

Gendered Perspectives of Social Capital: A Qualitative Analysis of Women's Spatial Experiences in Shared Social Spaces within Dhaka's Low-Income Housing

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Abstract – The urban housing landscape in Bangladesh is evolving rapidly, driven by factors such as urbanization, migration, and economic growth. However, disparities persist in terms of housing quality and spatial opportunities, particularly with women often facing unique barriers. In Dhaka's low-income housing areas, inadequate socio-spatial planning often deepens social fragmentation. At the same time, it highlights how the differential use of space by gender shapes community bonds and the capacity to cultivate social capital. For women, in particular, the absence of adequate social spaces in these settings exacerbates their marginalization, restricting their opportunities to build networks and access vital social support. Despite the recognized significance of social capital in urban sociology and planning studies, limited research has examined how shared social spaces in housing environments specifically influence women's social capital formation in Dhaka. This paper addresses this gap by exploring the intersection of gender and social capital in Dhaka's low-income housing. By using the World Bank's social capital measurement framework and qualitative methods, the findings identify that women's access to such social spaces significantly influences social capital formation and mutual support. Hence, the paper underlines the essential part of gender in shaping social capital dynamics and advocates for gender-responsive housing spatial planning to address women's specific challenges and unique spatial needs in low-income contexts.

Key Words: Gender, Social Capital, Spatial experience, Social Space, Low-income housing

1. INTRODUCTION

The association between space and gender is both socially and, to some extent, culturally constructed, often shaped by societal expectations, gender roles, and patterns of spatial usage. These dynamics influence the different demographic group's interactions and interpretations of spaces, which significantly impact both individual experiences and societal relationships. In the context of urban housing, even within the same physical spaces, these dynamics result in varied roles and participations for different groups. Besides, social capital which is characterized by networks and connections, supports communal well-being, it is essential for creating unified communities and encouraging constructive civic outcomes [1].

Nevertheless, the gender aspects of social capital along with its developments and manifestations are often disregarded. [2]. This oversight is especially crucial in Dhaka's low-income neighborhoods, where women's vulnerabilities persist due to unequal distributions of domestic chores and caregiving duties. Additionally, these are intensified by the cultural norms that frequently limit their access to the public sphere. These limitations hinder their capacity to interact with others, participate in collective events, and develop social capital in general. In Dhaka's densely populated urban fabric where housing conditions often include substandard living units and limited social spaces. These social spaces such as front or backyards, alleys, common fields, or communal facilities serve as vital sites for daily communications and relationship building. In these settings, social capital is not only confined to traditional kinship networks but also extends localized, socially bound connections, particularly among women. Furthermore, substandard living conditions are frequently cited by researchers as a significant parameter which contributes to weaker societal ties and reduced social capital [3].

However, spatial practice as defined by [4] Lefebvre (1991), highlights how everyday appropriation and spatial usage reflect and reinforce social dynamics. These practices are inherently shaped by societal expectations and cultural norms, resulting in varied individual experiences and contributions to spaces. Housing, as a lived experience, serves a dual role in both the physical structure and social space where relationships are formed, negotiated, and contested [5]. Despite this, current research primarily focuses on the structural or economic aspects of low-income housing, paying little attention to the complex gender-specific spatial experiences that occur within these settings. This gap is prominently visible in Dhaka, where low-income communities experience distinct social and spatial disparities due to urban density, economic hardships, and cultural norms. Addressing this gap, this paper explores women's spatial experiences through the lens of social capital. Guided by the World Bank's framework, this study seeks to answer the central question: "How do shared social spaces influence women's social capital formation within low-income housing in Dhaka?" By offering a gendered perspective on social capital, this paper contributes to urban sociology, gender studies, and housing design, providing

practical insights for more inclusive urban and housing policies.

1.1 Research Objective

Housing constitutes a fundamental determinant of individuals and collective well-being. Within this domain, low-income housing represents a critical strategy for addressing urban and socio-spatial inequalities by providing affordable shelter to economically deprived populations. However, such housing often lacks well-designed spaces and has systematic issues. This paper uses qualitative research methods to explore how women perceive shared social spaces and how these spaces influence in development of social capital. Therefore, the paper aims to examine how the availability of these spaces impacts women's capacity to build relationships and access resources within the housing environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Housing Perspectives and Social Capital

Housing is one of the fundamental human rights and consists of elements that form a complete ecosystem. Housing and its built environment both internally and externally play critical roles in balancing and maintaining societal sustainability. While housing is perceived primarily as a physical entity, its social aspects are equally significant as the tangible amenities. The arrangement and configuration of the living units along with the spaces surrounding them, deeply influence the socio-cultural values and the formation of social capital within the community. However, in recent times, due to land scarcity and housing shortages, urban populations are more likely to adjust and adapt to compact living conditions, which leads to more congested accommodation and reduced opportunities for social interaction. Moreover, the spatial layout and quality of accommodation not only affect physical comfort but also impact the establishment of trust and communication within communal environments.

Social capital was first introduced as a concept in the 20th century and has obtained prominence in recent studies. Many scholars have frequently cited its spatial significance and explained its function as a shared resource for communities [6][7]. Even though, factors such as context, time, or the characteristics of the community affect the dynamics of interactions between people and their surroundings. At the same time, these factors impact the gradual development of social capital. Additionally, these aspects also shape the nature and efficacy of this capital, allowing people to utilize the resources to overcome obstacles [8]. According to [9] Jacob (1961), in urban settings, social capital is essential for improving sustainability as this capital develops mutual relationships which are defined by reciprocity and cohesion towards

shared goals. At the micro level, social capital contributes to family well-being, and community strengths, and improves overall living standards [10].

Hence, social capital is not merely a definition or an idea, it has the full capacity to empower the community particularly when there is inadequate institutional support or insufficient infrastructure. [11] Putnam's (2000) work offers insights into the two types of social capital. The first one - bonding capital discusses the horizontal connections and associations within homogenous groups. This form of capital fosters close ties and internal cohesion. On the other hand, the second one - bridging capital describes the association across diverse demographic and cross-cultural groups that contribute to inclusivity and integration. In the low-income settlements especially in the developing regions, the establishment of social capital is linked to social and cultural norms which often play a vital role in shaping community perspectives. In order to enhance the collective growth and functionality of this capital, this is imperative to comprehend both bonding and bridging capital along with its dynamics in such settings.

2.2 Gender and Spatial Experiences

Housing offers women safety, leisure, and income generation opportunities, as well as access to necessary facilities and infrastructure [12]. According to [13] UN-Habitat (2014), women actively participate in economic and household duties while also fostering social connections and promoting communal well-being. However, in low-income housing, cultural expectations and societal structures strongly impact how women interact with their immediate environment. The spaces inside and outside of their living units are not just physical areas for them but also important parts of their social lives.

In Bangladesh, cultural norms often emphasize domestic roles and limit women's independence which restricts their access to financial and economic resources. As the primary caregivers and homemakers, women remain confined to their homes, where they perform regular chores and, in some cases, involve themselves in home-based income-generation activities like sewing or preparing food. This physical and cultural confinement highlights the unequal relationship between men and women in domestic spaces, with women taking on responsibilities of household management [13]. The lack of safe and accessible spaces makes these challenges worse. According to [14] Rolnik (2011), women are disproportionately affected by the gender gap, making it challenging for them to access adequate housing and worsening their living conditions. In low-income or marginalized settings, women's spatial experiences are closely linked to everyday domestic responsibilities, and in urban areas, this is even more visible as mobility and safety is a major concern. Shared social spaces such as water points, narrow alleys, or courtyards serve as regular venues for communication and practical support. These interactions are essential for fostering social

capital which offers emotional support, shares information, and helps overcome regular obstacles such as safety concerns and resource shortages.

2.3 Social Spaces in Low-income Housing

According to [4] Lefebvre (1991), social spaces are a dynamic construct and are shaped by societal relationships. He further argued that space is both a product of human activities and a means of production, reflecting larger structures and inequalities of society. When talking about shared social spaces in low-income housing, where the spatial dynamics often mirror the systematic disparities, this perspective is relevant. In unplanned or poorly designed housing areas, spaces generally develop organically rather than intentionally designed.

The housing social spaces mainly refer to the traditional courtyards, common playgrounds, shared facilities, or transitional spaces but in the context of low-income and marginalized settlements, all these are largely absent. In such settings, social spaces are in-between spaces, narrow alleys, or water points, usually those that are not intentionally designed. Often, such lack of planning leads to crowded, congested areas that are not sufficient or inclusive of all facilities. Even today, women, children, and elderly people are among the most deprived people in society and are mainly excluded from the benefits of such spaces. Women, in particular, are forced to make difficult trade-offs between social engagement and their safety when shared spaces are not properly given or designed. According to [15] Emmanuel (2012), low-income housing is not merely a component of the urban landscape but also a site of societal struggle. For those at the bottom of the hierarchy, it underpins inequalities that limit their access to opportunities.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case Area

This paper adopts a qualitative method to understand women's spatial experiences in social spaces within a selected case study. The case area was chosen for its representation of low-income status and due to having available spaces.

The case study aims to demonstrate how a concept or theoretical framework can be applied in varied contexts. In this paper, the study is contextual and seeks to look into the daily lives of women to address the spatial aspects and current realities that are often overlooked by experts. Hence, this paper centers on Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, with a specific focus on the Sher-E Banglanagar Housing. The case is located in the heart of the city and comprises prime landmarks, along with both primary and secondary connecting roads. The housing has three major blocks namely, F-G-H. The selection of this site was guided by its

demographic composition and the spatial organization of the housing premises. Spanning an area of approximately 30 acres, the complex consists of around 600 residential units.

These housing units primarily serve individuals in lower-ranking positions in the public sector, reflecting their modest income levels. Allocations are determined by income brackets and hierarchical positions within the government sector. The spatial layout includes social spaces such as front yards, adjacent alleys, common intersection points, communal facilities, and three main fields. All these available spaces are part of the quarters and the complex which were already incorporated during the design phase. These defining attributes make this housing an ideal case for explaining the intersection between social capital and gender perspectives in low-income housing.



Fig 1: Location of the case (Sher-E Banglanagar Housing)

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Given the explanatory nature of the research question, this paper incorporates a widespread literature review to comprehend the key dimensions of the study at hand. To ensure internal validity, a triangulation approach has been employed, combining multiple data collection methods. While architectural drawings and planning documents were considered secondary data; to gather primary data, semi-structured interviews along with observations were used. A total of 15 interviews with women occupants were conducted to understand their regular usage and perception of the spaces. Participants were chosen according to their age using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in representation. The age groups were divided into three categories, young (13-29), middle-aged (30-44), and elderly (45-65), each category consisted of five respondents. All of the interviews were performed and recorded with prior consent.

An interview guide was developed based on dimensions of social capital, including both open and closed-ended questions. To complement the interview data, both static and

mobile observations were executed. While static observation took place at predetermined points using the observation guide, mobile observation involved walking through the

spaces to gather dynamic perspectives. In addition to that, sketches, photographs, and notes were also used to keep the information and data updated. All interviews were analyzed with Atlas.ti and thematic coding were applied, focusing on the World Bank’s outlined dimensions associated with social capital. For coding, the dimensions were used as the main indicators, and interviews were arranged according to the age groups. Finally, the paper concludes by presenting the findings with scientific reasoning grounded in the specific context that directly answers the main research question.



Fig 2: Social spaces around the Housing Complex

3.3 Social capital and its measurement:

Social capital, according to [16] Grootaert et al. (2004), is generally acknowledged as a multifaceted term and can be defined through two interconnected lenses [17]. The first lens which is influenced by sociologists like [18] Burt (2000), focuses on how people obtain support, assistance as well as information from their interpersonal interactions. In contrast to physical capital such as technology or equipment and human capital like experience or wisdom, social capital is derived solely from social relationships and communications. The nature and frequency of these relations are impacted by the value of the connections [18]. On the other hand, the second lens looks into how engagement in both formal and informal networks contributes to the advancement of social capital [17]. This ranges from various activities, for instance, informal interaction with neighbors to involvement in communal organizations or having political affiliations.

This paper builds on the theoretical foundations, employing the framework outlined in “*World Bank’s social capital and social cohesion measurement toolkit*”. Four main dimensions of social capital defined by this framework are relationships, resources, trust, and collective action norms. Therefore, in this paper, these dimensions are applied to examine the spatial experiences of women within shared social spaces in the surveyed low-income housing. These components are further broken down into subcategories to thoroughly comprehend the multiple aspects to analyze the spatial and social dynamics. The following table provides a

structured approach to understanding the interplay of relations, resource exchange, trust, and collective actions.

Table -1: Dimensions and subcategories used to analyze social capital:

| Dimensions | Sub-categories | Description |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social relations | Bonding | -Connection within homogenous groups, fostering mutual support |
| | Bridging | -Interactions between diverse groups or networks create broader social ties. |
| Resource exchange | Material resources | -Physical items shared or exchanged such as goods or tools. |
| | Non-material resources | -Emotional or informational exchange supporting social and economic needs. |
| Trust | Interpersonal trust | -Trust in individuals to act in each other’s interest |
| | Institutional trust | -Trust in organizations or authorities to act responsibly |
| Collective action norms | Shared purposes | -Collaborations to achieve common goals |
| | Guided by responsibility | -Activities driven by moral or ethical obligations within the community |

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Social Relations

In the context of low-income housing, social relations often emerge naturally and are intertwined with their social connections or economic activities. According to [19] Massey’s (1994) claim, rather than being neutral or static, space is shaped by societal relations. She further argued that space is an “inherently dynamic simultaneity”, where multiple social processes co-exist and may vary depending on how things are arranged [19]. In Sher-E Banglanagar Housing, this framework is evident as the gendered activities are integrated into the available social spaces based on their usage and meaning. During the interview, women particularly mid to elderly, showed strong bonding capital within their immediate surroundings. According to multiple interviews, they depend on their fellow residents for both practical and emotional support. This underscores, how these spaces act both as a necessity and a means of connection. The social spaces function as an extension of

private dwellings where women perform household chores like preparing food, drying clothes, or supervising children. All these informal gatherings or interactions strengthen intra-group ties, creating opportunities for frequent and meaningful communication. For instance, common fields become sites of celebration during festivals such as Eid, or front yards are used for childcare exchange, allowing women to engage in shared experiences that deepen their connections. As a 52-year-old respondent shared:

“While cooking or watching the children, we often chat with our neighbors- it’s how we stay connected. Even during festival preparations, we all pitch in, whether it’s cooking or decorating, everyone helps- it feels like we are one family.”

The striking theme was the gendered nature of the available social spaces, as women are the primary users of these shared spaces during the daytime since men are largely absent due to work. This dominance highlights their central role in nurturing social ties within the housing community. One 58-year-old elderly woman mentioned:

“Men leave for work early, but we are here, keeping an eye on everything and everyone. These spaces belong to us during the day.”

While bonding social capital thrived within smaller and homogenous groups, interactions across socioeconomic or cultural groups were notably limited. Most cross-group exchanges were confined to polite greetings or brief conversations. However, respondents reported that occasional moments of bridging capital occur in open areas such as common fields, where children play together and women engage in conversation during festivals. One 36 years old mother reported:

“Sometimes during festivals, we chat with people from the next block. It’s nice, but it does not happen often. When the children play together, it’s easier to start a conversation with someone you don’t know well. But once the event is over, everyone goes back to their routines.”



Fig 3: Women exchanging conversation around the spaces

These interactions though limited, provided glimpses of the potential for social spaces to act as bridges among different groups. They demonstrate the fact that when given the right

conditions whether through community events or functional spaces, individuals and groups could connect meaningfully. However, the limited nature of such interaction also exhibited the critical shortcomings of the lack of intentionally designed spaces. Respondents noted that while some spaces tend to favor certain activities, they lack the infrastructure or layout that is needed to encourage consistent engagement across diverse groups. As a 46-year-old said:

“The open field is just an empty plot. If there were benches or a small seating area, maybe more people would gather here regularly.”

4.2 Resource Exchange

In low-income housing, where an individual faces deprivation of necessary allocation, resource exchange among them is more likely to occur via informal networks or social connections. In such settings, people often rely on mutual aid and reciprocity to offset the formal resource deficiency. Those social spaces are not only the sites for material exchange such as borrowing tools or fetching water but also play a key role in functional needs. One respondent explained how these spaces are woven into their daily routines:

“The front yards are not just for chores, it’s where we discuss problems, plan events, and support each other, then again, the communal field or staircase is where we meet every morning, we talk about family or work, and sometimes even help with each other with small tasks. It’s like starting the day with a connection.”

The accessibility of material resources in social spaces also shaped women’s mobility and participation. However, their effective use often depends on factors like maintenance and safety. For instance, poorly maintained staircases or overcrowded water points potentially limit access and even create tension among users. While the material resource exchange offers the foundation, non-material exchange such as emotional or informational exchange emerged as the key enabler of social capital during interviews. The intangible resources are often activated in specific spatial settings such as backyards or front yards, providing privacy and safety for certain discussions. A 55-year-old woman reported:

“The front yards are a safe space for us to talk freely, we share our problems discuss challenges, and help each other to find solutions.”

In Sher-E Banglanagar Housing, women use these informal gatherings to exchange knowledge on childcare, health, or financial matters. All these sentiments were echoed in multiple interviews. The value of material spaces is inherently tied to the non-material dynamics within the community. For instance, older women usually share parenting advice, while younger women offer employment

opportunities, highlighting the interplay of spatial arrangement and non-material resource flow. These findings align with [20] Bourdieu’s (1986) interpretation, which states that resources are inherent in links and relationships. Hence, non-material resources extend the utilization of physical spaces, resulting in transforming them from mere structures into sites of empowerment. This was particularly seen in the ways women used collective identity to overcome resource constraints in Sher-E Banglanagar Housing.

4.3 Trust

This paper distinguishes between two types of trust- one is interpersonal trust which underlines social bonds and the other one is institutional trust. Here, institutional trust discusses the residents’ confidence in authority and governance along with the maintenance of their shared environments. Both forms of trust are reinforced by the spatial arrangement. In Sher-E Banglanagar Housing, interpersonal trust appears as a cornerstone in fostering resilience among women in communal settings. As [21] Dempsey et al. (2011) added trust acts as a foundational component in establishing ties among individuals and creating long-lasting supportive relations. During interviews, almost all women regardless of age, reported high levels of interpersonal trust, catered in shared social spaces. Women described how these spaces serve as an environment for their children to play and foster cooperative behaviors among residents. A 35-year-old woman noted:

“I usually leave my children to play in common alleys or front yards with other kids, anyone passing by or watching them from their own homes keeps an eye on them. Even in the afternoons, we all gather around the field and everyone feels safe, everyone is trusted and we feel safe. These spaces are maintained by us, we keep them well-lit.”

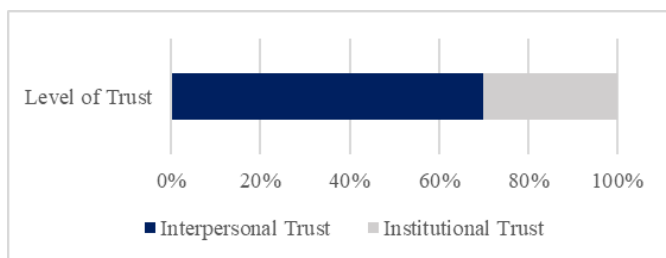


Chart -1: Level of trust

These spatially mediated interactions strengthen social capital as shared spaces provide opportunities to engage in reciprocal care and mutual trust. However, in contrast, institutional trust remains fragile. Women expressed dissatisfaction over inadequate governance of spaces that undermines their confidence in formal actors. Poorly maintained streets and common fields as well as a lack of secure entry points were cited as barriers to trust.

Table -2: Identified three primary concerns affecting institutional trust, all of which are tied to spatial conditions:

| Aspect | Percentages (%) | Examples |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Maintenance issues | 50% | Broken lights, unclean spaces |
| Safety | 30% | Concerns about the main gate |
| Governance | 20% | Delays in complaint responses |

Such frustrations and dissatisfactions reveal a disconnection between the space’s intended function and actual condition in recent times which limits its usability and weakens institutional trust in housing management.



Fig 4: Women and children’s activities around the spaces

4.4 Collective Action Norms

The collective action norms, promote cooperative performances among women and are defined by shared goals along with a sense of responsibility. The physical layout of the surveyed housing has a strong impact on these norms. According to [22] Uphoff and Wijayaratna (2000), norms of reciprocity and shared responsibilities are essential for nourishing collective efforts, particularly in settings with limited capital or resources. In addition to that, the presence of shared objectives can also reduce the impact of insufficient formal institutional support since community needs are often met by grassroots initiatives. It was noted by the respondents during interviews that it was necessary to make coordinated efforts to keep the staircases and common spaces functional and clean. This syncs with [11] Putnam’s (2000) view of social capital, which elaborates that community cohesion is enhanced when collective action is guided by common goals that go beyond individual benefits.

Furthermore, a strong sense of responsibility also acted as the initial ground for collective actions. While institutional supports are either absent or insufficient, women reported taking the initiative to address security concerns, lighting

issues for safety, or water shortages. A 32-year-old woman said:

“Instead of waiting for the housing authority to respond, we all tried to fix any broken lights or broken pumps. We look after it because it's our space. If we don't do it all by ourselves, they remain the same, unsolved for months.”

This is in line with [23] Ostrom's (1990) outline on collective action and shared resources, which highlights the strength of community-led authority and shared goals in managing common purposes, especially when formal actors are inadequate.

Table -3: Dynamics of Collective action norms in social spaces:

| Dimensions | Actions |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shared purposes | Collaborative goals that unify women and drive collective engagement |
| Sense of responsibility | Women take ownership of issues affecting shared spaces, stepping in where institutions fail. |
| Spatial configuration | Shared spaces as dynamic platforms that enable interactions, problem-solving, and decision-making |
| Community Impact | Strengthen ties and improve the functionality of spaces through grassroots actions. |

5. DISCUSSION

Urban housing planning and policy interventions are often intended to encourage inclusivity, making it crucial to consider the spatial significance to reach socio-spatial sustainability. The existing body of scholarly works and examinations on social capital and spatial dynamics is mostly influenced by Western perspectives and narratives. In addition to that, it has been noted that an acute lack of gender-focused analysis in social capital research prevails. Addressing the gap, this study presents some significant findings. The key outcome of this paper underscores the positive association between spatial configuration and social capital formation among women within the housing premises. This paper builds on the argument by examining how women in surveyed housing use shared social spaces and how these influences foster social capital. The findings indicated in most aspects that respondents who were regular users of shared social spaces, reported stronger social ties and mutual support systems over time. These housing spaces serve multiple functions at a time, they act as centers for creating vital social networks simultaneously reinforcing opportunities for women to perform collectively. Scholars have argued that women's involvement with space is closely related to their socio-economic responsibilities,

positioning them as key agents in forming social connections [19].

A hierarchy of private to public spaces was seen in the spatial layout of the housing that was under study, allowing women to utilize these spaces in diverse ways even in the absence of additional amenities. In low-income settings, such spaces are usually adapted to meet daily necessities. Thematic coding of the findings revealed that compact front yards and shared alleys were used extensively for mutual aid that contributes to community resilience. These spatial experiences among women aided in developing bonding social capital by establishing a support system through daily communication. This aligns with [20] Bourdieu's (1986) notion that social capital is embedded in associations and everyday practices. Due to the fact that most of the residents of the community belonged to a similar income group, they showed a homogenous character. This homogeneity further supported the development of positive bonding capital. However, the findings indicated the lack of bridging capital, highlighting the limited inclusivity among different socio-economic groups. Respondents mentioned that spaces, such as the common field were primarily used for cross-cultural communications during festivals or weekend gatherings.

Besides, material exchanges such as borrowing goods and non-material exchanges like emotional support were integral to women's use of spaces. This perspective enhances the integration of spatial and social phenomena by enabling a deeper understanding of the opportunities and difficulties specific groups face in utilizing spaces. Furthermore, the findings of interpersonal trust support [21] Dempsey et al. (2011) claim that trust is the basis for cohesion, yet this trust remains spatially mediated, relying on the functionality of overall spatial experience. On the other hand, low levels of institutional trust were found due to the larger governance disparities in low-income housing environments. This segregation is a common scenario in low-income settings, which further exacerbates the marginalization of such communities. Moreover, [11] Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital as the driver of shared involvement and resilience complies with women's proactive involvement in tackling communal issues. Nevertheless, the reliance on grassroots initiatives also suggests structural deficiencies in formal governance, which may restrict the overall viability of these outcomes. At the same time, it has been noted by the respondents that merely providing spaces without additional facilities may not be adequate to fulfill the desired community needs. The elderly women, in particular, expressed concerns about the spatial insufficiently to support their mobility and social engagement. Despite the challenges, the active use of space by women of all ages illustrated their adaptability and resourcefulness in utilizing spatial opportunities for social networking and resilience building, therefore fostering social capital.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The association between social capital and gender is a multifaceted topic, shaped by multiple interconnected factors that influence each other and operate both individually and collectively. In the case of Bangladesh, these dynamics get further complicated by cultural influences and norms. Social capital and gender perspective are not only affected by contextual factors but also by the constraints imposed due to social values, which often limit women's opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires a more sensitive approach to housing design particularly that considers the internal environments.

Housing is the foundational space for women and children to create formal and informal networks, making spatial consideration essential. Hence, the one-size-fits-all method may fail to account for gender-specific needs. Promoting gender equity in housing design requires acknowledging the diverse ways in which men and women contribute at the neighborhood scale to the development of social capital. Context-specific indicators and cultural norms need to be considered to ensure effective socio-spatial sustainability in low-income settings. This paper highlighted the spatial relevance in the development of women's social capital. Looking into women's spatial experience, revealed that they consistently utilize shared social spaces to build mutual support, even when these spaces are not intentionally designed for that purpose. Even though the analysis indicated positive findings regarding the social capital dimensions, it also revealed disparities in cross-cultural integration along with gaps in institutional support that limit the full potential of capital formation. This paper contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on the intersection of gender, space, and social capital by showcasing women's role in negotiating the socio-spatial constraints. The findings highlighted the need for inclusive and participatory urban and housing planning that prioritizes gender-sensitive approaches to ensure equitable access to spaces. This paper concludes that, in low-income settings, when spatial opportunities are given, women effectively foster community networks that enable them to address challenges when required. While it underscores the resilience of women in utilizing spatial opportunities, it also calls for systematic changes in planning and governance.

Despite the contributions, the paper has certain limitations. The findings shown in the paper are based on the qualitative interviews and observations within a single case area, which may have limited the generalizability of its conclusions to the other low-income housing contexts. Further research could explore the limitation by conducting comparative studies in

different housing areas. Moreover, investigating multiple case areas that encompass diverse demographic groups can capture the social capital more effectively. Furthermore, longitudinal studies may have provided insights into how social capital evolves with changes in spatial arrangements.

Such research would deepen the understanding of how space can support community development and gender justice in housing policies and design.

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