

Community Participation in the Sports Clubs of Bangladesh: The Case of Sheikh Kamal Sports Complex of Abahani Limited

Sheikh Hameem¹, & Md. Asaduzzaman²

¹B.Arch. Department of Architecture, RUET.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, RUET.

¹Email- sheikh.hameem71@gmail.com

²Email- asaduzzamansohag@gmail.com

Abstract

Sports infrastructure is frequently expected to create the style or tone and reflect the environment of its surroundings due to its sheer size and public attention. However, sporting facilities in developing nations such as Bangladesh are always seen in retrospect, and devotion is demonstrated in civic and social concerns. As a result, the attraction and popularity of current sports clubs are declining daily. The existing club facilities have now begun to serve only a particular group of enlisted athletes. Thus, the children and young people of the adjacent communities are deprived of the opportunities to participate in organized sports. This leads to issues like performance degradation, community detachment, and weak player recruitments. Due to this, the social and communal values of sports clubs seem to be declining. In this context, incorporating the locals and ensuring their active participation can be a likely strategy to improve the situation. However, how to encourage community participation in sports clubs is unknown. Since there are very few community participation models this paper examines this issue.

This study proposes a four-level community participation model for sports clubs, along with a numerical evaluation method. The application of this model has been illustrated through the proposal for the “Sheikh Kamal Sports Complex”. The intention of the paper is to widen the possibility of additional research in this area while offering a likely option of coexistence between sports clubs and the nearby communities.

Keywords: sports complex, community participation, evaluation procedure, Sheikh Kamal sports complex, Abahani limited

Introduction

Sport (or sports) is the generic term for any type of competitive physical activity that aims to utilize, maintain, or improve physical skills and abilities while providing entertainment to participants and, in some cases, spectators, through casual or organized involvement. A sports complex is a collection of sporting facilities housed under one roof. It is a well-balanced collection of indoor and outdoor gaming facilities that offers a wide range of activities on a relatively small piece of land. In towns and cities, sports complexes serve as both social and architectural landmarks.

Nowadays, in Bangladesh, sports are a popular form of entertainment as well as an essential part of the culture. People of Bangladesh have always been enthusiasts of sports. Sports events have often been held in full-house stadiums. The rivalry among the players,

intensity, and craze among the supporters is noteworthy. During any national-level sports event, the whole country is engaged in the event. However, this glorious past has gradually declined over the years and those who have seen the best era of Bangladesh sports are painfully watching the worst of it. One of the main reasons behind this is the lack of opportunities for community participation.

Usually, the sports clubs of Bangladesh are based on a community-centric establishments. However nowadays, this atmosphere is lost. The attitude of the sports club is to generate revenue as much as possible rather than build the club as a brand. In this process, community involvement is diminished. The sports clubs do not involve the public in decision-making, policy-making, and club administration. As a result, active participation of the communities in sports events is also lost. There is no such thing as a volunteer participation opportunity for the local children and teenagers. Undeniably, children are losing their interest in sports and physical activities.

This is not ideal and encouraging community participation is necessary to improve it. A wide range of active participation provisions should be there for the local people, including sports events, spectator facilities, volunteer participation, decision-making, and also involvement in the administration bodies. However, it should not hamper the club athlete's facilities. There should be a corporation between community people by providing participation provision and thus ensure coexistence of clubs and communities. Therefore, this paper focuses on assessing the need for community engagement with sports clubs and a probable way to measure the level of community participation. It also applies it to the case of "Sheikh Kamal Sports Complex". The objective of the paper is to contribute to resolve the current situation and encourage community participation in sports and other pertinent fields.

Literature review

Community participation is a notion that leads to successful and integrated outcomes that improve the situation of a certain target group. In most cases, different parties can participate in decision-making through implication, influence, cooperation, co-decision, and so on (Wulz, 1986). According to Sanoff (1990), there has been a significant shift toward direct public participation in several areas. However, the sports sector seems to be in hindsight in terms of community participation. However, residents' healthy lifestyles are significantly correlated with public sports facilities (Chen *et al.*, 2021). The quantity, quality, and distribution of public sports facilities have a great impact on people's passion and efficiency of physical activity, as well as their living conditions and quality of life (Li and Zhang, 2021).

However, only the availability of sports facilities is not the sole factor. It is the people's engagement and participation that plays a vital role in developing community leadership, pushing for awareness and endorsement. Only then do the sports clubs become the hub where community participation is centered around. According to the "Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report", most of the activities are focused on developing and strengthening linkages between the community, sports clubs, and other physical activity groups (Sport Ireland, 2018). However, this situation is not always there. The open spaces are gradually decreasing, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh which is rapidly becoming urban.

According to Salma (2018), sports participation opportunities for children have become 'exceptional' in urban areas of Bangladesh and the situation is not satisfactory at all. The participation opportunity provided by the authorities caters only to a fraction of the population and is also not always straightforward to secure and safeguard (Akhter, 2018). However, it appears that just a small percentage of people are concerned about this fact. Few relevant studies have been conducted on community participation and "how to measure" the participation level within the sports sector remains a question.

The local community must be involved before taking any steps toward a project or developmental course within the community. Without community involvement, the initiatives taken would suffer in the long run. They would not be able to bring the expected outcome. However, community participation in the sports sector is itself a laborious and complex task.

To successfully involve the community, some systematic steps must be followed. The first one should be the development of a thorough understanding of the current practice of community participation with the help of existing literature. Considering that the term "participation" can be used in numerous situations and fields. Being imprecise about the idea won't help at all; therefore, it needs to be given more consideration.

Research Methodology

Hence, it is important to thoroughly assess both the theories and the current models of community engagement. Thus the shortcomings of those models especially at the application level of sports participation in Bangladesh were identified. Then from all the gathered information, a new theoretical model with a quantitative evaluation procedure is proposed for that purpose. It will not only define the level of community participation but also numerically measure it. Additionally, it was kept in mind whether or not this can be applied in various contexts and circumstances. A study area was identified to illustrate the application of this model and also to find out the level of community participation in the existing sports facility of that particular area.

For a community involvement model, the evaluation process must incorporate data collection on communal response. The application of this model necessitates a survey, and the survey raises the issue of sample selection. As a result, a random sampling method was employed to obtain "user responses". Thus, a sample of 30% of the facility's daily users was chosen, and the survey was administered to them. The average analysis method was then used to examine the responses of the respondents, and the level of community engagement was determined based on the total of the average values.

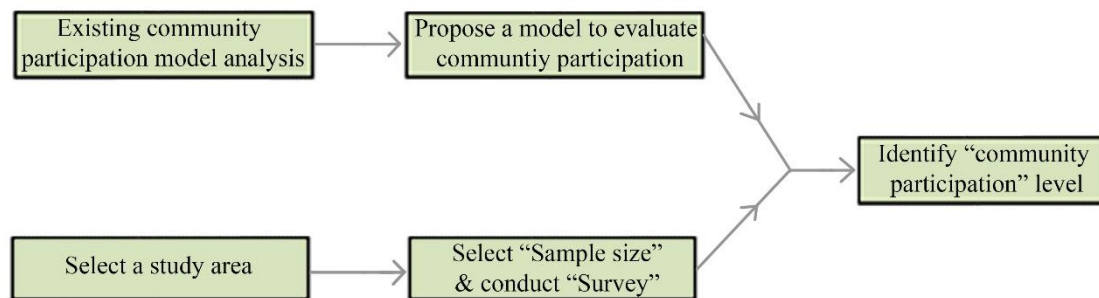


Fig. 1: Methodology flowchart
Source: author

The Theoretical Basis

Community participation and the existing models

Community participation in different social and public issues has been one of the major concerns over the past few decades. The term community is often interpreted as a traditional small-scale local group of people. Participation is to "have a share, take part in" (Chu, 2016). However, it is important to understand the meaning of community participation as it has been misused and abused in many projects (Irwin *et al.*, 1975).

"Community participation" can be defined as a process in which community members take part individually or as a group in a range of activities that allow them to have input and control over decisions about any particular issue. This helps people to stop being passive recipients of development aid (Care, Ata and Nations, 2000). In this process of community, people work with the authorities hand in hand and are allowed or invited to present their opinions and hold a certain level of control.

The concept of community participation spans across a wide range of different epistemological scales and also has infinitely malleable degrees of participation models depending on the nature of the community. Most of the models adopt qualitative approaches and normative assumptions varying from “good” to “bad”(Cornwall, 2008). There are several community participation models, but among them the Arnstein’s model, Roger hart’s model, Pretty’s model, White’s participation model, Matrix of Tim Davies, Scott Davidson’s wheel of participation are the major ones and mostly used in different sectors (Council of Europe, 2015). These models can be classified into two broad categories as follows.

Table 1: Basic types of community participation model
Source: Author

Community participation model	Ladder based models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnstein’s model • Roger hart’s model • Pretty’s model etc.
	Other models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White’s participation model • Matrix of Tim Davies • Scott Davidson’s wheel of participation etc.

Findings

A community participation model and evaluation procedure

Majority of the models include implicit normative presumptions, and it is currently unclear how to apply these models to community participation in the sports sector. In these circumstances, a model is required to fulfill this purpose. That is why a four-stage community participation model is created using the aforementioned literature to assess the extent of community participation in the sports clubs of Bangladesh. The four levels are:

- **Nominal participation:** A participatory approach for the name-sake. The responsible bodies only pretend to participate. Only briefing takes place to let the participants know the decision. Usually the participants are unelected and powerless individuals who have no real influence on decisions. Their existence is ignored.
- **Passive participation:** This is performed subsequent to decisions that have already been taken. The participants have a minimal level of information. They blindly follow the procedure. The process is not transparent. There is also the possibility of influencing the participants.
- **Responsive participation:** The opportunity to put up opinions is provided for the participants. Usually, they participate by contributing resources such as manpower, experience and materials. It is a dialogue-based participation and people are usually invited over to a forum to express their opinions. However, control is available for the authorities.
- **Active participation:** Active participation is a collective and collegiate procedure not only to achieve goals but also to set them. Local people consider participation opportunities as their social right. They develop a partnership-based relationship to distribute shares and resources. Thus, they hold a certain degree of control over the situation as a symbol of empowerment.

Evaluation procedure

These four levels have been categorized over a broad spectrum. However, to have an accurate evaluation system, this broad category needs to be segmented into a few particular factors, which in this case are referred to as "attributes." An attribute relies on assumptions because there are no rules governing them. They are seen as variables and subject to change concerning time, context, and place.

A thorough investigation of the existing scenario can fruitfully guide the attribute selection. To evaluate a community participation level, people's perceptions toward those attributes must be collected. However, the responses against these attributes are frequently qualitative. The conversion of qualitative factors into numerical values is necessary since the evaluation of community engagement is the main goal. The relative values of the qualities have been divided into three categories—High, Moderate, and Low—to suit this function. Only three categories were selected to keep this process simple and relatable for the participants, as more categories can marginalize the variation limit and can create a certain level of confusion for them. The corresponding numerical values against those categories are provided in table 2.

Table 2: Assigned score of the categories
Source: Author

High	1
Moderate	0.5
Low	0.1

Now the numeric values should be assigned against all the selected attributes. After determining the sample size, people's responses at the level of those three groups can be collected via survey. After that, the average value made under each attribute should be summed up and compared with the chart below to find out the level of participation. For example, if the summation of the assigned value is between 40-70 % of the total value, then it will be in response to the participation level

Table 3: Community participation level and their respective scores
Source: Author

Level of community participation	Percentage of the total value
Nominal participation	0-15%
Passive participation	15-40%
Responsive participation	40-70%
Active participation	70%-100%

Study area

A careful study of an area is very important to test this as it will provide the opportunity to concentrate on a particular zone to test the proposed model and draw some findings from it. For this purpose, the locality of “Abahani Limited” located in the Dhanmondi residential area of Dhaka has been selected. The background considerations for selecting this particular area are as follows:

- Dhanmondi is one of the oldest planned residential developments in Dhaka and also in Bangladesh. Thus there is a strong community to measure the participation level.
- As the research focuses on community participation in sports facilities, the presence of a sports clubs is important. “Abahani Limited” is a prominent sports club in Bangladesh located in Dhanmondi.



Source: author

Existing facilities and community participation at Abahani limited

Abahani Limited, one of the leading sports clubs in Bangladesh, owns 10.68 acres of property in Dhanmondi. This facility provides sports opportunities to their enlisted athletes. Currently, there is an office building in the Northwest corner. There is an indoor basketball court, temporary cricket practice pitches, and a dormitory reserved only for the professional club players of Abahani. For the maintenance of the ground, there is a water pump and an electrical substation.

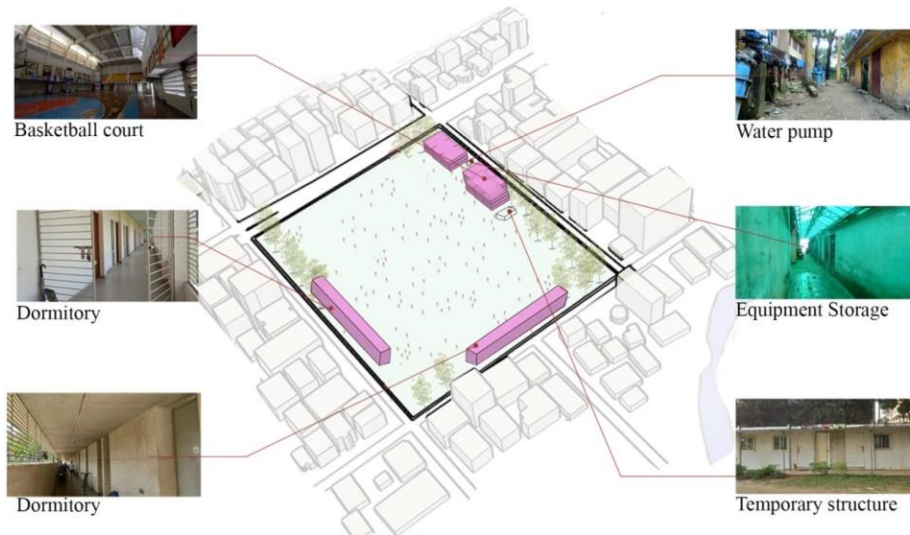


Fig 3: Existing built structures

Source: author

These facilities were open to all during the last decade, but then, the authorities placed a restriction on local people and began to serve only the club players. As a result, the children in those areas are deprived of proper outdoor sports facilities. Statistics indicates that in Bangladesh, the adolescents do not reach the requirements of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The teenage sedentary behavior appears to be acceptable, as 85% of adolescents having 2 hours sedentary time per day (Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010). In addition, 79 percent of the inactive population reported excessive screen usage (Uddin *et al.*, 2020). And among the children of Dhanmondi only 43% avail the outdoor playing opportunities and 53% cannot even have them (Akhter, 2018).

Being the prime club of Dhanmondi, this participation rate has had a significant impact on “Abahani Limited”. The popularity and craze is not here, also sports events began to hold in empty gallery. Till 1996 the local people were allowed to play at the Abahani ground. But after 1996 Abahani put restriction to this provision. This resulted in a very weak pipeline of athletes.

This ultimately ended up in a significant degradation of performance of Abahani Limited in the following decades.



a)

b)

Fig 4: a) Scenario of outdoor gaming opportunity for children of Dhanmondi

Source: Akhter, 2018

b) Performance degradation chart of Abahani Limited

Source: author

Probable solution of Sheikh Kamal Sports Complex

The analysis shows that the community participation level of Abahani Limited is not satisfactory at all. Abahani Limited also seems to have a responsible view of this circumstance. They have addressed these issues in their proposal for the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex” which is to be built on the existing facility in “Abahani Limited”. A symbiotic relationship between local people and the club athletes is proposed in the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex”. Thus, in this paper, a probable solution to the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex” is proposed. The community participation model is also applied to the proposal to find out the community participation level in the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex”.



Fig 5: Proposed ground floor plan of “Sheikh Kamal sports complex”

Source: Author

In the pedestrian-dominated proposal, vehicular access is ensured. A plaza will also, extract people from the adjacent community. Not only the elderly people but also the youth will have an attraction to the facility. There is also a child playing space in this facility. The Variety of the age groups were also carefully considered. Within the built form and on the grounds, children, youth, and the elderly each have their zone and facilities. On the other hand, there are cricket and football grounds along with practice pitches. As for community engagement, there are provisions for both active participation and participating as spectators for the local people. Some outdoor facilities like a jogging track and a walking trail for morning and evening walk separated by a green buffer zone from the outer pedestrians are included. There are also exercise and outdoor gossiping areas for the local people. These facilities can attract the people within the sports complex and thus will be able to encourage physical activities within the community.

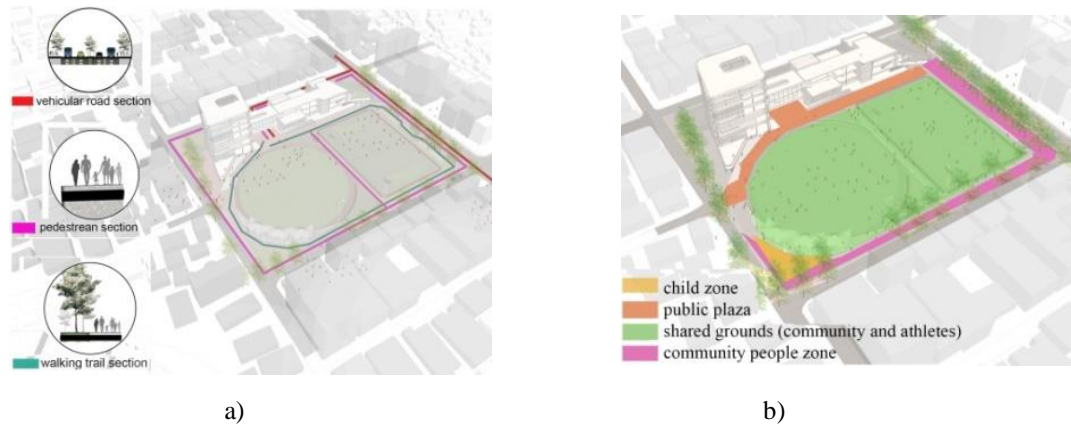


Fig 6: a) Age and user zoning, b) Circulation diagram
Source: author

The onsite survey also helped in identifying the different user groups of this facility. There are mostly four user groups in the form of athletes, administration, club members, and community people. As the prime focus is community participation, leaving someone behind won't be viable here. To achieve maximum participation, a user group-based program allocation technique was also implemented.

Another issue raised by the present analysis is that the facility is most active throughout the day. Cricket and football are the most popular activities in the morning and afternoon. However, by sunset, the ground has lost its energy and liveliness. As a result, it becomes a calm and dark zone. A "time-wise activity" technique was devised to address this issue. Where the community hub, administration, and some sports may serve a time period beginning in the evening, the facility will remain vibrant for a longer amount of time.

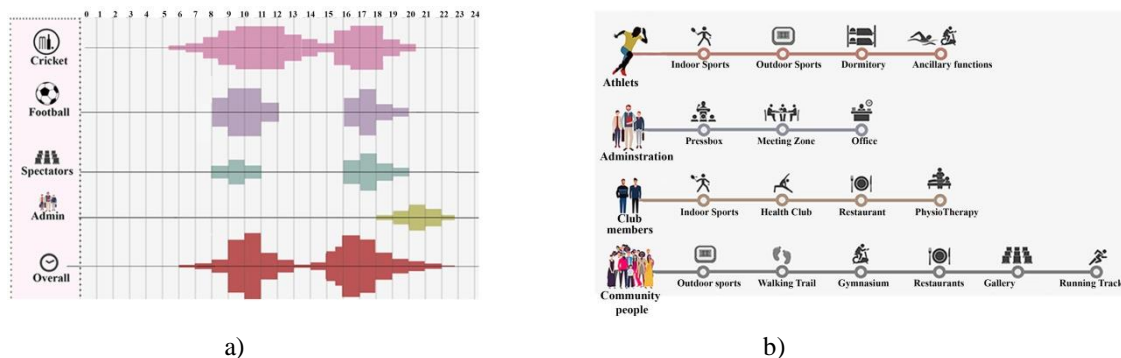


Fig 7: a) time wise activity mapping, b) user group wise activity allocation
Source: author

Evaluating community participation level

In this proposal factors like community participation, community facilities, and age-wise activity allocation were carefully considered but qualitatively. However, a quantitative measurement of the community participation level is required. The proposed participation model is applied to find out the level of community participation for the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex”. For applying the model, the attributes should be selected first. On the basis of the current scenario analysis a set of attributes is selected. Those are:

- I. Accessibility (vehicular and pedestrian)
- II. Universal accessibility
- III. Sports participation opportunity
- IV. Activities for different age groups
- V. Volunteer participation provision
- VI. Leisure and Communal facilities
- VII. Co-operation in decision making
- VIII. Partnership and co-management
- IX. Delegated power and citizen control

Now, to collect the opinions of individuals, a survey was conducted, and therefore a sample size should be chosen. It has been observed that the existing facility is used by 150-200 individuals every day. As a result, a sample size of 50 people selected who are in general from the adjacent community. Before collecting responses the existing and proposed situation is carefully presented to the respondents. Then their opinions were taken against these attributes concerning the mentioned three categories. The surveyed data is presented in the table below:

Table 4: Evaluation of community participation level
Source: Author

Attributes	High (respondents X score)	Moderate (respondents X score)	Low (respondents X score)	Total score	Average score
Accessibility (vehicular and pedestrian)	(41x1)= 41	(7x.5)= 3.5	(2x.1)= 0.2	44.5	0.89
Universal accessibility	(43x1)= 43	(6x.5)= 3	(1x.1)=0.1	46.1	0.922
Sports participation opportunity	(39x1)= 39	(8x.5)= 4	(3x.1)= 0.3	43.3	0.866
Activities for different age groups	(42x1)= 42	(5x.5)= 2.5	(3x.1)= 0.3	44.8	0.896
Volunteer participation provision	(32x1)= 32	(14x.5)= 7	(4x.1)= 0.4	39.45	0.786
Leisure and Communal facilities	(37x1)= 37	(11x.5)= 5.5	(2x.1)= 0.2	42.7	0.854
Co-operation in decision making	(31x1)= 31	(15x.5)= 7.5	(4x.1)= 0.4	38.9	0.778
Partnership and co-management	(34x1)= 34	(13x.5)= 6.5	(3x.1)= 0.3	40.8	0.816
Delegated power and citizen control	(25x1)= 25	(22x.5)= 11	(3x.1)= 0.3	36.3	0.726
			Summation of average value = 7.534		

According to the model, the value required for active participation is 70-100 percent of the total value. In this current evaluation process, there are nine attributes in total, and evaluated values against these attributes are 7, which is almost 77 percent of the maximum value. Thus, the proposal of the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex” situation falls at the “active participation” level according to the model.

Findings and the discussion

The application of the evaluation model indicates that the proposal for “Sheikh Kamal sports complex” has achieved a satisfactory level of community participation which does not exist in the existing scenario.

However, this result is not absolute, and can vary. The variation can be caused by the selection of attributes, as there are no fixed attributes for community participation in the sports sector. The change in attributes can cause a change in the result. Due to the perception of the evaluator, a variation is likely to happen, because the score assigned for one attribute by an evaluator is most likely to be different from the score assigned by another. There are also some factors to be considered. The participatory survey-based score allocation against the attributes can be more effective than the analytical assumption of the evaluator. The result will be more efficient, transparent, and acceptable. Thus, there are scopes for improving the model.

Nevertheless, this model meets the research objective by providing a gross overview of the community participation level in any given scenario. It can also pinpoint the areas to improve to achieve a satisfactory participation level and affiliate the community with the best possible prospects.

Conclusion

It is challenging to define the idea of a sports complex as a communal notion because it depends on what is important and pertinent to the need. The community benefit of the sports complex was viewed as offering an accessible sporting arena with a diverse range of high-quality facilities and programming for people of all ages and abilities. The multisport complex like the “Sheikh Kamal sports complex”, offers opportunities for the community's social, physical, and mental health, as well as a specific set of social benefits related to the establishment of the sports complex, such as increased participation and social cohesion, improved community lifestyle, and a boost in the number of people visiting the community.

This paper argues that the assessment of community participation is very important in the sports sector of Bangladesh. The study indicates that the presented model could be useful for this purpose. However, choosing the right attributes or criteria may be confusing. Following a thorough examination of the alternatives, the best set of attributes should be determined. As a result, the analysis will be conducted using a model that is more transparent and well-organized. This approach will open the door to additional research and prove beneficial to both the community and the relevant sectors.

References:

- Akhter, S. (2018) ‘Final Report on Children’s Play Right Situation in Dhaka City’, pp. 1–33.
- Care, P. H., Ata, A. and Nations, U. (2000) ‘Concept Paper Community Participation’, (1996).
- Chen, Y. *et al.* (2021) ‘Spatial equity in the layout of urban public sports facilities in Hangzhou’, *PLoS ONE*, 16(9 September), pp. 1–19. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0256174.
- Chowdhury, U. (2014) ‘Street Crime and Physical Environment - From the Perception of Local People regarding Security Feelings’, *International Journal of Architecture, Engineering and Construction*, 3(1). doi: 10.7492/ijaec.2014.006.
- Chu, C. (2016) ‘Chapter 20 Community participation health : definitions and public’, *ResearchGate*, (January 1997).
- Cornwall, A. (2008) ‘Unpacking “Participation” Models, meanings and practices’, *Community Development Journal*, 43(3), pp. 269–283. doi: 10.1093/cdj/bsn010.
- Council of Europe (2015) ‘Have Your Say’ - *Goldmine of Participation Activities*.
- Irwin, D. A. *et al.* (1975) ‘An injury-induced diffuse slow potential from brain’, *Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology*, 38 (4), pp. 367–377. doi: 10.1016/0013-4694(75)90261-8.
- Janssen, I. and LeBlanc, A. G. (2010) ‘Systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children and youth’, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 7 (Suppl 2), pp. 318–319. doi:

- 10.1186/1479-5868-7-40.
- Li, W. and Zhang, W. (2021) 'Design Model of Urban Leisure Sports Public Facilities Based on Big Data and Machine Vision', *Journal of Sensors*, 2021. doi: 10.1155/2021/1213978.
- Sport Ireland (2018) 'Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation', p. 72. Available at: https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/csh_evaluation.pdf.
- Uddin, R. *et al.* (2020) 'Physical activity and sedentary behaviour in Bangladesh: a systematic scoping review', *Public Health*. Elsevier Ltd, 179, pp. 147–159. doi: 10.1016/j.puhe.2019.10.006.
- Wulz, F. (1986) 'The concept of participation', *Design Studies*, 7(3), pp. 153–162. doi: 10.1016/0142-694X(86)90052-9.