

Urban Happiness Indicators in Iraq: Potentials for Future Intervention Towards Happiness (A Comparison Study)

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Abstract: *Urban happiness, an emerging concept in urban planning, highlights the role of cities in shaping individuals' experiences and happiness. Cities compete to bring happiness to their residents; however, achieving urban happiness requires a specific understanding of urban factors that contribute to individuals' happiness. This study concentrates on the significant role of urban aesthetic indicators in inducing individual happiness. Despite the absence of Iraqi cities from the Happy City Index 2024, citizens in Iraqi cities often reported being happy according to the Global Happiness and Hope Index. This indicates a discrepancy between happiness rankings among the least happy cities in the world and the actual reported happiness and shows some potential for improving these levels. The research problem stated the inadequate available knowledge about the concept of urban happiness and the impact of urban aesthetics indicators on individuals' happiness. The research proposes a hypothesis that urban aesthetics in cities can enhance individuals' happiness and achieve urban happiness. By exploring the concept and theories of urban happiness, urban aesthetics, and their impact on well-being and happiness, then comparing the urban elements of al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya cities to detect urban happiness indicators, the study aims to determine the concept and theories of urban happiness and the impact of urban indicators in enhancing happiness. It also seeks to develop an urban happiness model that can be used by urban planners for future interventions, focusing on the role of urban aesthetics that contribute to urban happiness. Using descriptive and comparative analysis approaches in case studies, the findings support the hypothesis, stating the significant impact of urban aesthetics on achieving urban happiness and presenting al-Kadhmiya City as the best model for urban happiness. Moreover, both cities hold the potential for improving happiness ranking levels. However, a multifaced approach is needed to enhance the happiness ranking levels of Iraqi cities.*

Keywords: happiness, urban happiness, hedonic, Eudaimonic, satisfaction, urban aesthetic, natural environments, quality of life.

1. Introduction

2024, the Happy City Index declares the happiest cities in the world distributed in three groups, gold, silver, and bronze, by accessing cities according to their commitment to supporting happiness for their residents through many activities that have a direct impact on individual quality of life, considering "what matter" for individuals, communities, and cities as a whole to flourish. Iraq's cities, according to the Happy City Index 2024, are absent (Wren-Lewis et al., 2016, p3), which means a low happiness level for individuals. Despite that, many individuals reported being happy, according to The Global Happiness and Hope Index in Iraq

(2022) (Gallup International, 2022, p1). This indicates a significant discrepancy between these rankings and the reported levels of happiness of Iraqi residents. This highlights the role of cities in the potential for higher happiness levels; the research problem stated the inadequate available knowledge about the concept of urban happiness and the impact of urban indicators on individuals' happiness. According to Gifford and Sussman (2012), Urban settings can play a significant role in promoting happiness for individuals by providing spaces that meet individuals' needs, support their well-being, and enhance their quality of life (Gifford & Sussman, 2012, p56). As happiness is a subjective feeling (www.Oxford English Dictionary.com), this study focuses on developing an objective scale based on the dimensions of the urban landscape that impact individuals' feelings. Mainly focusing on the role of urban aesthetics as a potential source for individuals' happiness, as the direct impact of urban indicators on evoking positive emotions and the effect on overall happiness is not confirmed. The research proposes a hypothesis that urban aesthetics in cities enhance individuals' happiness. The study aims to Determine the concept and theories of urban happiness and the impact of urban indicators in enhancing happiness for individuals and develop a model that can be used by urban planners and policymakers for future interventions, focusing on the role of urban aesthetics that contribute to urban happiness. Al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya cities, as case studies, were chosen based on their rich cultural and spiritual urban landscape that provides many opportunities for happiness and stands as the ideal settings to examine the relationship of the urban landscape with happiness and well-being. The research will proceed with developing a theoretical framework to explore the concept of happiness, urban happiness, and urban aesthetics as happiness indicators and apply the theoretical framework to the case studies using the Descriptive and Comparative Analysis approach to detect the availability and validity of urban happiness indicators within these cities to develop the best model of urban happiness that holds potentials for improving happiness levels of Iraqi cities.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept and Theories of Happiness

In order to understand the definition of urban happiness, there is a need to identify the meaning and theories that explain the various notions used to describe happiness, as people usually use positive words like Happiness, reassurance, pleasure, or comfort when describing an experience of a condition as states of mind, which will be represented by showing pleasure and satisfaction (Bok, 2010, p11). Besides these various notions of Happiness as a state of well-being, many theories have been suggested. However, the most significant psychological schools in the field of Psychology are the Hedonic and Eudemonic schools (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p189), quality-of-life theory, and satisfaction theories (Besser 2021, p23). The hedonism theory is a significant psychological school in the field of Psychology. It emphasizes Happiness as a primary source of pleasure and visualizes well-being by focusing on pleasure and Happiness. This theory is subjective, suggesting that well-being is formed by pleasant states of awareness that contribute to pleasure and well-being (Cooke et al., 2016, p732). It is a theory of well-being that holds pleasure as the only valuable factor (Besser 2021, 23). It is derived from the classical Greek concept of pleasure and embodies the school of absolute hedonist philosophy led by Aristippus of Cyrene in Greece in the 3rd century BCE. He stated that it is important to seize any opportunity to pursue sensory pleasure as a purpose in life, regardless of the consequences (Simons & Baldwin, 2021, p987). Epicurus, 100 years later, introduced happiness in terms of pleasure as the absence of pain, which was the basis of modern hedonism (Besser, 2021, p6). Hedonism theory is a classical theory of Happiness that is clarified through the terms pleasure, enjoyment, comfort, and satisfaction, which represent a certain mindset that focuses on the immediate moment and what an individual wants and needs. Still, contemporary

philosophers refer to well-being theory (Huta, 2015, p2). Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill developed a hedonistic view of Happiness through the principle of utility and sought to measure Happiness. Bentham tried to calculate the quantity of Happiness in his felicific calculus, counting on similarities between a group of people (Montgomery, 2013, p 24). In contrast, John S. Mill focused on the quality of pleasure. It is difficult to quantify happiness in Bentham's calculus since these pleasures cannot be broken down into measurable fragments. Still, by focusing on both the quality and quantity of pleasures, John S. Mill provided a clearer understanding of his perspective on Hedonism (Besser, 2021, p 8 &9). Eudemonic Theory is the second psychological school. It shares similarities with the philosophers' concept of eudaimonism, which focuses on living well, as Eudaimonia refers to "happiness" as well as the form of "well-being," with many variables that represent a certain mindset and balance in focusing on the self and others, present and the future, with a tendency to be guided big-picture concepts (Huta, 2015, p3). However, psychologists describe eudaimonism as the process of living well by satisfying psychological needs, expressing oneself, fulfilling one's potential functioning at an optimal level, or living a meaningful life. Psychological needs indicate the state of mental well-being that was first proposed as a model in 1989 by Carol D. Ryff in the frame of Eudemonic theory. It has six key dimensions of positive mental (psychological) health. This model is widely used by researchers studying well-being and includes an assessment tool. The six dimensions are Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, and Personal Growth (van Dierendonck et al., 2007, p474). These dimensions represent an individual's psychological state (what he likes or cares about) needed for Happiness, which is the main difference from hedonism theory, which assumes what is necessary for one person is the same for another person (Kesebir, 2018, p9). Another eudemonic model was proposed in 2001 by Ryan and Deci, suggesting that well-being is achieved through three basic psychological needs: autonomy, proficiency, and relationship with others. Which has some similarities with Ryff's model of identifying well-being through eudaimonic theory. The quality-of-life theory (QoL) is a medical theory that refers to well-being in medicine, including physical well-being, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction (Cooke, 2016, p731-732). The QOL term overlaps with the definition of well-being and may refer to perfect Happiness. Health sciences and social sciences adopted a policy to indicate QOL as physical function, psychological status, and the ability to engage in social interactions (Post, 2014, p168). Another medical theory is the Wellness theory, which can refer to well-being as it has been used interchangeably. It shares similarities with eudemonic approaches by focusing on the state of the human body, which indicates the orientation to maximize individuals' capability to function ideally and not only the absence of illness. Scholars in this field agree that wellness is an inclusive lifestyle that includes physical and spiritual health and owning an integrated character, which is a way to identify (the good life) or the perfect functioning of individuals. QoL is mainly used in medicine, but wellness is primarily used in counseling (Cooke, 2016, p733). Satisfaction Theory is One of the modern theories; desire fulfillment theory describes the situation of yearning for something and the procedure taken to achieve that. Desire is a normal human behavior experienced by many individuals and may end with satisfaction or frustration (Abdullah & Zulkifli, 2016, p263). Jermy Bentham said that Desire theories mean that well-being is composed of the satisfaction (minus frustration) of desires or preferences (Chappell et al., 2023, p4). However, Lopez and Snyder (2009) classified desire fulfillment theory into three groups:

- 1) The need and goal satisfaction theories indicate that happiness can result from the satisfaction of basic needs and the degree of life satisfaction matches the degree of desired satisfaction achieved, which leads to happiness. This view can be seen in Freud's (1933) pleasure principle and Maslow's (1970) hierarchical needs model represent this

approach (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p189). John Kekes suggested that happiness results from satisfying a desire, which is a momentary feeling, which he called “1st order satisfaction” that it does not necessarily affect one’s overall life, especially if a change in preferences happens, which indicates a “2nd order satisfaction” (Besser, 2021, p61).

- 2) Process or activity theories, suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), state that participating in an activity that matches one's skills provides Happiness, especially when pursuing a specific goal. Thus, goal theories can explain subjective well-being because they include elements of satisfaction and pleasure.
- 3) Genetic and personality willingness theories: Subjective well-being is strongly affected by individuals’ stable personality actions. Also, a stable level of well-being cannot be explained by the stable conditions of people’s lives (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p189).

In conclusion, happiness is a positive state of mind used to describe an experience and represented by showing pleasure and satisfaction, which is well explained by psychological theories. The combination of all theories is the best way to define happiness, which is achieved by having positive experiences, satisfaction in life, and well-being that will indicate a good quality of life.

2.2 The Concept of Urban Happiness

Within these theories, Recent global studies and experiences showed a reciprocal relation between Happiness and urban spaces, as the higher quality the urban spaces have, the more improvement in Happiness that a well-designed city with high-quality urban spaces works as a critical factor of happiness (Mirzaei & Zangiabadi, 2021, p3). Montgomery (2013) defined Urban Happiness in terms of how cities affect individuals’ moods by boosting the good stuff and avoiding the bad, which is a pure hedonic approach. He viewed cities as combined systems that should be designed to support human well-being by recognizing the seen and unseen factors that affect individuals’ physical and subjective well-being and control their behavior (Montgomery, 2013, p39). It is the state of being satisfied with social, economic, environmental, and urban governance factors determined by individuals and their communities in order to meet their needs and pursue their goals as fundamental for happiness and fulfillment of their prospects from urban development for both individuals and communities (Musa et al., 2018, p4). Human basic needs and human flourishing can be affected by the city's form and function through its physical elements as it supports an individual’s personal growth, social connections, subjective well-being, and satisfaction through accessibility to other people, amenities, and nature that offers safety, less pollution and noise, more social relationship, and overall positive feelings (Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2018, p4). Happy Cities are urban areas that provide individuals with their daily needs for food, shelter, and security, positive experiences, leading individuals toward healthier lives, offering freedom in living, moving and building individuals' lives as they want, building resilience towards economic or environmental crises, providing Justice in dividing spaces, services, transportation, distress, and expenses as well as establishing and maintaining good social interaction and strengthen the bonds between friends, families, and strangers that assure a meaningful life (Montgomery, 2013, p40). The level of individuals’ happiness is associated with city functions when it supports their health and wealth, provides them with needed amenities that improve their quality of life, and supports connections to their place and others. Moreover, a good transportation system, access to arts and entertainment, and child-friendly areas are significant factors in forming urban happiness (Leyden et al., 2011, p862 & 864). Urban happiness is achieved when cities can meet the psychological needs of individuals, such as satisfaction with the place and attachment to it. Otherwise, it will affect an individual’s physical health and mental health, as well as many other adverse social effects. Being satisfied with a place is based on daily activities and leisure,

whereas place attachment is about the socially effective bonds in that place; both will achieve a liveable place, social cohesion, and overall quality of life improvements (Gifford & Sussman, 2012, p57).

Accordingly, Urban Happiness refers to the way that cities can support individual subjective, physical, and social well-being by affecting their mood and meeting their needs. It is the state of being satisfied with social, economic, environmental, and urban governance factors to experience positive feelings through the recognition of visible and invisible urban factors that can make or break Happiness and lead to urban Satisfaction and promote quality of life.

2.3 Urban Aesthetic as Urban Happiness Indicators:

Urban aesthetics refers to the experience of looking at an attractive living environment with its natural elements that have therapeutic effects to relieve stress, improve well-being, and enhance satisfaction, attachment, and a sense of responsibility (Groenewegen et al., 2006, p2). As it is part of human nature's needs, it represents a range of topics of preference, such as spectacular beauty, the degree of cleanliness, and enjoyable sounds (Matsuoka, 2008, p11).

2.3.1 Natural environments

Many studies address the role of the urban landscape with its dominant natural features, showing strong preferences like gardens and parks, greenways, streetscapes, and neighborhoods; it represents a key factor for accepting such intervention in achieving urban happiness (Matsuoka, 2008, p11; Ahmed & Ihsan, 2018, p2). Aesthetic preferences are explained through the psychological process of human perception (sensation, perception, cognition), which identifies how individuals perceive their environment and how to configure the relationship between the spatial and physical elements of the urban landscape that leads to aesthetic judgment. Aesthetics is the study of individual sensations derived from the appreciation of the arts. At the same time, beauty refers to the unique attributes of an object or place that achieve pleasant experiences and satisfaction (Ahmad Nia, 2015, p51 & 52).

2.3.2 Built Elements

2.3.2.1 Visual Aesthetic Qualities: The visual aesthetic quality of the urban landscape in its created features is identified through the variety and contrast of its visual features, the nature of this feature, the scale and scope of the urban landscape, complexity, legibility, ambiguity, openness, and uniqueness, as well as the relationship between these features and their significance to the overall urban view. Moreover, the construction style, color, units, appearance of the landscape, the organization of features, awesomeness, and novelty (Ahmad Nia, 2015, p51 & 52). These are integrative variables that have the potential to excite, which achieves aesthetic satisfaction, a level of pleasure achieved through observing a work of art. These qualities represent aesthetic indicators. Urban aesthetic qualities create a city's identity. They are a fundamental element of urban dynamics that encourage jogging and exercise in public urban spaces through the positive perception of urban aesthetics, which leads to supporting physical well-being (Ahmad Nia, 2021, p59).

2.3.2.2 Street and Urban Aesthetics: Urban landscapes with aesthetic features, such as public arts and urban furniture, can further support social well-being. Individuals' appreciation of these aesthetics can lead to more vitality through active participation in designing these public places. Urban vitality, a social, economic, and cultural experience expressed by aesthetic features, is thus fostered (Ahmad Nia, 2021, p60). Street and urban aesthetics play a crucial role in psychological restoration, improving mental health and well-being. They can enhance brain functions and reduce depression, particularly when combined with physical activities.

This combination can also increase opportunities for social interaction. International health guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week and 60 minutes of physical activity per day, which is excellent for mental health benefits (Roe, & McCay, 2021, p115).

- A. Urban Furniture:** Individuals' perception of the landscape is influenced by urban forms and symbols that enhance landscape perception and promote the quality of urban spaces. The significance of proper urban furniture implementation is in preventing visual pollution and affecting landscape aesthetic evaluation (Arruda et al., 2017, p9). It represents the attributes of public urban furniture and the way of arrangement that urban spaces become more liveable and achieve urban happiness through the use of fixed and temporary seating, streetlamps, and rubbish bins that have various uses for rest, eating, sports, leisure, social interaction, and vegetation (Samavati & Desmet, 2022, p13).
- B. Public art** is also an urban aesthetic form that involves the presence of temporary or permanent artworks in public areas in different forms, from natural statues or monuments to graffiti drawn on walls that are free and accessible to individuals (Samavati & Desmet 2022, p14) to drawings in specific places (Roe, & McCay, 2021, p80).

Therefore, urban aesthetics refers to the experience of looking at an attractive living environment; it represents a range of topics of preference that can be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Theoretical Framework of Urban Aesthetic as Urban Happiness Indicators (by researcher)

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Natural environments | Dominant natural features | like gardens and parks, greenways, streetscapes, and neighborhoods |
| Built environments | Visual Aesthetic Qualities | Variety and contrast of its visual features, the scale and scope of the urban landscape, complexity, legibility, ambiguity, openness, and uniqueness, construction style, color, units, the appearance of the landscape, the organization of features, awesomeness, and novelty |
| | Street and Urban Aesthetics | Urban Furniture: like urban forms and symbols, public urban furniture. Public arts: statues or monuments to graffiti drawn on walls |

3. Iraqi's Urban Happiness

According to the Happy City Index 2024, none of the Iraqi cities manages to be on the list of the happiest cities in the world, which indicates being among the least happy countries in the world (Wren-Lewis et al., 2016, p3). This ranking is influenced by many challenges that affect individuals' quality of life; the security situation represents a significant factor that affects individuals' happiness in Baghdad, which affects individuals' sense of security and well-being. The economy is the second factor; many young people are unemployed, which can lead to depression, stress, and a sense of hopelessness; the lack of access to essential services like healthcare, education, and clean water also impacts individuals' physical and mental well-being and overall happiness. Moreover, traffic jams and commuting are significant issues in Baghdad, and there are limited public transportation options, making the city often loud with the noise of traffic and construction. Housing conditions, overcrowding, poor sanitation, and extreme weather conditions are all factors that represent the low levels of quality of life and happiness for individuals in Iraq (www.happiestcities.com). Therefore, the urban settings of Iraqi cities have a negative impact on individuals' happiness levels, which highlights the need to detect the availability of urban indicators that have a positive effect on individuals' happiness,

particularly the urban aesthetics factors of al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya City as examples to create a model, if successful, can be applied on other Iraqi cities to achieve a higher happiness level.

4. Application of theoretical framework on case studies









4.1 Al-Kadhmiya City





Al Kadhmiya is one of the suburbs of Baghdad, located about 5 km to the north of the center of Baghdad; a very viable city that is visited by 150,000 locals and tourists on a daily basis, especially when people visit Iraq's largest mausoleums: Imam Moussa Al-Kadhim and Mohamed Al-Jawad, the number of visitors becomes greater (Alwan, 2006, p62). Figure 1 shows Al Kadhmiya city from Satellite. Kadhmiya is one of Iraq's prosperous cultural heritage cities, with various architectural monuments and urban aesthetics, from old houses with beautiful wooden balconies to Iraq's largest gold market. Moreover, the existence of the shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) and the shrine of his grandson, Imam Muhammad al Jawad, made the city the jewel of Baghdad and its lung (Alwan,2006, p62). Many positive factors foster life in the city, which makes the city an ideal model of urban happiness. The city has a vibrant cultural scene, with a wide range of aesthetic value and diverse architectural, environmental, and functional value (Al-Saffar, 2020, p2), as shown in **Table 2** below:



Figure 1: al Kadhmiya city from satellite (www.Googlemaps.com)

Table 2: Urban Aesthetics as Urban Happiness Indicators
(Application of Theoretical Framework on Al Kadhmiya City Case Study) (prepared by the researcher)
based on (googlemaps.com) & (www.facebook.com)

| Urban elements | Aesthetic indicator | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Natural Elements: The city has many green elements, such as street trees, Gardens, and parks like 14 July Park and al-Salam Park (Al Kazimiyah Neighbourhood Guide in Baghdad, 2022). Figure 2 (a) and (b) shows the 14 July urban park.</p> <p>It has about eight squares planted with trees and flowers. Abdul Mohsen Al-Kazemi Square stands as one of the most beautiful areas in Baghdad. It connects Al-Atifiya, Al-Kadhmiya Corniche, and Al-Zahra Square. Figure 3 (a) and (b) shows Abdul Muhsin alkadhimi square.</p> |  <p>Figure 2 (a) shows 14 July urban park</p>  <p>Figure 3 (a) shows A. Muhsin alkadhimi square</p> |  <p>Figure 2 (b) shows 14 July urban park</p>  <p>Figure 3 (b) shows A. Muhsin alkadhimi square</p> |
| <p>Visual Aesthetic Qualities: The dominant presence of the shrine sited in the heart of the city represents the most significant urban aesthetics with its golden domes and minarets, massive gates with the historical clock, and surrounded by beautiful compact urban</p> <p>Figure 4 shows the Imam Musa al Kadhim shrine. Other visual aesthetics are represented by the beautiful architecture seen in mosques distributed around the city. Figure 5 shows al-Rasool mosque.</p> |  <p>Figure 4 shows the Imam Musa al Kadhim shrine</p> |  <p>Figure 5 shows al-Rasool mosque (photo by researcher)</p> |
| <p>Street and Urban Aesthetics: Urban furniture is seen through many public seats, symbols, decorative lights, and playgrounds that are distributed in the city, like Kadhmiya Corniche, Figure 6 (a) and (b) shows Kadhmiya corniche.</p> <p>Figure 7 shows streetlights, and Figure 8 shows the playground.</p> |  <p>Figure 6 (a) shows Kadhmiya corniche</p> |  <p>Figure 6 (b) shows Kadhmiya corniche</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| |  <p>Figure 7 shows streetlights</p> |  <p>Figure 8 shows the playground</p> |
| <p>Public arts, Many drawings can be seen on the concrete walls, which were done by a group of young people voluntarily and made the city look beautiful. Figures 9 (a) and (b) show public arts.</p> |  <p>Figure 9 (a) shows public arts</p> |  <p>Figure 9 (b) shows public arts</p> |

4.2 Al-Adhamiya City

Al-Adhamiya City is one of the suburbs of Baghdad, located to the northeast of Baghdad along the Tigris River, bordered by Omer Abdulaziz Street. It has a number of smaller neighborhoods; it is basically a residential area with significant cultural heritage. (www.understandingwar.org). Figure 10 shows Al-Adhamiya city from Satellite. Al-Adhamiya dates to the Abbasid era, but it was established in 1968. It is one of the prosperous cultural heritage cities, with various architectural monuments and urban aesthetics such as Gami' Al-imam Al-A'dham, The Royal Cemetery, Al-Adhamiya clock, and Imam Al-A'dham College. Moreover, it has a wide range of primary and recreational facilities such as universities, old and new schools, Islamic institutions, restaurants, cafes, and parks, as well as national and international hotels. Aldahwi, et al., 2018, p3371). It represents a unique residential area according to its beautiful nature, nice weather, location to the east bank of Tigris River, as well as having a number of historical sites, a wide range of restaurants and cafes, various markets and stores, and basic facilities such as hospitals and schools. These factors are the case of investigation to determine if the city represents another ideal model of urban happiness (www.Google Maps.com), as shown in **Table 3** below:

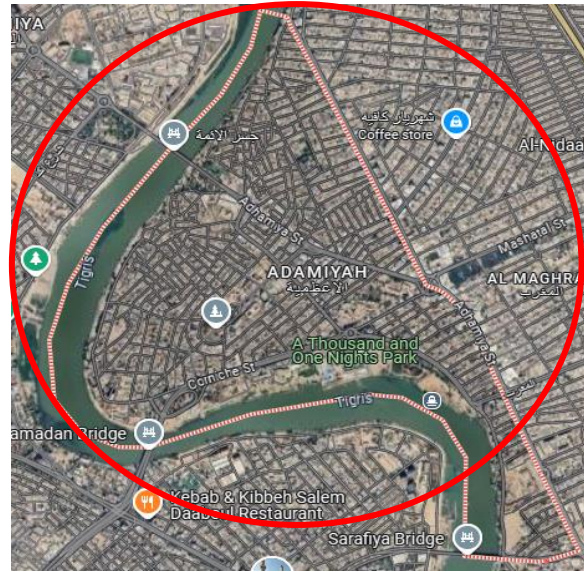












Figure 10: shows Al-Adhamiya city from Satellite (www.googlemaps.com)

Table 3: Urban Aesthetics as Urban Happiness Indicators
(Application Of Theoretical Framework On Al Al-Adhamiya City Case Study) (prepared by researcher based on (travel.sygic.com), (www.Google Maps.com))

| Urban elements | Aesthetic indicator | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Natural Elements: The city location offers a chance to contact with green and blue elements such as an urban park such as A Thousand and One Nights Park & Gardens, as shown in Figure 11 (a) and (b).</p> <p>The targeted area has about two squares with some trees and palms, especially Sahat Anter Square. Figure 12 (a) and (b) shows.</p> |  |  |
| | <p>Figure 11 (a) shows A Thousand and One Nights Park</p>  | <p>Figure 11 (b) shows A Thousand and One Nights Park</p>  |
| <p>Visual Aesthetic Qualities: The dominant presence of Abu Hanifa Al-Numan Mosque represents the most significant urban aesthetics with its dome and minarets, massive gates with the historical clock, and surrounded by beautiful compact urban. Figure 13 (a) and (b) shows Abu Hanifa Al-Numan Mosque.</p> |  |  |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The beautiful architecture of the royal cemetery represents another visual aesthetic. Figures 14 (a) and (b) show the royal cemetery.</p> | <p>Figure 13 (a) shows Abu Hanifa Al-Numan Mosque</p>  <p>Figure 14 (a) shows the royal cemetery</p> | <p>Figure 13 (b) shows Abu Hanifa Al-Numan Mosque</p>  <p>Figure 14 (b) shows the royal cemetery</p> |
| <p>Street And Urban Aesthetics: Urban furniture like public seats is limited to being only in Sahat Anter Square. Symbols and decorative lights are distributed in the city and playgrounds like Adhamiya amusement park, Figure 15 (a) and (b).</p> <p>Public arts: Not Many drawings can be seen on the concrete walls.</p> |  <p>Figure 15 (a) Adhamiya Amusement Park</p> |  <p>Figure 15 (b) Adhamiya Amusement Park</p> |

3.3 Discussion

By comparing the validity and availability of urban aesthetic indicators in al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya city, the results show that al-Kadhmiya city, in its current reality, has a high possibility of achieving urban happiness through its surrounding environment, both built and natural, primarily through the significant presence of urban aesthetic to induce happiness, which results in supporting the hypothesis and present the city as an ideal model for urban happiness in Iraq, Figure (16) shows distribution of urban aesthetic in the city.

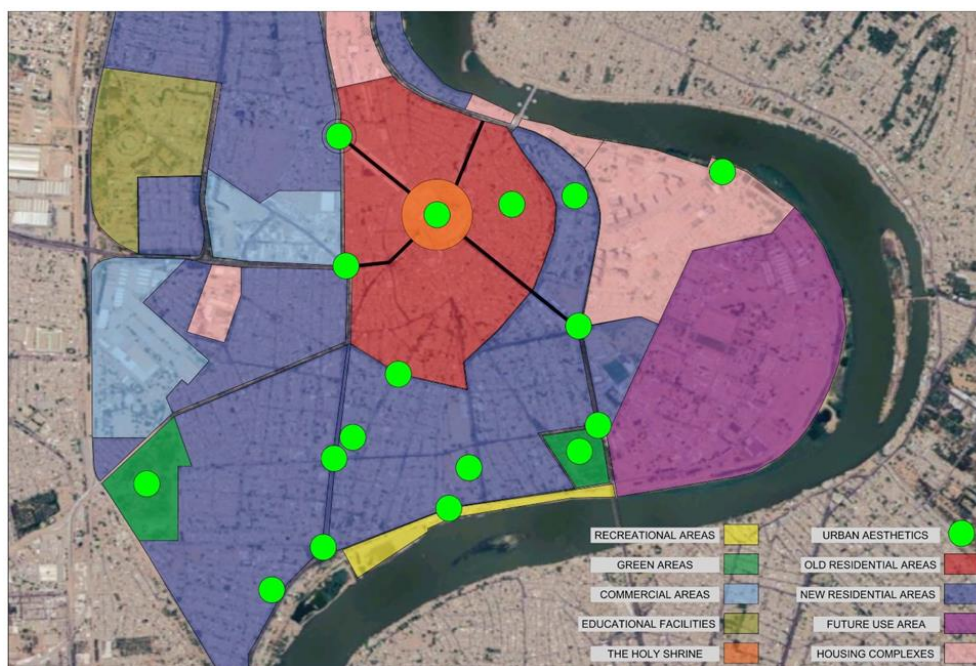


Figure 16 shows the distribution of urban aesthetics in Al-Kadhmiya city (based on Google Maps 2024 and edited by the researcher using Auto-Cad 2019)

Whereas Al-Adhamiya city, in its current reality, shows limited possibility for achieving urban happiness by having limited aesthetic elements that induce happiness, limited access to urban parks and squares, and the lack of many street and urban aesthetic qualities that support physical, subjective, and social well-being as well as promote satisfaction and overall quality of life Figure (17) shows the distribution of urban aesthetics in the city:

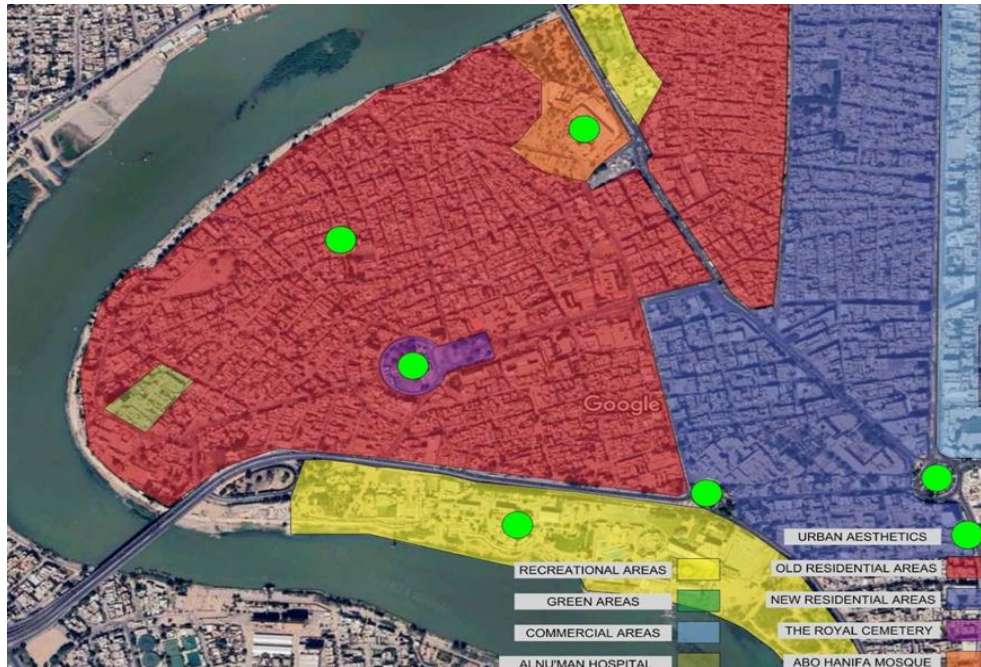


Figure 17 shows the distribution of urban aesthetics of al-Adhamiya city (based on Google Maps 2024 and edited by the researcher using Auto-Cad 2019)

These urban indicators foster urban happiness settings by supporting well-being as well as pleasure and satisfaction. Table 4 shows a comparison between the selected cities according to their urban indicators:

Table 4: Comparison between Al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya City as Examples (by researcher)

| Urban indicator | Urban happiness indicators | |
|---|---|---|
| | Natural environments | Impact on individuals' happiness |
| Natural Elements of al-Kadhmiya City | Variety of trees and vegetation in al-Kadhmiya street, especially in streets and many numbers of squares, for enjoyable experiments and social interaction | Urban happiness can be supported by having a context for passive or active leisure activities in urban areas, such as urban parks, that enhance individuals' physical and subjective well-being and give them enjoyable experiments and satisfaction (Samavati & Desmet, 2022, p30; Shaheen, & Faisal Abdulateef, 2016, p3) |
| Natural Elements of al-Adhamiya City | There are limited numbers of trees in Adhamiya's streets and only two squares for enjoyable experiments and social interaction. | |
| Built environments | | |
| Visual Aesthetic Qualities of al-Kadhmiya City | The dominant presence of the shrine is in the heart of the city with its golden domes and minarets, massive gates with the historical clock, and surrounded by beautiful compact urban as well as beautiful architecture seen in mosques distributed around the city. | Religious and social events that are held in the city create an aesthetic response, achieve aesthetic satisfaction, create a city's identity, and support physical, subjective, and social well-being. (Ahmad Nia 2021, p59). |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Visual Aesthetic Qualities of al-Adhamiya City | The dominant presence of Abu Hanifa Al-Numan Mosque represents the most significant urban aesthetics with its dome and minarets, massive gates with the historical clock, and surrounding beautiful compact metropolitan areas. There are also many mosques distributed throughout the city. | |
| Street And Urban Aesthetics | | |
| Urban Furniture of al-Kadhmiya City | High numbers of public seats, symbols, decorative lights, and playgrounds can be seen in al-Kadhmiya city. | Urban furniture is considered to be qualified to meet individuals' aesthetic preferences (Arruda 2017, p. 9), develop the quality of urban spaces, add value to city identity, and offer positive social effectiveness and well-being (Allameh & Heidari, 2020, p. 1). Street furniture also promotes safety and comfort for individuals and provides greater urban satisfaction (Arruda 2017, p. 10). |
| Urban Furniture of al-Adhamiya City | The limited number of public seats can only be seen in Sahat Anter Square, and there are limited numbers of symbols, decorative lights, and playgrounds distributed throughout the city. | |
| Public Arts of al-Kadhmiya City | Many drawings can be seen on the concrete walls. | The presence of public art is essential to supporting social well-being by strengthening relationships, supporting meaningful social participation, and promoting personal growth (Samavati, 2022, p14). It can also create focal points in public spaces that attract individuals to engage in playful social events, and sensory interactions can enhance interactions with places that make for a positive experience for individuals (Roe, & McCay, 2021, p80). |
| Public Arts of al-Adhamiya City | Lack of elements that represent public arts in the city | |

As shown before, Al-Kadhmiya City presents an ideal model of urban happiness, as urban structure refers to the diversity in spatial and styles distributed in a city (Al-Saaidy, 2020, p66); the urban structure of al-Kadhmiya City has many places for social interaction with family and friends in Kadhmiya, as well as high-end cafes for beautiful sessions. Also, the city is rich in commercial services for various needs (Al Kazimiyah Neighbourhood Guide in Baghdad, Iraq, 2022). Moreover, it shows excellent potential for more happiness levels, especially as the comprehensive service campaign started for all sectors in the city of Kadhmiya in February 2023. The plan is based on transferring the military region "Fifth Division," evacuating the military zone and converting it into recreational facilities like hotels, educational, cultural, medical, and a museum, as well as the transferring industrial area outside the holy city, The plan is directed towards enhancing religious events, by building visitor cities with integrated services, infrastructure service centers, a mosque, and a husseiniya, all of which are concerned with providing service to visitors coming to the city, besides the development of roads, bridges, public transport, service facilities, and security aspects (www.ina.iq). Dealing with noise and traffic problems is essential for attaining healthy urban communities and promoting quality of life by studying reducing levels of noise that would affect individuals (Al-Musawi & Alomariy, 2018, p42). Physical environments are associated with urban satisfaction, such as proximity to the city center, amenities, open public spaces, green public spaces, and traffic issues. Urban satisfaction includes scenarios of safety, quietness, social cohesion, place attachment, accessibility, public space quality, and aesthetic quality, which can all enhance urban happiness (Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022, p3).

According to al-Adhamiya city urban structure, potential for future higher happiness levels in the city is also applicable, as the city is undergoing a comprehensive service campaign that has

started for all sectors in the city since 2023, aims to reduce traffic jams by building a new bridge that connects al-Adhamiya and al-Kadhmiya city as well as connecting Muhamed Al-Qasim bridge with Al-Mashatil street, rehabilitation for all residential and recreational areas and urban parks, provide new gates with elegant design that suits the city historical and cultural position, special attention for river bank renovation with 1650m, new investment opportunities for hotels and infrastructure improvement, rehabilitation for schools and healthcare centers, as well as rehabilitation and expansion for Abu Hanifa Al-Numan shrine and Mosque aligned with many ancillary service facilities, and establishing a multi-story car park to serve visitors. Projects were also approved for the rehabilitation of the Youth Forum and Stadiums, the project to rehabilitate the Vanguard Theatre, the rehabilitation of the nursing home, and the river taxi project. (channel8.com). These interventions are essential to overcoming the challenges that have placed Iraqi cities at the bottom of the Happiness scale.

These findings prove the research hypothesis that urban aesthetics in cities can enhance individuals' happiness and achieve urban happiness, presenting al-Kadhmiya City as the best model of urban happiness and showing that both cities hold the potential for improving happiness ranking levels in Iraq.

In order to achieve higher levels of happiness in Iraqi cities, a multifaced approach is needed to overcome these challenges by giving priority to safety and security through urban design. A safe environment supports Urban happiness and enables the satisfaction of essential individual needs, allowing individuals to move freely, like safe traffic, visibility, active applications, and the presence of individuals (especially vulnerable groups such as women and children) at different times of the day in public places, streets, and urban parks, locating suitable lighting to indicate paths and areas at night (Hansson et al., 2013, p3; Samavati & Desmet, 2022, p37). That resulted in lowering overall crime levels (despite unequal victimization) might maximize the general social well-being (Hansson et al., 2013, p11); subjective well-being is also affected by the sense of safety; individuals with a high level of sense of security can preserve a positive and stable relationship with others, much less experience feeling loneliness and abandonment, and less experience a sense of incompetence (Feng & Zhong, 2021, p13). Social well-being for individuals is achieved by providing a wide range of secure, comfy transportation options, secure food, and other facilities to ensure their success. It also helps identify and solve any distinctive societal issues with creative and long-term solutions. (Shaheen, 2022, p144). Quality of life is promoted by improving safety and a healthy lifestyle and creating a friendly urban environment with friendly furniture that will achieve urban happiness. (López-Ruiz et al., 2021, p4; Feng & Zhong, 2021, p13). Recreation is another indicator that should be considered to achieve higher levels of happiness, as It has a significant role in serving as a therapeutic tool that contributes to psychological well-being by reducing stress, promoting mental health, and enhancing overall life satisfaction, which attracts many individuals to spend times, especially with its picturesque landscape and pleasant elements that can provide individuals with health, entertaining and quality of life (Alani, 2014, p152; www.psychology-lexicon.com)._Recreation in the urban landscape is represented by many urban physical elements that are associated with achieving urban happiness, such as its characteristics, functions, transportation facilities, proximity to recreational facilities, and housing density (Dannenberg et al., 2002, p1503). It indicates a variety of space platforms, landscapes, and amenities that provide individuals with leisure and entertainment activities, which is an opportunity to be away from unpleasant obligations and achieve urban happiness (Samavati & Pieter, 2022, p30). Moreover, the presence of green or blue spaces also plays a significant role in improving urban happiness for cities and creating healthy environments (Josef & Abdul Wahab, 2017, p 66). Therefore, future interventions should focus on planning and distributing

green elements, enhancing safety and security, creating places for recreation and social interaction when designing cities, ensuring easy access to recreational places, create more recreational sports fields with suitable lightening that promote safety and security, and plenty of seatings and public toilets for elders and children; these interventions can contribute to achieving more happiness levels for individuals (Roe, & McCay, 2021, p38.), attention should be paid to al-Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya city to detect the resulted impact on individuals well-being and overall happiness, and determine a policy for future interventions toward happiness to improve Iraq happiness rankings, and considered as a standard for future interventions in another urban landscape.

3.4 Conclusion

The research aims to explore the concept and theories of urban happiness and the impact of urban aesthetic indicators in enhancing happiness for individuals and to develop a comprehensive model that can be used by urban planners and policymakers for future interventions, focusing on the role of urban aesthetics that contribute to urban happiness. Al Kadhmiya, with its fascinating urban aesthetic, especially its religious and magnificent architecture, expansive urban parks, and vibrant public squares, presents an ideal model for studying the impact of the natural and built environments on individual happiness. Moreover, both cities' ongoing comprehensive development plan, which has prioritized the significance of recreational spaces, religious tourism, and substantial infrastructure, further emphasizes their potential for enhancing greater well-being and happiness among their residents. These research findings support the hypothesis and highlight the crucial role of urban aesthetics in promoting physical, subjective, and social well-being, satisfaction, and quality of life. Al Kadhmiya has successfully integrated aesthetic elements within the urban landscape, such as its sufficient green spaces and architectural masterpieces, illustrating the positive impact of urban design on the overall quality of life. Furthermore, the Al Kadhmiya and al-Adhamiya development plan prioritizes urban aesthetic considerations to shape the city's character and enhance the happiness of its residents. The creation of accessible, welcoming new public spaces, the inclusion of natural elements into the urban fabric, and the enhancement of community cohesion through urban design are essential factors in transforming development plans and visions into actual improvements of happiness for all. Both cities show excellent potential for a higher ranking of happiness for individuals by exploring the relationship between urban aesthetics through urban parks, architectural style, street furniture, and public arts on individuals' levels of happiness. However, multifaceted policies should be applied in order to improve Iraq's cities' ranking levels, as the study established a foundation for urban happiness model that focuses on the role of urban aesthetics in enhancing well-being and happiness, prioritizing the use of recreational places and facilities to improve social interaction, satisfaction, and well-being, and the integration with the natural environment, ensures safety and security in the urban landscape, is essential for overall happiness using a human-centered approach to urban development.

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