

Women Perception of Spatial Safety Relating to Working in Historic Cairo's Retail Street Markets

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Abstract : This research primarily studies the correlation between the existence of different spatial factors in relation to the perception of females towards safely participating in the labor force within selected areas of economic bustle in Historic Cairo. This research measures the following independent variables: (1) perception regarding spatial safety on the street as controlled by street network, (2) vegetation as a facilitator and inhibitor of feeling safe in public places, and (3) outdoor lighting; in relation to the following dependent variable: the perception of females towards safely participating in the labor force in Historic Cairo. The objective of this research lies within adding to the design guidelines of urban design and planning in terms of design recommendations, making them more inclusive, especially those dealing with conserving and enhancing the built environment of old and historic cities. It is hypothesized that a balanced male-to-female ratio in terms of street activity, increased visibility of street in terms of its volume, a decrease in street obstacles, creation of open sighted vegetation, and increased visibility due to proper lighting will show up as positive response relating to the female perception of safety. The site chosen as an area to host this exercise of data collection is Al-Ataba. The site is within the borders of Historic Cairo and was chosen for two reasons: firstly, it provides a major source of economic bustle in Historic Cairo; and secondly, it hosts retail economic activities. This is a cross-sectional study. The data collected will consist of three parts: (1) observations by the researcher regarding the percentage of female participation, as well as perception of females on site, (2) interviews with women working on-site regarding the percentage of female participation, as well as their perception on participating, and (3) an anonymous online survey that studies the perception of a random sample of women towards the site as a place to exist in. The survey will aid in producing design recommendations on how to design an open 'souk' that suits women's perception of a safe space.

Keywords : urban design, women empowerment, safety perception, street markets, historic Cairo

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