

Functions of City Parks on Public Life

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Abstract: Residents of the city can benefit in a variety of ways from the presence of city parks, including their health, social lives, recreational opportunities, and the environment. In recent years, a growing body of research has supported the idea that better understanding the preferences of urban residents should be successful in the management of urban green space. The purpose of this study is to comprehend the purpose, motives, and attitude towards urban parks in various socio-demographic assortments, as well as the variety of preferences with regard to the park quality. A poll using questionnaires was carried out in a municipal park that was chosen at random in Chattogram, which is Bangladesh's one of the most populous and important commercial metropolis. According to the findings of the study, there is an interesting public perspective about the use of city parks, which depends on a mix of preferences about aesthetics and benefits regarding the environment. The conclusion demonstrates that many socio-demographic criteria, such as gender, age groups, educational level, and economic status, all play a role in determining whether or not people attend parks. It also reveals that the vast majority of respondents go to parks in order to obtain "social benefits" (21.66%), as well as "psychological and health benefits" (55.83%). In addition, it was shown that opinions aligned with seven criteria to determine the quality of a park. These criteria are the presence of a water body, park security, sanitary facility, historical significance, children's playground, and noise level. Overall, this study will be beneficial in the assessment of park users' motives and their attitudes, which is fundamentally required to manage city park functions in a multi-dimensional construct. This assessment is crucial to ensuring that city parks continue to serve their intended purposes.

Keywords: Urban green space, City Park, Social benefits.

Introduction

In today's urbanized world, developing an urban green space has become a vital component in city planning (Sreetharan, 2017; Dinda, Chatterjee & Ghosh, 2021). Urban green space aids the environment by managing urban heat island phenomena, lowering noise and air pollution, and providing a variety of ecosystem services to cities (Armson, Stringer, & Ennos, 2013; Hamada & Ohta, 2010). Additionally, it contributes in improving the physical and sociocultural value of that area, fostering long-term economic benefit and well-being (Dinda & Ghosh, 2021). Green spaces serve as a center for species reproduction and conservation, soil and water quality and provide visual relief, seasonal change, and a connection to the natural world (Sadeghian & Vardanyan, 2013). Allowing people to relax and have fun, connecting them with nature and socialize while also providing access to interesting sights (Parks, 2020). All of these advantages have made public parks an

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essential and permanent feature of the urban governance system for many decades. Traditionally, parks have been made available to the public for free through leisure programs that have improved the quality of life, public health, and even public safety by offering locations and activities for at-risk children who would otherwise participate in criminal behavior (Fulton, n.d.). Parks typically take up the most territory and are the most obvious example of green space in urban areas. The aesthetic, recreational, health, social, economic, and environmental benefits that urban parks bring to their respective communities are numerous and multifaceted (Dinda & Ghosh, 2021).

City park serves as a location for preserving the nature, it also has a good impact on people's social and psychological well-being, which affects the city environment as a whole (Ward, Parker, & Shackleton, 2010; Noriah, Noralizawati, Mohd Hisham, & Mohd Ali Waliyuddin, 2015). Urban green spaces are important for urbanized society in improving the quality of life (Chiesura, 2004). While other municipal parks concentrated on social, economic, and environmental needs, they paid less attention to the benefits to human health (Godbey, 2009). Today, the city park serves numerous functions, including recreation, meditation, tourism attractions, gathering spaces for family and friends, and enjoyment of nature's beauty. It can appropriate for people of many ages, ethnicities, and genders (Asmah & Abdullah, 2014). Geographically speaking, Chittagong is suitable to grow green spaces both inside and beyond the city. The city is the commercial capital and largest port of Bangladesh, and it is experiencing rapid urbanization, which has resulted in the loss of the city's existing open spaces as a consequence of its development. Even if Chittagong's urban residents don't have enough green space for their recreational needs, there is still a chance to expand the recreational carrying capacity of the current green areas through careful management (Jafrin & Beza, 2018a).

A study investigates that the activities and factors influencing the utilization of gardens by urban residents, as well as the potential of natural environments in improving the health of people (Razak et al., 2016). Another research being conducted to evaluate the relevance of city parks, namely their ability to captivate residents and foster a sense of affiliation and the significance of place-based awareness for the adaptive leadership of an environment has been previously emphasized (Lee & Kim, 2015). The present investigation aspires to establish an open space database for Chittagong by assessing the inclusion of open space provisions in master plans (Jafrin & Beza, 2018). The significance, intentions, and perceptions regarding urban parks among various socio-demographic groups. Additionally, it seeks to explore the range of preferences and willingness to pay (WTP) for these parks (Santana Dinda, Subrata Ghosh, 2020). The urban park is situated in close proximity to residential areas, typically within a distance of 5 to 10 kilometers. It functions as a focal point for recreational activities and social gatherings for the inhabitants of the urban environment (Suria, Nik Hanita, & Sabrina, 2013). Scholars mostly focus on conducting environmental analyses of urban green spaces or urban open spaces. Additionally, it has been argued that urban parks possess greater socio-economic significance (Cho, Bae, & Sok, 2008). Focusing on examining the presence of green spaces and recreational facilities in disadvantaged communities within major urban regions, it also investigates the perspectives of experts and local residents regarding the condition of these spaces and their consequent effect on recreational access. (Bakar et al., 2016). In addition, urban parks serve not only as sites for the preservation of existing vegetation and

habitats, but also as catalysts for beneficial social and psychological effects on individuals, so contributing to the overall quality of urban areas (Ward, Parker, & Shackleton, 2010; Noriah, Noralizawati, Mohd Hisham, & Mohd Ali Waliyuddin, 2015). Understanding the significance of parks and the various roles they play in urban society is becoming increasingly vital so parks can continue to serve as a vital public benefit and a fundamental component of the urban fabric (Ellis & Schwartz, n.d.). The availability and quality of park facilities and amenities were seen to vary significantly, with socioeconomic factors playing a notable role (Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd, & Payne, 2005). The outflow of air helps to reduce pollution in the city by bringing fresh air from the park to the nearby streets (Eliasson & Upmanis, 2000). Parks can help in mitigating the rising temperatures caused by climate change and urban heat islands by producing an "oasis effect" with considerably lower temperatures (David and Aljabar, 2017).

The primary emphasis of research endeavors lies in the examination of the environmental aspects pertaining to urban green space and urban open space. In addition, urban parks make a substantial contribution to socio-economic values. This article endeavors to analyze the role, benefits, and potential of urban parks in fostering community well-being. Simultaneously, it is relevant to ascertain the extent to which individuals within our communities' place importance on urban parks and the benefits they derive from them. In contrast, the present study established a comprehensive approach to assess the importance of urban parks for urban dwellers. The broad aim of this study is to evaluate the purposes and motives to visit the park. The another is to analyze the variations of park visits in terms of socio-demographic differentiation, park use and their pattern to determine the feasibility of recreational activities, safety issues, park suitability and enhance the park quality to fulfill visitors need.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

This park is known as D.C. Hill Park because the official residence of the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong is situated at the highest point of this hill, and the hill itself is encircled by a park. DC Hill Park was established in 1998. It is located in Nandan Kanan residential area, Kotwoali Thana in Chittagong, Bangladesh. DC Hill Park has a length of 1.02 kilometers. Two sides of this triangular park have roads, but the third side, which is hilly and borders a private area, does not have a road. The area is surrounded by a wall, and there is only one way in and out of the spot. The park is 8.49 acres, and the whole land is 17.92 acres, but almost half of it is not used by the people of Chittagong (Jafrin & Beza, 2018b). Around the circumference of the entire hill, a variety of flowering and fruit-bearing trees of various species have been planted. During the celebrations of Rabindra Jayanti, Nazrul Jayanti, and the Bengali New Year (Pahela Baishakh), this park plays host to a variety of colorful events throughout the day. The park is revered for its historical and cultural significance, and it is a popular gathering spot for Chittagong residents who are passionate about the city's rich cultural heritage.

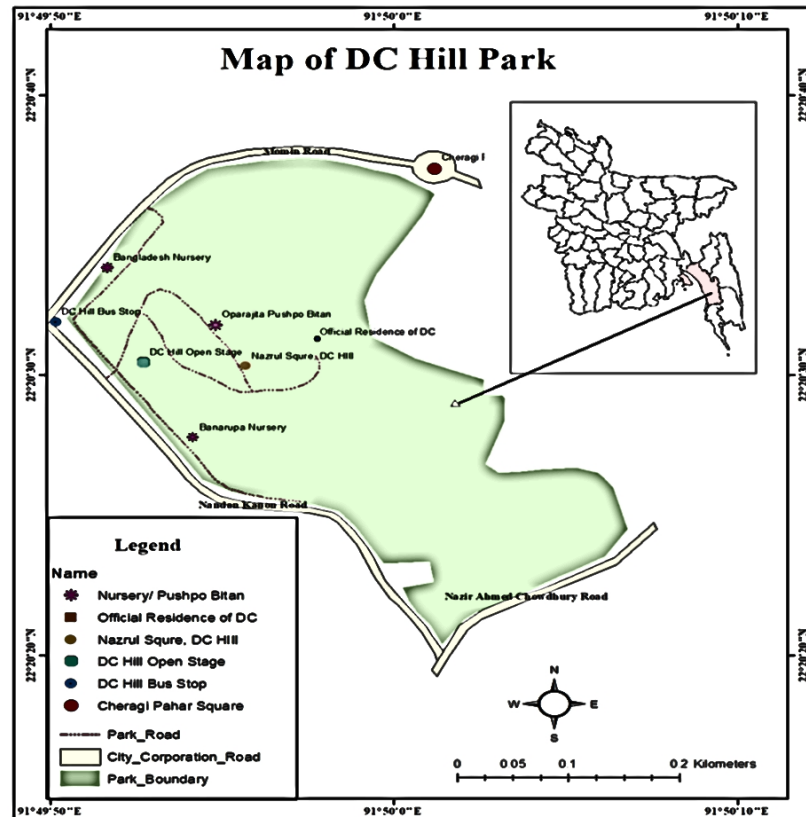


Figure 1: Map of D.C. Hill Park, Chattogram

Methods

This study is about to know how local people are involved and how much they care that having a park nearby of them. A mixed methods is used in the research. Semi-structured interview, oral interview and a visual recognition exercise had been used during the data collection process.

For the study, this research was conducted with the visitors of D.C. Hill Park in Nandan Kanton residential area. The total number of the respondents were 120 in which male 69 and female 51. Among them some were children, some were young, adult, mature and old aged. Respondents from different social background participated in this survey and gave their opinion living in surrounding areas. The sample size ($n=120$) had been taken by applying snowball method for collecting data from park visitors. This study explains snowball sampling as a deliberate technique for gathering data in qualitative research (Naderifar et al., 2017). The sample group expands like a rolling snowball, hence the name "snowball" for this method (Sedgwick, 2013). The survey was conducted using a pre-designed, structured questionnaire. The 20-question survey asks on visitors' demographics (gender, age group, education, occupation), park usage (how often they go, when they go, what brings them there, and why), visitor motivations, and park quality. Both open-ended and closed questions were provided on the survey sheet. Interviews with a semi-structured format were carried out with each of the respondents.

Results

1. Visitor's purposes and motives to visit the park

Park user's and experience is a primary motivation for this study. Health consciousness, environmental outlook, and park use expectations are all reflected in visitors' opinions of park use.

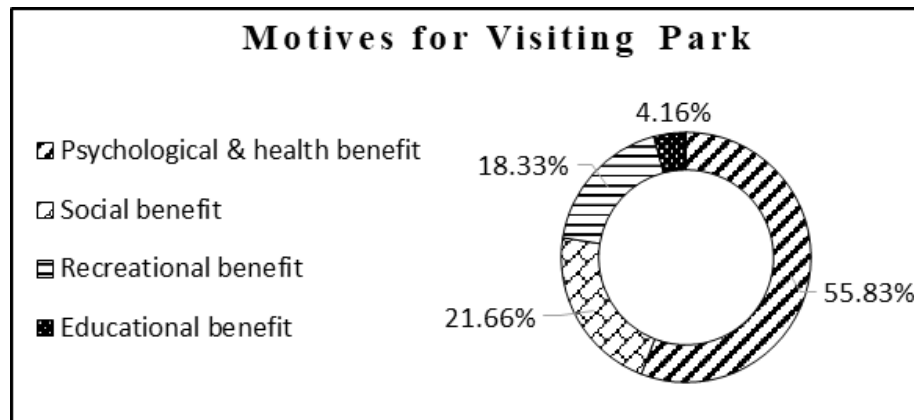


Figure 2: Motives for visiting the park

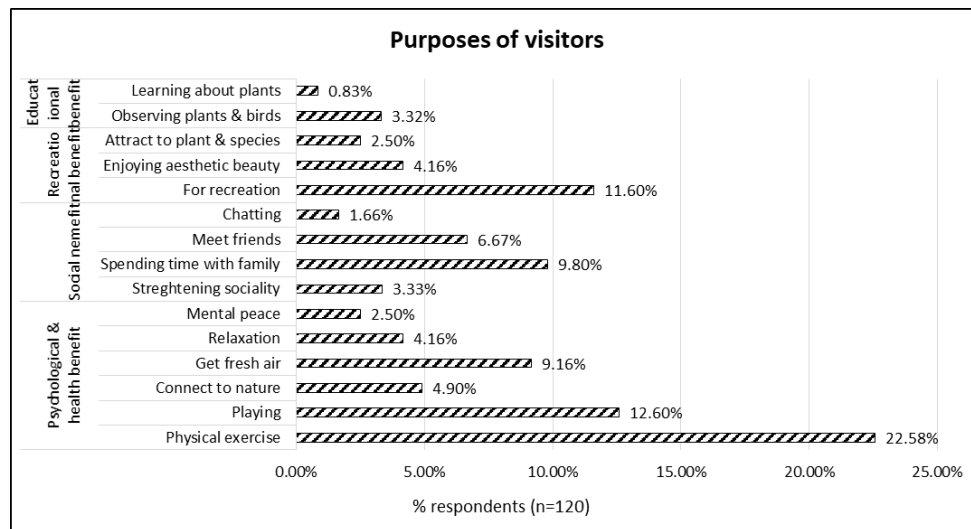


Figure 3: Purpose of visitors by percentage

Participants were surveyed on what inspired them to go to parks. About 21.66% of survey participants were visiting the parks for the purpose of acquiring 'social benefits,' and among those people, the primary intention was to 'spend time with family' (9.9%). Others 6.6% came for the purpose of 'meeting friends,' 3.33% came for the purpose of 'strengthening social bonds,' and 1.6% came for the purpose of 'chatting.' While this was going on, approximately 18.33% of respondents went to the park with the intention of

achieving the goal of 'recreational benefits,' and of those who came, approximately 11.60% came for the purpose of 'recreation,' 4.16% came for the enjoyment of the 'aesthetic beauty' of the park, and 2.50% came because they were 'attracted by the plants and other species.' Despite this, the majority of respondents (55.83% of them) voiced their support for the idea that there are "psychological and health benefits." The most common reasons people travel to natural areas are to "get fresh air" (9.16% of visitors), "get physical exercise" (22.58% of visitors), "play" (12.60% of visitors), "connect to nature" (4.9%), "relax" (4.16%) and "find mental peace" (2.50%). These are the primary means by which visitors seek to achieve "psychological and health benefits." Only two percent of people who participated in the survey said that they attend for the goal of "environmental education." The field research yielded a wide variety of reasons for people to frequent urban parks, which are depicted in the graphs below.

2. Socio-demographic characteristics of park users

Table 1: Socio-demographic survey of visitors (Percentage)

Characteristics of respondents	Percentage
Gender	
Male	57.5
Female	42.5
Age Groups	
<17 (child)	15.8
18-25 (young)	24.16
26-35 (adult)	6.6
36-45 (mature)	13
>55 (aged/old)	40
Education Level	
School	15.8
Collage	32.67
Diploma	16.83
Masters	51.48
Employment Status	
Govt. sector	22.8
Pvt. Sector	31.32
Self-employment	13.25
Student	25
Retired	22.89
Unemployed	9.64

57.5% males and 42.5% women filled out the survey. A total of 120 valid respondents (69 males and 51 females) participated in the survey. Twenty-four percent of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25, while six percent were between the ages of 26 and 35. About 40% of those who participated were considered "elderly" (defined as 55 and older). These individuals have a greater consciousness of the importance of health and wellness. About 16.83% of responders have a Diploma, and 51.48 % have a Master's. However, we discovered that a larger percentage of respondents had graduated high school (32.67%) or

college (15.8%). Despite the fact that most visitors to the park are working in the private (31.32%) or public (22.8%) sectors, once they have finished their day's job they head there to unwind and have fun. A quarter of the visitors here are students here to unwind. Therefore, the demographic analysis can confirm that almost all age groups, educational levels, and occupational groupings frequent the urban park.

3. Park uses and their pattern

Visit frequency to the park: The findings shown that the community members visited the parks on a regular basis (Fig. 4). Approximately 17% of respondents said they visited parks 'one or two times a week,' while about 13.30% said they came at their own desired period, after completing their official or other works, and when they were free from their work responsibilities. On the other hand, approximately 43 % of respondents come every day for a morning stroll or exercise in the morning, and then they play in the afternoon. Approximately 11% of respondents go to the park once or twice a month, and about 16% go there once or twice a year to take part in the cultural activities and celebrations that are held there.

Preferred day for visit: The parks often offer a variety of recreational possibilities to visitors, thus going to a city park, particularly on the weekends and holidays, is now thought of as a method to pass the time. 38% of those polled said they would prefer to go to the park every day. 23% of respondents said that weekends were their preferred time to visit parks. However, roughly 18% of respondents said they went to the park on vacations, and others said they went on a special day.

Visitation during the day: The morning and afternoon hours saw the greatest number of visitors to the parks, with 45% and 35% of users respectively. According to the thoughts of those who participated in the survey, because respondents were busy with their regular responsibilities throughout the day, the optimum time to go to parks was in the morning and afternoon. The majority of them go there to get some exercise by walking about and enjoying the fresh air. Evening visits account for around 18% of total daily traffic. Despite this, a sizable number of guests (8% of total visits) frequent the parks during the evening hours.

Mode of transport: The city has excellent accessibility to public transportation because to its well-connected network of roads. However, because the park is located in a residential area and the vast majority of dwellings are located in close proximity to the park, a significant portion of park visitors (34%) choose to walk there. These individuals live in close proximity to the parks and make it a habit to visit them on a daily basis. Rickshaws are used by approximately 27.30% of tourists to cover shorter distances. 14% of visitors to the park drive there, with families making up the majority of those visitors. About 12% of respondents, the majority of whom are youngsters and young adults, get to the park on bicycle, while 15% of respondents take public transportation there.

Travel duration: The majority of visitors, approximately 27.50%, come from distances of less than five minutes, which indicates that they are residents of surrounding residential areas that are included in the park's service area. 21.60% of people had to travel a distance

of between 6 and 10 minutes to get to the park from their residential location. 19.16% of people are traveling from a distance of 11-15 minutes, and 16.60% are traveling from a distance of 16-20 minutes from where they live. Only about 15 percent of visitors will travel between 21 and 30 minutes to get to the parks. However, there were also visitors who came from more suburban regions in order to appreciate the natural surroundings.

Accompany for park visits: The vast majority of respondents go to the parks with other people, most frequently with their families (36.33%) or their friends (39.67%). There are only 11.33 percent of people who go to the park by themselves, and the majority of them go there to walk or exercise in the morning. Their intention was to take pleasure in the natural beauty of the setting.

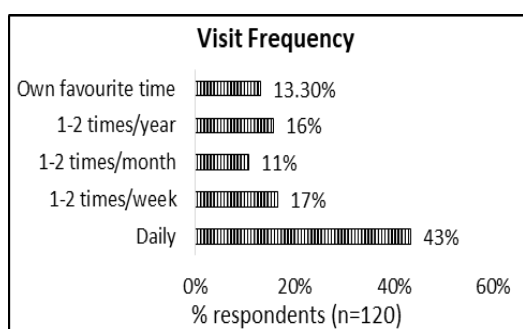


Figure 4: Visit frequency of respondents

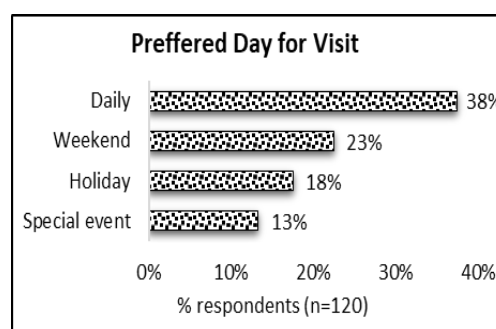


Figure 5: Preferable day for visit the park

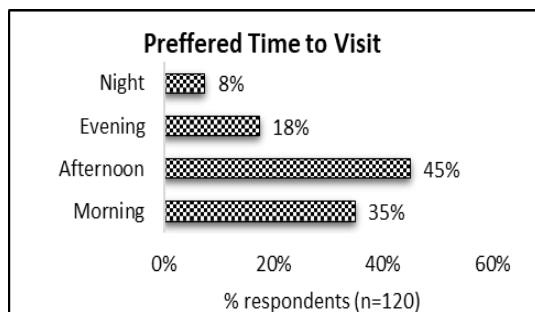


Figure 6: Preferable time to visit in a day

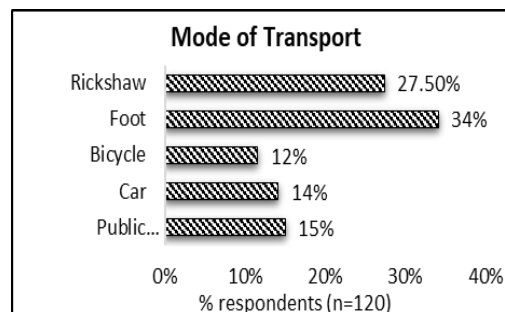


Figure 7: Transport used by respondents

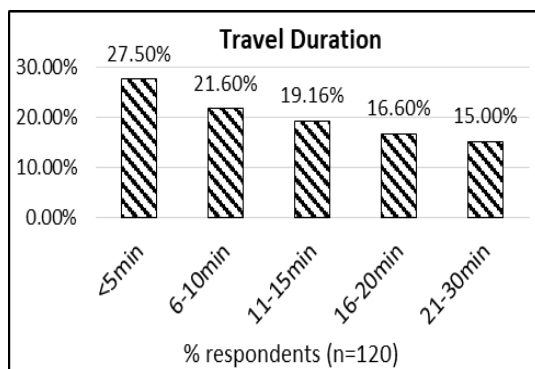


Figure 8: Travel duration from home to park

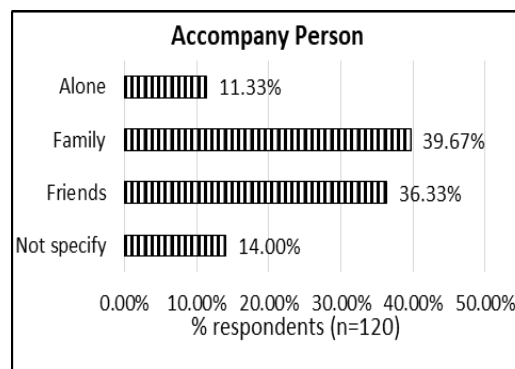


Figure 9: Accompany person of respondents

4. Criteria for park quality

Respondents were asked their opinions on seven criteria, including the presence of water bodies, historical significance, historical significance, sanitation facility, park safety, noise influence, children's playground, and park safety. These criteria will be used to measure the quality of the park, and the authorities will be able to use this information to provide appropriate services for visitors. The opinions of park visitors were gathered with the purpose of conducting research on the park's level of excellence (Yes, No).

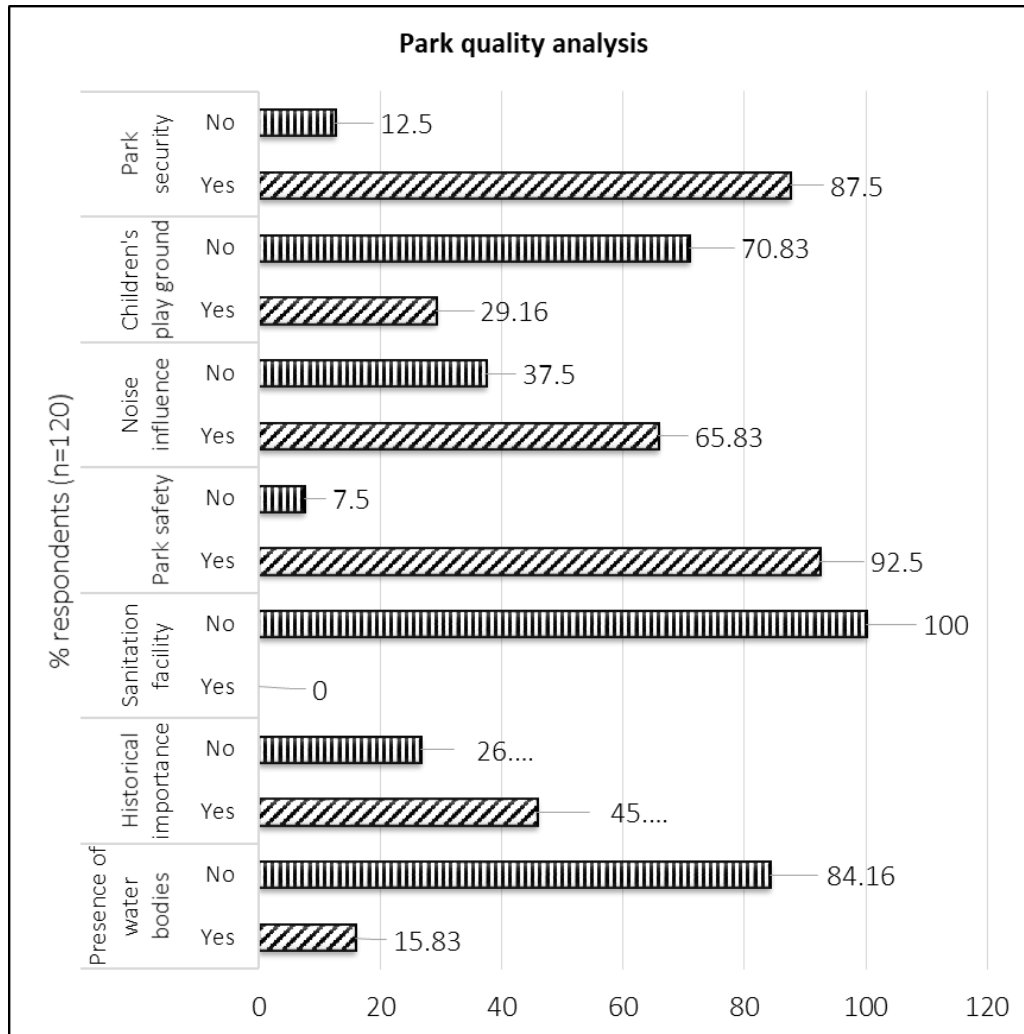


Figure 10: Seven criteria to measure park quality

When asked about the first criterion, "availability of water bodies," 84.16% of respondents selected the "No" option; this indicates that the park is in need of the installation of water sources. Both the yes and no answers to the second criterion, which is "historical

importance," have relatively little distinctions between them. The third category is referred to as the "sanitation facility," and all of the respondents gave it a poor rating. They asked that there should be safe and well-organized sanitation in the park area. 92.5 percent of guests, or nearly all of them, express satisfaction with the 'park safety.' Because the park is located adjacent to the road, people have voiced concerns that the "noise influence" poses a problem not only for themselves but also for the birds and other creatures that inhabit the park. Children and others of young age make up a significant portion of the visitors, who have expressed a desire to see an expansion of the area designated as a "children's playground." Approximately 87.5% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the 'park security,' and others proposed increasing the level of stringency in park security.

Our results show that the satisfaction of visitors did not affect how many people went to the park. It could be that going to city parks has become a habit for visitors, regardless of how happy they are, or that there aren't any other urban parks nearby. Even though visitors' happiness didn't have a big effect on how often they went to the park, the survey showed that most people like D.C. Hill Park. This is because D.C. Hill has considerably greenery and a humid climate, and policies that help people to mitigate their demand from an urban green space.

Discussion

The first step in defining a space is to differentiate between unbounded and confined areas, the former of which must be maintained in a tamed, park-like fashion and the latter of which has more leeway to be wild, hazardous, and natural. The landform, ecology, hydrology, and climate of an unbounded area determine its physical character, while the causes for a bounded area are primarily anthropogenic. Municipally owned, paved, landscaped, and strictly administered, contemporary parks can have a wide range of human-centered designs. More green space and parks make towns and neighborhoods more desirable to live in. When people are able to spend time in parks, they are able to benefit from the positive effects of nature on their mental and physical wellbeing. The value of surrounding homes is also raised.

- ✓ Age, gender, and level of education are only a few of the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists that significantly impact their access to various forms of entertainment. When compared to male visitors, females are underrepresented at the urban park. This is sometimes attributed to a lack of facilities, personal safety, information, and even companions.



Photo 1: Nursery



Photo 2: Walking way middle of the nursery



Photo 3: Walking path middle of the park



Photo 4: Nazrul Mancha



Photo 5: Nazrul historic note



Photo 6: Cultural activity area

- ✓ In line with previous research, we found that people aged 55 and up participated in more physical activities than those aged 18 to 34. In a similar vein, one's educational background plays a major role in determining whether or not one has access to the parks. As for respondents' educational backgrounds, the current study indicated that around 51.48 percent of visitors had completed graduation. Additionally, park visits are affected by the factors such as proximity, accessibility, travel options, journey time, and transportation expenses. According to our research, most people walk the 5-10 minutes it takes to get there. However, the number of visitors, especially those from far away, tends to drop as the distance to urban parks grows.
- ✓ The awareness of park visitors is a major factor in determining the reasons they attend to parks and willing to pay for visits. According to the findings of the present study, people plan to visit parks in order to get the 'psychological and health benefits'. Approximately 14.1% of respondents believe that parks are good places to inhale fresh air, and approximately 13.3% of respondents agreed that parks are the places where they can be connected with nature. Environmental education and awareness are now a required part of the school curriculum in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government hope that this will help people to aware of the advantages of maintaining a healthy relationship with their natural surroundings.
- ✓ In addition, the quality of the park is linked to the enjoyment of doing recreational activities in the park. Because shopping malls, multiplex theaters, and museums are already popular destinations in Bangladesh for leisure activities, the quality and amenities of a city park has to be on par with those of these other types of establishments. The quality of the park and the level of people's awareness are the primary factors that influence visitors' reasons for going there. An advanced environmental knowledge of functions of green space is the necessary components of environmental consciousness.
- ✓ Among the seven selected factors for park quality, the presence of a water body, the availability of sanitation facilities, the number of children's playgrounds, and the degree of noise all received greater levels of unfavorable preferences. It was discovered that the respondents, particularly females were more conscious about their safety and security in relation to the facilities they used. As a result of the provision of these services, parks have become increasingly popular destinations for people living in urban area. The parks' service areas are likewise determined by these criteria to some extent.

Researchers found that the quality of a park and its facilities are strong predictors of how often people went to parks and how pleased they are with them. According to the findings, people's perceptions of the value of city parks depend on a range of factors, including their own personal aesthetic tastes and the positive effects on the environment. The study also indicated that people had a favorable view of the environment, which highlights the growing significance of urban parks and green space alongside other leisure opportunities. Parks need to be built and kept in a standard quality so that people in that area choose to give a visit. These criterions also showed up how the quality of green spaces affects the health and well-being of the communities in urban societies.

Conclusion

The maintenance of a community's exposure to nature, the community's bonding and communication, the improvement of the community's environment, and individual members' physical and mental health are all key needs that can be met by parks as green open spaces. The phases involved in the planning, design, and development of a park can be more easily navigated with the help of an understanding of what aspects of the design are most important. In this study, we introduced the sustainability metrics, attribute counts, and priority configurations for each of the several types of parks that are known through global standards for the planning and defining of park lands. Increasing the number of people who visit public parks is an essential issue that has a significant positive impact on human health (physical, mental, and physiological) since it brings more people into contact with natural settings. When a park is used, it indicates that the park need upkeep so that its areas continue to attract visitors and so that the natural environment of the park can be preserved. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for the governmental entity responsible for the development of parks to strike a sustainable balance between the utilization of park environment and facilities and their preservation. In 2016, David E. conducted a study with the goal of better comprehending the connection that exists between park utilization and safety concerns. According to the findings of the study, there is in fact a connection between the usability of parks and the safety of the areas they contain. The more a park is utilized, the safer the surrounding region is thought to be; therefore, individuals are required to have a sense of safety in order to utilize the park. Developing nations, on the other hand, do not appear to be aware of the fact that frequenting public parks might contribute to the region's economic, cultural, and social growth. The results of the questionnaire suggest that in order to increase the usability of public parks, park spaces should be served to the varied interests of a variety of users. These interests range from recreational areas (both active and passive) and educational spaces to cultural events that attract tourists and increase a sense of place in urban residents. In addition, environmental treatment ought to be added to the safeguarding of plants and the habitat of species. Particularly in underdeveloped nations, there is a need for studies that compare city parks' comfort indices, examine the relation between visitors' aesthetic preferences and the landscape quality of parks, assess the positive effects of parks on visitors' mental health and wellbeing, and calculate the economic value of parks' recreational ecosystem services. However, as urbanization spreads throughout Bangladesh, natural features like wetlands and open fields are being destroyed. One way to experience greenery and nature in the city is to visit a park. As a result, it is reasonable to predict that parks will be prioritized in future city planning because of the growing public awareness of the benefits of parks and green spaces, which in turn shows the people's strong conviction to the environment.

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