NAVIGATING THE PUBLIC SPACES: A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF ACTIVE AGEING AMONG OLDER WOMEN

Mohsin R*

Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, Faculty of Social Science, Aligarh Muslim University, India

Abstract: In the phase of rapid urbanisation and a global rise in the ageing population, creating public spaces conducive to the well-being of the elderly population has become a pressing global concern. This study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the experiences of older women as they navigate public spaces within the framework of active ageing. Through a gendered analysis, the study aims to illuminate the unique dynamics that shape the daily encounters of older women in the public realm. The literature review reveals a gap in research concerning the intersection of gender, active ageing, and public spaces. This study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating in-depth interviews and observations to capture the nuanced interplay between gender, ageing, and public spaces. The interviews offer a personal perspective, allowing older women to share their stories and challenges while navigating various public spaces. Observations conducted in diverse urban settings provide a contextual backdrop, offering a visual understanding of the physical and social factors influencing the active ageing experiences of older women. The study is divided into two parts: the first deals with the gendered dynamics of public spaces, while the second part incorporates the contribution of public spaces in the active ageing process for older women. The study found that the experiences of older women in navigating public spaces vary widely based on factors such as location, cultural context, and individual circumstances. The respondents experienced physical challenges, safety concerns, transportation issues, social isolation, ageism and gender stereotyping, lack of accommodation and financial constraints as they moved through public spaces. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on active ageing by offering a gendered lens that enriches the understanding of older women's complexities in navigating public spaces.

Keywords: active ageing, older women, public spaces, well-being, social isolation.

Introduction

Establishing public spaces that promote the welfare of the elderly has become an urgent worldwide necessity during an era characterised by rapid urbanisation and a worldwide increase in the elderly population. The percentage of individuals aged 60 and above is expected to rise substantially by 2050, doubling from the rate documented in 2006 to 22%, as per projections by the World Health Organization (WHO). Similarly, the United Nations Population Fund's India Ageing Report 2023 projects that by 2050, 20.8% of India's population will be aged 60 or older, representing a substantial increase in this demographic. The concurrent issue of efficiently providing care for an ageing population is brought about by rising life expectancies and declining fertility rates in numerous countries, including India.

*Corresponding Author's Email: *mohsinrubab00@gmail.com*

The World Health Organization (WHO) promotes urban development plans that endorse the well-being of the elderly, aiming to create age-friendly cities where older adults can lead active and healthy lives and actively participate in society. An essential aspect of this undertaking is the provision of easily accessible transportation, infrastructure, and spaces outdoors, which enable elderly people to engage in external activities independently. Although ageing is universal, its expressions are frequently altered by different circumstances, particularly gender. It is worth mentioning that there are more older women than older males, particularly in India. People in India who are 60 years old expect to live an extra 18.3 years, with women living somewhat longer at 19 years compared to men who live approximately 17.5 years. Within the framework of India's low female labour force participation rate, those who lack social and economic stability are more susceptible to elder abuse. As urban development stories progress, it becomes increasingly important to consider the needs and experiences of older individuals, particularly older women.

HelpAge India's report highlights those older women in India encounter significant challenges concerning financial insecurity, restricted access to social security, and obstacles in healthcare, digital inclusivity, and community engagement. The findings indicate that older women face a greater probability of poverty, encounter limited access to pensions, and frequently lack adequate social support. These elements exacerbate their vulnerability and hinder their capacity to move through public spaces autonomously. The findings from HelpAge India highlight that these economic and social challenges create isolation for elderly women, limiting their full participation in community life and heightening their dependency on others for access to essential services (HelpAge India Report 2023).

Elderly women face unique difficulties arising from age-related and gender-specific factors, encompassing areas such as physical movement, availability of necessary services, personal security, and chances for social interaction. To effectively tackle these difficulties, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of how age and gender intersect in urban environments. Participating in activities outside their homes promotes social connection among older adults, thereby improving their general well-being. Developing an environment that prioritizes elderly people's needs is becoming increasingly crucial. By examining these intersecting issues, this study aims to shed light on the lived experiences of elderly women in Aligarh City, thereby contributing valuable insights into the complexities of ageing and gender in Indian urban settings.

Literature Review

Several studies emphasise the significance of outdoor environments as settings for social interactions among the elderly and underscore the role of quality public spaces in facilitating social integration and enhancing overall health and social networks. Srichuae et al., (2016) highlight the importance of age-friendly urban environments and inclusive transportation systems in supporting the ageing population's mobility and active participation in community life. Efforts to create age-friendly cities emphasise collaborative partnerships and proactive policymaking in redesigning public spaces, healthcare services, and housing concepts (Van Hoof et al., 2018).

Noon & Liat Ayalon (2017), Gomez & Lebrusan (2022), and Zhang et al., (2022) focus on the importance of social interaction and well-being in public spaces for older adults, particularly women. Lampinen & Heikkinen (2003) found that good mobility is associated with fewer depression

symptoms in older individuals living in the community. Mobility issues and older age increase the likelihood of developing depressive symptoms. Pasaogullari & Doratli (2004), Kellet & Rofe (2010), Sugiyama & Thompson (2007), and Turel et al., (2007) emphasise the significant role of public open spaces and parks in enhancing the well-being of communities, particularly for older adults. These spaces foster social interaction, relaxation, and active living, contributing to a healthier and more fulfilling ageing experience.

Nonetheless, there exists a scarcity of literature addressing the availability and accessibility of age-friendly facilities in India. Indian cities encounter distinct infrastructural and socio-economic challenges that can profoundly affect the elderly, especially older women. The report released by HelpAge India in 2023 offers a comprehensive examination of the social, financial, and health-related difficulties encountered by the elderly population in India, highlighting the necessity for infrastructure and services that are conducive to their specific requirements. This underscores the impact of inadequate infrastructure on mobility, social interactions, and overall quality of life. (HelpAge India, 2023).

Adlakha et.al., (2020) offers important perspectives on how neighbourhood environments contribute to active ageing among older adults in urban India, specifically examining the cities of New Delhi and Chennai. The findings highlight the significance of accessible amenities such as transportation, parks, and green spaces, which are crucial for fostering social interaction and encouraging physical activity. The research underscores a significant deficiency in urban planning in India, which frequently neglects the creation of age-friendly environments, even as the nation's elderly population continues to expand.

Jahangir. S (2018) examines how parks and green spaces contribute to social interactions, relaxation, and light physical activity among elderly men residing in urban environments. This underscores the significance of these environments as essential social centres for older men who might experience isolation from their families and the broader community. Parks facilitate the development of community connections and promote significant interactions among individuals. The research highlights the critical role of parks in promoting the social and emotional well-being of elderly men residing in urban environments.

Gaikwad, A., & Shinde, K. (2019) explore the role of a neighbourhood park in Pune, India in facilitating active ageing, integrating physical activity with social interaction for senior citizens. The findings indicate that parks promote health benefits and social support by facilitating group interactions through a mixed-methods approach. The research underscores the significance of incorporating parks into urban planning that cater to older adults, thereby enhancing their overall well-being.

This research employs a perception-based methodology to explore the requirements of senior citizens for age-friendly urban environments in India. Utilising focus group discussions, a questionnaire survey, and Ridit analysis, this study identifies and ranks indicators of age-friendliness according to the perceptions and preferences of seniors. The findings offer a prioritised checklist of indicators spanning social, physical, and economic dimensions, along with targeted recommendations for policy interventions. This research provides significant insights for the planning of urban communities that more effectively accommodate ageing populations. (Sarkar, B., & Banerji, H., 2023)

The collective findings from these studies centred on India highlight a significant deficiency in age-friendly infrastructure within urban settings, underscoring the obstacles that elderly women encounter as a result of insufficient inclusive and accessible public amenities. This research expands upon the current body of literature by examining the experiences of older women in Aligarh, highlighting the essential requirement for urban planning initiatives that address the specific needs of India's elderly female demographic.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the issues and challenges (infrastructural, attitudinal, gender stereotyping, safety, and security) older women face in public spaces through gendered analysis.

- To examine the contribution of public spaces to the active ageing process of older women in Aligarh City.

Methodology

The study employed exploratory research methods to analyze the data about older women's experiences in public spaces in Aligarh City, Uttar Pradesh. The methodology used was empirical in nature, emphasizing direct data collection from the field to gain insights into the participants' lived experiences. The study originally aimed to employ a mixed-method approach. However, to capture the depth of participants' lived experiences, it evolved into a purely qualitative study, utilizing observation and in-depth interviews as the primary data collection methods. This modification yielded comprehensive, narrative information that corresponds with the research objectives.

The research sample initially consisted of fifty respondents, all of whom were 60-year-old females residing in Aligarh City. The sample size was increased from fifty to eighty respondents during the revision process to enrich the diversity and depth of the data collected. This adjustment was made to achieve data saturation across varied demographic and socio-economic groups, thereby enhancing the reliability and comprehensiveness of the study findings.

The study adopted a qualitative approach, employing both observation and personal interviews with the respondents. The researchers used a random sampling technique to select various public spaces within Aligarh City, ensuring a diverse representation of urban environments.

The research methodology centred on utilizing an interview schedule supplemented by participant observation. The interview schedule was designed to facilitate in-depth conversations with the respondents, allowing them to share their stories, challenges, and perceptions regarding their experiences in public spaces. The use of participant observation complemented the interview process, providing researchers with additional contextual insights into the behaviours and interactions of older women in public settings.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were prioritized to ensure the well-being and confidentiality of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participating in the study, and their anonymity and privacy were strictly maintained. Researchers adhered to ethical guidelines and protocols to conduct the research ethically and responsibly.

Result and Discussion

Through a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of older women navigating public spaces, this study unveils a rich tapestry of insights into the intricate interplay between gender dynamics, ageing, and urban environments. Drawing upon in-depth interviews and observational data collected from diverse urban settings, our findings illuminate the nuanced challenges and opportunities older women encounter as they engage with public spaces within the active ageing framework.

Present findings on Gender Dynamics of Public Spaces

The gendered characteristics of public spaces present distinct challenges for older women, influencing their experiences and constraining their agency in these settings. This section examines how societal expectations, safety concerns, access to resources, and social interactions distinctly influence the participation of older women in urban public spaces.

Social Expectations and Norms

Older women often navigate public spaces within the framework of societal expectations and gender norms, which influence their behaviour, mobility, and sense of safety. Interviews revealed that older women feel constrained by traditional gender roles, leading to self-imposed limitations on their activities and interactions in public settings.

A significant number of respondents expressed the belief that conventional gender norms influenced their ability to dress or act in manners that could attract attention. The expectation to adhere to conservative appearances highlights the ongoing societal scrutiny that restricts the self-expression of older women, even in informal environments such as parks or markets. The data indicate a widespread expectation for older women to adopt a restrained demeanour in public, highlighting the lasting influence of gendered norms on their autonomy. Respondents shared that, *"attending public events can be awkward. There's a subtle but pervasive expectation that older women should dress conservatively and avoid drawing attention. When we wear something colourful or trendy, we get comments about how we should dress 'appropriately' for our age."*

The findings presented here are consistent with extensive research indicating that societal expectations frequently impose limiting roles on older women, thereby affecting their comfort and participation in public spaces (Noon & Ayalon, 2017).

Safety Concerns and Risk Perception

Safety concerns emerged as a significant issue for older women navigating public spaces, with many expressing apprehensions about personal security and fear of harassment or violence. During interviews, instances were observed where older women adopted precautionary measures such as avoiding certain areas or altering their routes to mitigate perceived risks.

The consideration of safety has become a significant element affecting the decisions of older women regarding their engagement with public spaces. Participants frequently indicated an increased awareness of environments characterised by inadequate lighting, overcrowding, or insufficient security protocols, particularly during the evening hours. It has been observed that markets and bus

stops are often highlighted as locations where safety issues are exacerbated by overcrowding and insufficient lighting. The data indicated that numerous older women employed precautionary strategies, including selecting well-lit areas and refraining from travelling alone after sunset. The diverse perceptions of safety—such as experiencing a sense of security in bustling daytime markets while feeling apprehensive in secluded areas or during nighttime—underscore how older women manoeuvre through urban environments influenced by their perceived vulnerabilities. The findings presented here are consistent with existing literature, highlighting that safety concerns can profoundly influence women's mobility, particularly in urban environments characterised by insufficient infrastructure (Pain, 2001).

The responses highlight the critical role of context-specific safety interventions, given that safety perceptions fluctuated based on the environment and the time of day. The findings underscore the importance of developing safer, well-maintained environments, which could greatly improve the mobility and independence of older women.

Access to Resources and Facilities

Gender disparities in access to resources and facilities within public spaces were also evident in the findings, where older women face barriers to amenities such as public restrooms, seating areas, and transportation. Interviews revealed instances where older women face difficulties accessing essential services or facilities due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of accommodations for mobility aids, or inaccessible design features.

Many participants noted that the absence of accessible amenities, including restrooms, seating, and transport options, posed significant challenges for older women. Participants consistently conveyed that these shortcomings restricted their capacity to remain in public areas for prolonged durations, affecting both their physical comfort and social engagement. As they traverse the outdoor places, the absence of accessible toilets poses a significant problem because, in old age, holding urine is a major issue. The need for more facilities catering to their specific needs creates a discomforting experience, adding an extra layer of difficulty to their daily routines.

A more thorough examination indicates that the absence of fundamental amenities transcends mere practical inconvenience; it constitutes a form of exclusion that deliberately deters older women from engaging with these environments. This exclusionary design reflects the findings in studies focused on age-friendly cities, highlighting the critical importance of accessible infrastructure for promoting active ageing (World Health Organisation, 2007). To foster inclusivity, it is imperative that urban planning takes into account these practical necessities, guaranteeing that essential amenities are both accessible and properly maintained to facilitate ongoing participation in public spaces.

Social Interactions

Older women's experiences of social interaction in public spaces were influenced by gender dynamics, with many reporting encounters marked by ageism, gender stereotyping, or invisibility. Gender stereotypes that older women face in public spaces impact their ability to engage fully and equally in community life.

"*As older women, we often feel invisible when we are out in public. It's like we've faded into the background. People rarely acknowledge us, and it's difficult to get assistance when we need it. Many times, we have to stand in a store for what felt like an eternity, trying to get the attention of a sales associate, but younger customers were served immediately while we overlooked*", respondents shared.

Observations revealed instances where older women faced exclusion or marginalisation in social settings, highlighting the need for inclusive and supportive environments that foster meaningful connections and social participation.

For example., In Aligarh, residents have proactively set up community centres within their buildings. These centres are communal hubs where older men and other residents gather for conversations on various topics. However, despite their inclusive nature, there is a concern about excluding older women in these community discussions. Despite the lively community involvement, there is an apparent lack of female participation in these discussions, suggesting a type of gender bias in these environments. While these community centres promote social connections and conversations among male residents, it is important to also focus on including older women. This will allow them to participate in and enjoy the social events in these residential areas. Promoting community initiatives that include all genders can improve the overall well-being and unity of the residents in these areas.

This indicates that social inclusion plays a crucial role in enhancing psychological well-being in older adults, highlighting the importance of creating environments that are inclusive of various age groups and genders (Buffel & Phillipson, 2016). To address the issue of social exclusion, it is essential to thoughtfully design and manage public spaces that foster intergenerational interaction, thereby providing older women with significant opportunities for engagement within the community.

Challenges Faced by Older Women in Public Spaces

Exploring challenges the older women face in public places encompasses various aspects of their daily lives, spanning activities such as travelling, working, shopping, socialising, attending to familial responsibilities, and enjoying leisure time. This section delves into the pervasive issues related to the poor quality of public places within Aligarh, particularly regarding accessibility concerns for banks, hospitals, markets, transportation, etc.

Physical Challenges

A central concern highlighted by respondents revolves around streets and roads, often congested with cars and other vehicles. These environments are described as unhealthy, unwelcoming, and unsafe. Navigating through busy roads becomes a daunting task for them, who express the need to step into traffic when there is insufficient space on the sidewalks. The prevalence of broken and uneven pavements further exacerbates the challenges, as they risk falling and sustaining injuries.

While interviewing, a 65-year-old lady said that she had been hit by a bike while she was walking on the sidewalks as she came from the hospital. Though her son was sick, she went to the hospital alone to avoid bothering him.

Respondents often indicated that sidewalks plagued by cracks or obstructed by parked vehicles, vendors, or debris not only impeded their mobility but also posed a persistent risk of tripping and

injury. For certain individuals, these challenges proved to be particularly tough due to their limited mobility or chronic conditions that rendered them more susceptible to falls. Consequently, they perceived that their autonomy was undermined by a setting that failed to accommodate their requirements. The individuals expressed that traversing their customary path to the market had become progressively challenging due to the decline in the condition of the pathways, necessitating a marked reduction in their pace and a heightened awareness of each step taken. Additionally, these concerns were reiterated, highlighting the necessity to skip specific routes entirely. The perspectives presented underscore a prevalent issue: the physical environment frequently limits the mobility and independence of older women, which in turn affects their confidence in navigating through urban areas. The findings highlight the importance of urban planning that emphasises accessibility and safety, especially for vulnerable populations who depend on well-maintained infrastructure to maintain active and independent lifestyles.

Transportation Issues

One of the challenges older women face in public places is transport facilities. The public road transport system needed several aspects: bus stations, bus designs (high steps), overcrowding, route number display, overcharging, and misbehaviour by route operators. Additionally, the apathy of co-passengers and challenges faced by the elderly during nighttime travel were significant barriers identified by those relying on public transport. In several locations, one of the respondents added that no alternative arrangements were provided during the renovation of bus stations, leading to inconvenience for older passengers. Some older women expressed concerns about rarely leaving the house except for hospital visits or significant family events. Many older women felt apprehensive about travelling by themselves on buses or in auto-rickshaws. Many older women had unpleasant experiences while travelling solo.

A 68-year-old retired teacher shares her experience. The primary concern is the lack of designated seating for older individuals, especially women. On numerous occasions, she had to remain standing throughout the entire bus journey due to the unavailability of seats, resulting in her feeling fatigued upon reaching her destination. She advocates for enhancing the care of the elderly by proposing the introduction of designated seating to improve the comfort and well-being of older passengers. In Aligarh, there are currently no regulations regarding reserved seats for the elderly on buses.

Contribution of Public Spaces to the Active Ageing

Public spaces are critical in promoting active ageing by providing opportunities for older adults to engage in physical, social, and cultural activities that enhance their overall well-being. Here are some ways in which public spaces contribute to active ageing:

Parks and Community Centres in their locality

The social engagement opportunities for older individuals in Aligarh are quite restricted. Older women are spending more time on household chores than older men, leaving them with little time for leisure or recreational activities. Older women's lifestyles don't emphasise community involvement and social connection outside the home. Nevertheless, the scenario only applies to some participants, while some respondents socialise with others.

Some residential complexes feature dedicated parks and green spaces designed for the enjoyment of residents of all ages, including the elderly and children. These thoughtfully planned spaces encourage activities such as playing, jogging, walking, and exercising, fostering a healthy and active lifestyle. Some female respondents residing in such areas can visit parks for regular walks.

Public Parks

Research findings indicate that older women mainly engage in social activities within family-oriented environments. Local parks and neighbourhood areas are the primary public domains where older women communicate. The observed social interactions include unplanned conversations, strolling, and family gatherings.

The results highlight the importance of family-centred social events for older women and emphasise the role of community areas such as parks in promoting their social contacts. Informal discussions and leisure activities enhance older women's connection and overall health, creating a supportive atmosphere in their local communities. The focus on family-centred interactions highlights the importance of strong relationships and community ties in influencing the social environment of older women, where these settings operate as crucial centres for communication and participation in many daily activities.

Some respondents mentioned that they only visited a local park for a walk with their neighbours in the mornings because the park was closed for the rest of the day. They added that they have a group of older women who exercise together and discuss various topics related to religion and other issues. They believed that social interactions play a role in countering feelings of loneliness and isolation, which positively impact their mental well-being, reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Varied Experiences and Intersectionality

Navigating public spaces presents diverse experiences for older women, shaped by intersecting factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, health, safety concerns, and gender expectations. For affluent older women, access to private transportation and well-maintained neighbourhoods provide a sense of security and comfort. At the same time, those from low-income backgrounds face challenges with inadequate infrastructure and unsafe surroundings.

For some older women, public spaces serve as employment workspaces. Many individuals find purpose and fulfilment in contributing to the community, and public spaces provide avenues for them to offer their skills, knowledge, and time. This involvement allows them to stay active and reinforces their sense of purpose and value within society.

During interviews, some elderly female respondents aged 60 and above work hard to support their families. These people work as domestic workers and applique workers and sell different things. They shared that they don't have much free time because they constantly work to ensure their families have what they need to survive. Whether working in different houses as a maid or selling items, their days are filled with labour, leaving little time for relaxation or leisure activities.

One of the female respondents, a 65-year-old widowed, was selling 'roasted gram' in a government hospital in Aligarh for her survival. Despite having children, she emphasises the necessity to work for

her livelihood. She expressed a sense of responsibility: *"Since my husband passed away, I've been selling [roasted gram]. Why would I need to do this if he was here?"* This story provides a glimpse into the complex dynamics of elderly individuals, particularly widows, who navigate the challenges of financial independence and survival without spousal support.

By recognising the diverse experiences and intersectional identities of older women, policymakers and urban planners can work towards creating more inclusive and accessible public spaces that promote the active engagement and well-being of all members of society, regardless of age, gender, or background.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the intersection of gender and active ageing in urban environments. By examining the experiences of older women as they navigate public spaces, the research sheds light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by this demographic group.

One significant contribution of this study is recognising the gendered nature of active ageing experiences. Older women encounter distinct obstacles and dynamics in public spaces that are shaped by societal expectations, cultural norms, and gendered roles. For example, older women face safety concerns or encounter ageist stereotypes that limit their mobility and participation in community life.

Moreover, the study highlights the intersectional nature of ageing experiences, acknowledging how factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and disability intersect with gender to influence older women's interactions with public spaces. For instance, older women from marginalised backgrounds face compounded challenges due to intersecting forms of discrimination.

The findings also underscore the importance of addressing gender disparities in access to and use of public spaces. Older women often encounter barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited transportation options, and lack of inclusive amenities. Addressing these disparities requires gender-sensitive approaches to urban planning and design that prioritise the needs and preferences of older women.

Furthermore, the study's findings have implications for policy and practice in promoting active ageing. By understanding older women's unique experiences and preferences, policymakers can develop interventions that foster inclusivity and accessibility in public spaces. For example, initiatives such as age-friendly cities and gender-responsive urban planning can enhance the quality of life for older women by creating environments that support their autonomy and well-being.

Ultimately, the findings of this study empower older women to assert their agency and voice in public spaces. By amplifying the experiences of older women and advocating for gender-inclusive approaches, the research contributes to a more equitable and inclusive vision of ageing in urban environments.

This study lays the groundwork for understanding the gendered dimensions of active ageing. Future research could deepen insights by investigating regional and cross-cultural differences in the experiences of older women in public spaces, considering both urban and rural settings. Furthermore, longitudinal studies have the potential to examine how the ageing process over time affects these

interactions, offering a comprehensive perspective on the changing needs. Investigating the impact of digital technologies, such as mobile applications and online social networks, could uncover strategies to improve accessibility and foster social inclusion for older women. Investigating particular policy interventions like enhanced lighting, assigned seating on public transport, and accessible infrastructure has the potential to provide valuable insights for creating inclusive, age-friendly public spaces. Advancing research in these areas has the potential to greatly enhance the formulation of policies that empower older women to flourish in various settings

Conclusion

This study offers a detailed exploration of the gendered dynamics associated with active ageing, with particular emphasis on the experiences of older women in urban public environments. The research delves into the experiences of older women as they navigate different environments, shedding light on the considerable challenges they encounter, such as safety issues, societal expectations, restricted accessibility, and insufficient infrastructure. The findings highlight the critical need for urban planning practices that are both gender-sensitive and inclusive, ensuring that the needs and preferences of older women are prioritised. Policymakers can enhance older women's autonomy, mobility, and well-being by developing environments that prioritise accessibility, safety, and a welcoming atmosphere.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the various limitations present in the study. The research primarily centres on older women residing in an urban context, which restricts the applicability of the findings to rural or semi-urban areas where social norms and infrastructure might vary significantly. Furthermore, the research is based on qualitative data, which, although abundant in detail, may not possess the wider representativeness that a larger and more diverse sample size could provide. The lack of quantitative metrics presents difficulties in assessing the magnitude of particular challenges encountered by older women. Moreover, the research does not comprehensively examine the influence of digital technology on older women's participation in public spaces, which may represent a crucial area of significance in the contemporary digital landscape.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the study offers significant insights into the interplay of gender, ageing, and public space. It promotes a vision of urban environments that are both equitable and inclusive, enabling older women to engage fully in community life. Building on these findings, future studies addressing these limitations—through comparative studies, quantitative data gathering, and investigation of digital influences—could aid in the creation of age-friendly, fully inclusive public spaces.

References

Adlakha, D., Krishna, M., Woolrych, R., & Ellis, G. (2020). Neighbourhood Supports for Active Ageing in Urban India. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, *32*(2), 254-277. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333620937497

Buffel, T., & Philipson, C. (2016). Can global cities be age-friendly cities? Urban development and ageing populations. *Cities*, *55*, 94-10https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.03.016.

Gaikwad, A., & Shinde, K. (2019). Use of parks by older persons and perceived health benefits: A developing country context. *Cities*, 84, 134-142. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.08.001.

Gomez, M. V., & Lebrusan, I. (2022). Urban Ageing, Gender and the Value of the Local Environment: The Experience of Older Women in a Central Neighbourhood of Madrid, Spain. *Land*, *11*(9), 1456. https://doi.org/10.3390/land11091456.

HelpAge India (2023). Women & Ageing: Invisible or Empowered? – A HelpAge India Report 2023.

Jahangir, S. (2018). Perceived Meaning of Urban local Parks and social well-being of Elderly men: A Qualitative Study of Delhi and Kolkata. *Int. J. Rev. and Res. Social Sci.* 2018; 6(3):243-247. doi: 10.5958/2454-2687.2018.00022.9

Kellet, J., & Rofe, M. (2010). Creating active communities: How can open and public spaces in urban and suburban environments support active living: A literature review. South Australian Active Living Coalition, Research Summary. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283505511.

Lampinen, P., & Heikkinen, E. (2003). Reduced mobility and physical activity as predictors of depressive symptoms among community-dwelling older adults: An eight-year follow-up study. *Ageing Clinical and Experimental Research*, 15(3), 205 211. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03324501.

Nadal, J. I. G. (2022). The daily mobility of older adults: Urban/rural differences in ten developed countries. *The Annals of Regional Science*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00168-022-01192-0.

Noon, R. B., & Liat Ayalon. (2017). Older Adults in Public Open Spaces: Age and Gender Segregation. *The Gerontologist*, 58(1), 149-158.

Pain, R. (2001). Gender, Race, Age and Fear in the City. Urban Studies, 38(5-6), 899-913. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120046590

Pasaogullari, N., & Doratli, N. (2004). Measuring accessibility and utilisation of public spaces in Famagusta. *Cities, 21,* 225-232.

Sarkar, B., & Banerji, H. (2023). Understanding age-friendliness of cities and urban communities through the perceptions of senior citizens in Kolkata, India. *Current Science*, *125*(2), 138-147. Doi. /10.18520/cs/v125/i2/138-147.

Srichuae, S. et.al. (2016). Ageing society in Bangkok and the factors affecting elderly mobility in urban public spaces and transportation facilities, IATSS Research. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.iatssr. 2015.12.004.

Sugiyama, T., & Thompson, C. W. (2007). Outdoor environments, activity and the well-being of older people: Conceptualising environmental support. Environment & Planning A, 39, 1943–1960.

Turel. H. S. et al., (2007). Evaluation of elderly people's requirements in public open spaces: A case study in Bornova District (Izmir, Turkey). Building and Environment 42. 2035–2045.

UNFPA India (2023). Caring for Our Elders: Institutional Responses India Ageing Report 2023.

Van Hoof, J., Kazak, J. K., Perek-Białas, J. M., & Peek, S. T. M. (2018). The challenges of urban ageing: Making cities age-friendly in Europe. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(11), 2473. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112473.

WHO (2007). Global age-friendly cities: A guide from World Health Organization, Geneva.

Zhang, Y., Chen, G., & He, Y. (2022). Social Interaction in Public Spaces and Well-Being among Elderly Women: Towards Age-Friendly Urban Environments. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, *19*(2), 746. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19020746.