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Analysis the quality of living condition and its effects in urban environment Case study districts (4 & 8) of Herat: Afghanistan January- 2018

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Abstract

Urban environment and its inhabitants must respect the fragile natural environments in which they are located.

The way inhabitants' functions are the result of a complex interrelationship between its history, the way that people, groups, and institutions are organized and interrelated, and the way that power and resources are dispersed. The degree of complexity of a community and its interrelationships will largely determine any efforts to change any aspect of it, including the psychological and physical wellbeing of that community's inhabitants.

To days in Afghanistan much less attention is being paid to quality of inhabitants' life and the place they are living, in other word, type of nature close to where people live and work, to small – scale green areas in cities and to their benefits to people. Increasing empirical evidence, however, indicates that the presence of natural areas contributes to the quality of life in many ways. Besides many environmental and ecological services, urban nature provides important social and psychological benefits to human societies, which enrich human life with meaning and emotions. The main concern of this paper is to address the importance of urban environment for inhabitants and for quality of their life. The issues investigated concern inhabitant's relationship, attitude and expectations from living place. Results confirm that the experience of nature in urban environment is source of positive feelings and beneficial services, which fulfill important immaterial and non – consumptive human needs.

Keywords: Relationship, Inhabitants, Habitat, Urban, Urban Quality

Introduction

An urban environment plays an important role in economic, political and cultural development. The concentrated population and production in urban environment leads to greatly reduced unit costs in providing and managing basic infrastructure and services, better employment and livelihood opportunities, and easier participation in the political process. The same concentration, however, makes urban environment consumers and resources and producers of pollution, resulting in a wide range of environmental problems in the cities and beyond.

Analysis of habitant's relationships in their urban environment give potential to aid population with mental and physical limitations, to provide resource conservation, and to make their lives comfortable and productive.

The urban environment, to some degree, can facilitate/limit one's orientation, depending on the structure and characteristics of the physical elements of the city.

The Urban Environment is another way of saying our cities, towns and neighborhoods. It includes where we live, shop, work, learn, play and interact. It also includes places we think of as natural, such as green open space and rivers, which have been heavily influenced by urban development. Where, and the conditions in which we live, has a significant impact on our physical and mental health.

Access to high quality housing in safe neighborhoods, green spaces, strong communities and good transport systems all contribute to positive health and wellbeing. In an urban environment, factors which affect quality of life outcomes are: air pollution, traffic, noise, lack of space, lack of park, lack of street cleanness, poor housing, feeling unsafe and insecure, anti-social behavior and absence of neighborliness', stress and mental ill health,

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exposure to infections and limited options for physical activity.¹

Urban areas commonly face shortages of safe drinking water and inadequate provision of sanitation, solid waste collection and disposal, drains, paved roads and services necessary for a healthy environment. Urban environment also faces problems in controlling encroachment in to public spaces and degradation of cultural sites and heritage.

Cities are probably the most complex things that human beings have ever created. Since the beginning, people have lived in places that provide shelter, basic comfort, and support, but as society and technology advances there is growing interest in improving the relationship between in habitants and city users and their intelligence of

Inhabitant's responsibilities

Inhabitant's participation has two dimensions. 1) Active and Passive

Active participation called inhabitants rights and cooperation.

Passive participation called

1. Follow the low: respect and perform the low and encourage people to cooperate in a good manner
2. Civil Participation: participation of people in all public decisions
3. Social participation: protect and respect cultural and moral living style of household, respect other rights in society and respect different culture and no damages to neighborhoods

Importance of Park, green area and cleanness of street in quality of urban environment,

The role of parks and green open spaces and street cleanness in urban environment is often underestimated, while the potential of urban environment to improve both the quality of life of city dwellers and urban sustainability is not always being fully realized.

A park experience may reduce stress, enhance contemplativeness, rejuvenate the city dweller, and provide a sense of peacefulness and tranquility.

Natural environments can also be seen as a domain of active experience providing a sense of challenge, privacy and intimacy, aesthetic and historical continuity.

Beside the social and psychological benefits mentioned above, the functions of urban nature can provide economic benefits for both municipalities and citizens. Air purification by trees, for example, can lead to reduced costs of pollution reduction and prevention measures. Furthermore, aesthetic, historical and recreational values of urban parks increase the attractiveness of the city and promote it as tourist destination, thus generating employment and revenues. Furthermore, natural elements such as trees or water increase property values, and therefore tax revenues as well.²

Herat Urban Environment

Herat is rightly lauded as the most livable city in Afghanistan due to the rapid speed of reconstruction financed by both local and international capital. However,

some of the city's areas continue to harbor poverty and social exclusion.

With the help of donors and the provincial government, the municipality has purchased a dozen maintained secondhand vehicles for solid waste collection from Germany. However, the emphasis is on secondary collection and cleaning of main roads, commercial centers and better off neighborhoods. Lower-income areas and less influential communities remain underserved.

Despite major achievements with regard to service provision, services such as education, health and water are somehow adequate to cope with present growth.

The municipality has rehabilitated parks in an attempt to create public spaces and emphasizes a policy of including and protecting women in public life and discourse, yet both women's rights groups and human rights activists reported abuses and intimidations backed by local authorities. (AREU.2005.P-15)

Herat City urban environmental problems

Today if we consider deeply in to the problems of Herat city we could find out that the critical problems' of Herati people is distances between needs and facilities and expressing facts and their expectations that nowadays increased the number of citizen inside the city. Increasing or decreasing of this situation is due to governor role and supply of public goods and welfare, the civil society and inhabitants struggle has low effect on this situation.

Herati society have been struggling very hardly with many problems such as unemployment rate, luck of shelter, polluted environment, luck of basic services, luck of infrastructure and economical deficiency and social damages.

So due to above mentioned problems, day by day Herat city situation become difficult and darker which make the view of good city and quality urban environment impossible. Therefore, we could divide the problems of Herat city in two categories as follow:

1. Management Method and system that always was for society not with society.
2. Method of managing city which is always initiated (plan) and performed by policy maker and city managers, the society and inhabitants not permitted and there are not any changes from past up to present. It means the concept of inhabitant is not familiar within city's society and no inhabitants aware of his/her rights and responsibilities in urban environment. As a concept of participation is not clarified the civil society is not formed and improved in a good manner as their education and knowledge and cultural level of society is low.

Research questions

1. How inhabitants have relationship with their urban environment?
2. How relationships of inhabitants have impact on quality of their living condition?

Research variables

Direct variable (independence) – inhabitants, education /security and public services are as in depended variables.

Indirect variable (dependence) – quality of urban environment.

¹ www.bristol.gov.uk/healthfactsheets. Bristol Public Health. March 2010.

² (Tagtow, 1990; Luttkik, 2000)

Interferential variable – infrastructure could be interferential variable. Because it has effect or influenced inhabitants’ attitude/ feeling/ satisfaction and also enhance on improving quality of living condition.

Research Methodology

In social researches to get the conceptual result we should create a conceptual model basis on our topic title and follow it.

According to its purpose is considered descriptive and will focus on the qualitative research design, through descriptive statistic. As it relates to method, Interview which is the most common type of qualitative method.

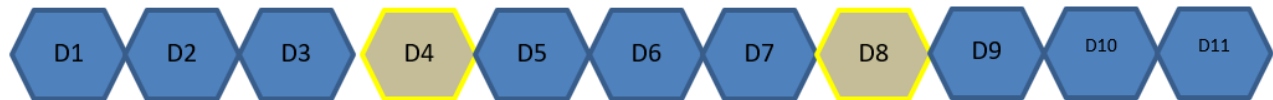


Fig 1

I used Random Sampling method, then compare districts due to their characteristics and the criteria I have for surveying. I found out they could be comparable because of

Data Collection & Study Area

Primary data sources are data that are not previously existence but are acquired directly from field.

Secondary data are normally sourced from contemporary literature, official documents, as well as relevant web sites.

Sampling and Target group

To collect and gather primary data, I have chosen districts 4 and 8 (2 districts out of 12) and from each different district, gain the first-hand knowledge of data.

different characteristics. As table 1 shows districts information

Table 1: District Characteristic

No	District	sub district	stadium	Park	Population	Educated %	% uneducated	No- Male	No- Female
1	4	8	4	3	38680	% 62.5	% 37.5	16300	22380
2	8	33	1	2	55000	% 20	% 80	25000	30000

As I studied and found out that district 4 is one of the best districts in Herat because of its facilities and welfare and public goods (streets, public space and parks). More than 50% of its populations are educated. It has 8 sub districts. The economic and social condition of people is in high level, the important point is the security in this district is very good as most of population is educated.

District 8 has different characteristics. It has the least educated population compare with other district or even in all Herat’s districts.it has less facilities and welfare than district 4 and it has 27 sub districts which introduce us large area more than districts 4. The security level is good but not as district 4.the economic and social condition of inhabitants is in a low condition.

The target group is inhabitants from different age groups (children vs adults, women vs. men etc.)

From each districts based on gender equality answered the questions

Sampling target groups for interview

According to “Stratified Random Sampling” methods I performed as follow:

Table 2: Number of population from different categories.

District	Population	Male	Female	Educated	Uneducated
4	38680	16300	22380	24175	14505
8	55000	25000	30000	11000	44000
Total	93680	41300	52380	35175	58505

According to the formula (stratified random sampling) the total of (n) selected sample for interview from whole population of two districts is 96 persons for interview.

Data Analysis

The fieldwork was largely based on qualitative methods such as participatory observation and semi structured interviews. While selecting the interlocutors randomly, I attempted to carry out interviews with people belonging to different ethnic, social and age groups in addition to different personal background. Although, conducting intensive interviews was not possible in many cases, but observations and informal talks led also to results in regarding the analysis of relationship between inhabitant and their urban environment. Nevertheless, I carried out interviews with as many Informants as possible to come to reliable results regarding inhabitant’s relationship in urban environment. I asked for preferences but never for rankings. Instead, some informants gave preference rankings voluntarily. Sometimes, we also asked my informants to describe certain problems with in their places (urban environment). The data that is analyzed is comparison of two selected districts.

Results

Level of Education

Among 96 persons which were selected for interviewed 58 person were Uneducated and 19 persons were High school, 16 persons had MB degree and only 1 person had Master degree. Which mean that %60.4 of selected people from study area were uneducated %19.8 percent were in High school, %16.7 percent had MB degree and %1 percent was Master

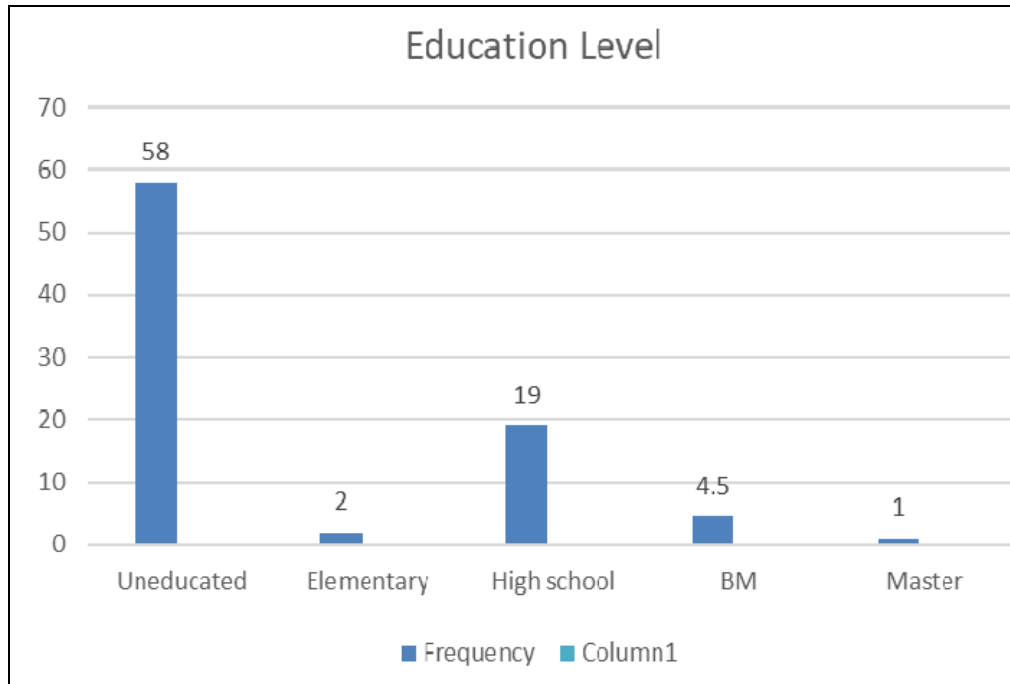


Fig 2: Education level of inhabitants

Level of satisfaction with in the place (district) inhabitants are living in:

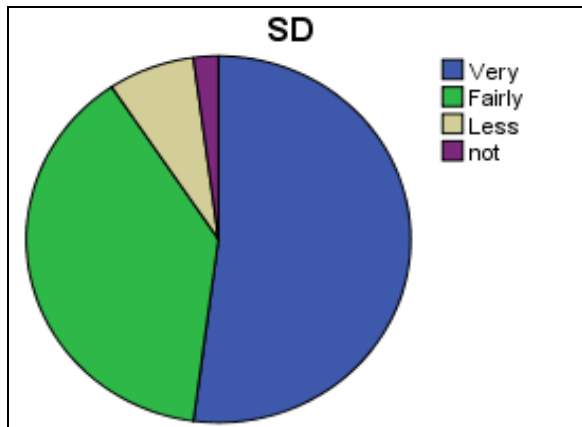


Fig 3

Table 2: Satisfied with in District

	District 4		District 8	
Very	21	52.5%	29	51.8%
Fairly	18	45%	19	33.9%
Less	0	0	7	12.5%
Not	1	2.5%	1	1.8%

In 96 inhabitants that were interviewed, 50 of them were very satisfied from the district they are living in that is %52.1 percent of whole neighborhood's districts and 37 inhabitants express their fairly satisfaction which is %38.5 percent 7 inhabitants express their less satisfaction and only 2 person was not satisfied with in living style in both district 4 and district 8.

Level of satisfaction with the house/ apartment inhabitants are living in:

Table 3: Satisfied with in House

	District 4		District 8	
Very	19	47.5%	33	58.9%
Fairly	16	40%	14	25%
Less	4	10%	6	10%
Not	1	2.5%	3	5.4%

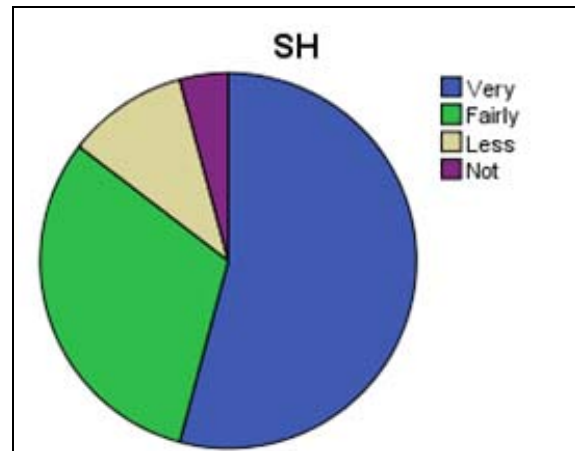


Fig 4

In 96 inhabitants that were interviewed, 52 of them were very satisfied from the House they are living in district's neighborhoods that is %54.3 percent of whole selected inhabitants and 30 inhabitants chosen fairly which is %31.3 percent, 10 inhabitants expressed their less satisfaction condition which is % 10.4 percent of whole and only 4 person was not satisfied with in house living style. Data shows that inhabitants living in district 8 express their less satisfaction than district 4.

Inhabitants’ consideration regarding current accessibilities of districts

Factors which consideration done based on are: Educational facilities, Medical facilities, Entertainment opportunities

(parks, sport etc.), Garbage/trash pickup services, Cleanness of street and Security.

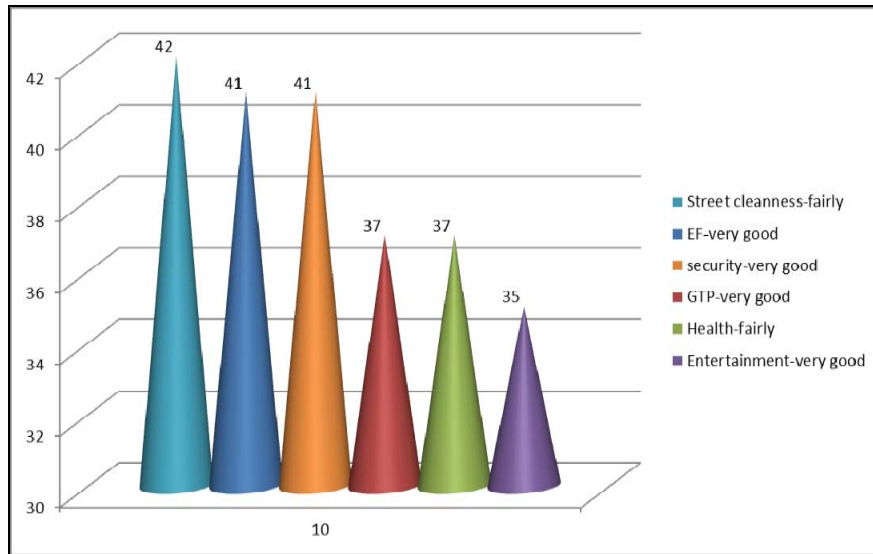


Fig 5: Inhabitants accessibilities consideration

The whole comparison of two districts show that in general, 42 persons which is 43.8% said the cleanness of street is in fair conditions, 41 persons which is 42.7%, observed the education condition very good, 41 persons from inhabitants observed the security condition very good, 37 persons of inhabitants that is 38.5% observed the Health condition Fairly, 37 persons that are 38.5% observed garbage pick-up

very good and 35 persons observed the Entertainment condition is very good.

Inhabitants’ ideas on regards of missing entertainment opportunities.

Library/Internet cafes (L & N)- Restaurant/ tee houses (R & Th)- swimming pool/ sports (Swp & Sp)- park/ playground (Pa &Pl)

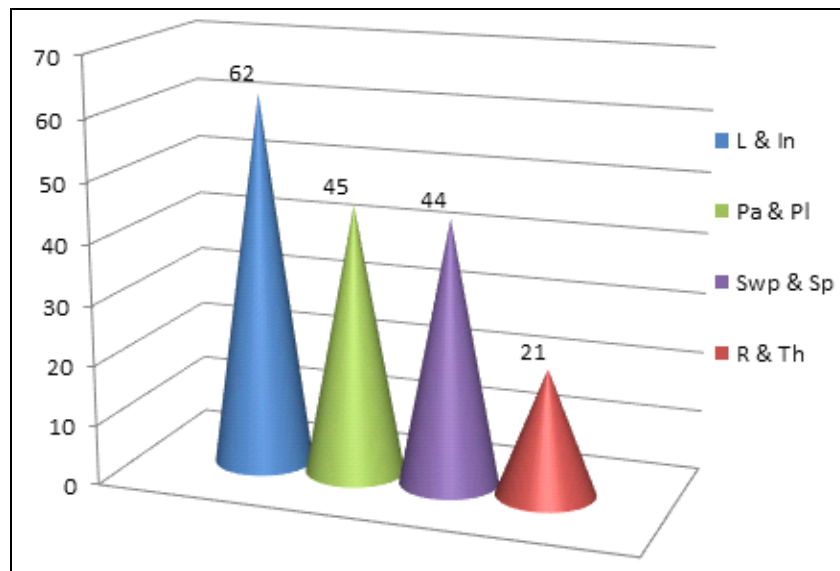


Fig 6

Table 6: Missing opportunities

	District 4		District 8	
Library /internet	22	55%	38	67.9%
Restaurant / Tea house	4	10%	12	21.4%
Park / Playground	13	32.8%	6	10.7%
Swimming pool / sport	1	2.5%		

Inhabitants suggested ideas on regards of entertainments' opportunities:

Library/Internet cafes/- Restaurant/ tee houses/- swimming pool/ sports/- park/ playground

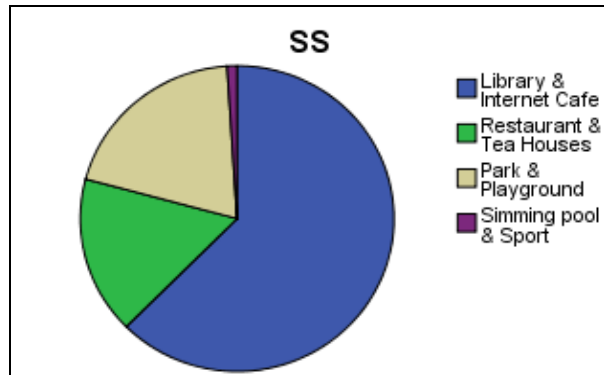


Table 7: Suggested opportunities

According the collected data, 60 inhabitants suggested Library and Internet service, that is %62.5 percent, 19 inhabitants suggested Park and playground which is %19.8 percent, 16 inhabitants suggested Restaurant and Tea houses which is %16.7 percent and only 1 inhabitants suggested swimming pool and sport area that is very less %1 percent from whole selected inhabitants.

Compare district 4 with 8, in district 4 first inhabitants suggest library and internet services, second the suggested Park and playground third Restaurant and Tee houses and finally swimming pool and sport area but in district 8 second suggestion was Restaurant and Tee houses.

Inhabitants ideas about way of developing neighborhood (It is getting better/ it is not changing/ it is getting worse)

Table 8: Solution way

	District 4		District 8	
It is getting better	13	32.5%	20	35.7%
It is not changing	25	62.5%	27	48.2%
It is getting worse	2	5%	9	16.1%



Fig 8

Collected data shows that most of inhabitant's thoughts that the solution way has been performed for their districts it is not changing too much and less agree with getting better of district improvement. Which means 52 persons that is %54.2 select not changing, 33 persons that is %34.4 selected getting better and only 11 persons that is %11.5

percent answered is getting worse. From these mentioned percentage, %62.5 of district 4 observed that the solution way is not changing the urban environment but %32.5 of inhabitants observed it is getting better.

Degree inhabitant's get benefits from Urban Environment (Not at all/ somewhat/ A great deal)

Table 8: Benefits from Urban Environment

Benefits of Urban environment					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A great deal	17	17.7	17.7	17.7
	Somewhat	64	66.7	66.7	84.4
	Not at all	15	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	96	100.0	100.0	

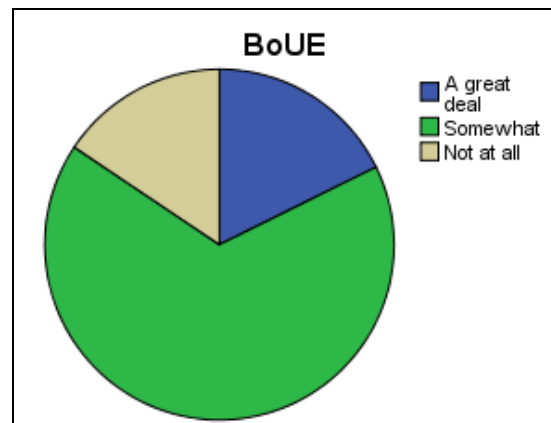


Fig 9

From 96 inhabitants somewhat around %66.7 percent of whole that is 64 inhabitants benefits from urban environment infrastructure of the available public goods in their neighborhoods %17.7 percent observed a great deal and only 15 inhabitants that is %15.6 have no accessibility to park, green area and public spaces. This means 15 inhabitants from whole selected sample not getting any benefits from urban environment at all. Therefore in general less inhabitants of district 4 compared with district 8, get benefits from whole urban environment services.

Participation Level of Inhabitants

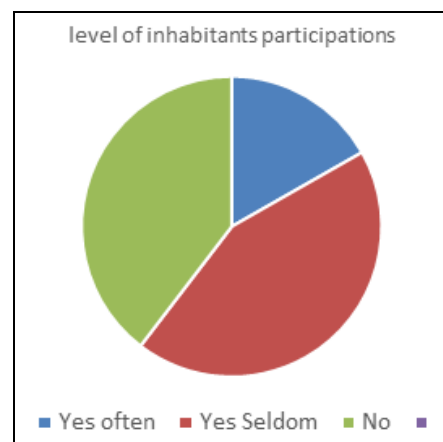


Fig 10

Table 10: Participation level

District 4			District 8	
Yes often	7	17.5%	18	32.5%
Yes seldom	19	47.5%	18	32.5%
No	14	35%	20	35%

Among 96 inhabitants selected for interviewed 37 of them seldom participated in public meeting or some kind of activities that was held and organized in their district's

neighborhoods which is %38.5, 25 answered they participated seldom and 34 persons which is %35 not participated in any kinds of activities.

The inhabitants of District 8 have less participation then district 4 in some kind of activities that organized in their neighborhoods.

Inhabitants suggested methods for supporting public facilities:

Table 11: Suggested Methods

District 4			District 8	
Mainly through taxes	18	45%	20	35.7%
Mainly through fees for users	8	20%	13	23.2%
Through an equal combination of TF	14	35%	23	41.1%

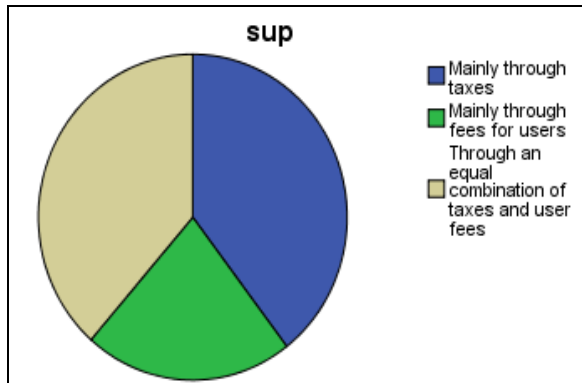


Fig 11

From 96 inhabitants most of them were agree to support city facilities & services (public goods) Mainly through taxes that is 38 inhabitants and %39.6, 37 inhabitants agree with the Equal combination of taxes and user fee but only 21 were agree that is %21.9 percent to support it through fees of users. The contrast between two selected districts shows that most of inhabitants (%45) agree to support the mentioned services mainly through taxes but in district 8 the inhabitants consider the combination of tax and fees of users

Facilities well mostly contribute to improving quality of life:

(Parks/natural areas, Good educational infrastructure (schools, Libraries etc.), New shops
Sense of community, Security)

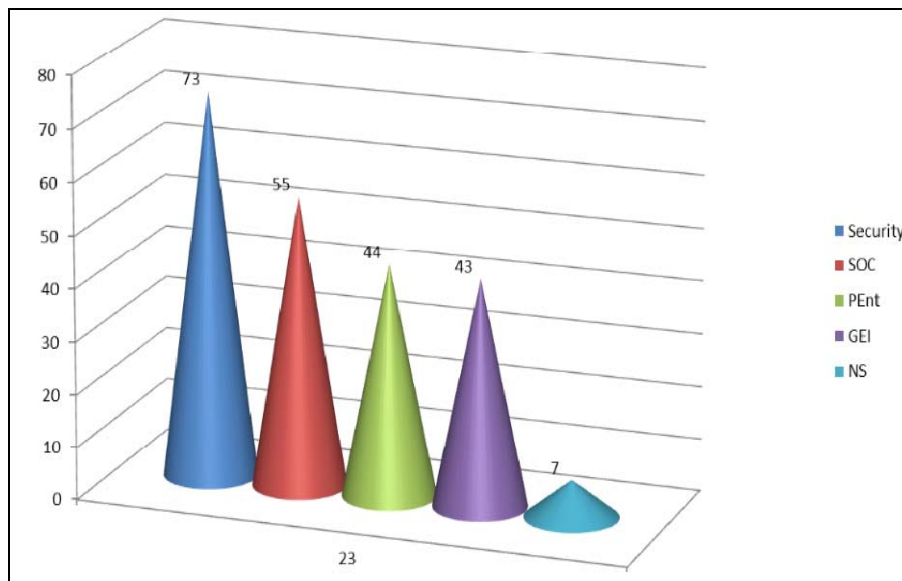


Fig 12: Increasing life quality indication

Indicators that are decreasing quality of life:

(Noise, Traffic, Power cuts, Cost of housing, Increased taxes, Rapid changing)

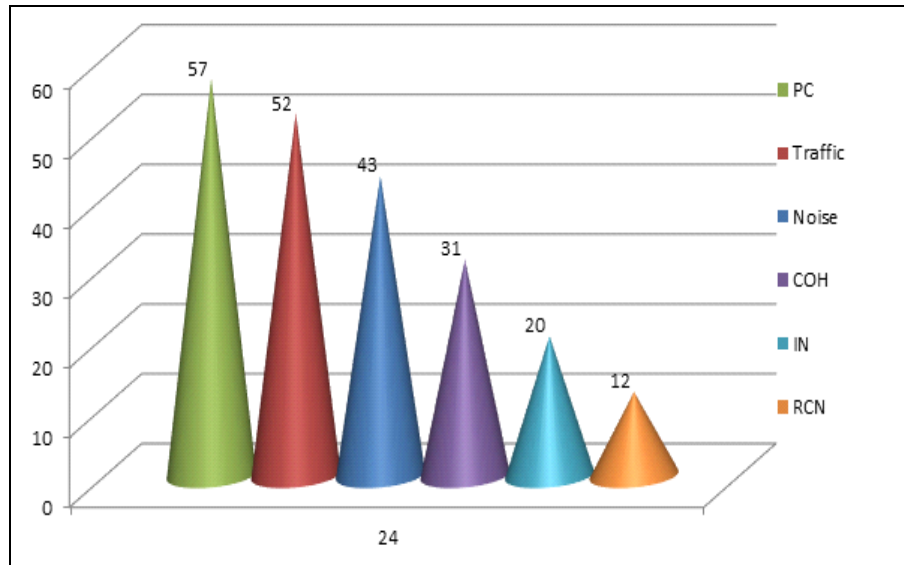


Fig 13: Life quality decreasing indicator (shows first choice)

From 96 inhabitants 57 of them were agree that Power cuts is an important indicator of an improvement of life quality that is %59.4 percent of whole inhabitants, 52 persons point out traffic as another important indicator, 43 inhabitants thoughts that noise in neighborhoods that is %44.8 percent, 31 person which is %32.3 percent point out cost of housing, 20 inhabitants that is 20.8% observed increased taxes and 12 inhabitants point out rapid changing neighborhoods which is 12.5% as a life quality un improvement indicators in whole study area.

Discussion and Recommendations

In the context of this study, the relation of inhabitants with in their urban environment (quality of their living condition) has been addressed. Some results have been presented of an interview aimed at exploring the quality of living condition and satisfaction of inhabitants of two selected districts of Herat Province. Inhabitant's relationships and participation is an important key issue for developing strategy of urban improvement in Herat Province. Today's good governors emphasize public relation and active relation of both government and society.

Urban environment fulfills many social functions and psychological needs of inhabitants, which make urban environment a valuable municipal resource, and a key ingredient for city sustainability.

Different age-groups have different motives and ideas to visit the park and different activities they are going to undertake.

Briefly the conclusion we reached is, we found out that in Herat province the overall condition of public goods and facilities getting better than past time, but still the city needs that government should take an actions in all parts especially in providing entertainment park recreation, cleaning of street and trash pick-up service. Inhabitants of both districts were overall satisfied with in their living condition of houses and offered services in neighborhood. The Indicators that increase the quality of living condition first of all was security, then sense of community, good education infrastructure, park, natural environment. The indicators that decreased the quality of life especially in district 4 were traffic and noise of neighborhoods but in

district 8 was power cut. Inhabitants of district 8 has less participation in public activities and believes that the current solution policies and way is not changing their living style and places, but for betterment they suggest that public goods should be supported through an equal combination of taxes and user's fees. It is very good before using public goods the people learn and know how to use it in a good manner.

Street cleanness and trash pick is another service that right now in most parts of Herat Districts is done by private organization which went door to door and pick them all up, but still in some streets and some parts of neighborhoods due to low economic situation of inhabitants that are not able to pay the tax, we realized that it changed the face of living condition very bad in those parts.

The research hypotheses are accepted which is: if the infrastructure in an environment is enough and good, the urban environment can be able to access them for all inhabitants, of course their relation/motivation and participation would be done in a good manner that will case to improve urban environment quality. Therefore we could write that:

To enhance improved urban environment and improved people, we should improve relationships between inhabitants and their urban environment. And increasing of relation between Inhabitants within their urban environment cases to improve or increase quality of living in an urban environment.

The problems of Afghan society besides low economic situation, is low education level if the government invest on public awareness and improve it of course when the education level of inhabitants is high/low, their expectation from urban environment is the same would be high/low beside that when the economic, social condition of inhabitant would be high/low the level of their expectation would be high/low.

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