مطالعه‌ی موردی: منطقه‌ی یک شهر شیراز

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