



## Student Engagement and Wellbeing at Public Spaces: A Cross-Contextual Comparative Urban Study

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### Abstract

This research investigates student involvement and wellbeing at public spaces, exploring how these environments influence their experiences. Student engagement refers to more than just gathering. It also includes their level of involvement, enthusiasm, and motivation. The research focuses on what attracts students to public areas, what sparks their interest, and how spending their time in such spaces impacts their wellbeing.

The study adopts a comparative approach, analyzing two international case studies, Russell Garden (London) and Greenacre Park (New York) alongside three public spaces of Nepal, Patan Durbar Square, Pimbahal and Kamalpokhari. Data were collected through field observations, surveys of 15 students from each national site, and analysis of online public reviews for international sites to understand the use, engagement, and wellbeing outcomes.

Findings reveal that students primarily visit these spaces for relaxation, social interaction, discussion with friends and loved ones, leisure activities, and personal reflection. The research highlights differences in design, accessibility, and facilities of public spaces at international and national levels.

Based on these insights, recommendations are proposed to improve Nepali public areas, making them more accessible and welcoming to students with complementary facilities like internet, proper seating, public amenities, trees and shading, clean and peace environment if possible, etc.

**Keywords:** *Accessibility, Public spaces, Student engagement*

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In our growing urban world, public spaces are essential. They go beyond just leisure; they provide chances for socializing, learning, and exercise. For students dealing with academic life, these spaces often become informal extensions of their schools. However, many urban public areas, especially in developing cities like

those in Nepal, do not meet the diverse needs of students.

This study looks at how students use public spaces and how these interactions affect their mental health, productivity, and wellbeing. It aims to identify usage patterns, the quality of student experiences, and whether current features meet student needs. While research often focuses on classroom engagement, this study also considers outdoor and informal urban environments like parks, cultural heritage sites, plazas, and recreational areas.

Using insights from both Nepal and other countries, this paper explores: the ways students engage with public spaces, the factors that affect their participation and satisfaction, and how design changes can improve student wellbeing.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### 1.2.1 Student Engagement

According to Trowler (2010, p. 6), student engagement refers to “investment of time, energy and other relevant resources” by students to improve their social interaction skills, academic outcomes, personal development and in case of university it also impacts on institution reputation. Students feel engaged when there are opportunities for participation in activities that benefit them in any way.

### 1.2.2 Dimensions of Engagement

According to Harper and Quaye (2009 as cited in Trowler, 2010, p. 8), engagement extends beyond participation, it requires both emotional connection and meaningful activity. If an individual feels engaged but fails to act, they become disassociated. Conversely acting without feeling engaged means mere involvement or basic compliance (Trowler, 2010, p. 8). As given by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004, as cited in Trowler, 2010, p. 8), student engagement has three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.

#### *Behavioral Engagement*

Behavioral engagement in public involves active participation, efforts and commitments, interaction, attendance, contribution etc. of students in various activities such as attending public events, recreational program, recreational activities, social interaction with friends, strangers and others. (Trowler, 2010, p. 8).

#### *Emotional Engagement*

Trowler (2010, p. 8) suggests that when students are emotionally engaged they feel connection to their environment. Moreover, students tend to participate with natural curiosity and pleasure, when they feel safe and comfortable.

#### *Cognitive Engagement*

Cognitive engagement of students in public spaces refers to their mindfulness like mental involvement and intellectual investment, not just being involved physically. It encompasses students to be invested in their learning beyond limits, critical thinking, and takes time to reflect on their experience, thoughts, and feelings (Trowler, 2010).

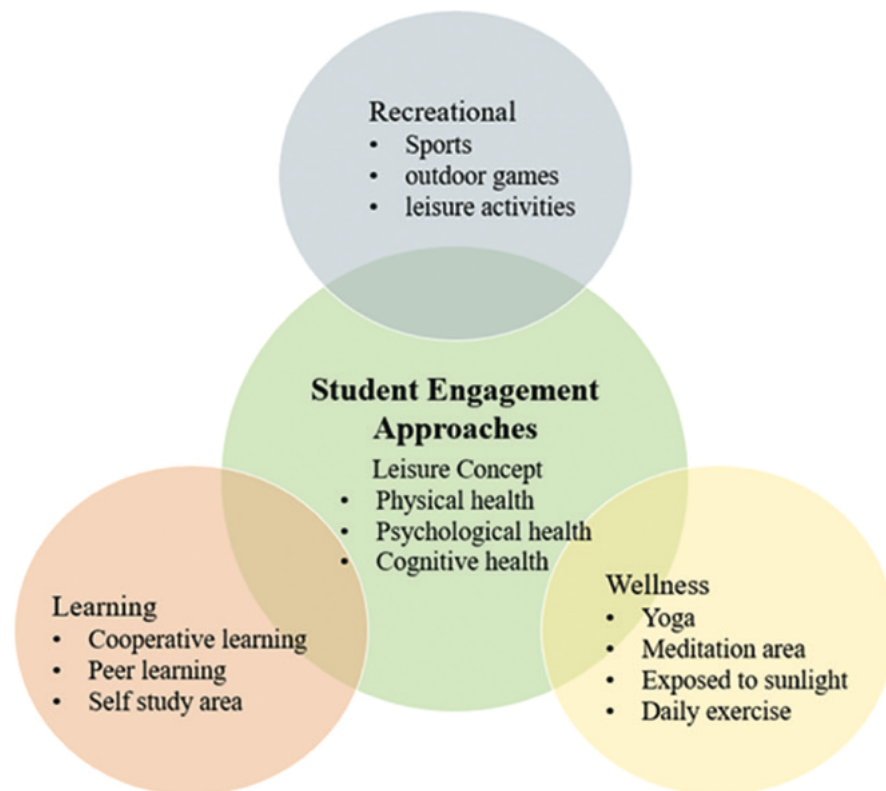
### 1.2.3 Public Spaces

According to UN-Habitat (2015, p. 6) public spaces are “all publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive.” These spaces are designed to serve varieties activities:

recreational, social, cultural, trade, educational and wellness among a diverse range of people regardless of their backgrounds (UN-Habitat, 2015, p. 4). As mentioned by UN-Habitat (2015, pp. 127-128) and the Resource Centre for Primary Health Care (2016, p. 9), public spaces covers both outdoor landscapes (including parks, streets, squares, religious open areas, courtyard and water front areas) and indoor spaces like public libraries and museums. It serves as the primary attraction points within a city, facilitating circulation, communication, and shared platform for cultural engagement (Resource Centre for Primary Health Care, 2016, p. 7)

#### 1.2.4 Student Engagement in Public Spaces

Student engagement in public spaces extends to a wider range of contexts, from academic pursuits to social and cultural exploration. This engagement provides mutual benefit as it enhances student's wellbeing while promoting the site itself. As a result of their motivation, focus, and investment, it helps in academic and personal growth too.



**Figure 1:** Student engagement approaches at public spaces Sources: (Broderick, 2018), (Phuyal, 2021), (Adams, n.d.), (Kadry & Safieddine, 2016)

1.2.5 What Makes Public Spaces a Great Public Place?

A successful public space usually has four main characteristics: accessibility, comfort, activities, and social connectivity (Project for Public Spaces, 2019). When these four qualities are followed any space can transform into great public place this includes streets, waterfronts, squares, market, local park, etc. The detail features of each character is provided in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Characteristics of a great public space  
 Source: (Project for Public Spaces, 2019)

### 1.3 Review on “Engagement and Wellbeing in Public Space. Case Study: Suropati Park Jakarta” by Achmad Soerio Hutomo and Achmad Hery Fuad.



Figure 3: Recreational Activities at Suropati Park (Hutomo & Hery Fuad, 2020, p. 141)

Focusing on Suropati Park Jakarta, this case study investigates relationship between engagement and personal wellbeing within the public environment. Through a combination of site mapping, field visit, photography and direct observation, the research assesses the components of healthy lifestyles. Hutomo and Hery Fuad, (2020, p. 139) suggests that wellbeing is rooted in long-term satisfaction rather than daily experiences alone, even if feelings are not constant. The study utilizes the New Economic Foundation’s (2008, as cited in Hutomo & Hery Fuad, 2020) "Five ways to wellbeing" methods: connecting with people, staying active, being mindful, learning new things, and giving back.

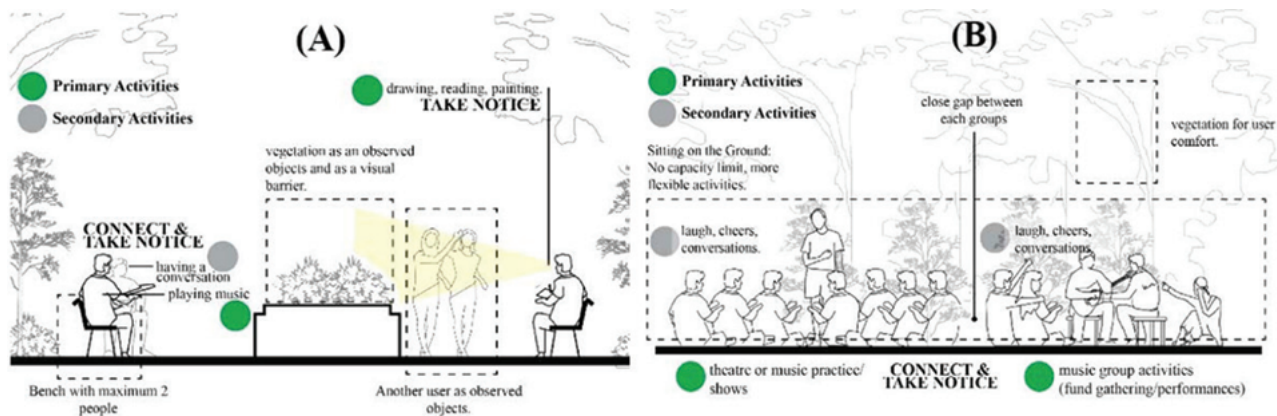


Figure 4: Individual and groups engaged in various activities at Suropati Park (Hutomo & Hery Fuad, 2020, p. 141)

The findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation between student engagement in public spaces and their overall wellbeing. The study highlights two types of activities: primary and secondary. Figure 4, illustrates the primary activities as exercising, jogging, playing musical instruments, or walking pets, which serve as catalysts for secondary activities, during which bystanders begin to take notice and eventually initiate conversations.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes how nature-centric recreational facilities influence the level of engagement within any public space. This park has specific zone dedicated to yoga, jogging, stretching, that acts as recreational spaces which have become the sources of attraction for a consistent flow of visitors and eventually resulting in high level of engagement necessary for personal wellbeing.

## 1.4 Research Rationale and Question

### 1.4.1 Research Rationale

While open public spaces are abundant near educational institutions, they often prioritize social or religious gathering leaving little room for student-oriented activities. Lack of dedicated space for student's needs compromises their ability to unwind, recharge and work efficiently, especially as they face increasing stress, anxiety and social isolation. Consequently, this leads to misconceptions about the use of public spaces. For instance, many students visit Patan Durbar Square for leisure activities, often overlooking the true value of that masterpiece. However, the shift towards digital learning has changed how students engage within open public and university spaces.

Many public spaces lacks multi-functional design, forcing diverse activities in the same place. This overlap often leads to congestion and spatial conflict, which is concerning as the quality of the environment directly impacts students' mental state and productivity. To solve this, public spaces need to be better designed so that the students can participate and turn these area into lively spots for social and intellectual exchange. By comparing national and international case studies, this research explores different design influence on student engagement and provide insights to assist the development of public spaces that motivates student's active participation, satisfaction, and overall wellbeing, ultimately maximizing their potential to benefit all users.

### 1.4.2 Research Question

How do students engage in different public settings and what factors influences their wellbeing and satisfaction?

### 1.4.3 Case Study Rationale

Five public spaces, three national and two international, were selected for comparative analysis of student engagement. These cases cover diverse environments, including open green spaces and waterfront to examine how different settings influence engagement and wellbeing.

**Table 1:** Case Study Rationale

<b>National Case Study</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Patan Durbar square, Lalitpur	Chosen for its cultural and historical significance. Proximity to educational institutes.
Pimbahal, Lalitpur	Selected for its range of affordable food options. Popular social spaces that are frequented by students.
Kamalpokhari, Dillibazar	Large open social spaces. Open area featuring natural water body.
<b>International Case Study</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Russell Square Park	Historical significance, respect for nature, and proximity to educational institutes.
Greenacre Park	Comparison of student engagement in waterfront spaces

## Materials and Method

### 2.1 Research Design and Approach

**Research Design:** This study combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand how students interact with and think about their wellbeing in public areas.

**Research Paradigm:** The research uses a mixed paradigm by integrating positivism for quantified and interpretivism for understanding the experience of students.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Sources

#### 2.2.1 Data Sources

This research utilizes primary data collected from students engaging at the national site through survey and observations. Secondary data consists of literature review, journals, research articles, and previously documented cases studies.

#### 2.2.2 Data Collection Methods

- **Survey:** Questionnaires were distributed to 15 students at each national site to gather quantitative data on their usage of public spaces.
- **Interviews:** Conversations were held with selected survey participants regarding student experience and perspective.
- **Observation:** Activity mapping
- **Visual Documentation:** Photographs and sketches were used to capture the spatial details that are difficult to express in text.

#### 2.2.3 Data Collection Tools

This study used surveys, notebook, camera to collect information. This data was then organized and analyzed using tools like Google form and Excel.

## 2.3 Data Analysis Framework

All collected data were not usable. Some came out to be void, and some gave interviews as fun. So, to gather the correct and useful information data filtering was done first and then all the usable data were organized and presented as findings.

## 2.4 Description of Case Studies

### 2.4.1 International Case Studies

#### Case Study 1: Greenacre Park

Location: New York City, New York, USA

Designer: Sasaki Associates

Greenacre Park, established in 1971, is a good example of “vest-pocket” park, with an area of about 6,000 square feet, spanning 60 feet by 120 feet offering a peaceful oasis amid a bustling urban city (Sasaki Associates, 2020). Its most prominent features includes a 25-foot waterfall that masks the city noise creating an intimate and peaceful environment (Gannon, 2017). Although privately owned, the park remains publicly accessible, opening daily from 8 AM to 6 PM (CityDays, n.d.), and attracting about 700 visitors per day (Gannon, 2017). This level of engagement is protected by the park’s “Fight for Light” campaign which reflects the ongoing efforts to preserve its existence against the challenge of urban development. In 1980, a planned building near the park exceeded the building height limit and overshadowed the park. Under the guidance of Greenacre Foundation, park visitors organized a campaign to reduce the building’s height, and won the case. To secure park’s future, the Greenacre foundation purchased and resold adjoining property under legal guarantees for height restrictions (Hu, 2017). By prioritizing natural light and sensory comfort, Greenacre Park ensures environmental quality necessary for high level of engagement and well-being for healthy urban life style.



**Figure 5:** The pocket park in past (Sasaki Associates, 2020)



**Figure 6:** The pocket park in present: (Sasaki Associates, 2020)

#### Case Study 2: Russell Garden

Location: Bloomsbury, London

Designer: Humphry Repton (1806)

Russell Square is a historic public square covering approximately 2.5 hectares. It was established in the early

19th century and named after fifth duke of Bedford, Francis Russell which is currently protected by the London’s Squares Preservation Act of 1931 (Russell Square, Bloomsbury, 2022). Due to its location near University of London and British Museum, the square serves as vital social hub for students and public to engage in group discussion, study or relax.

It is open to the public daily from 7.30am to 10pm (Russell Square Gardens | Bloomsbury - London, n.d.). The square garden is enclosed by cast iron railings and shrubbery. The layout includes open lawn, lush garden and a central fountain. The garden has eighth entrances, two in each of the four corners which can be seen in Figure 8.



Figure 7: Open Space of Russell Square

Visitors can use a long perimeter walking track or follow the Repton’s original 19th century path pattern with two curving bow-shaped walks crossing the garden from each corner meeting in the center (Russell Square, Bloomsbury, 2022).

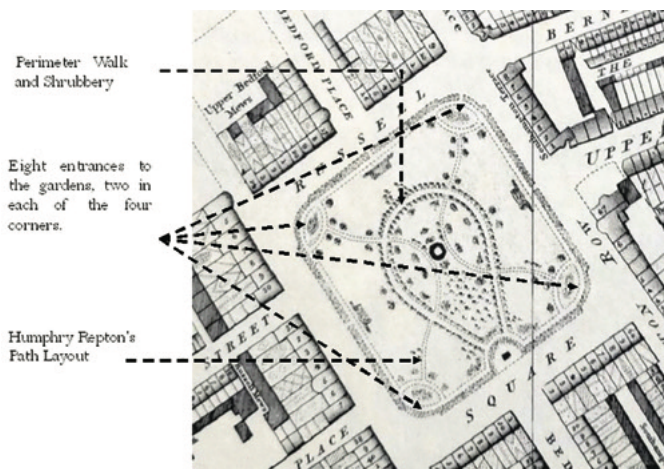


Figure 8: Master Plan of Russell Square Garden, London (Russell Square, Bloomsbury, 2022)

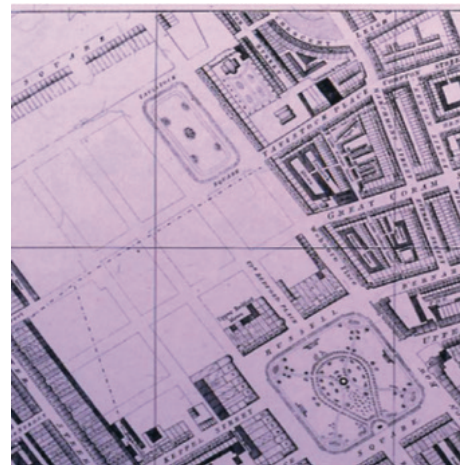


Figure 9: Russell Square in 1813 (Clarke, McKellar, & Symes, 2004, p. 29)

### 2.2.2 National Case Studies

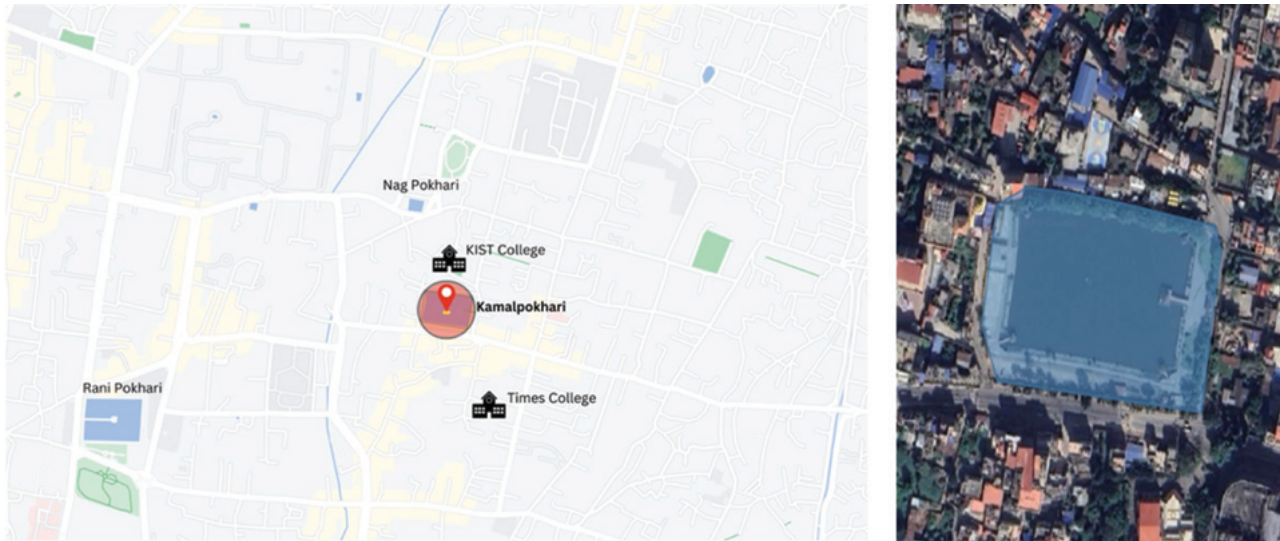
#### Case Study 3: Patan Durbar Square

Patan Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, renowned for its concentrated collection of temples, statues, and palace that reflect the rich culture and history of Lalitpur. Spanning approximately 18.85 hectare (Patan Durbar Square, n.d.), the square serves as high density urban hub. Due to its immediate proximity to several educational institutions such as Pulchowk Campus, Lalitpur Engineering College, Patan Multiple



severely damaged due the earthquake in 2015 (2072 B.S.) and it was restored to its original form in 2017 (Pim Bahal Pokhari, n.d.). It is considered as a significant public space where students from nearby educational institutions like Pulchowk Campus, Patan Multiple Campus., frequently gather for tea and food, making it an ideal location for academic research on student engagement at public spaces.

#### Case Study 5: Kamalpokhari



**Figure 13:** Location map of Kamalpokhari (Snazzy Maps and Google maps)

Kamalpokhari, a historic pond spanning approximately 20,349 square meters (40 Ropani) (Bajracharya, 2020), is located in the heart of Kathmandu surrounded by lush foliage offering a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. This pond was restored by Kathmandu Metropolitan City in 2021 (Himalayan News services, 2021). The pond attracts a large number of students due to its proximity to educational institutions such as Kist College and Times College. The area is frequented by visitors of all age groups throughout the day because it offers space for various recreational activities including jogging, exercising, relaxing, and conversations.



**Figure 14:** Kamalpokhari in 1950 (Sijapati & Shrestha, 2021)



**Figure 15:** Kamalpokhari before renovation of 2021 (Sijapati & Shrestha, 2021)



**Figure 16:** Present Kamalpokhari

The pond features a central lotus-shaped fountain, symbolizing the meaning of the name “Kamalpokhari.” Recent renovations have enhanced the overall quality of the site through improved seating and viewing

decks, including phalchas at each corner and main central phalcha with statue in the eastern side. Additional improvements includes dhungedhara (water spout) on the northeast side, an enlarged entrance, boundary wall, green park to the south, and recreational area to the west.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Findings from International Case Studies

##### 3.1.1 Greenacre Park

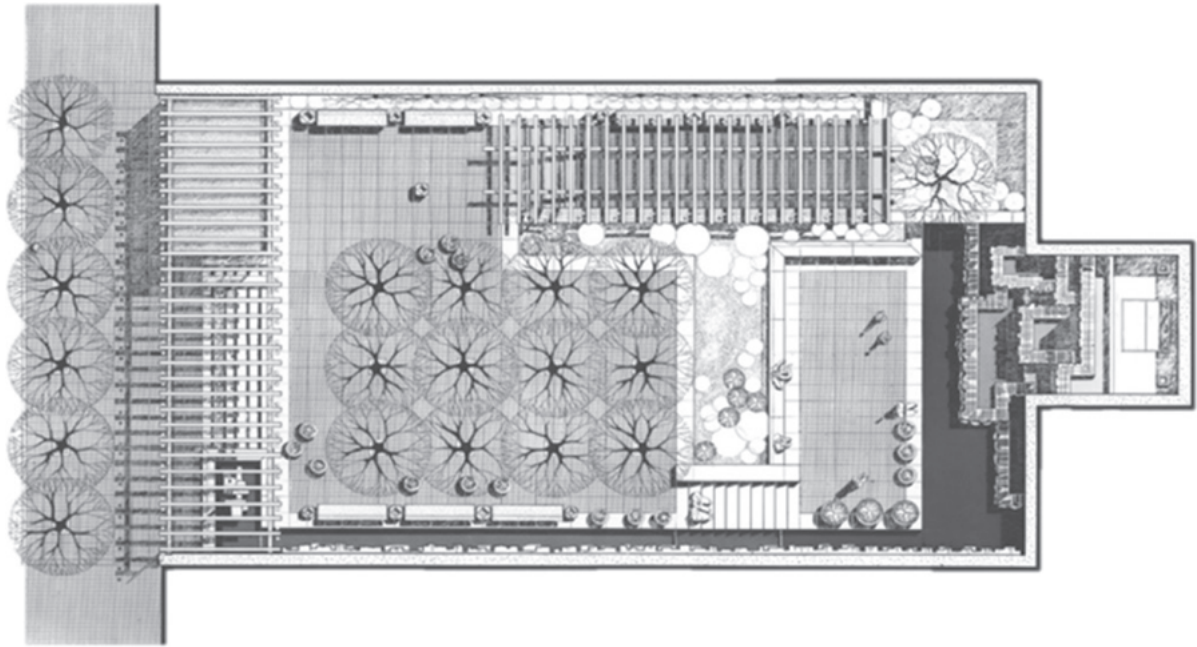


Figure 17: Top view (Greenacre Park)

(Sasaki Associates, 2020)



Figure 18: East section of the Greenacre Park (Sasaki Associates, 2020)



**Figure 19:** Upper Seating Area (Sasaki Associates, 2020)



**Figure 20:** Lower seating area (Sasaki Associates, 2020)



**Figure 21:** Students studying at Greenacre park (Sasaki Associates, 2020)



**Figure 22:** People interacting during lunch break at Greenacre park (Sasaki Associates, 2020)

The park has become a gathering spot for discussion, informal meetings and networking for students. Students often visit the park for quiet reading, relaxation, or just to enjoy some time alone (see Figure 21 and Figure 22). The on-site café is also a favorite spot, where individuals can grab a coffee during a brief interlude. With the multilevel sitting area (see Figure 19 and Figure 20), Greenacre Park has become the lunchtime oasis for workers in Midtown Manhattan. The overall experience boosts students' wellbeing and academic engagement.

#### Evaluation

Although there is less number of student activities at the park, it is the ideal option for students looking for more interactive environment. However, it isn't the best place for students seeking recreational, because it lacks student recreational needs and resources. The park's small size limits opportunities for physical and large group activities. The park serves as a lunchtime space for employees in the surrounding area rather than a complete student engagement place. On the other hand, the park seems to be the excellent spot for quiet learning, individual creativity and relaxation.

#### Inference

This case study showed that incorporating biophilic design with proper seating area, sensory experience, pocket breakout space, supporting amenities like café, layout in different level significantly enhance student engagement and wellbeing.

### 3.1.2 Russell Garden

#### Findings

Russell Square Garden is a historically significant public space that addresses the students' needs for engagement. The garden features an expansive green lawn ideal for outdoor study, collaborative group discussions, picnic, chilling area and other recreational leisure. Pavilion at entrance provides a unique experience to the visitors while information board with historical information, warning sign, and signage board for direction ensure proper usability of those installation. Unlike many smaller pocket parks, Russell Square provides essential public amenities such as restroom, mailboxes that enhance the site's functionality for daily users.



**Figure 23:** Statue of Francis Russell (T, 2021)    **Figure 24:** Central paved area with three large circular fountains (Zvuluny, 2023)

Its strategic location near British museum and University of London attracts huge number of student. Features such as real scale board games and a café where students can enjoy beverages and study in a pleasant environment contributes in making the place lively. The restorative spaces of garden impact positively in the wellbeing of the students and has helped in their achievement by providing an ideal space to study in peace connecting with nature and wildlife.



**Figure 25:** Post box (Ivisitedtheplace, 2023)



**Figure 26:** Pavillion (Russell Square Gardens | Bloomsbury - London, n.d.)



**Figure 27:** Lawn with scattered trees (K, 2022)



**Figure 28:** Public Washroom (OBrien, 2024)

#### Review of Russell Square Garden from visitors

According to Brian T. on trip advisor (2021), Russell square garden is popular spot especially for students of University of London, visitors to British Museum and local workers. He highlights the beauty of the garden like lovely lime trees, west lawn carpet of daffodils and trees of summer. He is surprised to see the Cabmen's shelter (1897) serving to present day as café. He explained the garden is accessible to everyone and has spaces for picnic, lunches, and numerous settings along curving footpath. In his opinion this park lacks stand out features and suffers from overcrowding. He is also not happy about original fountains being replaced in 2002. He believes there should be more notable statues and memorial beside statue of Francis Russell. In conclusion he suggest to visit the garden if you are near the University of London or have come to visit British Museum otherwise there are other attractive public spaces to visit.



**Figure 29:** Historical events board near entrance (BradJill, 2024)



**Figure 30:** Warning sign (OZS\_ATW, 2022)



**Figure 31:** Russell Bug Hotel (leafshade, 2019)



**Figure 32:** Students relaxing, eating and reading in open space of Russell Square Garden (SOAS University of London, 2016)

## Evaluation

Russell Square Garden has great accessibility with eight perimeter entrances with thoughtful inclusive design. The garden's layout is defined by a radial path system where eight walkways converge at central focal point, naturally facilitating social interaction exciting visitors. This central plaza, activated by a water jet fountain, creates a vibrant environment that appeals to both children and students. The garden's restricted operating hours from 7:30 to 10 pm (Russell Square Gardens | Bloomsbury - London, n.d.) ensure a managed level of safety and comfort. By combining excellent accessibility and essential public amenities with a safe, wildlife friendly environment, Russell Square Garden create highly social space for recreational and other meaningful activities. Also its strategic location attract huge number of students making this public space a great place for student engagement.



**Figure 33:** British Museum (EncIm)



**Figure 34:** Master Plan of Russell Square Garden (Zvuluny, 2023)



**Figure 35:** Caffè Tropea (Moyra, 2021)



**Figure 36:** Real Scale Board Games for Engagement (D, 2023)

## Inference

Features like high accessibility, inclusive design, and strategic proximity to urban landmarks are essential to a successful public space. Combined with large green lush open area, sustainable ecology features and diverse activities zone ranging from group discussion area to interactive board games, these elements significantly enhance student engagement.

## 3.2 Findings from National Case Studies

### 3.2.1 Patan Durbar Square

#### *Finding*

Date of study: June 30-, 2024 (16th of Ashad 2081)

#### *Observation*

A focused ten minute observation was conducted at Patan Durbar Square around 1:00 PM to analyze pedestrian movement and student interaction. The data revealed a high volume of transit activity, with 314 pedestrians and 4 cyclists passing through the square. While the museum drew 18 visitors, the traditional

phalchas (resting platforms) served a stationary node for 12 individuals.



**Figure 37:** Students merely passing by



**Figure 38:** Students socializing at heritage area in lunch time with their family



**Figure 39:** Socializing with friends

The square functioned as a vibrant cultural hub during the period providing common space for people to gather wearing cultural outfits. Some individuals were seen using gadgets while some were seen studying. Some artists were performing live art near the phalcha area which drew many students appreciating the process and art pieces.



**Figure 40:** Students on a bicycle



**Figure 41:** Quality time with family



**Figure 42:** Staying under roof to stay dry



**Figure 43:** Exploring the heritage monuments



**Figure 44:** Some using gadgets and some studying



**Figure 45:** Participating in cultural outfits and events



**Figure 46:** Mesmerizing the artist work



**Figure 47:** Visiting temples for religious purpose

Apart from relaxing and exploring the monuments, people often visit Krishna mandir in Patan Durbar Square for religious purposes (Figure 47). Besides these activities, people were seen clicking pictures, making reels, visiting water sprout to wash face, and seating around the water fountain. Most people in the periphery of main square area were enjoying food and drinks in and outside the cafe nearby

Survey



Figure 48: Students taking survey at Patan (1)



Figure 49: Students taking survey at Patan (2)

Table 2: Summary of Survey at Patan Durbar Square

Number of Participants	15
Frequency of visit	2-3 times a week
Time spent	1-2 hours
With?	Friends
Preferred time	Afternoon

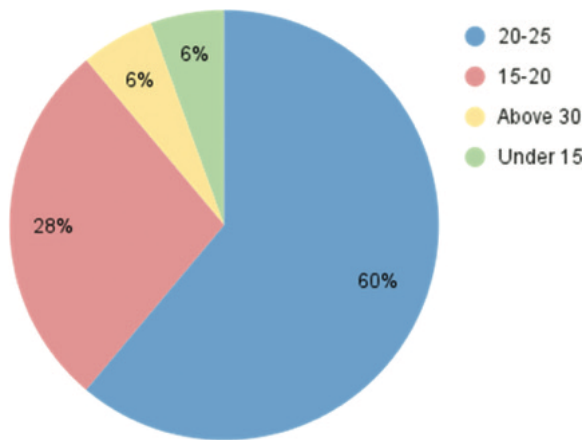


Figure 50: Age group of the participants

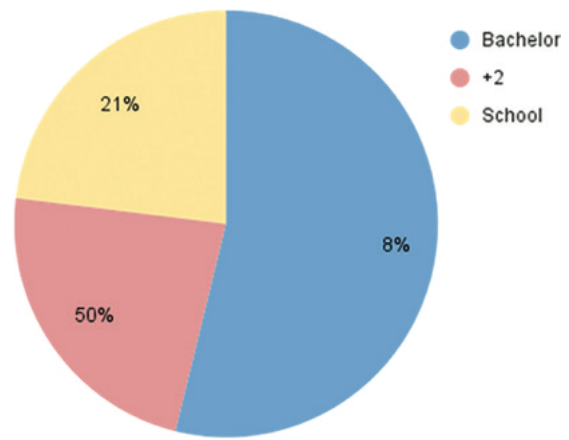


Figure 51: Education level of the participants

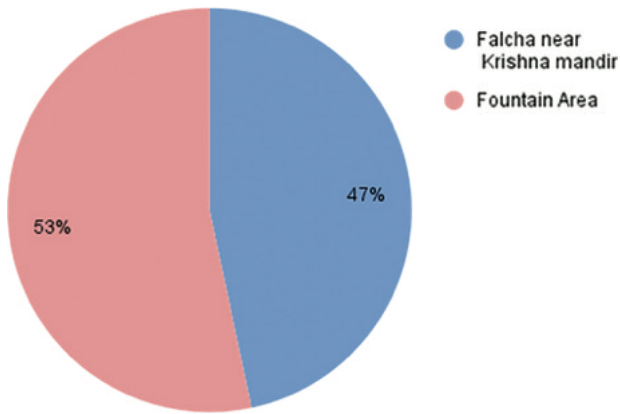


Figure 52: Seating area preference

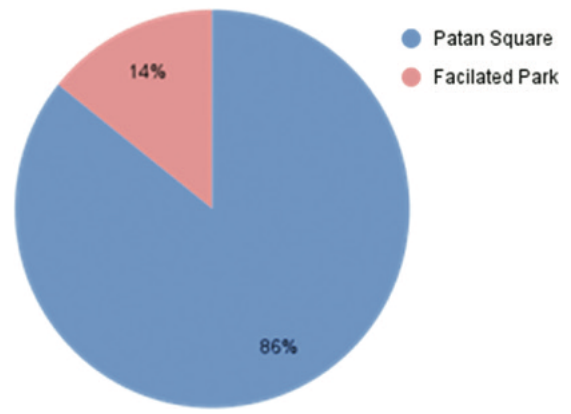


Figure 53: Preference between Patan Square and other nearby parks

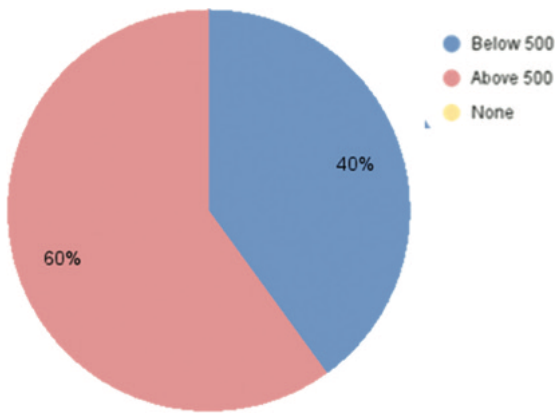


Figure 54: Amount spend per visit

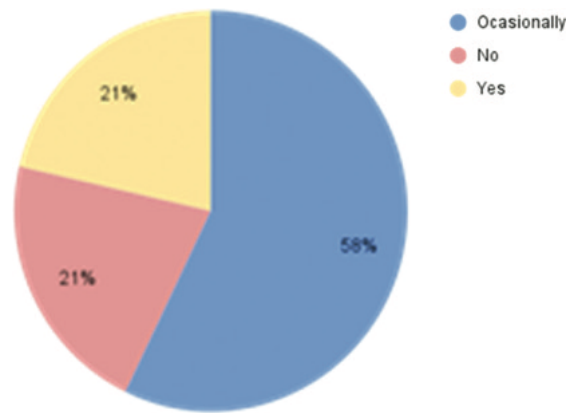


Figure 55: If there were entry fair, would the participants still visit?

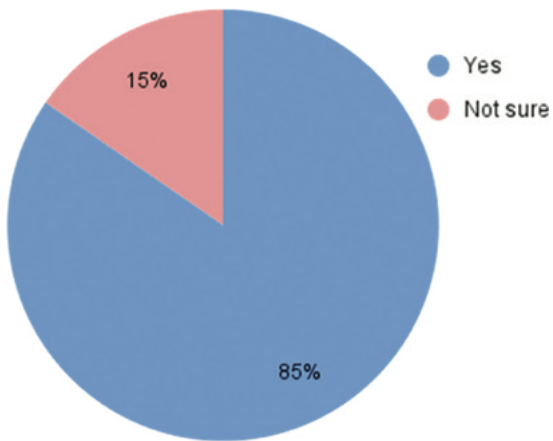


Figure 56: Thoughts in Patan as no-vehicle zone

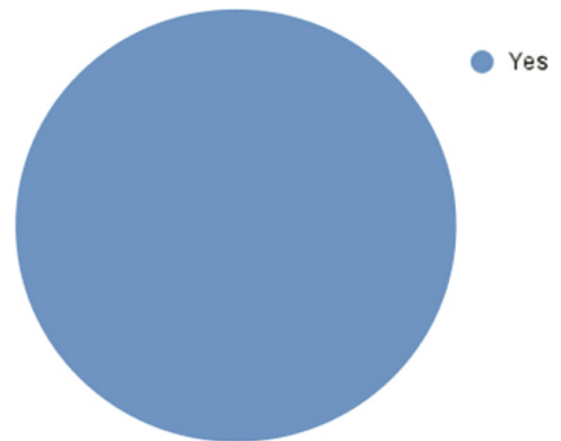


Figure 57: Thoughts on green space at Patan

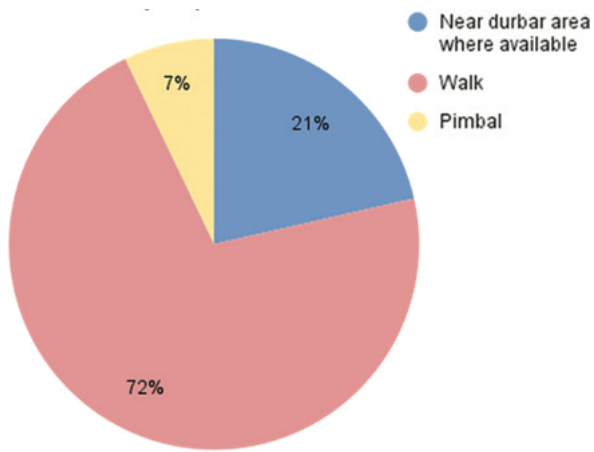


Figure 58: Parking while visiting Patan Durbar Square

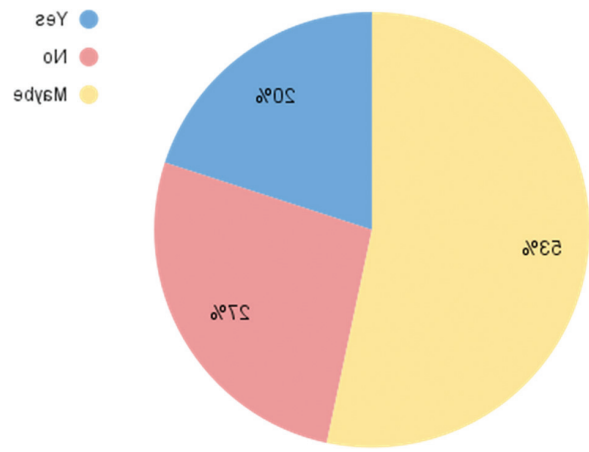


Figure 59: Parking problem in Patan

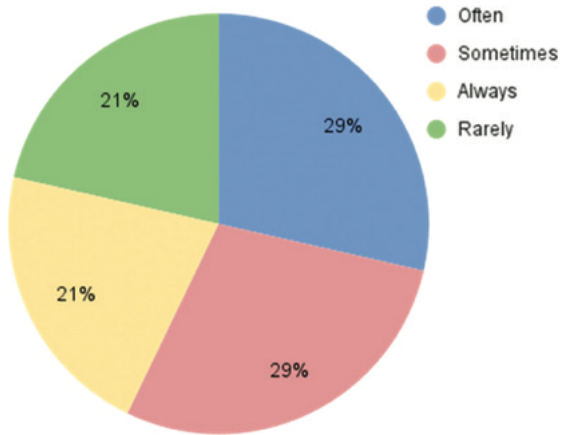


Figure 60: Visiting Pimbahal after being at Patan

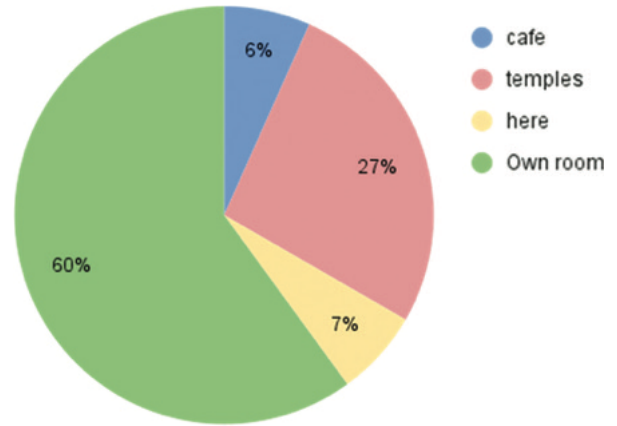
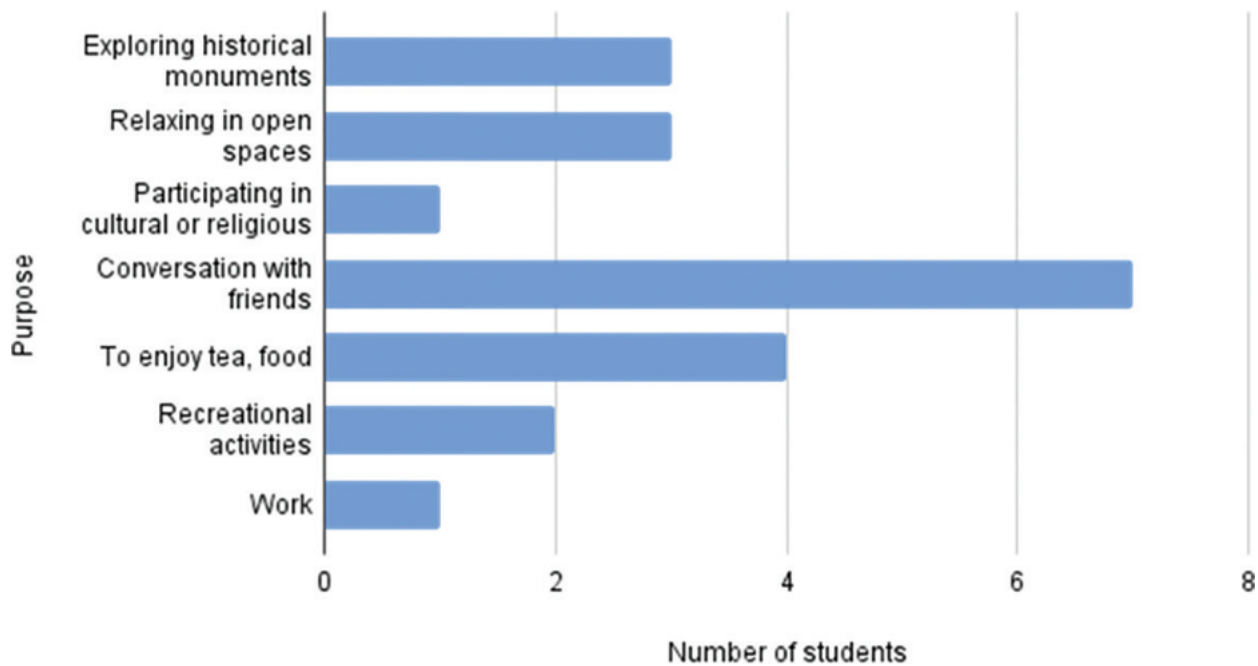


Figure 61: Preference for place to relieve stress



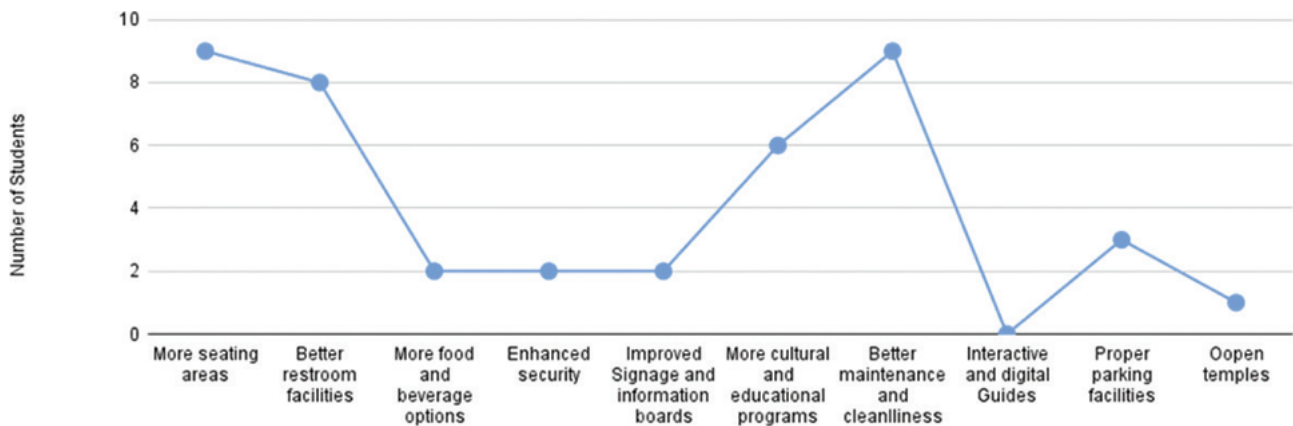
**Figure 62:** Purpose of visiting Patan Durbar Square

Patan Durbar Square serves as a mixed urban hub, attracting visitors for social interaction, recreation such as photography and leisure walks, and cultural events. Some visitors are drawn to the square for exploring its historical monuments and museums, while very few come for academic research and educational purpose.

When asked why Patan Durbar Square is cherished by the visitors, many stated that the square helped reducing stress, socializing with friends and connect to the cultural heritage. Religious and spiritual belief played a huge role in majority of people's visit. It was found that students/visitors faced challenges like inadequate seating areas, restroom facilities and parking problem at Patan Durbar Square. Despite the challenges visitors were still willing to visit the place due to its architectural appeal, sense of belongingness and historic significance even with small nominal fees in future.

#### Participants' recommendations

Participants provided several recommendations from their experience for improving the overall experience. Key suggestions were more comfortable seating areas and better maintenance and cleanliness. They also explained the need of better restroom facilities and proper parking facilities as illustrated in Figure 51. Improved signage and information boards were highlighted as necessary for guiding the visitors and providing educational insights about the site.



**Figure 63:** Additional facilities or services to enhance the experience at Patan Durbar Square

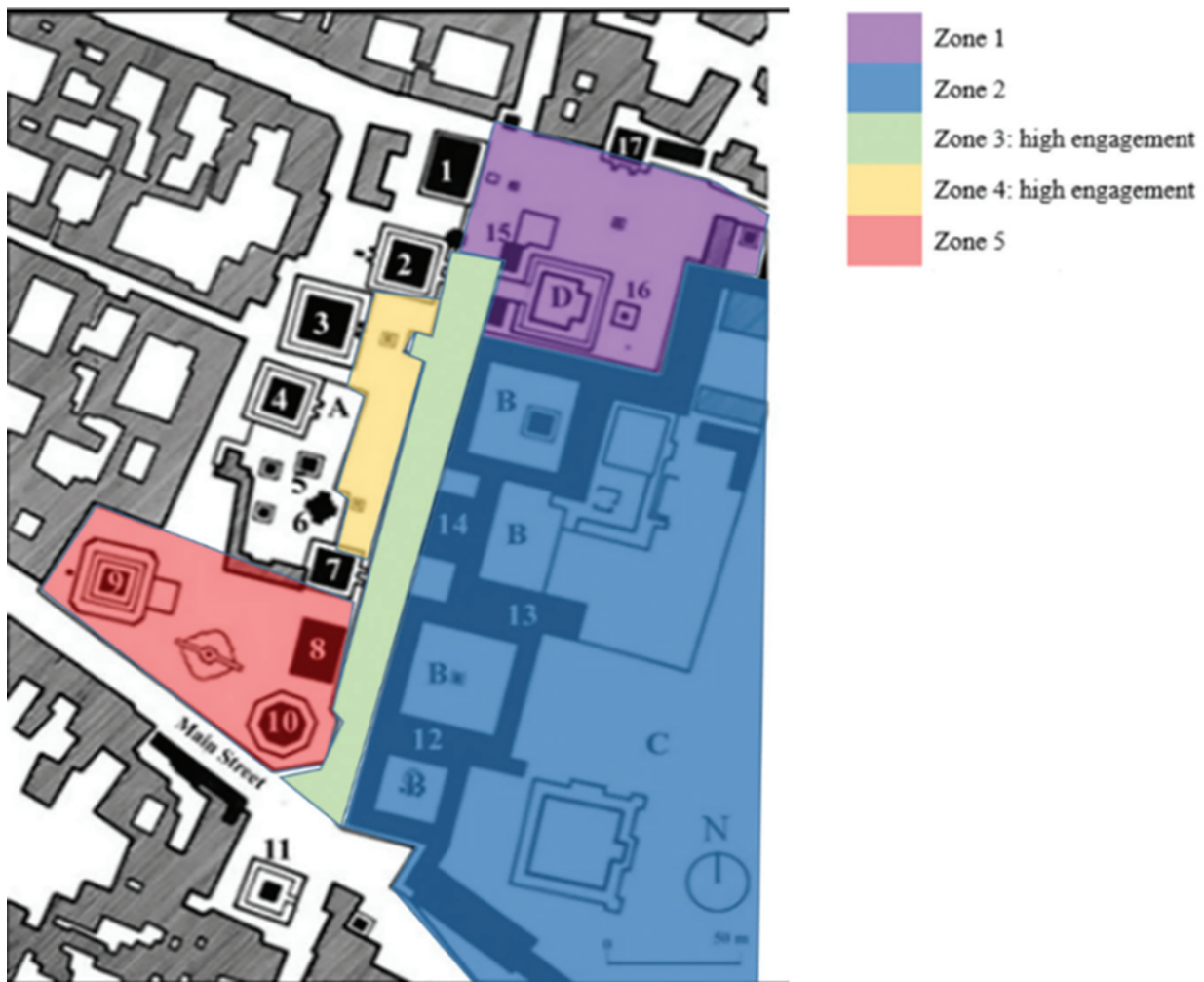
Regarding the green space within Patan Durbar Square, feedback indicated that it would be better to have green space as buffer space in the periphery. Small pot plants on the side of pavements would be better for the site as it wouldn't block the view.

#### Evaluation

It was observed and analyzed that students visit Patan Durbar Square for traditional and cultural sense of belonging. There is definitely huge number of student engagement in Patan Durbar Square, but most of the students were dissatisfied with the experience and would want to enhance their experience. It will be more successful public space if it has the modern public amenities like restroom, comfortable seating area while preserving its traditional vernacular beauty.

#### Recommendation

To meet the present needs and improve the experience at Patan Durbar Square, there should be control of pedestrian traffic within the space. Provision of amenities like restrooms and more comfortable seating spaces should be provided in Zone 1 and Zone 5 without disturbing other zones. Information board about the area and its master plan should be installed in focal points like entry, seating area for much educational information which will be helpful to students. History Storytelling programs should be conducted every month to spread the knowledge about the importance of students engagement and preservation of Patan Durbar Square area as public space.



**Figure 64:** Zone mapping of Patan Durbar Square for recommendation (Shrestha & Chitrakar, 2020)

### *Inferences*

Each and every corner of Patan Durbar Square tells a historical story through Malla period. Public spaces with historical importance provides rich backdrop that adds depth and context to public space, making it more engaging. The vernacular architecture with its unique character like detail wood carvings enhances its aesthetic appeal and attracts visitors. The presence of museum offering educational opportunities and cultural environment, while traditional elements like hiti (traditional water spout) adds functional and historical value. Exposure of original material highlights the authenticity of the spaces. Platform for religious and cultural activities encourage dynamic interaction which can be applied in public space to make it more lively and engaging.

### 3.2.2 Pimbahal

#### Finding

Date of study: June 30-, 2024 (16th of Ashad 2081)

#### Observation

A focused ten minute observation was conducted at Pimbahal around 3:00 PM to analyze pedestrian movement and student interaction. The majority of visitors were students, who came to socialize and utilize their leisure time exploring diverse culinary options with friends.



**Figure 65:** People relaxing in parapet of Pimbahal



**Figure 66:** Socialization of students for tea and food



**Figure 67:** Students enjoying street foods



**Figure 68:** Boating



**Figure 69:** Gathering after college



**Figure 70:** For parking purpose college



**Figure 71:** Students waiting in line for table



**Figure 72:** Students riding bicycle to home after school



**Figure 73:** Two friends sitting silently

Survey

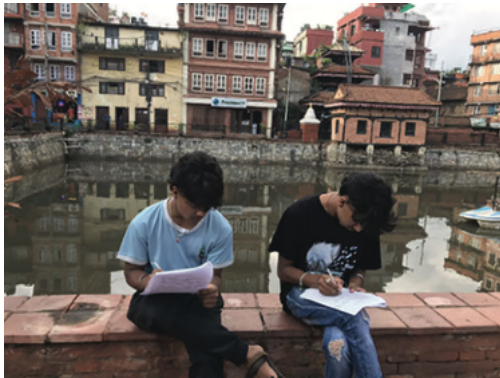


Figure 74: Students taking survey at Pimbahal (1)

Figure 75: Students taking survey at Pimbahal (2)

Table 3: Summary of Survey at Pimbahal

Number of Participants	15
Frequency of visit	Daily/2-3 times a week
Time spent	1-2 hours
With?	Friends
Preferred time	Evening

Patan’s Pimbahal serves as a vital social and wellness hub for students, who primarily visits for its tranquil environment, scenic water body, and affordable local cuisines. Particularly spending about one to two hours and an average of Rs. 500 per visit, students utilize space to alleviate academic stress and engage in informal activities spending quality time with their friend and family. However boating is less popular among them. They made clear about their visit to Pimbahal is for affordable food option and water body view, however they indicated that even a nominal entry fee would likely reduce their attendance.

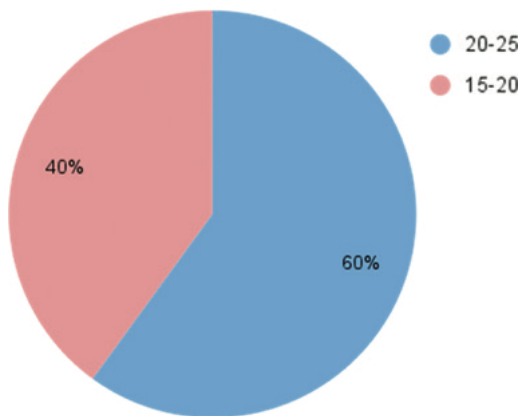


Figure 76: Age of participants

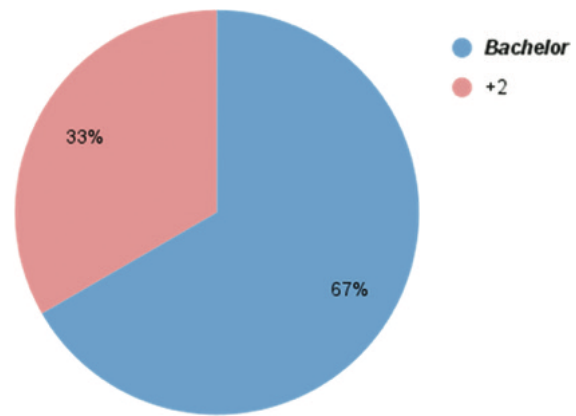


Figure 77: Education level of the participants

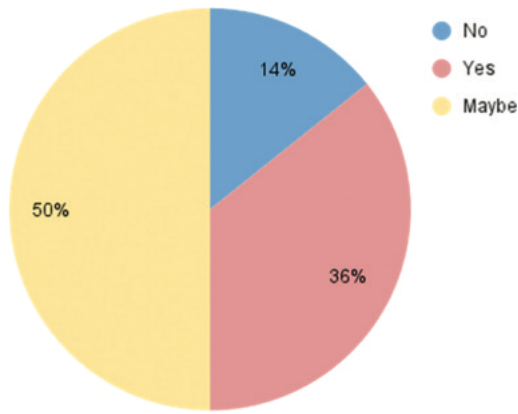


Figure 78: Visit Pimbahal in absence of pond

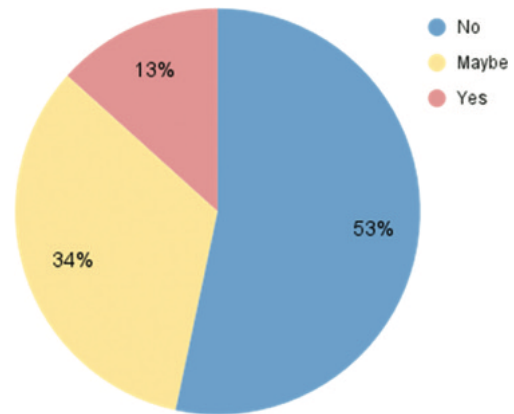


Figure 79: Visit Pimbahal in absence of food

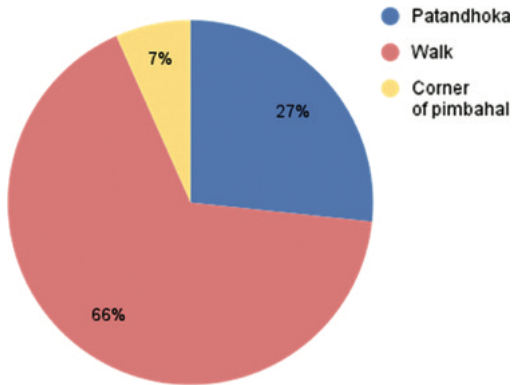


Figure 80: Parking spot while visiting Pimbahal

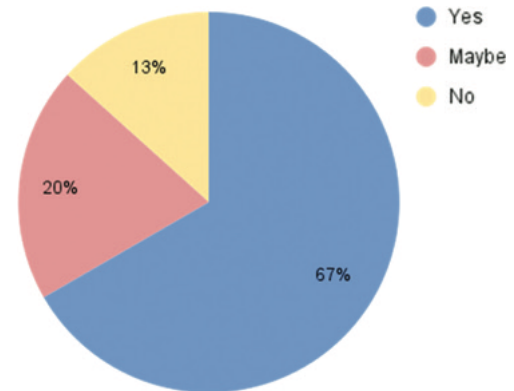


Figure 81: Thoughts on parking problem at Pimbahal

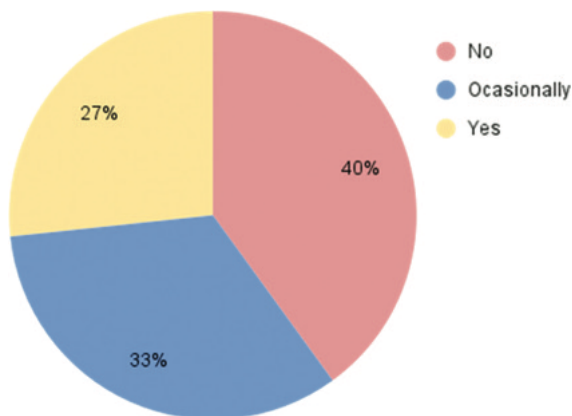


Figure 82: Thoughts on visiting Pimbahal if there were entry fee

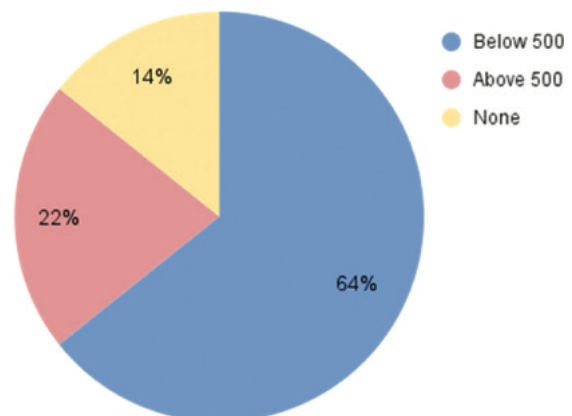
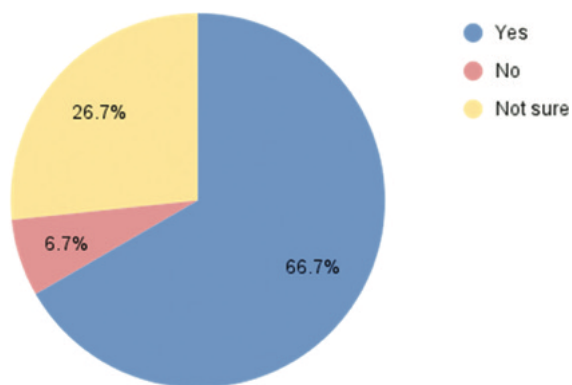
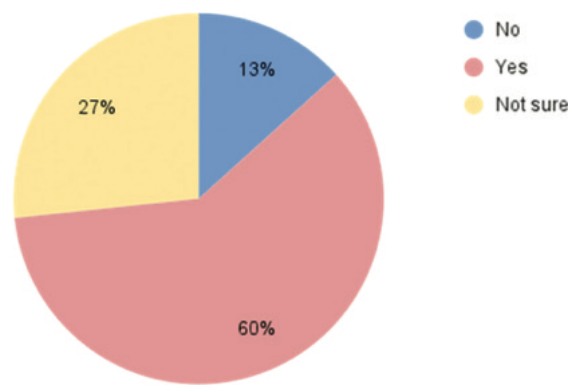


Figure 83: Amount spend at Pimbahal



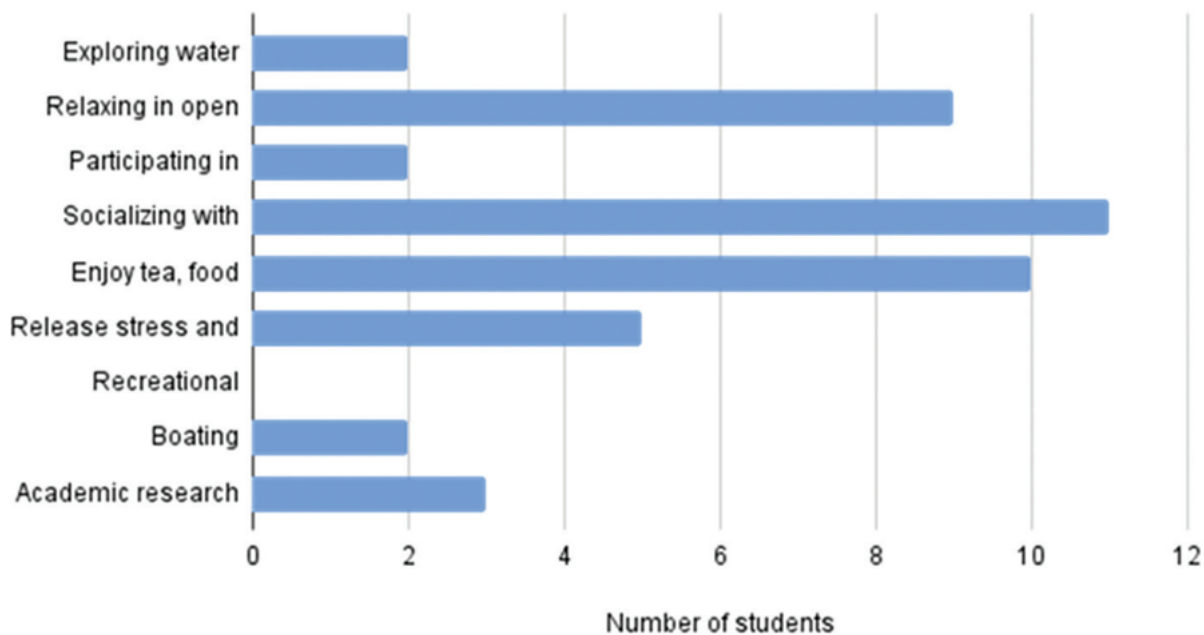
**Figure 84:** Thoughts on no-vehicle zone at Pimbahal



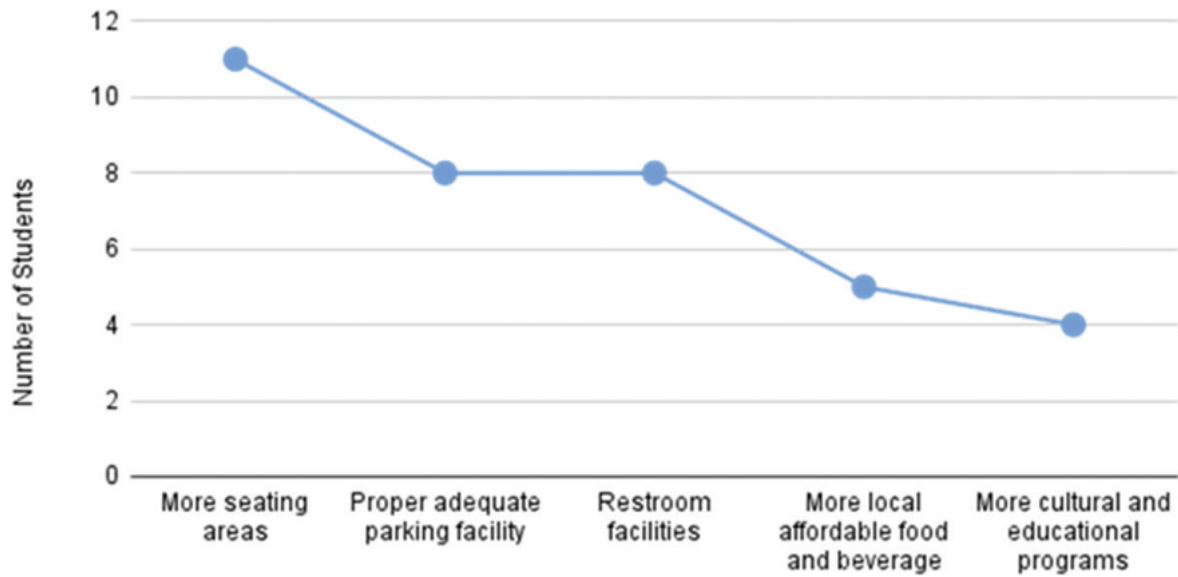
**Figure 85:** Thoughts on green space at Pimbahal

Participants' recommendations

To optimize user experience at Pimbahal, respondents suggested improvements such as more comfortable seating area, parking facilities, and restroom. They also highlighted the shift towards diverse and affordable local cuisines to enhance site's liveliness. Additionally, implementation of peripheral green belt was recommended to expand the environment's serenity with occasional cultural, religious and educational program.



**Figure 86:** Main purpose of visiting Pimbahal



**Figure 87:** Additional facilities or service that would enhance the experience at Pimbahal

#### Evaluation

It was observed and analyzed that students frequently visit Pimbahal for affordable food options and to socialize with friend during break and after college time. Despite the compact area and concerning challenges, Pimbahal stands out as a successful example of student engagement. Field survey indicated that over 50% of visitors of Pimbahal are students.

#### Inference

For inference its affordable food option, tranquil environment, vernacular architecture, micro climate controlling strategies can be very useful for successful engagement of students at public spaces.

#### 3.2.3 Kamalpokhari

##### Finding

Date of study: June 30-, 2024 (16th of Ashad 2081)

##### Observation

A focused ten minute observation was conducted at Kamalpokhari around 5:00 PM to analyze pedestrian movement and student interaction. The majority of visitors were students, who came to socialize, relax, study and utilize their leisure time exploring the site. Mornings primarily see joggers, while afternoons are dominated by students and other visitors.



**Figure 88:** Student studying and enjoying alone time



**Figure 89:** Evening stroll



**Figure 90:** Students relaxing after tiring day



**Figure 91:** Socializing with friends



**Figure 92:** Students discussing



**Figure 93:** Quality time with family



**Figure 94:** Playing football



**Figure 95:** Clicking photographs



**Figure 96:** Chatting and socializing with friends

Survey

**Table 4:** Summary of Survey at Kamalpokhari

<b>Number of Participants</b>	15
<b>Frequency of visit</b>	Daily/2-3 times a week
<b>Time spent</b>	1-2 hours
<b>With?</b>	Friends
<b>Preferred time</b>	Evening

Students were more interested in breakout spaces within urban settings, such as parks with greenery or water bodies. Students are primarily attracted to Kamalpokhari for their natural environment rather than for

food and beverages. That is why most respondents were willing to pay a nominal entry fee for the area even in absence of pond or fooding options. Students here were engaged in activities like water gazing, aquatic life observation, sports, jogging, photography, recreational, academic research etc. Majority of Participants didn't have to spend any money during their visit. Participants suggested to have more student oriented seating area, cost free restroom facility to increase their engagement level.

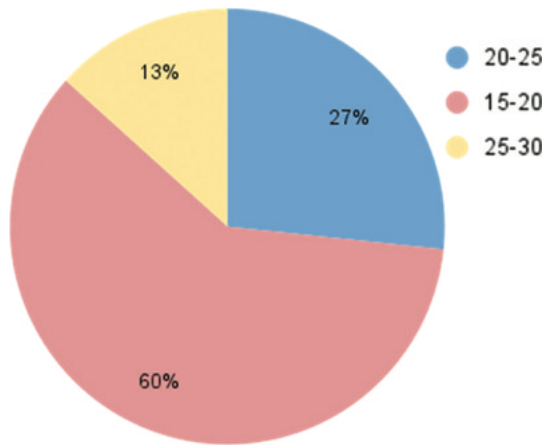


Figure 97: Age group of participants

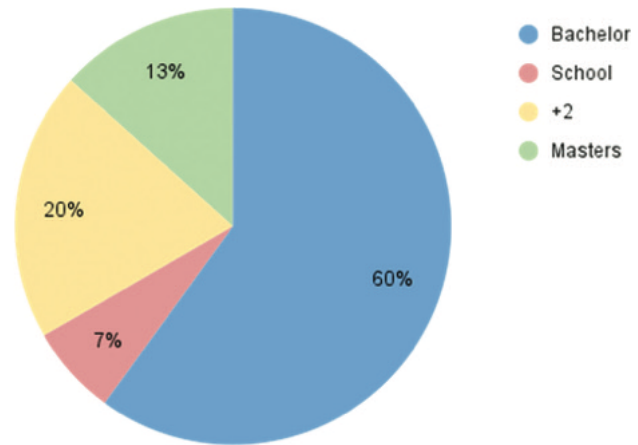


Figure 98: Education level of the participants

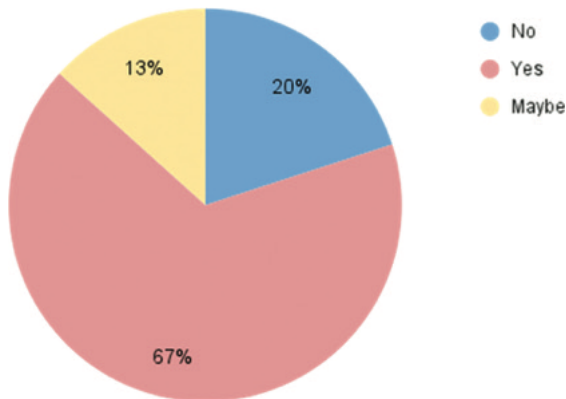


Figure 99: Would the participants visit Kamalpokhari in absence of food and cafes?

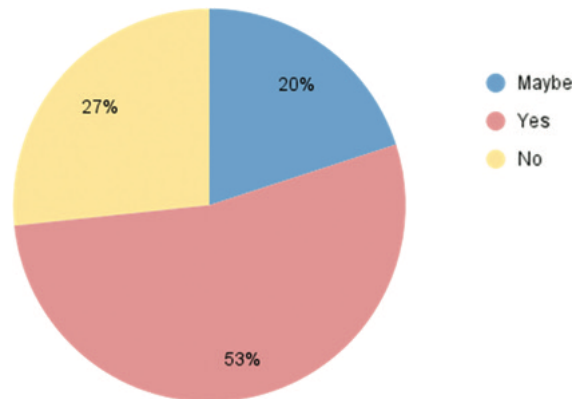
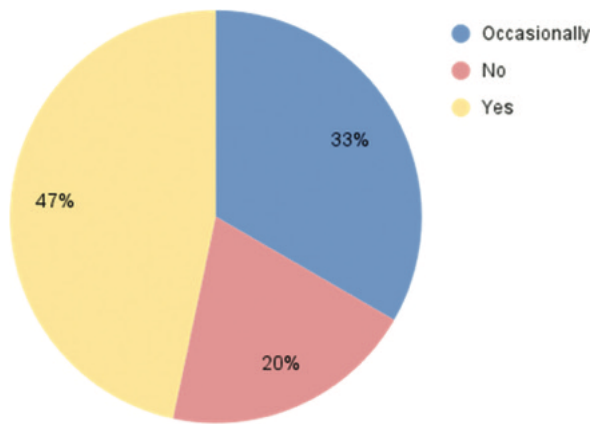
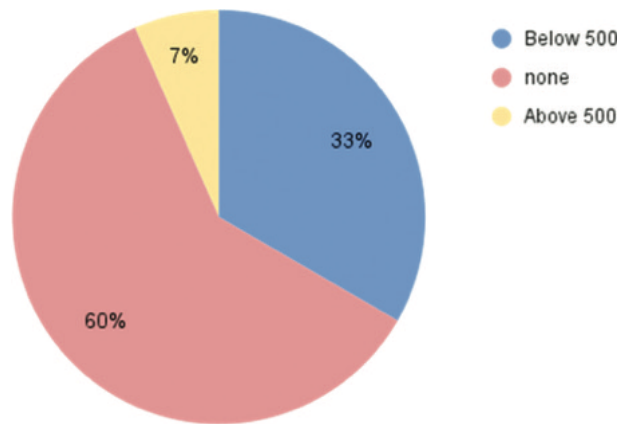


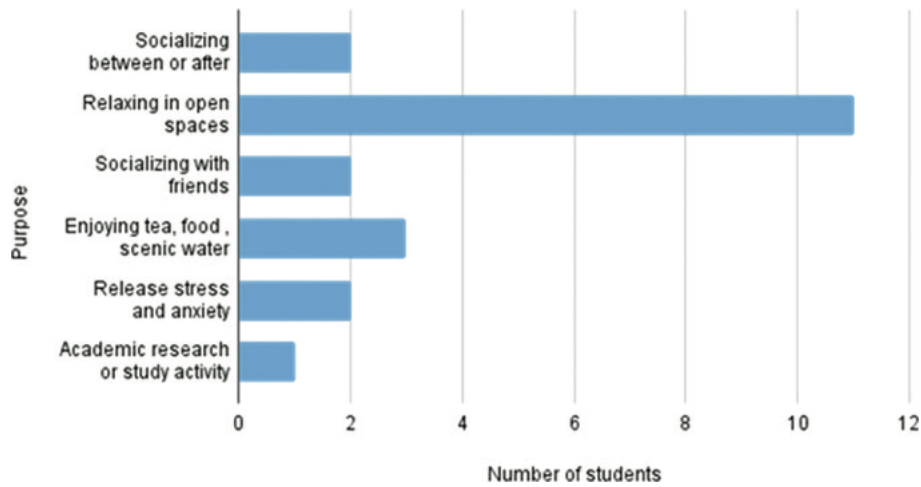
Figure 100: Would the participants visit Kamalpokhari if there were no pond?



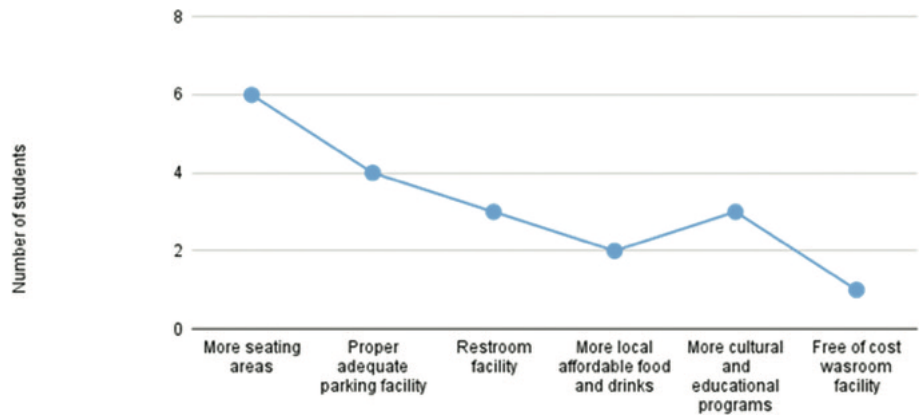
**Figure 101:** Would the participants still visit Kamalpokhari if there were some entry fee



**Figure 102:** Amount spend per visit at Kamalpokhari



**Figure 103:** Purpose of visiting Kamalpokhari



**Figure 104:** Additional facilities or service that would enhance the experience at Kamalpokhari

## Evaluation

Survey and field observation data of Kamalpokhari, Dillibazar concludes high level of student engagement predominantly by individual or with loved one than in groups and friends. The site's tranquility and greenery attracts students searching relaxing and study areas, contributing to their overall wellbeing and satisfaction.

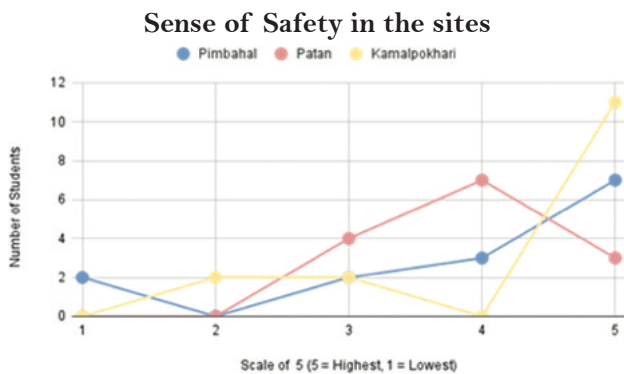
## Recommendation

Implementing a small mini library within the site could enhance student engagement by providing a quiet area for studying, addressing both student's recreational and educational need. Upgrading the seating with charging stations and tables, alongside better aquatic life management would create a functional workspace that significantly improves the daily experience for students.

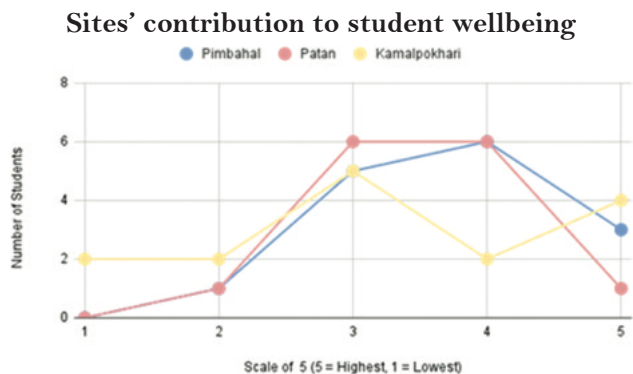
## Inference

Each development stage of Kamalpokhari in 1950, 2021 and 2024, has increased engagement level of students because of improved amenities like seating spaces, basic washroom facility, water vending service, garden and picnic area. Therefore, its huge welcoming nature, relaxing spaces, suitable seating area, visually pleasing lighting for night view, inclusive amenities and designs that connects human with nature can be taken inspiration before designing any public spaces addressing need and requirement of students for their active participation.

### 3.3 Comparative Analysis



**Figure 105:** Comparison of safety rating by participants



**Figure 106:** Sites' contribution to wellbeing

The above graphs illustrate that while all three sites contribute positively to student's wellbeing, Kamalpokhari is considered as safest location. In contrast, while Patan Durbar Square and Pimbahal also support student wellness, their safety ratings are more distributed, with Kamalpokhari standing out as the most secure environment for the respondents.

Positive impact of sites on student wellbeing

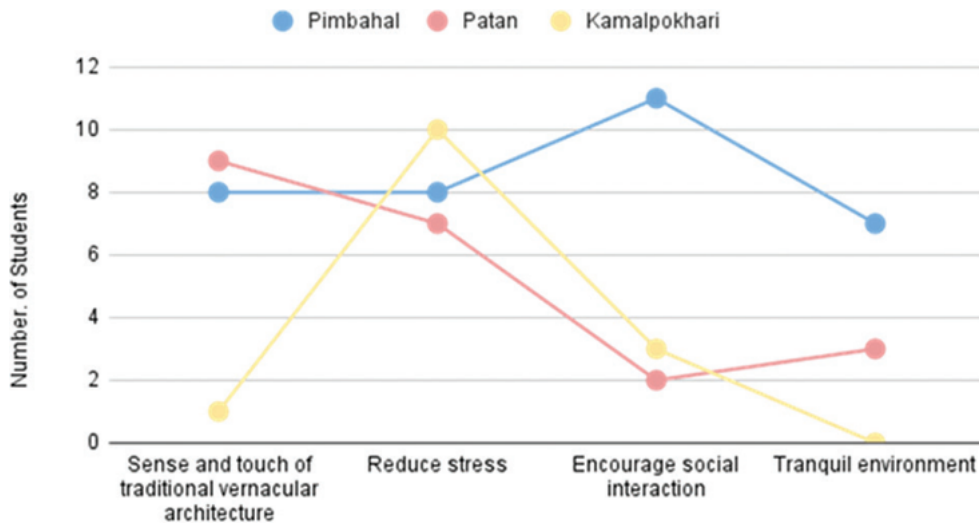


Figure 107: Positive impact of sites on wellbeing of students

Figure 82 illustrates how three different public spaces contribute on student wellbeing. Among them, Pimbahal is favored for social interaction, Patan Durban Square is valued for its architectural heritage and sensory experience and Kamalpokhari is identified for most effective for stress reduction. Because these spaces allows students to interact safely and comfortably, they act as a form of therapy. Ultimately, each site provides a unique but equally positive impact on overall student health.

Negative impact of sites on student wellbeing

Figure 83 illustrates the comparison of the negative impact of sites on student wellbeing. Pimbahal suffers most from inadequate seating space, while overcrowding is crucial issue at Patan Durbar Square. In case of Kamalpokhari, it has lowest level of negative impact across all categories, including harassment from street vendors, noise pollution, etc.

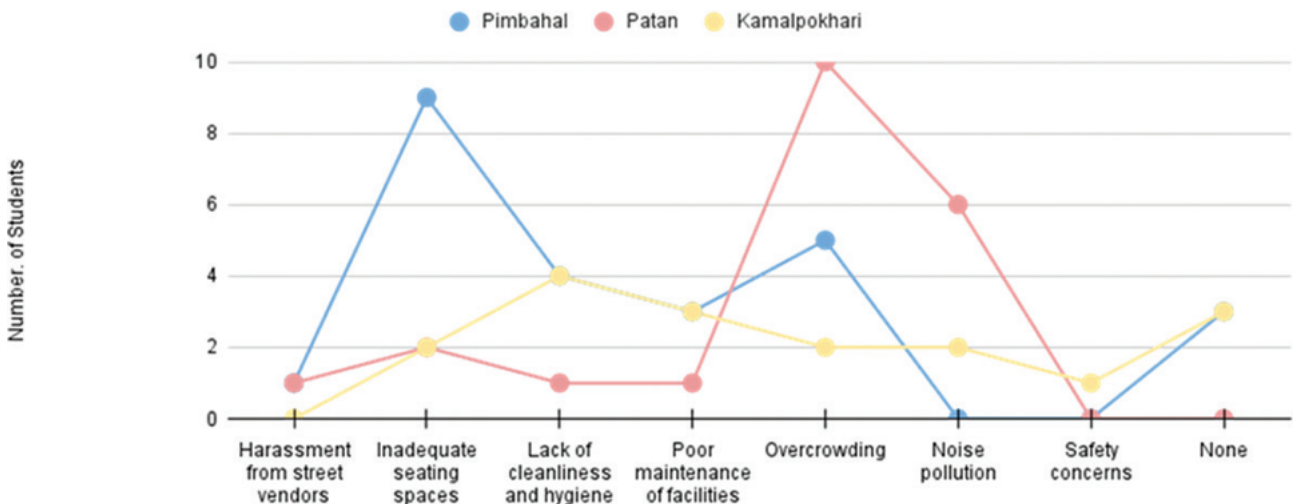


Figure 108: Negative impact of sites on wellbeing of students

**Table 5:** Comparison table of Case Studies

	International	International	National	National	National
Public spaces	Russel Garden	Greenacre Park	Patan Durbar Square	Pimbahal	Kamalpokhari
Feature	Large Garden Square in London	Small pocket park in New York	A large, historic public space with cultural and religious significance	Water body located in heart of Patan	Natural Water body located in Kathmandu
Student Engagement	Studying, group discussions, picnic, jogging, or simply taking a break between classes.	Take breaks, read, or socialize in a less crowded, serene environment	Academic research, Friends gathering spot, religious and cultural activities	Casual meetings, Food hunting.	Relaxing, Socializing, recreational activities
Amenities (seating / W/c)	Adequate	Insufficient in heavy traffic day	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate but can be improved
Signage / information Board	Yes	Yes	Lack of signage	Lack of signage	Lack of signage
Focused aspect	Historical	Environmental	Traditional	Economical	Environmental

Study shows that public spaces in Nepal differ significantly from international ones. While international parks generally meet all standard requirements, Nepalese parks often lack basic amenities. Public spaces in Nepal with historical and traditional importance reflect vernacular architecture, while international sites often rely on information board rather than the physical architecture to convey history.

From evaluation of visitors' engagement at national public spaces it was found that student's engagement could fluctuate if facilities were improved. However research indicated that even a small entry fee would discourage people from visiting. Engagement patterns can vary in different occasion; group interactions occurred in lush green open area while solely engagement occurred around water bodies.

#### 4. Recommendation

To enhance student engagement at public spaces, it is essential for the site to have clear and accessible connections to its surroundings. Designer must prioritize inclusivity by providing essential amenities and integrating natural elements to create a lively and inviting atmosphere. To specifically address student needs, the space should include multi-functional facilities such as sports, libraries, and discussion areas to increase the community interaction. Regarding sanitation, while user prefer cost-free option, implementing a nominal fee for restroom is recommended to ensure regular maintenance and cleanliness, as free facilities often face

negligence causing it very unhygienic. Effective navigation within the public space is crucial for high quality user experience.

## 5. Conclusions

Public spaces have powerful impact on students' lives however their engagement and wellbeing depends on location, context and cultural factors. In Nepal, Patan Durbar Square is visited for cultural and heritage exploration and Pimbahal for socializing and trying cuisines. Both places are favoured by students for group outings while Kamalpokhari for solitary quiet moments and intimate time with loved ones.

Internationally, public spaces offer more amenities, letting students relax, explore and socialize all in one place. While issues like overcrowding and limited amenities can sometimes affect overall experiences but these spaces still offers valuable opportunities for engagement, connection and personal growth. With thoughtful designs, public spaces can truly make a difference in engagement and everyday experience.

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