

**A STUDY ON THE SUCCESSFUL OF CHILDREN PLAYGROUND IN TOWN
PARK**

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ABSTRACT

The research study is about finding the compulsory elements which are necessary in creating a successful children playground. The research study will focus specifically on the children playground which is located in Town Parks. Town Parks are been specially designed for the urban community in order to fulfil their recreational needs. This place should also be able to provide all kinds of facilities for the public and one of the important facilities is the children playground. Parents who wish to entertain their little kids will bring them to this place and the playing satisfaction for the kids is determined by the elements that have been designed around this area. The playground is more than just a playing ground to the children, as it also supposed to offer a variety of amazing experiences to the children. It also becomes a place to learn new things and gain self confidence throughout their play activities. No doubt that playing is an essential activity in helping to develop their body strength and encouraging a healthy mind. Even though play activities can take place in their own home but children sometimes like to learn new things from nature and that is how the situation was during the old days where there is still not a single playground for children had ever been created. As a result on this matter, men started to have their own initiative to build a special place which serves a purpose as a place for children amusement. Here they will play in a safe and sound condition but is there still any chance for them to learn from their surrounding nature? The answer depends on the way of how the children playground was planned and how it was being accomplished to achieve the desired results. In fact the playground can be turn out as a very comprehensive place for children to learn through their playing activity. Every aspect of children well being should be fully understood in order to design a successful children playground. In the end the playground will be able to provide children with variety kind of learning process through the comprehensible planning.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The topic of this research is about designing a successful children playground which is located in a Town Park. The research will stress mainly on the necessary elements that need to be implemented on any children playground across Malaysian urban area. This chapter will explain in detail about the relevant of play to children and the important of providing a good children playground to them. Beside that, this topic will discuss on the common problems of urban children playground. There are many old Town Parks in Kuala Lumpur which is seemed to have those same problems. Problems exist because the playground is weak in term of the planning at the early stage. After al the

1.1.1 The Important of Play to Children

Play is very essential to the children because it helps them in a development of motor skills, making a good decision, learn to control the emotion, get involved in a social interaction and help to shape the spiritual well being of a child. The Greek philosophers Plato (427-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) recognized the value of play for promoting healthy development (Frost & Klein, 1979, p.1).

In early childhood, the great outdoors like playgrounds are a vital source of formative experiences, where each encounter is met and absorbed by all the senses like smell, sight, touch, taste and sound. In other word natures become a medium for the children to learn more about their surrounding environment. The way of the information being absorbed by them is very important in determining the quality of their learning process. This is the main aspect which has been so much concern by us because the better the learning process is the better the learning quality will be. It is

also consider as a crucial moment during a child growth as it will help them to be prepared for challenge in live.

The type and diversity of children's physical settings are also important criteria to be determined of because it will directly affect the type and diversity of children's play. We are responsible to provide them with a good playing environment. The effectiveness of playground in offering variety kind of learning experience to the children is determined by a proper planning from the early stage.

1.1.2 The Important of Children Playground

A good playground will give so much benefit to the development of a child mentally and physically. Happy kids are the healthy kids and they are ready to confront with any challenge that coming on their way. Children playground is the only place in town where kids can spend their time having so much fun, adventure and laughter. In children playground, kids are free from any kind of risk and danger. It a safe ground for them to play around without nothing much to bother. The fact is children playgrounds need to be seriously designed and not to be taken for granted if we really want them to be prepared for the future.

Relationship among the family member can also be tightened up when they get together in the playground. Adults will take it as pleasure moment for them to spend some precious time with their kids. The playground can become a right place for the teenager too if the playground is provided them with a special spot to hang up.

1.2 Goal

The main goal for this research is to study on the important elements in designing a good children playground in Town Park. The research study is concentrate more on the playground design, the playing equipments and the facilities for the adults that should be provided within the playground itself.

1.3 Objectives

There are three main objectives for this research;

1. To identify elements that needs to be considered in creating a successful children playground to the city dweller.
2. To investigate the present situation of today's children playground and any problems pertaining to its surround facilities.
3. To observe whether the designer and the authority had ever played their role up to the expected requirement, in order to meet the recreational needs of children who live in an urban setting.

1.4 Problem Statements

There are common problems pertaining to children playground in the Town Park and each problem needs to be solved effectively by the authority so that the children will be given a great opportunity to fully enjoy themselves in a playground. All problems stated below will become a solid ground for this research. The problems will be studied alongside the elements that should be implemented in children playground. Problems which has been identified is regarding on the safe playground, setting and arrangement for playing equipment, barrier free environment, facilities for adults and weak maintenance.

1.4.1 Safe Playground

A safe playground should be free from any defect that can cause any serious kinds of accident or injury to the children while they are playing. There should be signs being posted in the playground area to give some guidance to adults on to the age appropriateness of equipment. The accident and injury are normally caused by the playing equipments, material used in the playground or uncontrollable natural hazards.

1.4.1.1 Outdated Playing Equipment

The playing equipments provided in the old playground can sometimes promote hazard to children. The old playground here define as a playground that was built 20 to 30 years ago when there is still no manufactured playing equipment been designed to be put in the park. Most of the park furniture at that time was manually built including play equipments in the children playground. During the equipment being produced there is less consideration on the safety aspect for children. Some of the materials that being used for playing equipment are not children friendly and can cause injury to the children physical while using it. Some other playing equipment is not even properly designed for the children usage where it can invite for the accidents to happen.

Time has past since than; all the playing equipment becomes outdated with the invention of manufactured playing equipment that can be found on any of today's children playground. The physical state of the equipments has already been damage, broken, rust and can not be used anymore. Even though some of it has been upgrade to give a new pleasant outlook but it still did not have a guarantee on the children

safety. All this old equipment supposes to be removed completely and replace with much safer one.

1.4.1.2 Material for the Fall Zone

The old playground also did not have a good cushioned surface for the fall zone. In this old playground asphalt, cement, dirt and grass are commonly used in the fall zone under or around equipment. This material is not safe to children and must be replaced to avoid any accident from happening. A safe playground should have adequate and suitable cushioned surfacing such as chips, pea gravel sand, rubber tiles or mat.

1.4.2 Setting and Arrangement for Playing Equipment

One of the features for a successful children playground is a good setting and arrangement for its playing equipment. It is sad to see that there are not many playgrounds having this kind of feature. The problem with most of today children playground is that, there is no certain spatial setting has been created for the playing equipments. The arrangement of the play setting is also quite chaotic without having any relationship between each other. The playing equipment was just simply put on the ground and isolated from any natural feature like trees, shrubs and water.

Spatial setting for the equipments is very important because children will be able to play in a safe closure and feel intimate with the surrounding of nature. The arrangement for the play setting should be done in a systematic way so that the children will learn to appreciate more on the playing environment.

1.4 .2.1 Integrated Play Facility

A common playground located in a Town Park is normally having an integrated play facility to ease up the maintenance work. This practice is no good because there is no definitive play area meant for the preschool children. This present situation will only lead them to choose play equipment that is not suitable for them to play with. Beside that the preschool children will also have to compete with the elder group during the play time if both groups are sharing the same playing equipment within the same play area.

Children playground should also provide a place for a non – structured play activity. The non – structured area is important in generating creative and imaginative kind of play. It is important features of children play environment where the diversity of opportunity is being offered (Harris & Dines, 1995, p. 240-18). This non – structured area can be done by manipulating the natural features to be part of the play settings such as ground, water and vegetation.

1.4 .2.2 Different User Group

There should be segregation within the play area between this two different user groups. It is recommended that playgrounds have separate areas with appropriately sized equipment and materials to serve ages 2 to 5 and ages 5 to 12. This is to avoid any form of conflicts from happening between these two groups of user. The play areas should be separated at least by a buffer zone which could be an area with shrubs or benches. Setting for play facilities should also be located in a good condition where children will not be completely isolated from their shrouding.

1.4.3 Barrier Free Environment

There are lots of park in the city today that still did not fulfil this aspect. When there is barrier exist around the park it will be very difficult for the disable person to get a full access on the park facilities including the children playground. Children who are born with the disability need a special kind of facilities to help them get through the park. The disable might be also the parents to children who need to bring their kids to the children playground and to cope with this situation all the possible facilities for the handicapped people should provided. Among the landscape treatment that should be provided in the park is like ramp, supported handle bar, and smooth pavement surface for a wheelchair user.

1.4.3.1 Park Is Meant For Everybody

Park is mean for everybody and so a barrier free environment must be uphold so that justice will be achieved in our community regardless their fate and appearance. By introducing the barrier free environment, this small group of people will be given a chance and opportunity to enjoy the garden just like everyone else.

1.4.4 Facilities for Adults

Another significant problem found on today's children playground is that there is a little facility provided for the adults used. The adults comfort must be seriously taken into the consideration as they are the one who is going to supervise the children while they are playing.

Among of the facilities that should be provided in the playground for the adults used is such as shelters, picnicking areas, benches, trash receptacles, water

accommodation and phone booths in a case of emergency. All these facilities are necessary in creating a good playground because the adults are somehow going to utilize it. In a most present situation those kinds of facilities are there but due to the weakness in durability and poor maintenance by the authority those facilities turn to look dull and not so pleasant to be used.

1.4.5 Maintenance

Another problem with today's children playground is a weak maintenance on the playing equipments itself. This is the most common problem facing by any children playground in the city. The playground was not in a tip top condition because the authority is lacking in manpower and there is no action has been taken about this matter. Frequent maintenance is important to ensure the playground will always be in a safe condition. Any broken equipment that found on the playground must be quickly amended so it will not cause any injury to the children. The playground should always be kept clean to avoid litter from causing any harm to children such as slippery.

1.5 Research Methodology

Figure 1.5 illustrates the flow of chart for this research study from the early stage to the end. There are four methods that are going to be applied on the case studies. Method that is going to be used in this research is questionnaire, focused observation with photography, checklist and plan analysis. Children are the respondent in the questionnaire method. They will be guide while answering the questionnaire. The other three methods are very useful in getting the information about the external part of the case study.

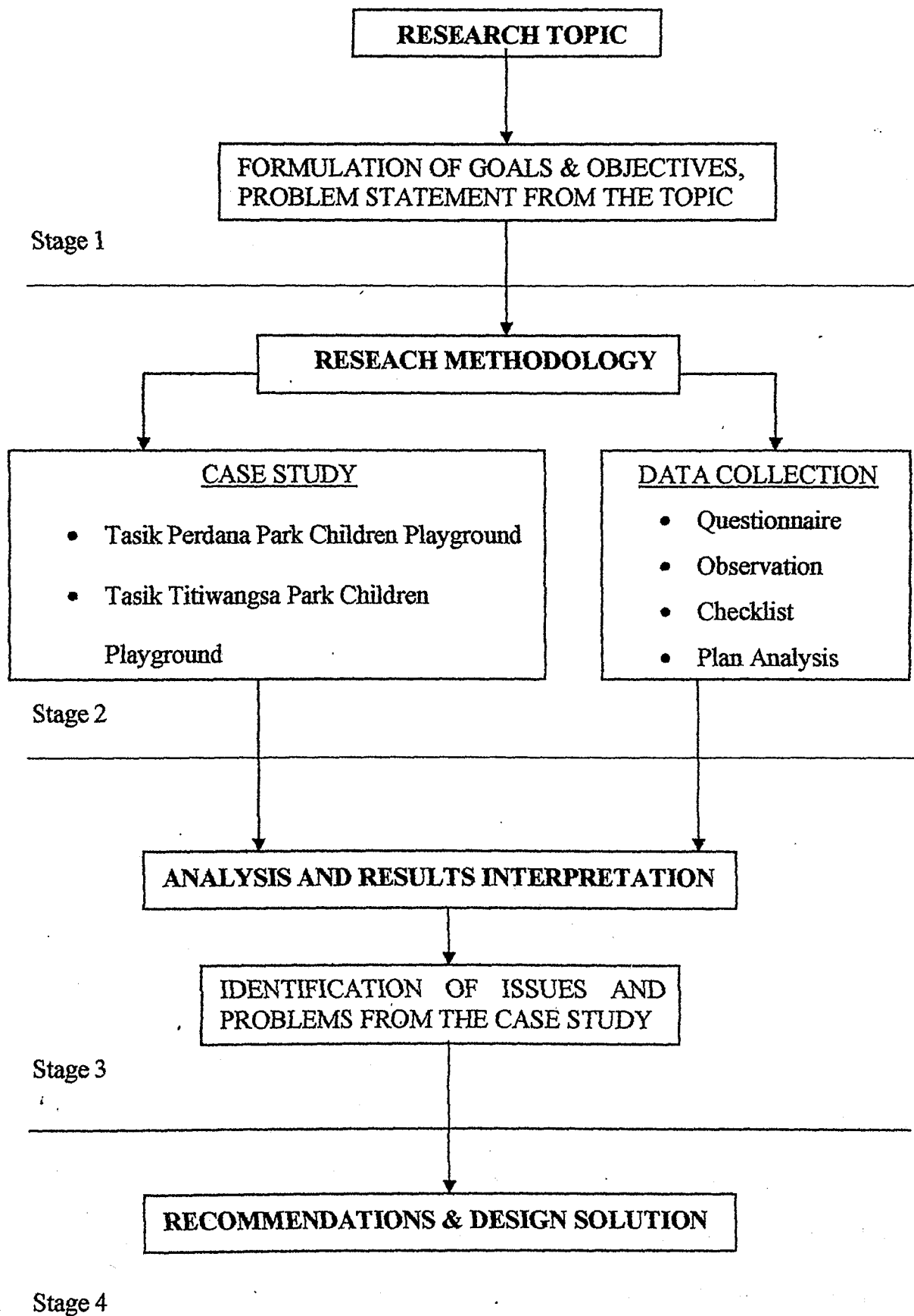


Figure 1.5: Flow chart of the Topical Study

1.5.1 Case Study

Case study is a necessary for this research, here every problem statement will be able to be examined thoroughly, and from this site observation we should be able to get to know on how human tend to react to their surrounding. In a case study, investigators make an intensive study of a limited number of representative cases. A case study is narrower in scope but more exhaustive and more qualitative in nature than a survey (Asiah, 2001, p.152).

For this research, two case studies have been adopted. There is a possibility of encountering many problems related to the children playground because both places are considered as an old Town Park. Case Study 1 is located in Taman Tasik Perdana Children Playground while Case Study II is located in Taman Tasik Titiwangsa Children Playground.

1.5.2 Data Collection

Five methods of data collection are going to be used in this research study;

1. Questionnaire – there are 30 samples going to be distributed on the site study to 30 numbers of respondents. The respondents will be randomly selected among the children.
2. Observation and Photography – there will be a certain duration time being set up for the field observation on both case studies. The photograph is very useful in providing the real evidence about the case study.
3. Checklist – during the site observation, list of checklist can help to understand more about the site study. By doing this all the necessary information will be notified by the researcher. The checklist was prepared according to the general design principles for the children playground.

4. Plan analysis – critical review on the plan layout will help in giving some of the information about the case study.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

Once the fieldwork of all the case studies in both Town Park was completed, all the information and data from the questionnaires, observations, photographs, checklist and plans will be gathered to be analyzed and turn it into some useful data. Every result will be interpreted in every possible way and will be fully understood. In this way every issues and problems from the case studies will be easily solved later on.

S.P.S.S method is very useful in producing a reliable data. The S.P.S.S. output is derived from the questionnaire that has been answered by the respondents. Information from the checklist is also going to be analyzed in order to get more information about the site itself.

CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH TOPIC

2.1 Introduction

This study of the children playground in a Town Park is very significant and beneficial to the urban community. Even though the main objective of the children playground is for the purpose of children outdoor leisure, but it can actually offer more than that to the other age of user. Most importantly the perfect playground in a public park will surely reflects the outdoor lifestyle of Malaysian community. The outsider can tell that Malaysian people is giving a great concern on the aspect of outdoor living.

The urban community deserved to have a good playground in a Town Park because Malaysia is trying to achieve a goal as a Garden Nation in the year 2005. This is another strong reason for doing a research on this topic. To achieve this goal every landscape development deserves a good quality including the children playground. It should have a good quality in term of its design criteria and most importantly it must be able to serves a purpose and function to the whole community especially the children.

Reference study has been selected earlier on in order to get a good example on the elements of the children playground. The reference study will be study in term of playground safety, setting and arrangement for playing equipment, barrier free environment, facilities for adults and maintenance.

2.2 Literature Review

Playground is all about creating a good outdoor experience for the children and giving them a chance to learn about their surrounding. As for this matter the design of any children playground should be able to manipulate on its physical environment. In another word a good playing environment must be designed as a

range of settings carefully layered on the landscape. This research is generally about the effectiveness of children playground in a Town Park but before going any much further the definition of Town Park must be understood first.

2.2.1 Definition of Town Park

Town Park is actually a place meant for urban residents to fulfil their own recreation needs and to experience on the natural environmental. Usually it is located within half an hour of driving and it is suppose to cater the population between 50 000 to 100 000 people. The size of Town Park is about 400 000 meter square to 1 km square.

Town Park area is mainly purpose as a public park and children playground is being reserved as one of its main criteria other than facilities like fields, court games, swimming pools, indoor courts, camping ground, picnic areas, water recreation, recreational forest and garden.

The children playground here is specially meant for toddlers, preschool children (under the age of 6) and primary school children (between the ages of 7 to 12). It comprises of common play item such as slides, swings, climbers, balance events, spinning equipments, rocking and spring equipments.

2.2.2 Definition of Play

As for the definition of play, according to Rubin, Fein, and Vandenberg, play must contain five essential characters, (1) intrinsically motivated where it is done only for the sheer satisfaction, (ii) freely chosen where children are allowed to choose and not being forced, (iii) pleasurable which make them enjoy the experience of play, (iv) non literal which is mean that it will involves a certain element of make believe or a