



## Urban Empowerment for Disabled People as a Strategy

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### Abstract

With the growth and development of Iraqi cities and the increase in population density in cities' centers, the development of cities and urban areas involves focus on economic concerns, often resulting in the exclusion of people with disability from participation in meaningful urban activities. In recent decades, technological advances and social awareness have made accessibility more common for people with disability. However, major disparities remain in people's access to basic support services and opportunities. To ensure that all citizens can benefit from the revitalization of city spaces, it is essential to integrate empowerment strategies for people with disabilities into urban open spaces. The implementation of such strategies can lead to the empowerment of disabled people in urban areas by providing them with access to public spaces, transportation networks, and other services. Therefore, the research problem is concerned with the need to find mechanisms to integrate people with needs into urban spaces through the urban empowerment strategy for people with special needs, and thus revitalize the city's spaces and achieve a healthy, safe, flexible and sustainable environment.

This new design strategy aims to empower and improve the lives of people with diseases, physical disabilities, and mental health impairments by giving them access to social networks, resources, employment opportunities, and leisure activities that enhance the quality of life in cities. It also plays a crucial role in developing an environment that meets the unique financial and personal requirements of disabled people. The paper examines this issue by adopting the descriptive analytical approach, the research employs a questionnaire as a data-gathering technique and the data was analyzed using the Microsoft Excel program. The results showed that there is a clear gap in what is currently provided to disabled people in this city and the development plans for the year 2030. Moreover, the study showed that there are problems in applying empowerment strategies in the development and revitalization of urban spaces.

**Keywords:** Disability Empowerment, Disabled City Services, Disabled Street Design, Public Transportation Access for the Disabled Citizens, Urban Mobility Solution Ideas



## 1 .Introduction

Disabled people face numerous challenges in our society, as they are often excluded from cities and towns due to a lack of resources, prejudiced attitudes, and discriminatory social practices, this form of exclusion is linked to their limited access to basic services, infrastructure, and mobility in city spaces. Disabled people experience numerous types of social exclusion from a variety of life activities, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report [1, P. xii]. One billion individuals, or approximately 15% of the world's population, are estimated to have special needs, as reported by WHO and the World Bank, and this number is rising due to demographic changes as well as other factors and causes [2, P.4 .]

Iraq is one of the countries where disabled people are increasing the most, due to the wars it has waged since 1980 until today, as well as war remnants, sectarian conflicts, violence, terrorist organizations, and other factors [3, P.3.]

The Iraqi Central Statistical Organization (ICSO) estimated that more than 1.35 million people in Iraq has special needs in 2016. According to the National Survey Index from the CSO in 2016, there were 776,721 males, representing 5.2% of the population, and 580,342 females, representing 5.9% of the total population, in 13 governorates, excluding the governorates of Kurdistan, Nineveh, and Anbar [4.]

As is the case in the majority of developing nations, disabled people are considered a marginalized demographic in Iraq, and they face numerous health difficulties, as well as educational and employment barriers resulting from social, economic, and cultural biases[5, P.24]. We note that disabled people are excluded from the administrative, military, and service professions; thus, they are economically dependent and unable to work without the presence of those who attend to them. However, we note that the integration of disabled into wholesale and retail trade, and vehicle repair are challenging their limited ability to control normal life. Therefore, the Iraqi government has taken serious steps to empower disabled people to increase their participation in society, the results of the 2016 national census, released in December 2017, provide a database for decision-makers to draw up special policies for people with special needs. In mid-July 2017, the Commission for the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs issued the first edition of Law No. 38 for the Care of Persons with Special Needs of the Iraqi Constitution for the Year 2013 [6, P.41 .]

The concept of empowerment is directly related to disabled people, in an attempt to integrate them with society and the environment to achieve well-being for them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) called for the empowerment of persons with disabilities [7, P1]. Where empowerment is an important measure, attempts have been made to remove the barriers and obstacles that disabled people suffer from, thereby enabling them to participate in their lives [8, P.4]. Therefore, the importance of study that seeks to present the most important concepts about urban empowerment and disabled people` and city spaces and related concepts that lead to achieving urban empowerment for disabled people has



emerged and thus leads to their interaction, integration, and inclusion of them with society, by understanding how these urban empowerment design theories work, cities can create better public spaces that are accessible to all citizens regardless of their abilities.

## 2. People with Disabilities

The definition of the concept of "disabled people" is multi-faceted and carries many meanings, but they all refer to the same significance. There was no consensus on an internationally accepted definition of the term "disabled people" as it is a flexible term that can carry different conceptual dimensions [9, P.35]. The term "disabilities" is defined as "people who are wholly or partially unable to ensure a normal personal and social life as a result of a congenital and/or non-congenital deficiency in their physical abilities" [10]. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined the concept of Disabled people as "complex, dynamic, multi-dimensional, and disputed". This is linked to two aspects: medical and social. Categories include health, contextual, environmental, and personal conditions [1, P.3].

According to International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2021) the term of "Disabled people" refers to, for example, but is not limited to: wheelchair users, people with walking difficulties, people with weak strength, vision impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities or mental sensitivity, people with a diversity in age and stature, including young children, older people [11, P.1]. Also the term of "disabled people" refers to those who suffer from a health condition that prevents them from leading a normal life, either due to genetic or environmental factors, and who have deficiencies, whether it be learning, acquiring skills, or performing work. Disabled People have educational, health, service, economic, and social needs, and society is obligated to provide it for them [2, P. 4-7].

The United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities has also recognized that the concept of disability 'is evolving and affirms that special needs are the result of interactions between people with disabilities and the behavioral and environmental barriers that prevent them from participating and interacting in society in a way that guarantees their right to equality' [12, P.4]. For example, it is possible to improve social participation by addressing the barriers that hinder people with special needs in their daily lives, a decision "meaning that special needs are not a defining characteristic of a person" [1, P.5-35].



### 3. Empowerment

#### 3.1 .Literature review

Many works of literature and various disciplines have dealt with the concept of empowerment, which is defined linguistically as an act that gives someone more control over their life or the situation in which they live [13].

The origin of the English word "empower" is derived from the Old French prefix "em," meaning "into or in," and "power," meaning "the ability or capacity to do something or act in a special way". The roots of the term "power" can be traced back to the early 13th century AD. Although the word "empowerment" was used in literary works in the past, its modern usage dates back to approximately 1986 [9, P.1].

Empowerment is a concept used in development work, though it is rarely defined. It is one of many concepts with overlapping applications, such as sustainability, participation, capacity building, and institutional development [14, P.4]. Empowerment has been defined in many works of literature, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1. Review of the Empowerment Concept in Many Works of Literature**

Year of	Empowerment definition	Researcher
1976	A process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatised social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles [15, P.3].	Solomon, B. B.
1990	An ongoing, community-centered, intentional process involving mutual respect, critical thinking, care, and group participation, through which people who lack an equal share of valuable resources gain greater access to and control over them. These resources, or simply a process in which people control their lives, involve democratic participation in the life of their society, and a critical understanding of their environment [16, P. 174] [17, P. 2].	Zimmerman, M. A.
1991	Empowerment may be seen as a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes [17].	Mechanic
1993	Is any process that provides greater autonomy by sharing relevant information and providing control over factors affecting job performance [15].	Newstrom and Davis
1995	The process of involving the user in the decision-making process [18, P.4].	Rowlands, J.
2002	Expanding the assets and capabilities of the poor to	Narayan-Parker,

	participate and negotiate with them, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives [19, P. xviii].	D.
2009	A progression that helps people gain control over their own lives and increases the capacity of people to act on issues that they themselves define as important [20, P. 16].	Luttrell et al.
2010	Is a collective process and not just an individual process, as it is related to working together for our collective interests, Improving our societies and institutions and building a more just society [21, P.1].	Perkins, D.D
2011	It is the result of changed lives and expectations for individuals, organizations, and entire societies. In addition, empowerment refers to improvement in community participation, capacity building, and access to information related to development projects [22].	Dye, A.

### 3.2 History of Empowerment

Studies indicate that the term “empowerment” did not appear in literature until the 1950s and 1960s. Many empowerment practices were implicitly rooted in Cartesianism, which tends towards anthropocentrism [23, P.1].Pioneers of philosophy and political science explained that the concept of “empowerment” in its general meaning of freedom, false consciousness, and liberation, first appeared in the early Middle Ages with the term “freedom”. Freedom was granted to a person or group by another powerful individual, and the Church considered it synonymous with evil. However, the modern concept of freedom has become associated with basic ideas about self and individuality. As the philosophical thought of empowerment began, it included some basic beliefs about human identity, including the emergence of the concept of the human individual needing to be freed from illusions and irrational beliefs. As the concept of empowerment developed and appeared in the post-World War II period, it has become a feature of the modern area, and it is possible to see the term “empowerment” used as a watered-down version of a more radical concept. However, the most radical interpretation of the term originated in the Age of Enlightenment and Marxism [24, P.131-132]. This is confirmed by the study of Birnbaum (1968), which refers to the return of the concept of empowerment to Marxist sociology, where it first appeared in the early 1950s with the emergence of modern civil rights movements [25]. The study by Lausch (2021) indicated that the term "empowerment" was used for the first time about civil rights when an article was published in 1975 about empowering Black politics (people of African descent) [21, P.II]. In the 1960s, the term “empowerment” was adopted by social work, social policy, and healthcare organizations, emerging as a more radical concept with implications for social movements [9]. By the 1980s, the word was used to empower marginalized people, as it was used by various other groups [26]. A study confirmed that since the 1980s, the term ‘empowerment’ has become a central theme in the work of many development organizations [20, P.1]. In the 1990s, this concept was mainly associated with the



concepts of gender and development. At the end of the last century, international development organizations finally began to use it to reduce poverty [27, P. vii].

By the year 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) had referred to community participation in the design of health promotion and healthcare services [28, P.4-21]. These documents formed some of the founding principles of healthy cities and new public health movements, paving the way for increased participation by ordinary people, respond to health issues that have emerged due to urbanization [29, P.3].

Information and communication technologies make up the second aspect of empowerment. As noted by Robert Solow in 1987, the idea of digital empowerment emerged in the 1980s as computers began to be used for commercial purposes, by the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, digital technologies were being used in a way that was evident in the United States of America [30, P.171]. Then, empowerment took on an ecological dimension as Richmond introduced the concept of the environment within social work practices in 1922. This was a method of environmental empowerment that states that "the physical environment becomes part of the social environment." [31, P.10].

#### 4.Urban Spaces

Rob explains that "urban space, unless aesthetically evaluated, all types of outdoor spaces in cities and other areas are considered urban spaces"[32, P.15]. Madanipour defines urban space as "a physical place available to everyone; it is defined as "spaces within towns, cities and rural areas where foreigners and locals can enter with very few restrictions"[33, P.132]. The research focuses on urban public space ( Also called the "public realm") it includes all outdoor urban spaces including streets, squares and parks that can be used and accessed by everyone in principle, regardless of who owns or manages the space [34, P.9]. Public spaces - including streets - are spaces that should be viewed as multifunctional areas for social interaction, economic exchange and cultural expression among a diverse group of people. For urban planning to create and organize these public spaces, and for urban design to facilitate and encourage their use, in the process enhancing a sense of identity and belonging [6, P.5]. From the perspective of disabled people, Stephen Carr stated that public space is a place where anyone has the right to be without exclusion due to economic or social circumstances. Parks should be enjoyed by everyone as a public space, including people with disabilities. According to Dewang, one of the reasons for the lack of public space services for people with disabilities is due to the lack of awareness of government officials to meet the needs of people with disabilities in providing public spaces. The limited knowledge of government officials about disabled people, and the lack of funds allocated to provide accessibility for people with disabilities. According to Mulazadeh, human culture has a profound impact on the construction of built environments and their lack of accessibility, the quality of construction of the built environment, as such, is a key variable in enabling or disabling people with disabilities with regard to access to public spaces [35, P.1.





## 5. Urban Empowerment

### 5.1 Urban Empowerment Definition

The concept of “urban empowerment” has many different interpretations depending on the context that it appears in, such as community urban empowerment or sustainability. For others, urban empowerment may refer to comprehensive urban planning and broad grassroots efforts that involve participation in policies “revitalization” or Regeneration urban brownfield, the urban empowerment should be about equitably distributing resources across neighborhoods and ensuring that residents in all communities have the same prospects for civic engagement. Despite that, upward social mobility and community sustainability are more prevalent in affluent neighborhoods [36]. Attractiveness of a public space depends on diversity of accessible services and interests of citizens, where elements of social infrastructure play the key role in empowering contemporary public spaces to act as facilitators of different social activities [37]. Moreover, public urban spaces will enable participatory approaches to planning and designing landscapes that stimulate ecosystems, maintain health and quality of life, ensure accessibility for all individuals, offer the possibility of expressing opinions and holding political assemblies, and empower civic participation and exchange among them [38]. There are different ways to design and implement concepts of empowering cities in urban contexts to support well-being. Well-being can be achieved through dynamic interaction between the individual, behavior, and environment; thus, interventions at the urban level will create behavioral changes at the individual or community level, such as infrastructure investment, transportation, the use of technology systems, and social influence systems [39].

### 5.2 Urban Empowerment Levels within the City

The empowering cities research agenda is focuses on reshaping and redesigning three main urban areas: outdoor environments, indoor environments, and mobility in cities [39]. This study field focuses on two levels of them: empowerment within outer spaces and transportation .

### 5.3 Empowerment within Architectural and Urban Studies

Persuasive urban systems play an important role in making cities livable and resource-efficient by addressing current environmental problems and enabling healthy routines. More effort must be made to study how to improve the quality of life and health of individuals and communities through enabling cities, streets, buildings, homes, and vehicles. Study on empowering cities seeks to enhance urban spaces to facilitate societal changes. Thus, environmental design is a powerful influence on human behavior and attitude. In other words, improving urban spaces is often enough to help people become healthier and create sustainable communities. This is a very powerful view because it involves changing human behavior and urban environments on a large scale [39, P.2]. To encourage healthy behaviors on a large scale, the concept of empowerment has been associated with communities and cities, as it has become evident in architectural and urban literature in recent years. The concept of empowerment has been presented as a conceptual



framework involved with creating communities and strengthening the social capital that binds them together within architecture.

The “Architecture of Empowerment” was presented by architects and urban planners in collaboration with the community and funding agencies to create a built environment that responds to the needs of the poor and marginalized. This environment is not limited to developmental and industrial problems but is related to respecting people's humanity through participation and investment in building the cities of the future. The root of the idea of empowerment in architecture was introduced in the concept of “Architecture for the Poor” by Hassan Fathy (was a noted Egyptian architect who pioneered appropriate technology for building in Egypt). Despite the different titles, the concept of architectural empowerment is more of a challenging process for architects to do more than just build for the poor. It invites them to rethink the premises of the design process. As far as the construction process is concerned, it challenges them to give up their supposed omnipotence and become enablers of the poor [40, P.20]. Urban empowerment focuses on socially participatory environments to support disabled people, reshaping routines and behavioral patterns in dense urban settings, changing modes of mobility with intelligent outdoor sensing, and promoting environmentally friendly behaviors through social norms. Cities become attractive places when they are provided with opportunities for society in terms of housing, employment, living, and means of luxury. Therefore, these opportunities must be available and distributed in a socially just manner in order for everyone to achieve their fullest potential [41]. Empowerment architecture is not only limited to improving existing urban conditions but also plays a vital role in creating new settlements [40, P.21].

### 5.3.1. Sustainable Urban Empowerment

The concept of “sustainable empowerment” is a reformulation of the concept of “empowerment” in urban development processes. It refers to empowering society in the urban development system in the sense of providing an opportunity for society to play an effective role in all stages of the development process .

This involves both urban, administrative, social, and economic aspects in terms of decision-making, planning implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, Sustainable empowerment is considered an entry point for the development of urban communities with the aim of achieving sustainable urban development, as this approach realizes the importance of meeting the current needs of the population while taking into account the requirements of future generations. Therefore, it defines the necessary frameworks and mechanisms for society to take an active role in the urban development processes, considering the distance from the urban deterioration of the environment [42, P.3]. The concept of empowerment for sustainable development means giving people and communities the real ability to adapt to a changing environment, increased social awareness, higher levels of social and economic participation, and the use of new insights about environmental processes of change and self-renewal, such as communities. Societies are striving to enter the stage of transition towards sustainable development patterns. Achieving this requires reinforcing the meaning and reality of the principles of inclusion that involves relevant





stakeholders in the change process; transparency and accountability that legitimize any process and decisions reached [43, P.2]. It is a means of building and strengthening societies and individuals by involving them in decision-making, and then strengthening the strength of societies through mass participation, teamwork, and the concept of delegation of authority, and it must be based on several aspects and foundations, including: (education, successful leadership, effective monitoring, support, continuous encouragement, appropriate structuring and interaction between all of these through a bottom-up approach), which can be explained as: the approach of involving members of society in managing their society according to traditions and culture, i.e. involving them in the development of their societies in order to achieve their goals, and make them transferable to generations coming [38, P.265].

### 5.3.2 Empowering Individuals and Communities within Urban Spaces

Empowering people comes through creating social bonds and a sense of community. The transformation of social structures will enable citizens to have greater decision-making power within urban democracy and, ultimately, shape how the built environment facilitates the emergence of collective action. In response to a potential crisis, current urban democracy lacks the necessary social and spatial structure to facilitate collective action and citizen participation, where the townspeople have the political power to shape the future of their city. Thus, the concept of empowering citizens depends on participation. By understanding the ideal result of citizen participation in participation processes, the phenomenon of urban tactics is in line with the concept of empowering citizens from the bottom-up approach. Citizen involvement and participation are essential for establishing community flexibility that enables the ability to make meaningful decisions about desired actions and outcomes during a crisis. The city of the future and the practice of urban planning and architecture begin with a transition to a collective and environmental turn based on local experience that aims to re-engage communities and address individual needs as part of an interdependent system. Pop-up cities, tactical urban planning, and permaculture design act as catalysts for a bottom-up collaborative design approach that allows citizens to participate in less invasive decision-making about the built and natural environment. Ultimately, it encourages the creation of a more resilient and sustainable city for future generations [44, P.33-34]. Furthermore, the community's ability to take charge of the physical spaces between buildings, the public space, and not just the home, is an essential component of empowerment architecture [40, P.10].

Empowering the community to participate in discovering the problems and obstacles of major specialist development without compromising the resources of future generations are the main goals of sustainability [45].

From the perspective of disabled people, enabling cities for people with disabilities has been defined by the National Disability Institute as a prominent initiative to promote financial inclusion and economic opportunities for low-income people with disabilities. Empowered cities motivate the municipality's efforts to enhance economic opportunities for people with special needs [46]. The New Urban Agenda for Urban Development 2030 has focused on ensuring that



future cities and towns and basic urban infrastructure and services are more environmentally accessible, user-friendly, and inclusive of all people's needs. Urban spaces, infrastructure, facilities, and services can hinder or enable, perpetuating exclusion or promoting the participation and inclusion of all members of society [47]. This requires strong commitments to specific terms, an appropriate urban policy, regulatory rules and standards, a "universal design" or "design for all" approach to planning, mobilization or allocation of sufficient resources, and a broad partnership that includes and involves all members of society, including disabled people. Thus, available evidence reveals a widespread lack of accessibility to build environments, from roads and housing, to public buildings and spaces and to basic urban services such as sanitation and water, health, education, transportation, and emergency and disaster response and resilience building and access to information and communications. These accessibility limitations contribute greatly to the disadvantage and marginalization faced by persons with disabilities, leading to disproportionate rates of poverty, deprivation and exclusion. This situation also impedes the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals. Initiatives and good practices have emerged that successfully promote accessibility and disability inclusion in cities and towns in all parts of the world. Available evidence illustrates that urban infrastructures, facilities and services, if designed and built following accessibility or inclusive "universal design" principles from the initial stages of planning and design [48, P.2-3]. The current international policy framework guiding disability-inclusive urban development is largely dependent on a number of tools related to disabled persons, the Global Program of Action on disabled Persons views accessibility as a key means of furthering its goals of "full participation" and "equality", the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled people identify "accessibility" of the physical environment and information and communication as two "target areas" for ensuring equal opportunity. More recently, the Convention on the Rights of disabled people, adopted in 2006, has strengthened the international normative framework for the advancement and development of the rights of persons with disabilities, In addition. Accessibility is defined in the Convention as an inclusive factor that enables people with disabilities to live independently and to participate fully in all aspects of life, The United Nations also referred to a set of measures that must be taken to ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to physical environments, means of transportation, information and communications, including information and communication technologies and systems, and other facilities and services open or provided to society in both urban and rural settings, to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life [49, P.3-4].

#### 5.4 Principle of Urban Empowerment

1- Leadership: Empowerment is one of the leadership principles where city leadership affects the pattern of policy-making at the level of the lower structure, including communities [33, P.47]. As there are two types of methods Leadership from the top down and the style of leadership from the bottom up and the last is considered one of the leadership methods that contribute to



increasing the effectiveness of society through the role of empowered societies, and granting greater powers to the lower administrative levels in society [38, P.57].

2 -Awareness, Willingness And Ability: The basic principles in the development of urban space are awareness, readiness and ability. Consciousness arises from within society itself, which will ultimately create desire for those who have the ability. Awareness, readiness and capacity are important elements for the development of urban space, and this is also in line with the goals of comprehensive health development [50, P.47].

3 -Synergy: Empowering the poor and enhancing a sense of community through the involvement of all participants, obtaining their roles correctly in addition to obtaining rights to costs [40, P.23]. In other words, all stakeholders who can contribute be involved in solving urban health problems at the city level [50, P.47].

4 -Sustainability: sustainable development means the process of change that The use of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological innovation and exchange, and institutional change, reflect both future and current needs, and that development and the ecosystem are interrelated, as sustainability focuses on developing new approaches to support development processes that integrate production while preserving and enhancing resources with guarantees of sustainable livelihoods. One of the mechanisms by which this can be achieved is through empowerment that gives communities the ability to deal with the interaction between environmental, political, and socio-political changes that affect their livelihoods [3, P.3-4].

5 -Locality: All cities and towns strongly emphasize their own character in resurgent localism, arguing that where their residents are located makes them different from any other community. These special characteristics of each area are an important part of the empowerment process because they are often an affirmation The difference is the politically and psychologically important in the local participation [40, P.39].

6 -Inclusive: Inclusive processes are essential to creating successful societies [40, P.24].

7-International Development Assistance: International development assistance plays a basis in the process of empowerment, to give a helping hand, to give a well-directed and wise investment that will speed up the process and help those who help themselves. The manner in which this assistance is provided is essential to its effectiveness. It should be based on a true sense of partnership, not on a giver/recipient mentality. As the economic empowerment of people to develop their physical environments with limited help from others is the most important aspect [40, P.28].

8 -Recycling: Waste recycling leads to a stronger and more important empowerment process that gives individuals and communities confidence in their ability to manage the city [40, P.36-39 .]

9 -Implementation: The implementation process and the method of using urban design to help build social cohesion [40, P. 141].





10 -Participation: Community participation is one of the principles in organizing a healthy city, including the urban context. Community participation also contributes to sustainable development. Community participation is expected to contribute to maintaining a clean environment. Through community participation, it is expected that the local community will be able to solve its own problems [50].

11 -Independence: Building self-reliance, meaning self-empowerment, is the principle of community development, which is linked to Goal 19 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as independence avoids dependence on others, including the government. It focuses on community level developmental processes.

12 -Equality: Empowerment focuses on the principle of justice and equality for all segments of society, regardless of gender, religion, or social status, as development must be comprehensive, including vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

13 -Commitment to Urban Health: It is considered one of the main goals in development, which is associated with urban empowerment, as commitment to health means making health the main issue in development. They all have a commitment to the health of the environment and society. This commitment can be generated vertically from city, sub-district, and village governments down to the neighborhood level [50, P.47].

## **6.Indicators of the Theoretical Framework of Urban Empowerment Strategy**

Measuring urban empowerment for disabled people requires a multidimensional approach that considers various aspects of accessibility and inclusion. The following are some factors that can be used to measure the effectiveness of urban empowerment for disabled people, the most important indicators have been reached to achieve urban empowerment for disabled people and revitalize the city's spaces, as shown in the following (Table2), (Table 3), (Table 4), (Table5), (Table 6), (table 7), (Table 8) .to Evaluate the extracted Indicators demonstrate the Effectiveness of applying the mechanisms of the 'Urban Empowerment Strategy.'

**Table 2. Level One: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Right to the City)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Social Exclusion	Feelings of stigma or shame	X1-1
	Feeling satisfied and included versus excluded	X1-2
	Emphasis on the social model through the environment and society	X1-3
Urban Identity	Inclusion of people with special needs within the city's spaces through easy access to gardens, parks and public places	X1-4
	Adopting an approach in which people with special needs do not need to detect the type of disability through designing (slopes - using Braille or sign language - audio devices at crossings - access corridors to external spaces) within the city's spaces	X1-5
Urban democracy	Participate in group work within the neighborhood or city	X1-6
	Contribute to decision making	X1-7
	Leadership style (delegation of authority or authority) from the bottom up	X1-8
Urban Independence	Freedom to practice daily life activities within the neighborhood or city	X1-9
	Enjoying rights within (neighborhood/city) such as work, education, health care, legal protection, movement and travel	X1-10
	feel strong and influential in those around	X1-11
	The ability to practice activities within the (neighborhood/city) individually without the need for assistance or assistance	X1-12
	ability to control your life, practice activities, and practice your profession in your city	X1-13
	The ability to be self-reliant in navigating the city spaces	X1-14
Integration within society and the city	experience and efficiency	X1-15
	Skills, history, values, beliefs, knowledge and awareness	X1-16
	Type and degree of current health (e.g., mental-physical) - The type and degree of impairment present (e.g., mobility, cognition)	X1-17
	Lack of opportunities - discrimination - environmental obstacles	X1-18

	and risks - poverty and deprivation	
	Support and information resources Family and peer support Positive motivation Available and accessible resources Supportive policies, laws and culture	X1-19
	Support and guidance	X1-20
Social protection and security	Increasing imposition and combating poverty	X1-21
	Providing a database and working on planning programs and creating projects for people with special needs	X1-22
	Protection from exploitation and abuse	X1-23

**Table 1. Level two: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Urban Accessibility)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Access to external paths and roads	Clarity of the beginnings and ends of the movement paths (clear entrances and exits through the permeability of the motor paths)	X2-1
	Continuity of the motor pathway (absence of barriers - structures or furniture that intersect with the motor pathways)	X2-2
	Accessibility for people with special needs to public events and activities	X2-3
social access	Designing common spaces to achieve social access to all levels and social classes (play areas - recreational spaces - sports courts)	X2-4

**Table 2. Level three: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Urban Security and Safety)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Urban Security and safety	Reduce crime, murder, theft and petty misdemeanours	X3-1
	Sidewalks and lanes free of barriers for people with special needs and the elderly	X3-2
	Permeability of pedestrian walkways and sidewalks	X3-3
	Revitalizing abandoned urban spaces and adding new functions to spaces	X3-4
	Waste management, street cleaning	X3-5



	New street lights, LED systems, smart lighting	X3-6
	Spatial control of security surveillance cameras	X3-7
	Spatial control by increasing the density of people	X3-8
	Spatial control by providing urban services and elements suitable for the use of all, including persons with special needs	X3-9

**Table 3. Level four: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Urban Transportation and Mobility)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Representation of mobility (walking) for people with special needs	Having a fixed time dimension to build a stable and manageable daily routine	X4-1
	Having fixed distances between activities	X4-2
	Changes in levels of external pathways and shifts in urban spaces affect public transport accessibility	X4-3
	Transforming streets into pedestrian avenues	X4-4
	Identify cars at low speeds only	X4-5
	Streets designated for pedestrians only, and linking them with priority streets for pedestrians, where pedestrians and cyclists have the right of way	X4-6
	Safe lanes for the movement of bicycles, battery-powered cars and buggies	X4-7
Public transportation	Easy access to public transportation for people with special needs	X4-8
	Appropriate material costs in transportation	X4-9
	The presence of visual and audio information systems installed inside and outside the bus and at bus stops	X4-10
private transportation	Providing taxi service or taxis available for people with special needs	X4-11
	Taxis are available for residents and visitors and can be booked over the phone	X4-12

Stop point	Space for passenger drop-off points for taxis and public transport	X4-13
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**Table 4 . Level five: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Social Well-being)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Social well-being	Welcoming environment for people with special needs and the elderly	X5-1
	Ensuring space for all by removing barriers within public spaces	X5-2
	Providing seating for people with special needs	X5-4
	Providing public toilets for people with special needs	X5-5

**Table 5. Level six: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Smart Technology)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Assistive Technologies	Cane or smart stick to detect risks	X6-1
	Smart, hands-free lighting to inform passengers to leave or delay vehicles.	X6-2
	Install fixtures such as an access card reader or other security sensors at a height	X6-3
	Electric and manual chairs, hoppers and crutches	X6-4

**Table 6. Level seven: Urban Empowerment Strategy at the Level of (Community Participation)**

Indicators	Possible Values	symbol
Community participation	Participation in cultural life activities, sports, leisure time and other public events	X7-1
	Access to information and knowledge to participate in civil society activities	X7-2
	Participate in forums or organizations and communicate with stakeholders in the region	X7-3
	Participation of designers, planners and decision-makers in the development of the city	X7-4
	Using smart applications to provide input to the government and decision makers	X7-5



## 7. Materials and Methods

This study uses a descriptive approach. Through the explanation of the definition of empowerment strategy and then demonstrating at how urban city empowerment happens when mechanisms of empowering are employed in urban spaces to empower disabled people. It begins with the establishment of the theoretical framework and indicators and tests them through the city of Baghdad, Iraq. To distribute the questionnaire, and obtain accurate information, a comprehensive statistical survey of the members of the study community was adopted. This was due to the large size of the sample and the difficulty of reaching people with special needs within the public urban spaces of the city. A specific period was set for the period from (10/4/2023) to (10/6/2023) to conduct the comprehensive survey, as the questionnaire was distributed on two levels for the study community. As for the second level, the questionnaire was distributed to the study population manually at Ibn Al-Quff Hospital for Spinal Cord Injuries and Life Center. (21) questionnaires were neglected due to the lack of seriousness in the answer, in addition to neglecting the questionnaires that were from outside the city of Baghdad.

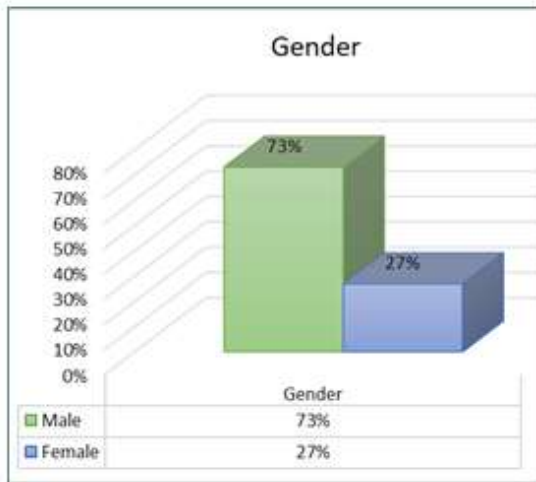
The triangular Likert scale was adopted as a measure for answering the questionnaire with (yes, no, or neutral) to facilitate their understanding and understanding of the answers to the questions of people with special needs. The questionnaire consisted of 63 questions of which 23 questions were related to the right to the city for disabled people, 4 questions were related to accessibility in the city, 9 questions related to safety and urban security, 13 related to mobility and transportation, 5 for Social well-being, 4 relate to Assistive Technologies, and 5 relate to Community participation in urban spaces.

## 8. Finding

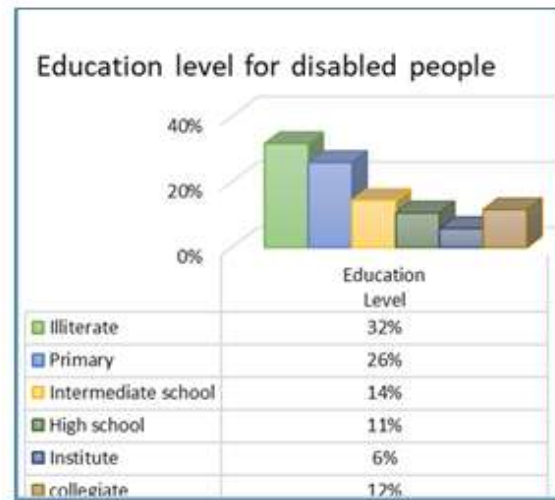
### 8.1 .The First Axis: the Demographics of Disabled People

The results on gender showed, as shown in (Figure 1), that the majority of the respondents were males, with a number of 76 out of 104, at a rate of (73.1%), and the number of female participants was 28 out of 104, at a rate of (26.9%). With a rate of (26%), intermediate graduates 15 people, with a rate of (14.4%), and middle school graduates with 11 people, with a rate of (10.6%). As for graduates of institutes, their number was 6, with a rate of (5.8%), while university graduates were 11, and their percentage was (11.5%), where the illiteracy rate was higher among the categories of disabled people (Figure2).





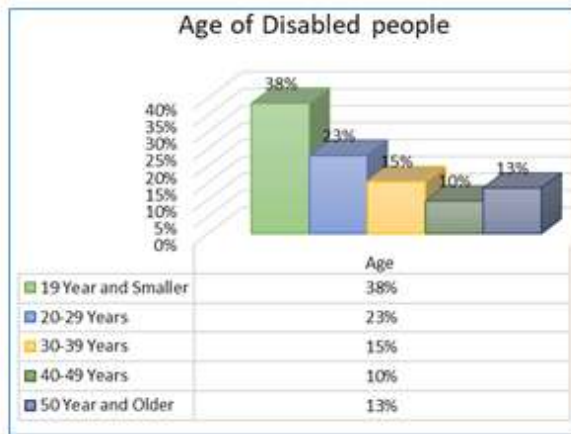
**Figure 1. Shows the percentage of disabled people gender (Author)**



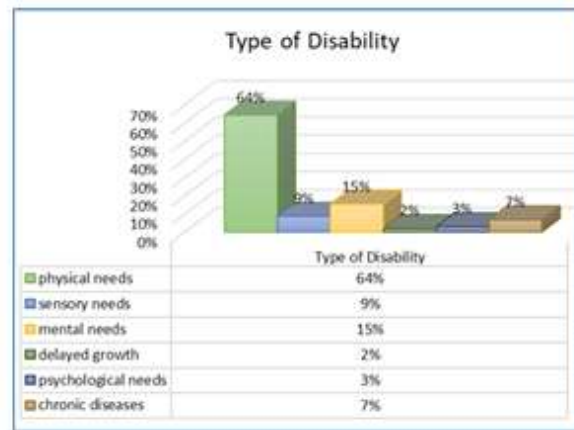
**Figure 2. Shows the percentage of disabled people Education Level.**

The results of the questionnaire shown in (Figure 4) also showed that the majority of the study population with special needs was from the age group 19 years and less, with a rate of (38.5%), and the group from 20-29 years old, with a rate of (23.1%), and people with special needs from 30-39 years, with a rate of (15.4%). This indicates that the disability rate among children and youth groups is the highest.

As for the type of disability, the results shown in (Figure 3) showed that the highest percentage of the sample was: those with physical needs at a rate of (64%), sensory needs at a rate of (9%) and those with mental needs at (15%), while the participants from the developmental delay group were at 2% and those with psychological needs at 3%, which is considered one of the lowest participation rates. As for those with needs due to chronic diseases, they were at 7%.



**Figure 4.** Shows the percentage of the Age of Disabled people. (Author)



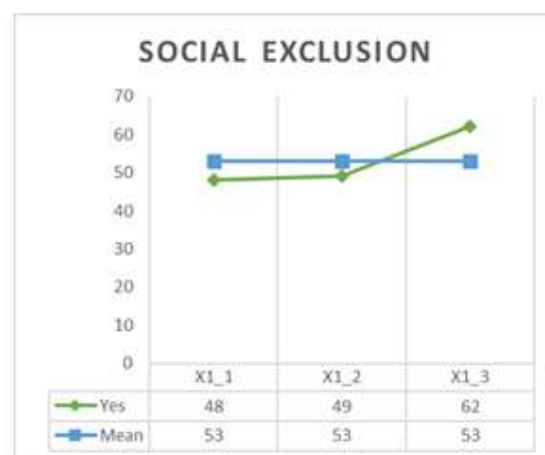
**Figure 3.** Shows the percentage of the Type of Disability. (Author)

According this result, with regard to the type of disabled people, disabled people represented the highest participation rate, and people with physical needs were the most groups that were clearly, present within the city, followed by people with mental needs. This difference in the percentage of disabled people results in a diversity and difference in the type of urban treatments.

## 7.2 .The Second Axis: Evaluating the extracted indicators of the Effectiveness of Applying the Urban Empowerment Strategy

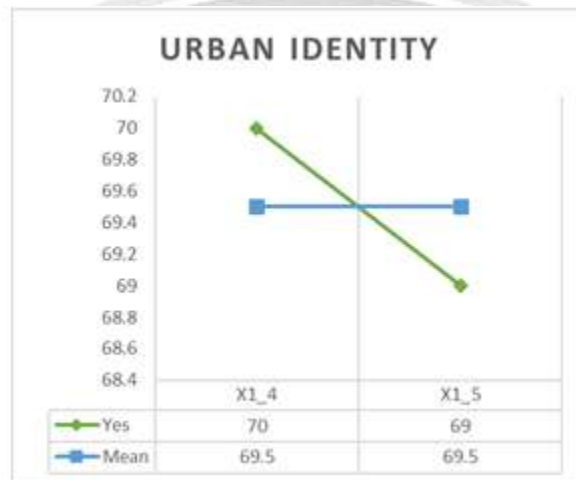
### 1. Results of Right to the City

The practical study reviewed the results of assessing the level of the right to the city for people with special needs, which were measured through six secondary indicators represented by:



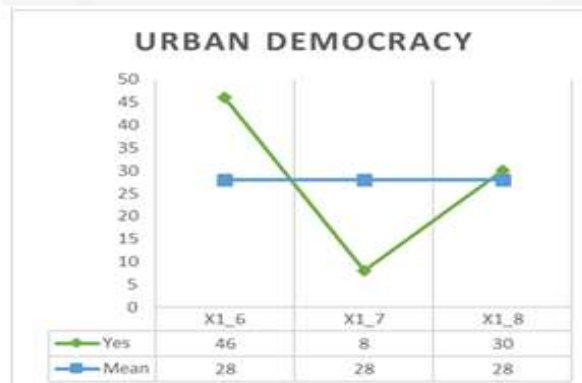
**Figure 5.** Test result of the social exclusion for disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)

Social exclusion- The effectiveness of social exclusion ( Figure5) achieved higher results than (52). Thus, the three mechanisms of the social exclusion index are effective mechanisms. Accordingly, the variable (X1-3) achieved the highest percentage; as we note the agreement of respondents with disabled people and the opinion of experts that the most influential variable of the social exclusion index was the variable (the social model through the environment and society).



**Figure 6. Test result of the Urban Identity for disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**

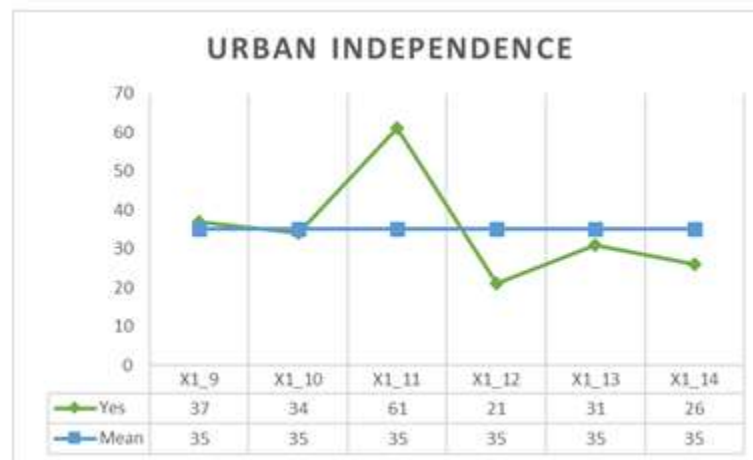
Urban identity- The results of the concept of urban identity also showed the importance of creating a special identity for people with special needs. It gave priority to including people with special needs within the city's spaces and achieving easy access to gardens, parks and public places.



**Figure 7. Test result of the urban democracy for disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**



Urban democracy- The results of the respondents with disabled people showed that the results are consistent with the opinion of experts and specialists, as the results confirmed the agreement of the respondents and experts that Social work is the most influential variable in achieving urban democracy and urban empowerment for disabled people.



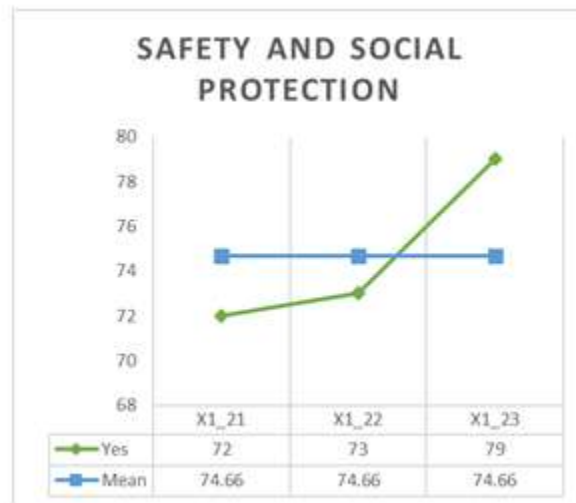
**Figure 8. Test result of the urban independence of disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**

Urban independence- With regard to the independence index, the respondents agreed that they feel valued and influenced by those around them.



**Figure 9. Test result of the integration of disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**

Integration – With regard to the social integration index, the respondents agreed that the most effective variables in achieving their integration within the community and the city are support and guidance. Experts gave priority to the variable of lack of opportunities, discrimination and environmental obstacles to achieving social integration.

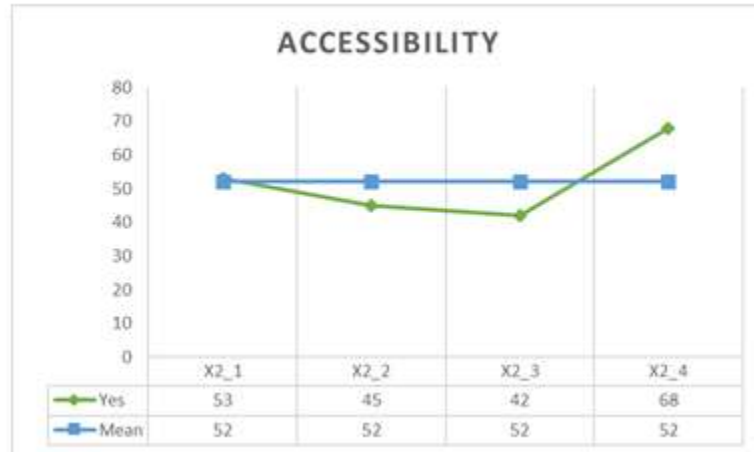


**Figure 10. Test result of the safety and social protection of disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**

Safety and social protection- Respondents with disabled people agreed that the variable that most affects the achievement of social security is protection from exploitation and abuse.

As a general summary of the results of the dimensions of the right to a city, the indicators of social protection had the highest acceptance rate among the participants, followed by the indicators of urban identity for people with special needs, then the indicators of social integration and social exclusion, which are among the negative indicators. As for independence and urban management, they obtained very close acceptance rates.

## 2. Accessibility

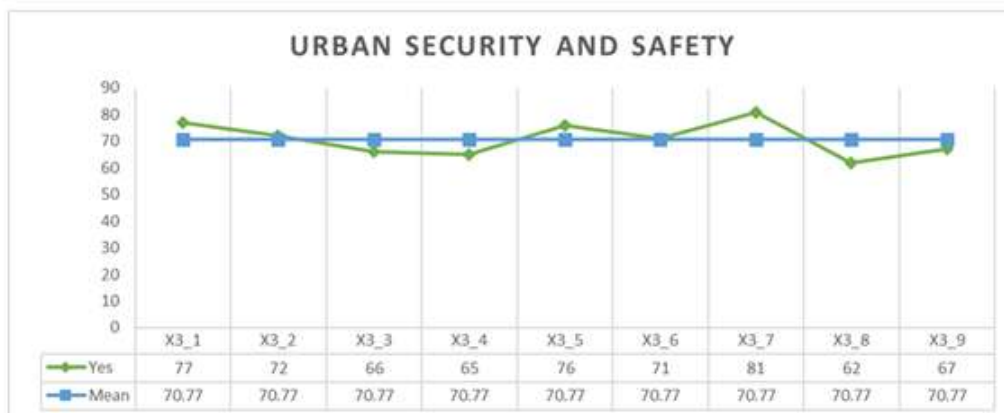


**Figure 11. Test the result of the accessibility for disabled people in the urban city spaces.**  
(Author)

The results shown in chart 6 related to accessibility showed that at the level of external paths and roads, the respondents agreed on the percentage of the variable (the clarity of the beginnings and ends of the movement paths) and that the effectiveness rate of the Mean is 46.66.

This indicates that there is a gap in achieving the index of accessibility for disabled people. As for the index of social access, the respondents stressed the need to create common spaces to achieve social connection to all social classes and urban places.

## 3. Results of Urban Security and Safety



**Figure 12. Test result of the urban safety and security for disabled people in the urban city spaces.**  
(Author)



The results of measuring urban safety and security for people with special needs showed nine variables, and the highest percentage was the variable (X3-7) (spatial control through security surveillance cameras). All variables of the mechanism achieved results higher than (52.)(

The respondents agreed that the most indicators of increasing urban safety and security for people with special needs are the presence of spatial control of public urban spaces through the adoption of surveillance cameras.

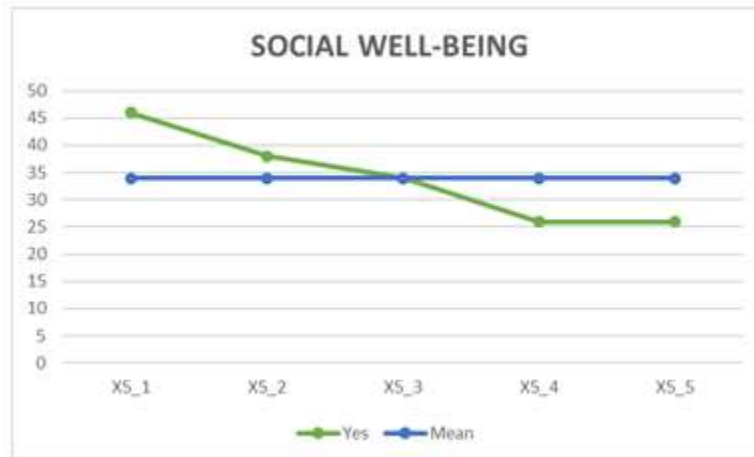
#### 4. Results of Urban Transportation and Mobility



**Figure 13. Test result of disabled people's transportation & mobility within urban city spaces. (Author)**

At the level of representation of disabled people's mobility within urban spaces (chart 8) showed that, respondents emphasized the difficulty of moving within the urban spaces of the city due to the lack of appropriate paths and roads for the movement and movement of disabled people, the results confirmed the achievement of mobility for disabled people by limiting cars at low speeds at a rate of (68.30%) to move within the neighborhood and city spaces. As for public transportation, results showed that it is difficult for people with special needs to access public transport, 51% of the respondents confirmed their inability to access public means, and only (32.70%) of those who indicated the possibility of their access to urban spaces. As for private transport, the results concluded that 50% of the respondents use remote means of transportation. As for the positions of dropping off passengers, the respondents confirmed that (44.20%) are the need to provide parking spaces for cars and public transport stops, As well as at the level of public transport, the results showed the difficulty of access for disabled people to means of transportation. In addition, the expensive of transporting fees costs.

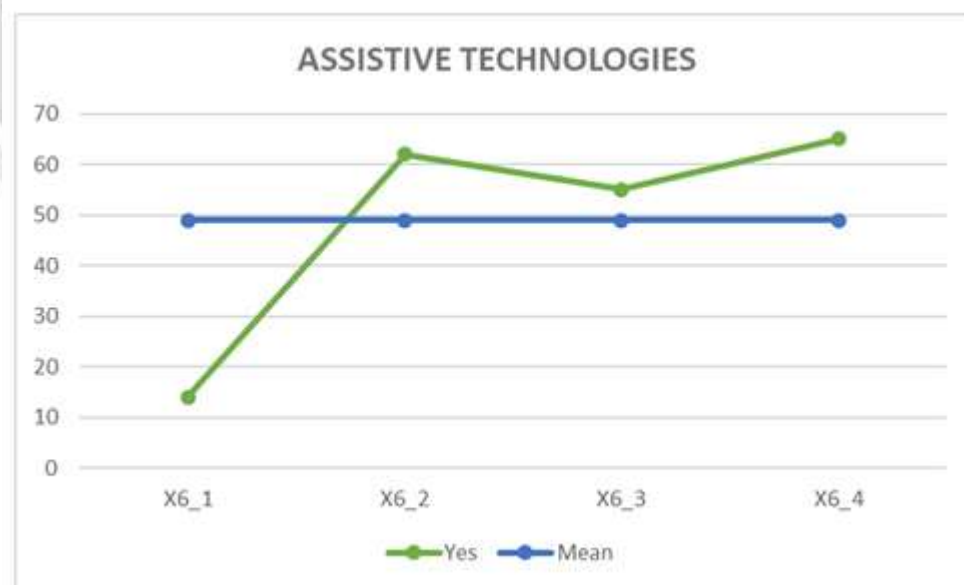
## 5. Results of Social Well-Being



**Figure 14. Test result of the social well-being for disabled people in the urban city spaces.**  
(Author)

The results reached an agreement among the respondents that the environment in the city of Baghdad is pleasant and welcoming for the elderly and disabled people. In addition, the (chart 9) showed that the respondents agreed on the absence of public bathrooms within the public urban spaces of the city at a rate of 64.40%, and that 58.70% confirmed that there are no suitable seating places for disabled people.

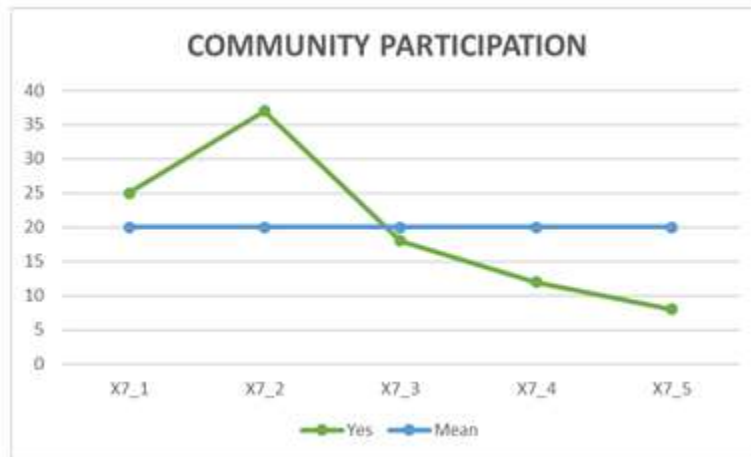
## 6. Results of Smart Technology



**Figure 15. Test result of the assistive technologies for disabled people in the urban city spaces. (Author)**

Respondents agreed on the importance of assistive technologies such as wheelchairs, manual and electric chairs in mobility and movement within urban spaces.as shown in figure 15 .

## 7. Results of Community participation



**Figure 16. . Test the result of Community Participation for disabled people in the city urban spaces. (Author)**

According to the results in figure 16 shown the Community Participation Index, disabled people do not represent their community participation, as the respondents agreed that there are no applications to communicate with decision-makers, and their percentage was (78%), and (72.10%) confirmed that they were not asked by designers and planners about their needs within the development of the city, and the results showed that the largest part of the passers-by emphasized the absence of forums or associations.

Showed the ineffectiveness of the social participation mechanism for people with special needs, as the average of all mechanism variables was less than (52).

## Conclusion

The study concluded. There is a gap in achieving the concept and strategy of the Urban Empowerment city for disabled people, at the level of accessibility, community participation, transportation, and representation of mobility for disabled people, and this is reflected in the quality of the features of urban spaces in the city of Baghdad. In addition, the study found that the failure to adopt clear design criteria for urban spaces led to the rise of representation of people with special needs within urban spaces. Therefore, the empowerment strategy is not only considered as a main axis in the redevelopment of urban spaces, but rather it is considered a





comprehensive plan to increase the interaction of users of urban spaces, including disabled people.

The study define the urban empowerment is a social and humanitarian process aims to increase the ability of cities, residential neighborhoods and urban spaces to transform positively to revitalize and reform urban spaces and empower society in a sustainable manner, through building the capacities of communities and individuals, access to information and resources, and participation in decision-making to build accessible urban and urban environments. Accessible and easy to use, it helps to integrate and improve the quality of life and increase the social welfare of people with special needs, which is achieved through mechanisms that work through comprehensive design standards to build safe and sustainable cities for all according to the identity of the community.

The urban empowerment strategy also contributes to stimulating and activating city spaces, increasing social access and social interaction through reforming and reviving urban spaces and increasing user density through adopting comprehensive design standards in designing and planning public urban spaces for the city.

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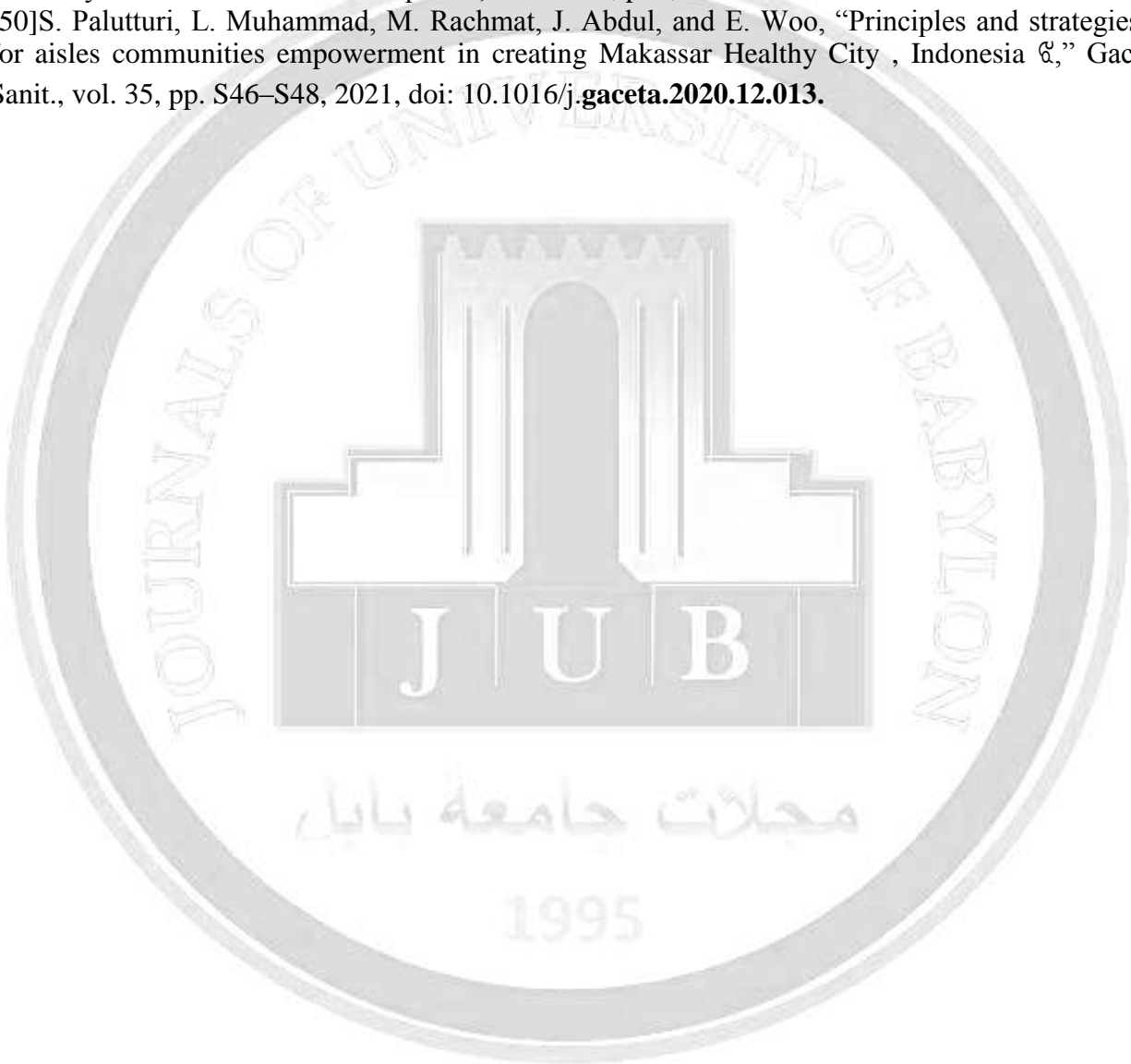


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## التمكين الحضري للأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة كاستراتيجية لتنشيط فضاءات المدينة

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### الخلاصة

مع نمو وتطور المدن العراقية وزيادة الكثافة السكانية في مراكز المدن، فإن تطوير المدن والمناطق الحضرية ينطوي على التركيز على الاهتمامات الاقتصادية، مما يؤدي في كثير من الأحيان إلى استبعاد الأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة من المشاركة في الأنشطة الحضرية الهادفة. في العقود الأخيرة، أدى التقدم التكنولوجي والوعي الاجتماعي إلى جعل إمكانية الوصول أكثر شيوعاً للأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة. ومع ذلك، لا تزال هناك فوارق كبيرة في إمكانية حصول الناس على خدمات الدعم الأساسية والفرص. ولضمان استفادة جميع المواطنين من تنشيط مساحات المدينة، من الضروري دمج استراتيجيات التمكين للأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة في المساحات الحضرية المفتوحة. ومن الممكن أن يؤدي تنفيذ مثل هذه الاستراتيجيات إلى تمكين الأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة في المناطق الحضرية من خلال تزويدهم بإمكانية الوصول إلى الأماكن العامة وشبكات النقل وغيرها من الخدمات. لذا فإن مشكلة البحث تتعلق بضرورة إيجاد آليات لدمج ذوي الإحتياجات في الفضاءات الحضرية من خلال استراتيجية التمكين الحضري لذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة، وبالتالي تنشيط فضاءات المدينة وتحقيق بيئة صحية وآمنة ومرنة ومستدامة.

تهدف استراتيجية التصميم الجديدة هذه إلى تمكين وتحسين حياة الأشخاص المصابين بالأمراض والإعاقات الجسدية وضعف الصحة العقلية من خلال منحهم إمكانية الوصول إلى الشبكات الاجتماعية والموارد وفرص العمل والأنشطة الترفيهية التي تعزز نوعية الحياة في المدن. كما أنها تلعب دوراً حاسماً في تطوير بيئة تلبي المتطلبات المالية والشخصية الفريدة للأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة، يتناول البحث هذه المسألة باتباع المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، ويستخدم البحث الاستبيان كأسلوب لجمع البيانات، كما تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج مايكروسوفت Excel. وأظهرت النتائج أن هناك فجوة واضحة بين ما يقدم حالياً للأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة في هذه المدينة وخطط التنمية لعام 2030. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن هناك مشاكل في تطبيق استراتيجيات التمكين في تنمية وتنشيط الفضاءات الحضرية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** تمكين الأشخاص ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة، خدمات مدينة لذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة، تصميم شوارع لذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة، وصول المواطنين ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة إلى وسائل النقل العام، أفكار حلول التنقل الحضري.