Children’s Perception Of Place Friendliness In An Urban Neighborhood In Shiraz, Iran

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Abstract:
The concept of making cities around the globe friendly for children has emerged in the last decades. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre explains Child Friendly City to be a strategy for promoting the highest quality of life for all citizens. However, little work has been done to improve the physical environments of children as child friendly ones in cities around the world. This is due to lack of knowledge to guide action on creation of child friendly physical environments. This paper, therefore, makes an effort to reveal which places are perceived by children to be friendly to them with a particular reference to an urban neighbourhood in Shiraz. The goal is to contribute the findings to the future planning and design of urban neighbourhoods which would be more child-friendly. The methods used for this survey consist of semi-structured interview as well as onsite observation. A new theoretical construct called place friendship suggested by Chatterjee (2006) is adopted as the underpinning framework in this research to find out friendly places in children’s point of view. Findings suggest that a child friendly neighbourhood is made up of numerous places that children themselves explore. However, formal open spaces, private precincts, informal open spaces and streets in local area had highest contributions to place friendship while school had the least contribution. Cultural centres were also nominated by children as friendly places where they could learn new things. Gender differences were also noticed in nomination of friendly places which is concluded to be an upshot of social constraint.

Keywords: child friendly city, place friendship, children’s perception, urban neighbourhood

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, a global vision of considering children and their rights in all aspects of their lives has raised. The child friendly city initiative is an upshot of such an outlook which emphasizes the need for improving quality of life of children and youth in cities around the globe and works with local governments globally to make the urban environment of children child friendly. In other words, such initiatives are concerned with ensuring that city governments consistently make decisions in the best interests of children, and that cities are places where children’s rights to a healthy, caring, protective, educative, stimulating, non-discriminating, inclusive, culturally rich environment are addressed (Riggio, 2002). Consequently, child rights have been promoted through initiatives and programs in a number of cities all over the world. However, the physical environment of cities has been usually left out in the process of making most of these cities child friendly (Bartlett, 2002). Few numbers of case studies, for instance in Australia and New Zealand, that tried to improve the physical environment of children as child friendly ones have not accomplished their aim due to lack of knowledge on what child friendly physical environment really means in the context of children’s lives (Chatterjee, 2006).

Put differently, in spite of several publications on children and cities, in the last decades, the number of published literature on environmental child friendliness especially friendliness of the physical environment is limited. However, Kytta (2004) presented a hypothetical model of a child friendly environment, based on the covariation of opportunities for independent mobility and the actualization of affordances. She named this model a Bullerby-model, according to the ideal circumstances where children enjoy sufficient possibilities to move around independently in the environment and to perceive the environment as a reach source of affordances. More recently Chatterjee (2006) offered a six dimensional framework of place friendship, after doing a comprehensive interdisciplinary literature review; with the goal of filling the gap of lack of theoretical framework in understanding environmental child friendliness. This theoretical framework for environmental child friendliness is the most and the only comprehensive and recent concept in the literature. The new construct of place
friendship developed by Chatterjee (2006), who aimed to create a framework that would be used in assessing friendliness of children’s places, is an initial attempt awaiting further empirical understandings of environmental child friendliness. This paper, therefore, adopts this framework to reveal friendly places in children’s point of view in an urban neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran. The goal is adding a case study to the existing body of research on children-environment interaction as well as contributing the findings to the future planning and design of urban neighbourhoods which would be more child-friendly.

This paper, therefore, starts with a brief review of the six dimensions of place friendship, offered by Chatterjee (2006), as a new place relationship construct within the broader sense of place framework. This framework provides new insights for research and theory in place relationships and is adopted as the underpinning framework in the current survey. The paper proceeds with demonstration of the methodology used in the current research. Results and discussion of the key findings are presented in three sections. The first section presents the friendliest places in the studied neighbourhood under each dimension of place friendship and discusses about the attributes of such places. And, the second section presents the places with higher contribution to place friendship in the neighbourhood. Finally, gender differences in perception of friendly place are presented.

Place Friendship as a Place Relationship Construct

Chatterjee (2006) argues that although the term, friendship with place, is widely applied in the global concepts of child friendly city and child friendly environment, it has not been subjected to scholarly inquiry. Therefore, in an attempt to develop the concept of place friendship as a valid form of place relationship in childhood, at the first step, she reviewed the literature on childhood friendship and by adopting the six dimensional framework of friendship offered by Doll (1996). Later she proposed the conditions for place friendship, based on children’s environments literature; and translated these childhood friendship dimensions to place friendship dimensions. She also differentiated between place attachment and place friendship, by referring to the existing literature, so as to advocate place friendship as a new and valid form of place relationship construct. By the aforementioned review of a large interdisciplinary literature, she suggests that it would be possible to study environmental child friendliness of children’s environments in cities through the construct of place friendship. Her proposed framework consists of six dimensions which were decreased to four after the empirical investigation of these dimensions in a low income neighbourhood in India. However, according to Chatterjee (2006), there is a need for empirical investigation of these six dimensions in other contexts. These six dimensions are explained in Table 1 to see how the conditions of peer friendships were translated to place friendships. This table is a summarized version of the original table, adopted from Chatterjee’s PhD dissertation, and briefly reviews her suggested framework for place friendship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for friendship (Doll 1996)</th>
<th>Conditions of friendship</th>
<th>Proposed conditions for place friendship (based on children’s environments literature)</th>
<th>Criteria for place friendship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual affection and personal regard</td>
<td>Criteria by which each friend demonstrates a Caring responsibility for the other (Hinde, 1979)</td>
<td>Childhood animism is the basis for children’s caring for the non-human world (Hart and Chawla 1981; Chawla, 1988)</td>
<td>1. Care and Respect for places: Children develop affection and regard for a place that has pleasing intrinsic qualities capable of delighting, as well as holding the child from harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared interests and activities</td>
<td>Represent the friend’s investment of time and attention to have fun together (Hartrup, 1989a; Youngiss, 1980)</td>
<td>In person-environment exchange or transactions, people and their environments are considered inseparable, and people as “inevitably immersed in physical surroundings that provide both the context and possibilities for the activities in which they engage” (Preston, 2003, 60).</td>
<td>2. Meaningful exchange with places: Places through their affordances allow children to fulfil different needs and interests through action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commitment
The intention on the part of both friends to continue fostering the relationship over time (Asher 1995; Hartup 1989a; Hinde et al, 1985)

Children’s direct and indirect experience of place contributes to children’s environmental learning and environmental competence (Matthews, 1992).

Learning and Competence through place experience:
Learning from the environment and gaining Environmental competence through direct experience of place are important factors for developing a committed relationship with the place and environment.

Loyalty
The intention of both friends to protect the interest of the other (Hartup 1989a; Hinde, 1979)

Human territorial behaviour shows that humans have a natural proclivity to claim, own, and defend spaces as their own territories (Sack, 1986; Malmberg, 1980; Altman, 1975).

Creating and Controlling territories:
Place allows creation of identifiable territory through children’s actions over time.

Self-disclosure and mutual understanding
Criterion by which each friend acquires and contributes to an uncommon understanding of the other (Hartup, 1989a)

Privacy needs, particularly in middle childhood, compels children to seek out secret places in the landscape (Sobel, 1993).

Having secret places:
Secret places allow children to disclose and preserve concealed information, suppressed truths, desires and dark knowledge, and also manage interactions with others by retracting into these private spaces.

Horizontality
Friends share power in the Relationship (Hartup, 1989a; Hinde, 1979)

One of the clearest expressions of power in the socio-physical landscape is the ability to invest one’s living space with meaning through personalization, decoration, and occupation (Breitbart, 1998), or in other words through free expression of the self.

Freedom of expression in place:
Children in occupying and claiming space, share power, by negotiating constraints to freely express themselves in different ways such as through art, music, personalizing space through activities and physical modifications of settings.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

One hundred and six middle childhood children (ages 6-12) participated; 58 boys and 48 girls. The reason for choosing this age group was that children in their middle-childhood most actively use outdoor space (Chawla, 1992). Studies in child environment research (Hart, 1979; Moore, 1986; Kytta, 2003) have also shown that school-age children are the heaviest users of outdoor landscapes, particularly around the home and its surroundings. Participants’ ages were divided into the number of the years they lived in the neighbourhood and this ratio indicated that they lived for an average of 82% of their lives in the neighbourhood. No gender differences were evident in this ratio. These participants were chosen randomly in the study area.

The study area was a high density, mixed use neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran. It accommodated middle to high income families. Houses within this area were a mix of two storey single-family houses and up to nine storey apartments with both forms of designed as well as left over open spaces in their precincts. Different places were accessible to children in this neighbourhood including a number of formally designed parks, informal open spaces, private precincts around apartments, local and commercial streets as well as sport complexes, and a number of schools and places to learn art related subjects such as calligraphy, music and drawing. Furthermore, a large population of the children (between ages of 6-12) who actively used the local area everyday for living, playing and learning were available in the study area.

3.2 Procedure

Individual interviews were conducted with 106 middle childhood children. Each participant completed an approximately 30 to 40-minute interview about his or her neighbourhood. Among the questions were ones...
asking children to nominate the places they mostly preferred under each dimension of place friendship including places that they mostly respected and cared for, places that they had meaningful exchange with, places that they learned from, places in which they could create and control territories, their secret places as well as places in which they could express themselves freely. Each child was recommended to nominate only one place under each dimension. There were also a number of sub questions, under each dimension, which asked children to explain why they nominated those places. These questions aimed to build an understanding of children’s perception of friendly places under each dimension and find out environmental attributes of such places in children’s point of view. Onsite observations were then conducted to clarify whether common environmental attributes determined the places to be nominated under the same dimension. Analysis of data was conducted in two steps. At the first step the nominated places were categorized according to the six dimensions of place friendship so as to find out the friendliest places under each dimension. According to observations and interviews the 25 nominated places under all dimensions were then recategorized into ten place types. In fact, the categorization of places into place types was according to two types of design input (formal and informal) patterns, two forms of ownership (private or public) and function of the places. Since some children nominated places in city level, further differentiation within the categories was achieved on the basis of location of these places (local and city-level). Local refers to places in the neighbourhood area that were easily accessible for children according to what they mentioned.

The number of nomination of each place type under each dimension provided a quantitative data set which helped to find out the place types which had higher contribution to place friendship in the neighbourhood. It also helped in understanding friendliest place types under each dimension. This data set in fact showed the distribution of places across the categories and dimensions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Friendliest Places under each Dimension of Place Friendship

4.1.1 Care and Respect for Places

One hundred and six responses were received from the participants nominating six unique places that they respected and cared for. However highest nominations were gained by three places. The highest nomination in this category was a formally designed neighbourhood park called Imam Reza Park, located in the middle of residential buildings, which was nominated by 39% of respondents. This park was well designed and landscaped. The second highest nominated place, which received 24% of the responses, was home precinct. Home precinct in the study area referred to the landscaped spaces around apartments. These spaces were semi private lands, owned by the residents of a number of apartment blocks. The third highest nominated place was another formally designed and landscaped park called Golha Park located in the midst of apartments. This park received 18% of responses. Three reasons given by participants as to why they cared for and respected these places (Figure 1) over other places in their neighbourhood: (1) clean, well-organized landscapes, embracing natural elements such as trees, flowers and lawns, (2) providing opportunities for social interaction, play and sense of safety and security, and (3) promoting care and respect. Imam Reza Park ranked first in this category offering the highest rates of the aforementioned attributes.

However, participants referred to well-organized natural elements more than other attributes of cared for and respected places. Buntings and Cousins (1985) had found pastoralism, or an attraction for natural settings and open spaces, the most commonly endorsed environmental disposition in a large sample of 9 to 16 year olds. In a study conducted in a low income neighbourhood in India, Chatterjee (2006) also found that even for children growing up in a dense inner city neighbourhood in a fast urbanizing city in a developing nation with very little nature in the immediate living environment, children were emotionally attracted to the well maintained designed parks in the periphery, and outside of their neighbourhood. These parks provided contact with nature, and were the places children respected and cared for the most in their everyday environment. Though children had access to several other unstructured open spaces with no rules and constraints on their behaviour and action, and wilder nature, places that were more orderly and had clear visible signs of care and maintenance invoked respect and caring in children (Chattarjee, 2006).
4.1.2 Places with Meaningful Exchange

One hundred and four responses were received from the participants nominating nine unique places that they could do a lot of activities and therefore, they had meaningful exchange with them. Twenty seven percent (27\%) of the respondents opted for open spaces in front of their house. These open spaces were not formally designed and were in fact leftover spaces. There were no natural elements or playing equipments with which children could play in these open spaces. The second highest nominated place under this dimension was home precinct which was nominated by 20\% of respondents. As discussed before, home precinct referred to semi private lands, owned by the residents of a number of apartment blocks. Imam Reza Park and streets near home were the third highest nominated places each of which were nominated by 13\% of respondents. Park near home was also nominated by 12\% of children.

The responses given by children regarding the ir reasons for nominating these places as the places where they could do a host of daily activities by themselves and with their friends revealed that high levels of actualized affordances and familiarity of places determined their friendliness under the second dimension of place friendship. Though open spaces in front of home were not formally designed, and did not have any playing equipments or natural elements, these places had different physical attributes that offered a large range of possible actions to children. Children used their creativity to perceive and actualize these affordances every time they went there. Home precinct, Imam Reza park, streets near home and park near home also offered certain rates of possible actions to the children. Sociality affordances were also of great importance to children during the experiences in the open spaces. Furthermore, all the places under this dimension were in a familiar environment near home. Familiar environment inspired sense of safety and security. Moreover, easy access to places in the proximity of home was beneficial in the sense that it allowed children to actualize further affordances every time they visited those places. The importance of distance from home for nomination of the places children could do a lot of activities there, in their daily life, can also be explained with the extent of children’s independent mobility and it’s relationship with actualization of affordances. The children’s nomination of places in the proximity of home under this dimension of place friendship is consistent to Kytta’s (2004) hypothetical model of a child friendly environment that affords creating meaningful exchange with such places.

Streets were nominated with only 12\% of the respondents as places they could have meaningful exchange with. This finding is in contrast to studies by Chatterjee (2006) that streets near home had the highest contribution to place friendship. Inasmuch, other studies had also emphasized on children’s tendency to play in the streets (Berg and Medrich, 1980; Sell, 1985; Cosco & Moore, 2002; Karsten & van Vliet, 2006). This difference was due to lack of safety in the streets of the study area. Eighty percent of the streets, nominated by children, were in the apartments’ precinct and were only accessible to the residents of the apartments. This was due to children’s restrictions in using unsafe streets outside their home precinct. However, the children mentioned that they tended to use streets other than their own and that restriction was imposed by adults who were concerned with their safety. These concerns are global fears. Valentine (1996) had shown how contemporary parents in the UK perceived their own children as innocent and vulnerable (angels) particularly to traffic accidents and violence, and the streets as dangerous and belonging to adults.

Figure 1. Cared for and respected places in the studied neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran. Left: Home precinct; Middle: Golha Park; Right: Imam Reza Park
4.1.3 Places Children Learn From

Ninety three (93) responses were received from participants nominating 15 unique places that they learned from in their neighbourhood. The highest nominated places in this category (13%) were calligraphy and drawing classes which were held indoors. Home precinct and a football field called Sasani field were second highest nominated places each of which were nominated by 12% of the respondents. The third highest nominated place was Mehrdad gym, a sport complex that accommodated indoor activities. This sport complex was nominated by 11% of children. Eleven other places consisting of music classes, Vahdat field, Mellat park, park around municipality building, home garden, Imam Reza park, Golha park, Elm o Adab School, pool, Azadi park and shops near home, were each nominated by a few numbers of respondents. However 12% of participants mentioned that there were no places in their neighbourhood that they could learn new things every time they went there.

As presented above, a wider array of friendly places was nominated under the third dimension of place friendship despite the 13 null responses. Children had pointed out in their interviews that they learned new things from others in those places. Chatterjee (2006) mentions that other adults and children often collaborate directly to help a child learn a new activity, or direct the learner’s attention to different features of the place and its functions. The conditions, under which this form of learning takes place, are the conditions of apprenticeship in the broadest sense (Rogoff, 1990), and these places in the neighbourhood present the context for social learning.

It is worthy of attention that among 93 children only 4 participants mentioned school as a place where they learned something new. This is while other indoor classes such as calligraphy and drawing classes in cultural centres got the highest rank in the nomination of friendly places under this dimension followed by Home precinct, Sasani field and a sport complex called Mehrdad gym. It is concluded that as Illich (1972) had suggested, school was after all obligatory confinement, whereas learning happened outside. The neighbourhood with its multiple everyday settings, in contrast, allowed the child to attend multiple settings and learn from them. The calligraphy, drawing or music classes, and different parks and open spaces near or far from home, all fell outside school. As Chatterjee (2006) mentions, what Lave and Wenger (1991) call legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) takes place in widely differing contexts of time and place. This conceptualization of LPP according to Hank positions learning as “a way of being in the social world” (Hanks 1990, p24).

The result of this study suggests that the children in the neighbourhood of Shiraz nominated a wide range of places of their neighbourhood as the places they learned new things every day they visited them. This finding is parallel to Chatterjee’s (2006) study that children nominated places with deep symbolism for the community and shared meaning as places from which they learned. Moreover, the children who actively participated in...
different community practices learned everyday as apprentices, and legitimate peripheral learners in the community.

4.1.4 Places Children Territorialize

The children nominated eight unique places that they knew them as their territories. The highest nomination in this category was home precinct (24%), followed by open spaces in front of home and behind apartment’s front door (21%). The parks, Imam Reza and Golha, only nominated by 9% of the respondents. Home precincts and open spaces in front of home and behind apartment’s front door were places that children seized as their territories most easily. The finding suggests that the home precinct and other places near home as the places as the children’s territories. Wridt (2004) called the territories as block politics and described as “an expression of young people’s gendered and racialized identities and social struggle to spatially differentiate themselves from one another using ‘the block’ as a group signifier…” Wridt originated the term blockism as underpinning block politics and defined it as “a sense of belonging to a particular community delimited by a specific territory to which one can develop a sense of solidarity and pride (Wridt 2004, 199)”. Although children living in the studied neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran, were not different from each other in terms of race but they still tended to differentiate between the children living in their home precinct and children living in other precincts. It means that they had a strong sense of belonging to their precincts. Gender differences also affected territorialisation of places in the same precinct. The spaces that girls territorialized were far from those that boys territorialized. Children living in the nine different precincts in Nizamuddin, India, similarly had strong sense of belonging to their precincts and this was one of the reasons beside proximity and familiarity that those children, especially the girls, played near their precinct and chose open spaces near their precincts as the places they could most easily territorialize (Chattarjee, 2006).

Moreover, two designed parks, Imam Reza and Golha Park, were also nominated as places that children territorialize through action. These two places were big enough to accommodate different territory seeking groups. The children, in fact, had unrestricted and reserved use of resources in these two parks, which according to Malmberg (1980) signified the everyday nature of territories. It means the children were out different territories for different needs in the same geographic space (Altman, 1975). For the children, fostering territorial claiming is important not only from the perspective of their privacy, play and social interaction needs, but also in order to learn how to coexist with others in the same social space, knowing them yet respecting the boundaries of

Figure 3. A wide range of places were nominated by children as the places they learned from. Some examples are: 1. Park around Municipality building, 2. Imam Reza Park, 3. Saksani field, 4. Home precinct, 5. Mellat Park.
other territory holders (Chattarjee, 2006). In other words, the parks afforded this attribute and accommodated different groups of people seeking territory.

However, the physical territories partitioned by Children in these places were *temporal*, the aspect of territoriality that Sack (1986) had emphasized on. As Chatterjee (2006) had also found in her study of Nizzamuddin, India, though children enjoyed absolute control and hence power in these settings while they were active in these settings, children had no control over these physical territories in their absence. Thus these territories functioned as child friendly places when children were in these settings, owning and personalizing the settings. But when children exited the settings with their props that helped define the territories, the nature of these places also changed till such time when the children returned to reclaim the setting and recreate the territory once again as a child friendly place.

4.1.5 Children’s Secret Places

Only 59 responses were received from the participants nominating 3 unique places that were their secret places in the neighbourhood. The highest nominated place in this category was street away from home which was nominated by 49% of the respondents. Around Sasani field was nominated by 34% of respondents. The third highest nominated place was park near home nominated by 17% of respondents.

The street away from home was in fact nominated in that it was away from familiar gazes of family and neighbours. So were around Sasani field and park near home. The park was a typical neighbourhood park located isolatedly. So was Sasani field around which were a number of fruit trees under which children sat either alone or with peers. Thus, any act, in the unfamiliar street, the cosy park or under the trees was secret from families and neighbours who occupied every corner of the familiar everyday spaces. When children were asked to explain why they liked those places they described that those places helped them hide from others and act as they pleased. They also explained that they liked to be alone, in a beautiful place away from the crowded living environment with family and friends. Privacy experience as found out in the Wolfe and Laufer (1975) study, showed the experience of aloneness or managing information as the most frequently reported elements of privacy for children of all ages.

The responses of the children in Shiraz’s neighbourhood on their secret places were somewhat similar to the findings of a study by Chatterjee (2006) in a poor neighbourhood in New Delhi. However, the Indian children, who with a number of social restrictions, had another reason for visiting secret places. They mentioned that they liked to access forbidden places. This reason was not mentioned by the children participating in the current research in that they lived in a medium to high income neighbourhood with a number of places they visited without social restrictions.

However, the observations revealed that besides unfamiliarity and isolation as environmental qualities of secret places found in children’s explanations, aesthetical qualities were also of great importance to children. The
scenery around Sasani field and the neighbourhood park were naturally rich and aesthetically pleasing landscape settings. This is consonant with Chatterjee’s (2006) and Korpela (2002) findings who suggested that children chose nature rich secret places for their restorative qualities when they like to be alone.

4.1.6 Places in the Neighbourhood where Children were Free to Express themselves

The result suggests that the children nominated seven unique places in which they could express themselves freely. The highest nominated place in this category was Imam Reza park, which was nominated by 29% of respondents. Home precinct was nominated by 22% of children and open space in front of home was nominated by 19% of respondents.

The places nominated under this dimension were the same places nominated under the second dimension of place friendship; meaningful exchange with place. This suggests that factors that contribute to children’s freedom of expression in places are similarly easy access to places and socio-physical context that offers different affordances thus, supporting free action of children. As Chatterjee (2006) mentions that children, in occupying and claiming space, share power, by negotiating constraints to freely express themselves in different ways such as personalizing space through activities and physical modifications of settings. Through these acts of free expressions in place, children create new meaning of places. Therefore, it is concluded that the activities that happen during meaningful exchange with places contribute to children’s ability to express themselves freely in those places.

4.2 Place Types with Higher Contribution to Place Friendship in the Neighbourhood

As discussed before in the section explaining the methodology of study, the 25 nominated places under all dimensions were recategorized into 10 place types. These place types consist of formal open space city level (FOSC), formal open space local (FOSL), informal open space local (IOSL), indoor sport complex (SC), indoor cultural centre (CC), private precinct (PP), my neighbourhood (MNH), neighbourhood retail (NHR), school (SCH) and streets in local area (SILA). The number of nomination of each place type under each dimension provided a quantitative data set which helped to find out the place types with higher contribution to place friendship in the studied neighbourhood. Figure 6 shows the percent contribution of each place type to place friendship in the studied neighbourhood. As shown in the figure, formal open space local has the highest contribution to place friendship (35%) followed by private precinct (28%), informal open space local (20%) and streets in local area (8%). Cultural centre which consists of calligraphy, drawing or music classes was nominated by 3% of children as a place they could learn from. However, school is one of the places in the neighbourhood which got the lowest rank (0.7%) in contribution to place friendship.

The findings of this graph suggest that:

- By promoting more formal open spaces consisting of designed parks and playgrounds in the local area, more places will be created by those children with respect and they enjoy as child friendly ones.

- By allocating enough space to private precincts around houses and apartments in the neighbourhood and sensitive design of those spaces, more places which can be actively used in an everyday basis are available to children, therefore contributing to friendliness of the neighbourhood environment. So are the informal open spaces in the local area.
- Streets in local area are still used by children for daily activities and as secret places despite lack of safety in the neighbourhood streets. Safety considerations must therefore, be carried out to enhance streets as child friendly places in the neighbourhood.

- Cultural centres should also be accessible to children in neighbourhood environment in that such places achieved the first rank in nomination of places in which children learned new things in addition to other outdoor places such as parks and home precinct.

![Figure 6. Percent Contribution of Each Place Type to Place Friendship. Formal open space city level (FOSC), formal open space local (FOSL), informal open space local (IOSL), indoor sport complex (SC), indoor cultural centre (CC), private precinct (PP), my neighbourhood (MNH), neighbourhood retail (NHR), school (SCH) and streets in local area (SILA).](image)

**4.3 Gender Differences in Perception of Friendly Places**

There were 259 responses from 48 girls, and 314 responses from 58 boys recommending places across all dimensions. Figure 7 displays the preferences of boys and girls in choosing places within each of the ten types across all six dimensions.

If we consider the first four types of places, which obtained the most place responses from children, there seems to be a considerable difference in the types of places boys and girls chose across dimensions. As shown in Figure 7, formal open space local, informal open space local and streets in local area were more frequently chosen by boys while private precinct was more frequently chosen by girls rather than boys. This finding is concluded to be an upshot of social constraint for girls in a community restricting girls due to fear of their safety and security, therefore reducing the rates of independent mobility they enjoy. In Chatterjee’s (2006) study in a low income neighbourhood in India, however, there was not a considerable difference in place choice between girls and boys. This was concluded to be an artefact of the age of girls selected for the study who were tolerated in public and had negotiated access to outdoor places till about twelve years.
5. CONCLUSION

This paper adopted the framework of place friendship offered by Chattarjee (2006) to reveal friendly places in children’s point of view in an urban neighbourhood in Shiraz, Iran. Observations of such places and the reasons given by children as to why they chose those places helped in understanding the environmental qualities of friendly places under each dimension of place friendship. It further discussed the place types that highly contributed to place friendship in the neighbourhood and argued on gender differences in children’s preferences for those place types.

Findings suggest that a friendly neighbourhood is made up of numerous places that children use in a daily basis for meeting their different needs as varied as play, social interaction, learning new things as apprentices and being alone in secret places for restorative effects. However, some place types such as formal open spaces in local area, private precincts, informal open spaces in local area and streets in local area were highest contributors to place friendship. Cultural centres were also highly important to children under the dimension of learning and competence. Thus, in order to have friendly neighbourhoods, provision of such places must be sensitively taken into consideration in the process of planning. Gender differences in nomination of friendly place types also suggest that in order to have a neighbourhood environment that accommodates both girls and boys in a friendly manner, private precincts must be well designed as places most girls know to be friendly to them.

REFERENCES