

PERANAN TAMAN PERMAINAN SEBAGAI TEMPAT PERKUMPULAN SOSIAL UNTUK  
KANAK-KANAK BERUMUR ENAM HINGGA DUA BELAS TAHUN

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## ABSTRAK

Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat peranan taman permainan kanak-kanak sebagai tempat perkumpulan sosial untuk pembinaan kanak-kanak dan menyelidik perangi kanak-kanak dalam taman permainan kanak-kanak. Taman permainan kanak-kanak merupakan salah satu tempat social yang penting dimana kanak-kanak jumpa, bergaul dan membina persahabatan (Erikson, 1973). Kajian ini ingin mengkaji peranan tempat permainan kanak-kanak yang sebenar sebagai tempat perkumpulan social kanak-kanak. Kenyataan permasalahan bagi kajian ini adalah taman permainan kanak-kanak tidak lagi berfungsi sebagai tempat perkumpulan social dan interaksi kanak-kanak untuk pembinaan kank-kanak. Kajian ini telah dilaksanakan di satu kawasan perumahan sahaja iaitu Taman Mutiara Rini, Skudai Johor. Kumpulan sasaran kajian ialah kanak-kanak yang berumur enam tahun hingga dua belas tahun. Masalah pertukaran iklim telah menyebabkan penambahan masa kajian terutamanya masa kajian di tempat kajian. Taman permainan kanak-kanak yang dikaji juga bertambah dari satu taman kepada dua taman permainan. Pendapat atas isu peranan taman permainan kanak-kanak sebagai tempat perkumpulan social untuk kanak-kanak yang berumur enam tahun hingga dua belas tahun di tempat perumahan telah diperoleh. Hipotesis kajian telah dibuktikan dan dicapai dengan hasil kajian yang menunjukkan bahawa kanak-kanak yang berumur enam tahun hingga dua belas tahun berinteraksi dengan rakan setara dalam taman permainan kanak-kanak dan belajar kemahiran baru melalui proses interaksi dengan rakan.

## ABSTRACT

This objective of the research is to investigate the significant role of playground as a social place for middle childhood children in residential community and to examine the behavior of middle childhood children in playground. Playground is one of the important social context in which children meet, interact and form relationship (Eriksen, 1973). Thus, the research is to examine the actual role of playground as social place for children. The problem statement of the research is most of the current playground fails to act as a social place, it loses its major function for children to develop their social, physical and cognitive skills. The context of the research is a playground at Taman Mutiara Rini, Skudai Johor. The target group is middle childhood children, aged 6 to 12 years old. Several limitations occur while going through the research's process. Data collections process stopped for a week due to the change of climate on site. It affected the result of the observation and questionnaire. The data collection period, due to the climate change, change into four days of weekday and three days of weekend. The study site also added from one playground into two similar playgrounds that located in same residential area. The hypothesis of research is achieved as study shows that middle childhood children interact with peers in playground and through these interactions they learn and develop new skills. The findings of the research are parallel to the literatures and theories studied in early stage. The research successfully showed the role of playground as a social place and the behavior of middle childhood children in playground. Finally, the opinion on the role of playground as a social place for middle childhood children in residential community is obtained.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This research examines the behavior of middle childhood children in playground and looks into the significant role playground plays in relation to children's social interaction in residential community. The aim is to understand the contribution of playground toward enhancing children's social, physical and cognitive development when they play.

Through real-life observation, children actually build their relationship with peer while playing along streets or car porches instead of playground. Even when playgrounds are provided in most of the residential area, the importance of playground design to meet to children's need is yet to be shown.

Playgrounds are outdoor environments where children have more freedom to interact in ways that are largely independent of adult-imposed constraints (Hart, 1993). Hence, there is a need to understand children's behavior in playground. The research studies the development of middle childhood children through play. It focuses on the

middle childhood children where their social, physical and cognitive developments are studied.

The research context is set at a residential area in Johor Bahru town. As the hypothesis of the research concern largely on the role of playground as the social place for middle childhood children interaction, the case study area should have at least an open space as playground that afford child to play.

## **1.1 Research Background**

Play is a reflection of and an influence on all areas of children's development—the vehicle by which they communicate, socialize, learn about the world, understand themselves and other people, deal with their problems, and practice skills that may be of use to them later in life (Hughes, 1995). In this research, the importance of play is considered as an essential part of children growth and development.

Play influences children's social, physical and cognitive development and it is also a media for children to show their respond to their living environment. It is a tool for them to socialize, to learn and to express themselves. It permits children to learn about the environment through their own senses, imagination and experimentation (White and Stoecklin, 1997). Play always been an important element in children's lives and continues to mirror their overall pattern of social, physical and cognitive development (Fromberg, 2002).

Middle childhood children are considered as children between the ages of 6 to 12 years old. According to Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development, children at

this ages are in the Concrete Operation Stage where children are able to master some basic logics as long as they are dealing with the here and now and the practical (Cohen, 2002). In this stage, as children's thinking is more orderly and patterned compare to the Pre-Operational Stage (2 to 6 years old), their sense of play becomes increasingly realistic and characterized by the need for order (Hughes, 1995).

In the middle childhood, children are becoming increasingly peered oriented and decreasingly family oriented (Hughes, 1995). Their peer group is a major socializing agent and when they are not in school they out roaming into their neighborhood to look for playmates. They learn a variety of physical and cognitive skills while playing with their peers and also social skills that are necessary for group acceptance. Some of these skills can never be taught but is by their own observation, experience and develop through playing.

Playground play a role as an interaction ground where children social transaction occurs, especially for middle childhood children (Alamo, 2005). As middle childhood children transit from family oriented to peer oriented, they will spend greater portion of time with their playmates (Hughes, 1995). In this case, playground may serve as outdoor context that provides play and social environments for children.

When it comes to build a playground, designer tent to pick some pieces of playground equipment that look nice and place it in an outdoor space. However, designing a playground is more than placing the play equipment in an outdoor space, there are certain criteria that need to put into consideration in planning a playground as a real children's outdoor environment (White and Stoecklin, 1997).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Playground is one of the important social context in which children meet, interact and form relationship (Eriksen, 1973). Playground afford children the opportunity not only to determine the nature of their play activities, but also the peers who serve as partners for these activities (Hart, 1993). Thus, the research is to examine the actual role of playground as social place for children.

A successful playground should provide some basic classification such as problem solving opportunities, potential for choice and able to sustain children's interest (Hart, 1993). In current situation, playgrounds are provided in most of the residential areas but are always left in unacceptable situation and fail to act as social context for children interaction. It does not meet to the basic classification, often poorly designed and unable to provide a good social ground for children to have interaction with peers.

Playground is a place where children play and interact more intensively (Alamo, 2005). If a playground fails to act as a social place, it loses its major function for children to develop their social, physical and cognitive skills. The physical setting of playground can influence the qualities of children social behavior and relationship (White and Stoecklin, 1997).

Children are always found spending most of their time playing on streets, narrow corridors, back lane, front yards and even car park instead of playing in the poor designed playground that are provided in their residential area. All these places that children play in are not designed as 'playground' at the first place, what make them prefer to play in these places? Playgrounds that are provided no longer serve the role as an interaction ground for children due to ill-design and lack of consideration in children's play behavior.

There are several factors that are the major causes resulted in the current situation. The careless and ignorant attitude of the designer and planners is the first major factor. Playgrounds are often handled insensitively and do not meet the developmental needs of children. Most of the playground design is focusing on manufactured and tightly designed play equipments. There is no sense of wildness and the opportunities for free play causes children to look for alternative place to explore their imagination and sense of adventure (White and Stoecklin, 1997).

Second cause is the safety factor of the playground. Safety issue has always been unfavorable by parents. Reckless planning has always cause life-threatening situation that worries the children's parents. For example, playgrounds located next to busy road, play equipments provided are in bad condition or are isolated or are not safe to be used. All these may hinder children away from using the playground and parents may forbid their children from playing in the playground. Hence, playground become unpopular, thus children only play in the front yard of their house instead in the playground.

The last factor is the poor maintenance and supervision given for playground. In a long run development of a residential area, playgrounds are often offered with the least attention of maintenance that causes playgrounds to deteriorate in short period of time. In developers opinion, good maintenance of playground will dose not repay financially, thus they will not spent extra money to invest on things that bring no benefits. Without regular maintenance, playgrounds are bound to be junkyard that cannot be utilized.

### **1.3 Objectives**

This study examines the behavior of middle childhood children in the playground and every reaction of middle childhood children toward the environment is carefully observed and studied. It also investigates the role of the playground as a social place for children development.

### **1.4 Scope of Study**

The research focuses on behavior of middle childhood children in playground and their development through play, where the roles of play in children's social, physical and cognitive developments are studied.

The context of this research is a residential area in Johor Bahru town. The target group is children in middle childhood (between 6 to 12 years old), in Taman Mutiara Rini, Skudai. Scope of study is first set to cover residential areas throughout Johor Bahru, yet due to the constraint of time and resources available the study site is then scope down to one of the residential areas in Skudai.

### **1.5 Limitation of Study**

As going through the process of research, several limitations occur especially in data collection stage. The process of collecting data is not able to carry out

smoothly due to the change of weather on site. The weather on site affected the process observation and survey questionnaire.

Parents do not allow children to play under hot sun especially when the outdoor temperature is too high. It is similar as in a rainy day, children are not allowed to play in playground while it is raining. This slows down the data collection process and cause the delay of completing the research.

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

The research examines the importance of play for middle childhood children and through playground serve as an interaction ground in which children could be well given opportunities to enjoy play as well as develop their social, physical and cognitive skills while playing with peers.

The study focuses on the role of playground as a social interaction ground for middle childhood children. The study examines the importance of play in children development then continues on the middle childhood children general characteristics in play and development. It further stresses on the importance of playground and children's behavior and their interaction with peers while they are in playground.

The research bears a hope that it may instill awareness to the society on the significant role of play in children's development and the importance of playground in residential areas as interaction hub for children.

## **1.7 Research Framework**

This research is organized in five chapters. It started with the introduction of the research by showing the research background. The introduction also discusses about the issue and problem statement of the study then continues with the objectives of the research. It showed the scope of study, limitation of study and the significance of study. Finally, the study ends with the research framework by listing out the main content of each chapter.

Literature review on chapter 2 is classified into three variables, namely play, middle childhood and playground. It elaborates the definition of play and its importance towards children's development, middle childhood children's characteristics and their behavior of play, finally children's development on playground, types of playground and criteria to be considered in designing playground.

Chapter 3 contains the methodology employed in this research in order to meet to the research objectives and its hypotheses. This chapter discussed every relevant aspect essential for the conduct of the research. It started with a brief introduction of the study site and the target population that showed the sampling size of the research. Next, the interview and questionnaire section is discuss, follow by the observation section and end with the research time and period and data collection.

The research continues to chapter 4 explaining the findings of the data collection. It starts with a brief introduction of the studied area and its playground layout. The data collecting from site studies are then analyzed in 3 sections, which is: (i) respondent's particulars, (ii) analysis of subject, and (iii) analysis of playground layout.



A conclusion is formulated in chapter 5, to determine whether the result of site studies in terms of respondents particulars, analysis of subject and analysis of playground layout have answer the hypothesis of the research. Lastly, recommendations are proposed for further conduct of research.

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