

# **Examining the Utility and Usability of Urban Public Spaces for Special Social Groups (Females): A Participatory Planning Approach (A Case Study: Nabovvat Square, Tehran)**

**Mojtaba Rafieian**, PhD, in Urban and Regional Planning, Tarbiat Modares University

**Razieh Rezazadeh**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Urban Planning Department, Iran University of Science & Technology

**Mahsa Seifaei**, M.A in Urban and Regional Planning, Tarbiat Modares University

**Yazdan Ahmadvand**, M.A in Urban and Regional Planning, Tarbiat Modares University

## **Abstract**

Today, attention to the urban public spaces as an essential issue in urban planning shows the very important role of these places in the socio-cultural dimensions of cities. Literature review shows that many books and papers have been published in Iran on this topic in order to create suitable public spaces for special social groups such as disables, the elderly and children but not for women. Since all citizens have equal rights to access and to be able to use public urban spaces, therefore, creating comfortable spaces for different gender and age groups is very important, specially in countries like Iran where certain Islamic laws are implemented. In this paper, we define the meaning of public space in such context and then examine women's perceptions and experiences of urban public spaces in Iran. Using this definition and considering the importance of these spaces in cities combined with the indicators used for indexing successful urban spaces in the world, we examined the utility and usability of urban spaces for women in Iran (Nabovvat Sq. in Tehran). Data was collected through a questionnaire and deep interview and analyzed using various statistical methods. This paper presents the key results of this research. Findings show that level of women's utility and usability of urban public spaces is independent from some variables such as: age, education, marriage status, distance to the urban space, and so on, but has significant correlation with other variables like: social interaction, safety and security, space accessibility, design, space identity, social supervision, willingness to participate, comfort and image, sociable space, activities. Among defined variables, sociability and social supervision are of the greatest importance.

**Keywords:** Urban Public Spaces, Special Social Groups, Female, Tehran.