WOMEN’S MOBILITY, MENTAL MAPPING AND MARGIN OF FREEDOM IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE: CASE OF WOMEN WORKING IN NEW SERVICE SECTORS OF DHAKA CITY

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Abstract
The study addressed the appearance of a new urban space of Dhaka city with the development of new service sectors focusing on women’s mobility, fear and freedom in the city. Harvey, Lefebvre and Tonkiss’ theories on city, social meanings to space, spatial practices, gender and fear of harassment inspired the essence of the study. The data were collected from the females working in different fashion houses, shopping malls and beauty parlours of the city principally by survey method and supplemented by case studies. Particularly with the growth of these new service sectors women’s increasing presence and mobility have been found in the public space of the city. But unfortunately their freedom and movement in the public space have been marginalized by their mental mapping of violence inflicted by male. To avoid danger and remain safe they are to employ different types of protective strategies while remaining in public space. The study also revealed that they have learned these protective strategies from their socialization as girls.

Introduction
Urban living is now perceptible with freer life and newer employment opportunities reinforced by global economic redesign. The economic restructuring has a capitalist concern that has reproduced the urban space with the growth of new service sectors and rise of consumerism. New services and businesses like cafes, restaurants, art galleries, and fashion shops have been attracted by new public space brought about by urban renewal.1 The emerging service sectors, particularly shopping malls, fashion houses and beauty parlours are increasingly becoming the livelihood options in Dhaka city for young, less educated or even the indigenous girls and women. By dint of the rise of these sectors they have been entering in service-based economic

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1 A. Ortiz et. al., Women's use of public space and sense of place in the Raval (Barcelona), GeoJournal, Vol. 61, No. 3, 2004, pp. 219-227
activities. Their engagement in this service economy has eased their visible presence in the public space of the city that was impossible few decades ago. Thus the city has become a space of freedom for women and women’s freer movement in the public space has been explained as women’s mobility in this study. Women’s depressed condition to incorporate them in the initiatives of economic development since the country’s independence did not change before 1980s.² But as a global development force urbanization has changed women’s condition and at the same time has also created risk or insecurity or exacerbated insecurity for urban dwellers. Harassment in public space hampers women’s physical and psychological mobility in Bangladesh. It has been mentioned that even for the fear of facing further harassment most of the incidents go untold and off the hook.³ Women’s use of space is determined by geography of fear that incorporates their mental maps and heightened consciousness of perceived dangerous places at dangerous times.⁴ Further, women’s fear of sexual susceptibility at particular dangerous and threatening environment has been regarded as their perception of safety.⁵ Harassment in public places makes women feel uncomfortable to relax and fear the most awful happening.⁶ Hence, women’s mental mapping of fear is their fear of male violence which marginalizes their use, experience and perception of urban public space. It is also reinforced by frightening experience and advices by their parents and others and media reporting. Furthermore, the younger women are more afraid of violent crime in public space, more constrained by fear of violence. Consequently, the concept of urban public spaces is recently rethought as socially constructed since production of public space reflects people’s social characteristics, gender and social background.⁷ In a modern city all of

² S. Hossain et. al., Safe City and Urban Space for Women and Girls: An explorative study to deepening understanding of the concept and indicators of safe city, 2012, Action Aid Bangladesh


⁴ G. Valentine, The Geography of Women’s Fear, Area, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1989, pp. 385-390


⁶ M. Davidson et al., The Mediating Role of Perceived Safety on Street Harassment and Anxiety’ Psychology of Violence, American Psychological Violence, 2016, p. 6

these factors are fretful about the right to the city and particularly the right to a
gendered city.

Theoretical construction of women’s presence in and mental mapping
of urban space

The city and the quality of urban life have been commodified. Urban living is now
accompanied by shopping malls, multiplexes, cafes, departmental stores, fashion
industry, cultural and knowledge-based industries. Simultaneously, threatening of
urban identity, citizenship and belonging as well as individual security in the face of
criminal activity promoted by a neoliberal ethic. But Harvey particularly focused on
the fortification of the city and creative dispossession apart from a right to a gendered
city. David Harvey presented ‘Grid of spatial practices’ recognized by Henry
Lefebvre where he described the representation of space as perceived. It includes all
of the symbols and significations, code and understanding, psychological inventions
(codes, symbols, spatial discourse, utopian plans, imaginary settings, figurative
spaces, built environments etc.) Harvey further says that the body exists in space
and submits to authority. Capitalist concern no longer does anything with the product
to be sold but more with money, sex and power. He attached social meanings to
spaces and time as different groups put different meanings to space and time by using
them. Spatial practices are derived from capitalism and they take different meanings
in accordance with different social relations of class, gender, community, ethnicity or
race. Inspired by Lefebvre, Harvey proposed that spaces are occupied by objects (e.g.
hearth, home, open places, street, squares, markets etc), activities (use of spaces),
individuals, classes, gender and the organization and production of space are
dominated by individuals or powerful groups which represents spaces as spaces of
fear or spaces of repression. Space reproduces spatial code that restricts activity in
space, commands bodies, prescribes and proscribes gestures, routes and distances to
be covered. Lefebvre captures our attention to the critical phase of the city – ‘the
harbinger of the certain globalization of the urban’. This critical phase has been
brought into light by exemplifying it with the pros and cons of streets. For Lefebvre

9 Ibid
11 Harvey, op. cit., p. 222
12 H. Lefebvre, ‘Production of Space’, Malden MA: Blackwell, 1974, pp. 31-33
Wasifa Tasnim Shamma argues that the highly trafficked and busy street provides security against criminal violence such as theft, rape or assault. So vanishing of street intensifies criminality. Against the street he postulated that streets have become a form of oppression or subjugation. Movement in the street has become not only mandatory but also repressed.

Fran Tonkiss spotlighted how the perception and the use of urban spaces are affected by the issues of gender and sexuality.\(^\text{13}\) Doing this it demonstrated how cities conduct us as bodies and how ourselves are produced by urban experiences. She elucidated how structures of gender and sexual difference are thus reproduced by urban spatial arrangements. Therefore, boundaries of individual bodies cannot shape gender and sexuality but these are shaped by space. Hence, she addressed the problem of gender and sexuality not as a function of a sort of individual body visible in the street but as a function of urban physical and social environments. It means that social and physical environment of the city inhabit and reproduce the problem of gender and sexuality. And, to locate gender and sexuality in the city means to locate bodies in space. She viewed street as sexed and gendered. She attempted to explore how the geography of violence and fear constrains women’s spatial practices. Thus she pointed out the gendered use of urban space. In Tonkiss’s theory it was mentioned:

> the younger generation of women who are just now entering in such large numbers into the newer occupations and the freer life which the great cities offer them.\(^\text{14}\)

She told that women’s presence in urban space is linked with interaction between freedom and danger.\(^\text{15}\) The cities are offering young group of women newer career and freer life in which the women are entering into huge numbers. It has troublesome effects on social and moral order. These women are thereby getting social and spatial liberties, political visibility and the pleasures of anonymity. Individual women have thus dislodged the dominant order of social space and also produced spaces of movements for themselves. Therefore, the city has become the space of freedom for women. Their presence in urban space is a signification of disorder, danger and desire. But the real scene of urban space goes unseen that is critical to both freedom and safety of women. Because the city has become a site of danger simultaneously as women’s fear of male violence has become a fear of space. The gendered subjects that come into view in the street not only handle the physical and social space but

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13 Tonkiss, F. (2005), Space, the city and Social Theory, *Polity Press*, pp. 94-112
14 Tonkiss, op. cit., p.101
15 Ibid.
also the symbolic spaces—gendered roles and practices, location and conduct of
gendered bodies. The gendering of space lies evidently in this geography of danger.
Geography of danger denotes city as a site of danger that restricts women’s full
access to and use of urban spaces and also perpetuates women’s fear of male violence
that is unraveled as a fear of space. Geography of gender is simply these margins of
freedom and maps of danger constituted in the city. Therefore, it can be inferred that
geography of gender is the geography of danger in urban space. More specifically, it
means marginalisation of women when they become visible in public space in the
city by jeopardizing women’s use of and fear of space.

Women’s perception of safety and danger is also structured by the physical
environment of urban space. Degree of visibility or transparency, openness or
easiness of access or way out, better street light, employ of closed circuit television
(CCTV) make women feel safer in the urban space. Thus perception of safety and
danger in the city that shapes gendered use of space. Thus, women’s common fear of
being mistreated by crime is predominantly underscored by the fear of rape and
sexual assault. Again, women’s perception of danger and safety is also spatialized
that relies on the unstable geography. Geography is unstable in two senses—in the
sense that various groups of people occupy urban space and in the sense that the
ways through which space changes over time.¹⁶ Spatialization of danger and safety
denotes that particular spaces are dangerous and some spaces become dangerous at
particular dangerous time. It is mostly because of the uneven distribution of male
violence over time and space. Tonkiss highlighted Valentine’s suggestion that space
is perceived as dangerous by women because of the unregulated behaviour of men at
particular times.¹⁷ These unregulated behaviours of men can take place both in open
spaces (parks, towpaths, and wasteland) and closed spaces (subways, alleys,
laneways, multi-storey car parks, train carriages). She exemplified that a railway
station or park is fully safe at mid day but becomes fully unsafe at mid night.

The charged nature of space for many women, and the fraught nature of the female
body in space are evident in the advice commonly offered to women if they should
find themselves on a deserted street after dark: the notion that you should walk in the
middle of the road and not on the pavement literally puts women out of place in
ordinary public spaces. It might be good advice, but it underlines the way that having a
female body can be a spatial liability, and how certain spaces in the city are
experienced as a kind of conflict zone.¹⁸

¹⁶ Tonkiss, op. cit.
¹⁷ Tonkiss, op. cit., p. 103
¹⁸ Ibid. p. 104
The nature of space is emotional/electric for women and that of female body is burdened. Women adopt spatial strategies to avoid danger and remain safe. Women’s defensive use of space means to avoid certain places at certain times, use private transport, avoid going out alone at night or seek protection from a man within the heterosexual couples. The strategies vary with respect to race, age, income, status and lifestyle of women. Akin to most kids and dogs, women are taught how to use street and where to tread, to observe who are staring at or gazing at, what to do if something unpleasant or irritating situation takes place. Women are advised to avoid pavements and to use middle of the road while walking in the street. Therefore, perception of fear and danger in urban space affects women’s use of this space.

**Methodology**

Mixed-method strategy was followed for the present study where quantitative findings have been supplemented by qualitative method. Five areas have been picked out from the city of Dhaka purposively for conducting the study. Dhanmondi, Shahbag and Nilkhet have been selected from DSCC and Mirpur-1, Mirpur-10 and Banani from DNCC.\(^\text{19}\) These areas have been selected as I have found host of service sectors such as shopping malls, fashion houses and beauty parlours and also consumers from different class and cultural backgrounds of the city in these areas. Also, these areas are situated in my proximity. Specifically, these three sectors have been selected as they are offering huge part time, full time and seasonal jobs for the poor, less educated and indigenous females of the country. Survey questionnaire was administered on female service workers of these sectors. As there was no previous data or statistics on the number of service workers in different service sectors, the sample size of 130 respondents was purposively selected. To make an almost fair distribution of the number of respondents in the three service sectors, 41 respondents were taken from shopping malls, 43 from fashion houses and 46 from beauty parlours. As the study required informative, in-depth and in-detail data, ‘face to face’ mode was selected for administering the interview guidelines to the respondents. Further, 25 unique and informative cases of female service workers were collected to supplement the findings of the quantitative data. The survey questionnaire was semi-structured to bring out the quantitative findings thoroughly on socio-demographic characteristics of female service workers, the new urban space and new service

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\(^\text{19}\) Dhaka City Corporation has been divided as Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) as per The Local Government (City Corporation Amendment Act (2011).
sectors, their contribution to women’s employment, freedom and movement in urban space, their psychology of fear and adoption of protective strategies while moving in urban public space. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis, cross tabulation and tabular presentation in bivariate analysis. After analyzing the data, they were interpreted in several sections following the questionnaire. Further, few cases were studied to discover diversified construction of social reality of the female respondents working in new service sectors. The exclusive and informative stories of the perception and lived experiences of the subjects were described in the form of narrative analysis. The findings from the case studies have been interpreted and summarized at the last stage of carrying out the cases. All of the ethical issues, validity and reliability were rigorously kept up to use a sound methodology for the study.

Women in new service sectors and movement in urban public spaces

Beauty parlours, fashion houses and shopping malls are the leading new service sectors in Dhaka city. These are the emerging service sectors that were not available in the city few years ago and they are growing so fast in the city that everyone can find them here and there of the city and can avail their services. Among the new service sectors, about 38 per cent of the respondents pointed out shopping malls, nearly 74 per cent beauty parlours, 45 per cent fashion houses as the flourishing service sectors in the city of Dhaka. Some women have also talked about the growth of some other service sectors in the city such as service centers of mobile phone, manufacturing, departmental stores, cafes etc. A brisk commodification of the city and city life of Dhaka escorted by shopping malls, fashion industry, beauty parlours, cafes, departmental stores and so on replicates Harvey’s arguments in his ‘Social Justice and the City’. 20 The development of new urban space in Dhaka also echoes Harvey’s ‘appropriation and production of space’ in the ‘the Condition of Post modernity’. 21 Appropriation and production of Dhaka’s urban space by numerous fashion houses, beauty parlours, shopping malls, cafes, departmental stores etc and also by people’s everyday transport practices perfectly harmonize with Harvey. The present study also tones with Friedmann and Wolff’s (1982) ‘clusters of employment’ in the sense that the cluster of luxury shopping and entertainment has

20 op. cit., Note 8
21 op. cit., Note 9
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replaced the cluster of manufacturing that was the dominant one few decades ago. 22 A sales girl of a shop summarized the reports of her observation as follows:

Previously there were not so many shops and shopping malls. Now lots of shops and shopping malls are giving recruitment to thousands of women. Many women are also coming into this occupation seeing other women.

Surprisingly, with the growth of new service sectors i.e. beauty parlour, fashion house and shopping mall, more women have been visible in work place and public place that was impossible for women a few decades ago. Respondents in this study argued that it is the credit of different beauty parlours, fashion houses and shopping malls to bring out huge number of women out of their four walls. It is the credit of the great city that has made possible women’s visible presence in urban space by giving them new jobs and free life. 23 Astonishingly, nowadays the proportion of unemployment has become higher for male segment than the female segment. Around 87% respondents commented that women are more recruited than men in these service sectors and 4 per cent replied the vice versa. But 13 per cent respondents argued that both men and women are being recruited by new service sectors in Dhaka city. Therefore, there is a relation between new service sectors and recruitment in terms of gender. Among the respondents surveyed, 31.5 per cent is from shopping mall, 33.9 per cent from fashion house and 34.6 per cent from beauty parlour. As per their statements, within recruitment types of respondents’ service sectors, shopping malls are offering 30.8 per cent full time and 35 per cent part time recruitment, fashion house 37.4 per cent full time and 15 per cent part time and beauty parlour 31.8 full time and 50 per cent part time recruitment. Also, beauty parlour, shopping mall, fashion house are the service sectors where young girls and women are being engaged in a greater proportion than the middle aged or aged women. The study reveals that the female sales girls and beauticians are mostly young girls and women between 20 and 25 years of age. These are also the sectors which provide employment opportunities for the women with educational background from class six to HSC. Also the girls who have no schooling or have had their academic qualification up to class five are recruited in these service sectors. Further, all of the respondents from the tribal background work in different beauty

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23 op. cit., Note 14
Women’s Mobility, Mental Mapping and Margin

parlour. Therefore, it is the outstanding finding of the study that beauty parlour is the only new service sector which offers the means of subsistence for the indigenous girls and women and thereby opens the carrier window for the disadvantaged population of the country. These sectors are thus empowering women who are young, tribal and low level of academic qualification by providing them job opportunities.

A indigenous girl working in a parlour of Mirpur-10 praised the growing engagement of young tribal girls in beauty parlour:

Previously, none of the tribal girl used to come to the city at a very young age. Now one is coming observing another woman working in beauty parlour.

Most of the female service workers (58.5%) have absolute and moderate freedom in their work place. Those (41.5%) who are absolutely or moderately unsafe in their work place are young women. They are harassed by their male colleagues who continuously disturb them by offering them marriage proposal or proposal for making love relationship, asking for their mobile number and following up them towards their home and even sometimes by blackmailing them.

Sumaiya, a young sales girl of a shopping mall combats with bad comments coming from the young boys in the corridor between her shop and rest room.

‘Look, look, she is looking very nice today. Is she all right?’

Sometimes young boys disturb the beauticians in their work place by tagging papers with indecent language and hanging them on the wall or the door of the parlour or by giving call to T & T numbers frequently and asking for different girls. Even when the beauticians leave their parlours, they are teased by men on the streets. But very few of them enjoy freedom moderately in public space. Haque defines this harassment of women as eve teasing such as making vulgar comments, deliberate touching, pushing, shoving, vulgar staring, whistling, opportune clapping, sly whistling, singing evocative song, despicable gesture etc in the street and public transport and also in the workplace.24

Women’s Mental mapping of harassment in urban public space

The present study also provides mental mapping of violence in urban public places of female service workers. Women’s mental mapping of violence is the conventional imagery that is socially rooted in the mind of women. This mental mapping shows

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them which places and times and also the crimes should be considered as fearful and
which women are more susceptible to violence. 25 For example, girls are made
anxious by family, friends, colleagues and media about the occurrences of women’s
harassment in public places and also socialized to restrict their movement in public
places. Their family suggests them to move decently or modestly. Further,
respondents mentioned that their family and relatives advised girls and women not to
protest harassment if they face in public places. Also, their family gives them order to
return home before night time and to avoid ultra modern dress. Thus women’s
movement in towns and cities is greatly interrupted by perceived vulnerability of
being attacked- ‘a virtual curfew on women at night in some urban areas.’26 The data
also uncovers that respondents’ family and colleagues forbid female service workers
to use subways, alleyway and certain dangerous places. The female service workers
are also socialized to avoid strangers and talk to them and not to move alone. It was
also revealed that some female service workers get suggestions to avoid male friends
or boyfriends, to avoid to go unknown place alone and to make the teasers
understand softly not to disturb them. Again young girls in new service sectors of the
city are made anxious about experiencing of harassment in public space by media
news and reports as well as by suggestion or awareness given by their family, friends
and colleague. The study reveals that public transport is the major mode of
movement for female respondents to commute everyday between their serving place
and living place. It clearly demonstrates that user of public transport (around 47 per
cent) is greater than that of walking mode (about 38 per cent). Another 10 per cent
use rickshaw and nearly 5 per cent only use battery driven vehicles for the same
purpose. These findings clearly replicate the explanation that women are greater user
of public transport and walking than men in European countries and also in
developing countries.27 Besides, women prefer to travel by less expensive transport
than men. Women’s problems while making trips exacerbates in developing
countries. For instance, in Bangladesh, women face difficulties to get access to buses
as they are to be touched by other passengers while boarding the buses. Moreover,
women are found engaged in part-time jobs in shops and supermarkets which have

25  E. I. Madriz, Images of Criminals and Victims: A Study on Women's Fear and Social
    Control, Gender and Society, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1997, pp. 342-356
26  R.H. Pain, Social Geographies of Women's Fear of Crime, Transactions of the Institute of
    British Geographers, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1997, pp. 231-244
27  C. Duchene, Gender and Transport, Discussion Paper No. 2011-11, International
    Transport Forum, 2011, pp. 7-9
longer or unsociable working hours. All of these problems together hampers women’s mobility and make them vulnerable to a sort of social exclusion. According to the study almost 27 per cent respondents feel unsafe in the street when they use it every day. Another, 45.96 per cent respondents who uses public transport for daily purposes perceives this mode of travel unsafe for them. Women’s fear of victimization incorporates fear while using public transportation. In practice, non sexual and sexual physical violence are experienced in a greater proportion by female service workers travelling by public transport rather than those using walking mode. In contrast to, verbal harassment is experienced more by women using walking mode than those using public transport. They also feel unsafe in markets, bus stops, neighborhood, lakeside or park. They are always drawing a mental map of being experiencing non-sexual physical, sexual physical and verbal harassment while moving in urban public space.

Female service workers are fearful of non-sexual physical violence by men while using public places of Dhaka every day. They are most scared of pushing, deliberate tapping, winking and making provocative expression among non-sexual physical violence. They sometimes get worried about the fear of throwing papers and spitting, throwing acid by men targeting them and again about the fear of kidnapping. Among sexual physical violence, touching is feared by large number of women. A good number of women are also fearful of rape, grabbing and caressing their private areas while remaining in the public space of the city daily. Majority of the women picked up bad or sexually explicit comments as the most fearful verbal harassment that a woman might experience anytime in the public places of the city. They are also severely scared of hissing and kissing sounds, leering and whistling. They are more fearful of sexual physical violence than non-sexual physical violence and verbal harassment in the public space of the city. Some other women are not fearful of harassment in public place as they have got habituated to it or they do not bother it. But in reality, they have had experience of more verbal harassment than sexual physical violence in the public places of Dhaka city.

A young receptionist of a shop expressed her fear when she remains in public places of Dhaka:

> the matter of losing prestige in public space is the greatest issue for a woman. Nothing is to be done if anyone says something bad about a girl or woman.

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Therefore women’s feeling of fear is produced by the fear of male violence and mostly by sexual violence. Madriz (1997) described female fear as fear of male violence. In this sense women’s fear is gendered as postulated by Tonkiss.

Spatialization of women’s danger and safety depends on unstable geography of space. Following her theory, the present study replicates two dimensions of spatialization particular space (e.g. public transport, subways, alleyways etc) are unsafe; particular space becomes unsafe at particular time (e.g. night time); and secondly, space becomes unsafe for the appropriation of it by various groups of people. Such as unemployed and deviant young boys, middle aged men, rickshaw pullers, drunkards, gangs. High proportion of joblessness, the presence of gangs, and the drug trade together intensified the visibility of adult men and young boys in public spaces. About half of the respondents (68%) perceive that at night time particular places become dangerous for women. Pawson and Banks (1993) found that night time is most fearful due to the domination of public space by young boys. Almost 23 percent perceives morning time as unsafe for women when they use certain public spaces to reach their work place. Nearly 15 percent thinks that all most all the times public spaces are unsafe for women and 10 per cent claims afternoon and evening as fearful for women. But women who work as service workers are harassed mostly by middle aged men and secondly, by unemployed and deviant youth and the Rickshaw-puller and drunkards. They tend to show their domination as the powerful group of the society on these public places by harassing women in different forms and varied degree. It also supports Harvey’s postulation on the appropriation of space by different persons, classes and social groupings and also on the domination of space by powerful groups. In this regard, Valentine argued that in spite of having career success, women’s freedom in public space is hampered by their fear of male violence. Closed space is more unsafe than open space as perceived by most of the women. Around 64 per cent women feel unsafe in closed space such as

30 op. cit., Note, 15
31 op. cit., Note, 16
33 E. Pawson, and G. Banks, Rape and Fear in a New Zealand City, Area, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1993, pp. 55-63
34 op. cit., Note, 4
subways, underground ways, alleyways, public bus, shops etc and 26 per cent in open space such as street, parks, and lakeside. Further, approximately 10 per cent women perceive both closed and open space unsafe for them. So, Goheen (1998) stated that in new spaces such as in the street variety of activities are represented and consequently suggested to fear public spaces even when they are crowded because of the dangerous behaviour occurring in these spaces. Tonkiss defined women’s fear of male violence as the fear of space for which the city has become a space of danger for women.

Women age and fear of harassment

There is a relationship between women’s age and feeling fear of harassment in the urban public space. Younger women are more fretful about experiencing violence while remaining in public place of the city. Conspicuously, as per the findings of the study, fear of harassment in public spaces is felt mostly and in a greater proportion by the young female service workers between 20 to 30 years. It uncovered that 14.39 per cent respondents of up to 20 years is fearful of non-sexual physical violence, 28.95 per cent is of sexual physical violence and 25.52 per cent is of verbal harassment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of the respondents</th>
<th>Non-sexual physical violence</th>
<th>Sexual physical violence</th>
<th>Verbal harassment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 20 yrs</td>
<td>14.39</td>
<td>28.95</td>
<td>25.52</td>
<td>68.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 yrs</td>
<td>23.02</td>
<td>26.32</td>
<td>20.69</td>
<td>70.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30 yrs</td>
<td>17.27</td>
<td>19.74</td>
<td>17.93</td>
<td>54.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 yrs</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>10.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 yrs</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+ yrs</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>35.97</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>28.97</td>
<td>82.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, 23.02 per cent respondents of age of 21-25 years are fearful of non-sexual physical violence, 26.32 per cent is of sexual physical violence and 20.69 per cent is of verbal harassment. Non –sexual physical violence, sexual physical violence and verbal harassment are respectively feared by 17.27 per cent, 19.74 per cent and 17.93 per cent of the respondents aged between 26 and 30 years. Very few numbers of women of 31 to 40+ years is afraid of harassment. So, fear of being harassed in

35 P.G. Goheen, Public space and the geography of the modern city, Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1998, pp.479-496
36 op. cit., Note, 13
public space declines with increasing ages. However, some of the respondents did not report or reveal their fear of being harassed in public space of Dhaka city.

Urban social & physical environment and women’s insecurity

Due to increasing crowd and decreasing day-time crowd, particular public places turn into dangerous space for women. Female service workers are harassed in the midst of crowd when it increases at office-hour in the morning or at night when working hour is over. These harassing incidents specifically occur when women attempt to get access to public transport and to have a limited space by competing with lots of men in a crowded bus. It becomes hardly possible for the female passengers to board the bus and ride by it without being touched, grabbed, tapped or caressed by male co-passengers or even by the helpers of the bus. Decreasing day time crowd again significantly makes women susceptible to harassment by men in streets, subways or alleyways at night when the women return back to their home. As exposed by the study, 28.43 per cent women commented that increasing crowd and 27.41 per cent that decreasing day time crowd account for unsafe public places. Lefebvre argued that criminal violence such as theft, rape or violent behaviour does not take place in busy and trafficked street. Rather, criminality is strengthened by the vanishing of business from the street i.e. decreasing day time crowd. Thus for Lefebvre, streets have turned into a form of oppression. Again, 20.3 per cent respondents insisted that it is lack of surveillance that contributes to make the public places dangerous for women. Furthermore, 20.81 per cent shared that women become harassed in public places for poor lighting in urban public spaces. Some respondents viewed that shortage of public transport is another reason of rendering certain places of the city unsafe for women. Lack of surveillance and poor lighting also contribute to women’s harassment in public space of the city.

Harassing situations take place against women by men even before the police or traffic police. Sometimes they enjoy or overlook the situations or sometimes they encourage women’s harassment in public space of Dhaka city by allowing the culprits to go unreported and unpunished. Moreover, they tend to take part in women’s harassment by interrogating them differently after the incidents of harassment and thereby waste their time and let them go alone at night after interrogation. Further, they are teased while walking in poor lighted subways, alleyways or even the main roads on their way towards home from their work place.

37 *op. cit.*, Note, 12
In poor-lighted areas, men get the opportunity to harass women outside the vision of other people. Degree of visibility, openness or easiness of way in or out, poor lighting are some of the features of the physical environment of urban space that shapes women’s perception of safety in the public space.\textsuperscript{38} Blobaum and Hunecke also revealed that poor visibility offering potentiality for the occurrences of crime is produced in poor-lit area.\textsuperscript{39} Poor-lit area is a physical characteristic as reported by them. Both increasing crowd and decreasing day time crowd make it easy and possible for the culprit to way in harassing women and way out after the occurrence of the harassment. The female service workers of the city of Dhaka are also afraid of being harassed at night on their way towards home in poor-lighted street, subway or alleyways. Poor-lighting and decreasing day time crowd reduce the degree of visibility of the incidents of a woman’s harassment in a dark subway and alleyway. Sometimes, due to shortage of public transport at night women are to wait at bus stops for longer period at night and are to be harassed by men. Thus problem of gender and sexuality in the street is not a factor of individual bodies but that of urban social and physical environment of the city as mentioned by Tonkiss’ theory.

Warr talked about women’s adoption of protective strategies to remain safe in Seattle.\textsuperscript{40} To avoid danger and stay safe in the public space of Dhaka city, almost all of the female service workers adopt protective strategies. Among the protective strategies avoiding walking alone at night and avoiding unsafe and unknown places are adopted by most women. A significant number of women also avoid travelling alone. Some female service workers have avoided public transport to remain safe while using the public place of Dhaka city. Many of the women avoid crowd and waiting at bus stops after dark to keep themselves aloof from unavoidable harassment in the public space of the city. The adoption of protective strategies by female service workers for their perception of fear and danger reinforces ‘Defensive use of space’.\textsuperscript{41} Women’s perception of danger socially built up affects women’s use of urban space. Thus space has become a social construction as space is itself the product of social practices and social practices are reproduced in space.\textsuperscript{42} More specifically, urban

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] op. cit., Note, 13
\item[41] Tonkiss, op. cit.
\end{footnotes}
space of Dhaka is produced by parental advices, discussion among friends and colleagues as revealed by the study. Social practices such as to avoid dark, unsafe place, moving alone, wearing modern dress etc are produced in the same space. Therefore, behavioural adaptation is affected by fear of crime.\textsuperscript{43} Freedom and movement of most of the female service workers in public place of the city is hampered by their adoption of different protective behaviour in order to avoid harassment by male violence while remaining outside their own home. Implementation of protective strategies hinder women’s free movement in the public places of city the most. It also interrupts to enjoy their jobs or engagement in new service economy. It also creates fear of male violence when they remain in the public space alone. Following different protective strategies by women in the service sectors also makes it compulsory for them to be accompanied by others for their own protection and thereby impedes their freer movement in the public places of Dhaka. Some women also cannot maintain modern life style for adopting protective tactics to remain safe in public place of the city. Women’s defensive use of space interrupts their access to work and freedom.\textsuperscript{44}

Conclusion

The city and city life of Dhaka have now recently been portrayed with the emergence and expansion of new service economy such as dazzling shopping malls, numerous fashion houses and inestimable beauty parlours. The rise and roles of these new service sectors have brought about huge number of women out of the four walls of their home and have created a space of movement for them in the city. All of these features have together produced a new urban space in city. The study has confirmed the presence of these features in the public space of Dhaka. It has revealed that these new sectors are offering livelihood options for young women tremendously by creating a host of part-time, full time or over-time jobs and thereby are encouraging women’s mobility in the public space of the city. Even though these sectors are also offering some job opportunities for the male segment of the population, the proportion of recruitment is not higher than that of the female segment. Notably, the women working in these new service sectors are to come out of their home and go for their work place daily. But unfortunately, some of the young sales girls have also


experienced harassment in their workplace by male strangers or male colleagues. These women are to leave their workplace at night daily and at late night occasionally. Most of these women use public transport and walking mode determined by the distance of their workplace and residence. Public transport, streets, subways and alleyways are the most convenient places for men to harass women in the public space of Dhaka city. Therefore, these women always attempt to draw out a map of danger in urban public space putting it in specific place and time. Their mental mapping revealed that they are more fearful of sexual physical violence than verbal harassment in the public space of the city. But in practice, they have experienced verbal harassment more than sexual violence. Women plot public transport, subways and alleyways as the most unsafe space for them and night as the most unsafe time of the day in their psychological mapping. Their perception of fear of harassment in public space has been socially originated in the psychology of women. The study has revealed that women are advised by their family, friends, colleagues to come back to home before dark and to move decently. They are also advised to avoid strangers, male friends or boyfriends, subways, alleyways, unknown places to stay safe in the public place. Women themselves adopt different protective strategies to avoid danger in public places of Dhaka. Among the protective strategies, avoidance of unsafe places and stay alone at unsafe time in public space is followed by the female service workers the most. Their fear of danger is also determined by their age. The urban social and physical environments also intensify women’s possibility of being harassed in public space of Dhaka city. Thus the social implication of psychological mapping of danger intensified by age and urban social environment impede women’s free movement in public place and also sometimes to enjoy freedom of their jobs.