

Designing of playground by children and their opinion on play

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Abstract

Introduction. Project aims to develop disabled and abled children's sense of awareness about their city by having them participate in decision processes in urban settlement areas and form an ability for designing urban areas according to disabled and abled children. During the project, training and practical works are done to get a playground where disabled and abled children can play together. **Material and Methods.** 24 abled and 6 disabled elementary school students are trained. Total of 27 students, 22 abled and 5 disabled, were administered the questionnaire. The opinions of the students about the play were taken through the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview method. **Results.** 80% of the disabled students answered that they spared 3-4 hours' and 50% of the abled students spared 0-2 hours' to playing. 60% of the disabled students and 55% of the abled students play games with their families. 80% of the disabled students did not play games. 50% of the abled students play games during break times at school. 60% of the disabled students did not play games in the street. 55% of the abled students play games in the street. It is observed that 80% of the disabled and 59% of the abled students who participated in the study did not play in the playgrounds in their neighborhoods. 80% of the disabled students considered that 1-3 hours of playing would be enough. 82% of the abled students considered that 2-4 hours of playing would be enough. **Conclusions.** Disabled and abled children design the playground where they would be able to play together. Children were made to acquire a sense of awareness both about their city and laying claim to their playing rights. It was determined that playing times of children should be expanded and playgrounds increasing their power of imagination are needed.

KEYWORDS: play, disabled, abled, playground.

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Introduction

Play has been defined as any activity freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, and personally directed. It stands outside 'ordinary' life, and is non-serious but at the same time absorbing the player intensely. It has no particular goal other than itself. Play is not a specific behavior, but any activity undertaken with a playful frame of mind [9]. It has been described as behavior which is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons. Play is the universal language of childhood. Different people have different definitions of play. From an early age, play is important to a child's development and learning. It isn't just physical, involves cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects. It is the main way most children express their impulse to explore, experiment and understand. Children of all ages play. Some may need support to get the best out of play. It is an indispensable life style of the child and the most natural learning tool. It means discovering, learning and self-expression for children. It is the main component helping the child to develop healthily, socially, physically and mentally and an operation with

which the child learns by doing and comes to terms with the social and physical environment. It is an important tool helping the child to accommodate to the world [9, 6].

World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical activity as any body movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity is the greatest need for a child in the childhood period, the most important stage of the human development process. In this stage, activities such as play and sport support physical activity. Playing a game and doing a sport is the greatest right for children. Every child should make use of these rights [7].

For these rights; In the "Children's Right to Play Malta Declaration" announced in 1977, it was emphasized that play, besides feeding and education, is of vital importance for the development of every child. The contract was approved in the Turkish National Assembly and put into effect at the beginning of 1995. In accordance with the 90th article of Turkish Constitutional Law, it was concluded and approved as the Children's Rights Declaration. This agreement obliged governments to create playgrounds for children [7]. Moreover, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) emphasizes the necessity that local governments should create well-designed playgrounds where children play in safety. The disabled child cannot play with their abled playmates in the same playground. For no auxiliary designs are provided to help transition to various playground facilities. In many playgrounds and play tools, physiological, dimensional and visual problems related to health and safety has not been solved yet. Children's play grounds are the areas where children meet with the nature in the city environment shaped by structures and do exercises with various elements and they develop their physical, psychological and physiological structure. Those are one of the first areas where a child starting to be socialized can feel it belongs to him/her outside his/her house and appropriate it.

Not only abled children but also disabled children can be raised as self-sufficient, self-confident and independent individuals. It is important to have disabled children live together with other people to help them accommodate to the social environment. By playing together with healthy children in the street or in playgrounds, disabled children can set up communication with humans by establishing a bond with the social environment. Studies indicate that the effect of external learning environment on children's development is gradually gaining importance [2]. For this reason, it is necessary

to organize play grounds, which are sufficient in terms of place and function, away from danger, pressures and children can easily access, outside home and school especially in cities. The fact that children's playgrounds in many cities of Turkey fall short of meeting the physical, mental and social needs of children in terms of quality and quantity has been confirmed by many researchers [1].

In Nilüfer district of Bursa, there are 189 parks and children's playgrounds in 29 neighborhoods. Only one play ground for disabled children was opened to service, but disabled children cannot use this play ground sufficiently. Since play grounds are not appropriate for disabled children to play with their friends of the same age, children desiring to make use of these play grounds do not become players but remain observers in these areas. This project aims to develop disabled and abled children's sense of awareness about their city by having them participate in decision processes in urban settlement areas and form a capacity about designing urban areas according to disabled and abled children. Under the light of these aims, we tried to determine the opinions of the disabled and abled children participating in the project.

Material and Methods

Participants

The research group is chosen from the students residing and/or receiving education in the Nilüfer district of Bursa. Disabled 6 students were selected from 'Our House', which is the service unit of the District Municipality for the disabled. 24 abled students, 6 were selected among the Nilüfer District City Council participants and 18 are selected from the different elementary schools in Nilüfer District. Children are participating voluntarily in the project upon their parents' permission and aged between 11-13 years old.

The students are trained by the Uludag University academics members and the professionals from the Academics Chamber members in Bursa. Each session is coordinated by related department in municipality. Also the teachers from the 'Contemporary Education Association' Elementary School, survey and coach the student during the project working sessions. Qualified instructors is assigned in the practicing area in relevant sessions. It is aimed to create capacity for the participation of children in decision-making processes in urban settlements, the development of urban awareness, and the design of urban spaces according to disabled and non-disabled people.

Measures

Total 30 students, 24 abled and 6 disabled participating in the project, a total of 27 students, 22 abled and 5 disabled, were administered the questionnaire. In this study, one questionnaire form was used. The questionnaire form is developed by the researcher and then evaluated by 4 referees. Finally necessary corrections are made. The first part of the questionnaire was composed of the questions aiming to determine the socio-economic status of the participant students. The second part of the questionnaire included the questions inquiring about the daily play-times of the participant students and their opinions about play. The questionnaires were evaluated by using the SPSS 16 package program and the percentage values related to the students' opinions about play were given in tables. Moreover, in the study, the Semi-Structured Interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The data obtained from the individual interviews was analyzed by using the content analysis method [8]. Within the scope of this analysis method, an open coding was created; the interview texts were read line by line and then the research problem was formed and finally a code list was created by the researcher within the scope of the conceptual framework of the study.

Results and Discussion

The first parts of the questionnaire includes the questions about the family situation and social economical profile of the participant group. As seen in Table 1, as for the educational status of the participant students' parents, it was determined that 60% of the disabled children's mothers were high school graduates, and 45% of the abled children's mothers were high school graduates, 60% of the disabled children's fathers were high school graduates, and 45% of the abled students' fathers were university graduates, 60% of the disabled students' mothers and 55% of the abled students' mothers were housewives, 60% of the disabled students' fathers were freelancers, and 27% of the abled students' fathers were officers.

It was also determined that 80% of the participant disabled students and 73% of the abled students had computers. It was also determined that 40% of the disabled students spared 2-3 hours a day to playing and 36% of the abled students spared 2-3 hours a day to playing. When the literature related to computer use was examined, it was observed that the students at the elementary school first stage preferred to play computer games in terms of their development periods. Despite this, it was observed that most research studies have generally included user profiles of the games in the

Table 1. General information about the families of the students participating in the project

	Disabled	%	Abled	%
Mother's education				
Primary school	1	20	3	15
High school	3	60	10	45
University	12	20	9	40
Father's education				
Primary school			4	18
Secondary school	1	20		
High school	3	60	4	18
Vocational school			1	5
University	1	20	10	45
Master's degree			3	14
Mother's occupation				
Housewife	3	60	12	55
Worker	2	40	2	9
Officer			3	14
Teacher			3	14
Nurse			1	4,00
Designer			1	4,00
Father's occupation				
Worker	1	20	4	18
Dealer			3	14
Officer			6	27
Teacher	1	20	1	4
Engineer			3	14
Freelancer	3	60	3	14
Tradesman			2	9
Computer				
Yes	4	80	16	73
No	1	20	6	27
How many hours a day does s/he play computer games?				
I never play	1	20	5	23
1-2 hours	1	20	3	14
2-3 hours	2	40	8	36
3-4 hours			5	23
More than 4 hours	1	20	1	4

internet medium [3,4], and adolescents and violence, but did not include elementary school students. In a study, Horzum [5] did not find a significant relationship between the students having a computer at their homes and those not having a computer at their homes according to such variables as giving up playing games, associating the play with the real life and delaying to fulfill their other responsibilities. We can state that the duration which the participant students spent in front of computer was not at a level to cause addiction.

Table 2. Values of the students participating in project related to play

	Disabled	%	Abled	%
How many hours a day does s/he play games?				
0-2 hours	1	20	11	50
3-4 hours	4	80	9	41
More than 5 hours			2	9
Playing with family				
Yes	3	60	10	45
Sometimes	2	40	12	55
Playing during break times at school				
Yes			11	50
Sometimes	1	20	3	14
No	4	80	8	36
Playing in the street				
Yes			12	55
No	3	60	6	27
Sometimes	2	40	4	18
Is there a playground in your neighborhood?				
Yes	2	40	20	91
No	3	60	2	9
Playing for a sufficient time in the playground				
Yes	1	20	9	41
No	4-	80	13	59
What do you think the duration should be?				
1-2 hours	2	40		
2-3 hours	2	40	9	41
3-4 hours	1	20	9	41
4 hours and more			4	18

As seen in Table 2, related to the question 'How many hours a day do you play games?', 80% of the disabled students stated that they played games 3-4 hours and 50% of the abled students stated that they played 0-2 hours. It was determined that, 60% of the disabled students and 55% of the abled students stated that they played games with their families. 80% of the disabled students stated that they did not play games. 50% of the abled students stated that they played games during break times at school. 60% of the disabled students stated that they did not play in the street. 55% of the abled students stated that they played in the street. It was observed that 80% of the disabled students and 59% of the abled students participating in our study did not play in the play grounds in their neighborhoods. As for the play-times of the students in the play grounds, while a total of 80% disabled students considered that 1-3 hours of playing would be sufficient, namely 40% found 1-2 hours sufficient and another 40% found 2-3 hours. A total of 82% of the abled students considered that 2-4 hours of playing would be sufficient, namely 41% found 2-3 hours sufficient and another 41% found 3-4 hours sufficient. In Table 3, as a characteristic of this age group, 80% of our disabled students and 55% of our abled students, who were at the sportive movement period, did not have a sportsman license. When we made a literature review, we did not find studies which were similar to ours.

Table 3. The students sport participations

	Disabled	%	Abled	%
Do you have a license in any sports club?				
Yes	1	20	10	45
No	4	80	12	55
Which sports branch				
Swimming			3	30
Volleyball			2	20
Badminton			1	10
Basketball			4	40
Chess	1	20		

When the students were asked the question 'In your opinion, what is to be a child?', all of the participants emphasized the right to play. When they were asked about the most important 3 rights of children, they answered playing games, entertainment and freedom is extremely meaningful that the children desired the

right to play and it was play that they desired to do most of the time. When the students were asked the question ‘In your opinion, what is to be a child?’, it was observed that although they usually answered like this “going to school every day, obeying the orders, a period with difficulties” the theme ‘being a child, being free, playing games’ was the most frequently stated theme. In summary, it was determined that the majority of the participant students emphasized the themes of ‘right to play, right to education and freedom’ most.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This project creates a capacity to both develop the disabled and abled childrens sense of awareness about their city by having them participate in the decision processes in the urban settlement areas and to design urban areas according to disabled and abled children. Game is a part of learning and healthy development. This study shows the difference of the use and perception of the play between abled and disabled children. Disabled and abled children’s playing together might be integrative. Further research is needed to understand how children with disabilities develop play repertoires and how parents support the development of play skills. At the end of project, 4 thousand 700 square meters in the scope of the project development will be a model park in Turkey. The park consists of a multipurpose hall with 125 square meters of space for children to work on, a road circulation designed for disabled people to reach playgrounds, park furniture designed for children, vegetative lavishment designed for wheelchair passengers, playgroups with disabled and unobstructed children, mud pools, playhouses, painting walls, and children’s own design ‘Father’s Doll’ playground.

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