

Management of Risks Associated with Children at Play

Gloria O. Nwankwo

Department of sport and exercise science, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt

gloria.nwankwo@uniport.edu.ng

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the need for management of risks associated with children at play. It highlighted the need for effective management of the high level of risks children are exposed to in recent times while at play. It proffered principles for effective management of these risks which include marking the risks in play environment clear to them and provision of appropriate emergency response plan. It concluded by stating that children who are most vulnerable to risks lack the skill to protect themselves therefore, adults should ensure that children are protected especially while at play. Its recommendations include; that every adult in children's play environment should take the responsibility of protecting the children and play providers should have safety signages in their facilities and conduct safety moments before the children set out to play.

Introduction

Play is one of the fundamental characters of childhood hence inability to play is considered atypical response among children. There is innate tendency for normal child to play. Renowned psychologists such as Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Lev Vygotsky to mention a few, have strong belief on the importance of play to human development. In agreement, Leon and Brodrava (2013) posited that there is a growing body of research that links play to the development for acquiring more complex skills as children grow older. They further stated that play is a link to growth in memory, self-recognition, oral language and recognition of symbols increased literacy and other academic learning. According to Encyclopedia of children's Health (2022), play reinforces children's growth and development, it facilitates their physical, emotional, social, and moral development. In view of the above Nwankwo (2017) posited that since play is acclaimed the cornerstone of learning and children can identify their potentials during play, it should be strongly supported.

Concept of play-among the concepts of play, that of Huzuiga (1955) has stood the test of time, as it seems to be more comprehensive and captivating. It states that it is a free activity standing consciously outside life, not being serious but absorbs the players intensely and utterly, not connected, with materials interest but proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in orderly manner.

However, other authors conceptualized play as enjoyable and spontaneous activities which emanate from the individual child. It is intrinsically motivated activities performed for recreational pleasures Encyclopedia of Children's Health, (2022). Play is a self-chosen and self-directed activity that is focused of the process and not its product. It is individually constructed to meet the child's desire and needs (Lumen Learning-Simple Book, (2022). Donaldson (2022) conceptualized play as powerful brain building activity which supports all area of child's development. It is a fun and happy activity which grantees learning for children either with others or alone while Barnes (2022) saw it as an aspect of biological, psychological and social development which enables the children to practice things they have learned, observed interacted and communicate to others. Gray (2013) characterized play as self-chosen and self-directed, intrinsically motivated, guided by mental rules which allow creativity, it is imaginative and conducted in an alert, active but relatively released frame of mind. In this paper, play is conceptualized as spontaneous activities that are intrinsically motivated which are performed at leisure for fun and enjoyment. Children are usually exposed to risks while at play.

Concept of Risks

Risks implies future uncertainty about deviation from expected results or outcome. (The economic times, 2022). Heyman (2022) described risks as a contemporary case of a universal human tendency to envisage the future by imagining alternative outcomes. Risks is the probability that an accidental phenomena would occur at a point during a given time. Risks is the potential for adverse consequences (Andy, Howden, Vera, et al, (2020). It is a combination of the probability of an event and its consequence (council of Europe portal, 2022) Openup (2022) posited that risk is an uncertain event or condition that would have negative or positive impact. It is usually qualified by probability of its occurrence and the effect when it occurs while Corporate Finance Institute (2021) conceptualized risk as the probability that actual results would differ from expected outcomes. In this paper, risk is the possibility of occurrence of unpleasant incident with implication to anticipated goal. It is uncertain hindrance to success

Concept of Risk Management

Corporate Finance Institute (2022) posited that risk management is a process of identifying, assessing and controlling threats which stem from a variety of sources. According to them, risk management programme examines the relationship between risk and the impact at they could have on goals. Also N-Able Risk Intelligence (2022) stated that risk management is the identification, monitoring and managing potential risks in order to minimize their negative impact. A good risk management programme unveils the full range of risks and the effect they could have on expected results. Risk management according to Corporate Finance Institute (2022) is the potential to reduce both the possibility of risks occurring and their potential impact. A good risk management structure

should also calculate the uncertainties and predict their influence. Business Plan Nigeria (2022) conceptualized risk management as the planning, arranging or controlling of activities and resources in order to minimize the impact of uncertain events and protect people with maximum efficiency at a minimum cost. Risk management in this paper is a proactive action to mitigate risk to enhance the achievement of expected goals. It is a process that requires good knowledge of potential risks and strategies for their reduction.

Risks Associated with Children at Play

Children at play are exposed to diverse unacceptable health and safety risks which make them prone to incidents and accidents of which injury and infection are the least. Banith (2021) simply classified risks at children's play into falls, injuries and getting lost but in recent times, risks associated with children at play have obviously stepped up to include abduction, abuse, deceit, internet risk which have placed them at a higher level of risk while at play. Ogunmefun (2013) observed that the social changes have influenced the safety threats faced by children. According to him, the society needs to respond to the new risks the children face. These risks should be effectively managed to avert fatality.

Management of Risks Associated with Children at Play

Since it is in the nature of children to play and the process of their play in some cases exposes them to high risks, there is a need to seek effective strategies for the management of these risks to ensure their safety at play. Ogunmefun (2013) further stated that it is important that children play safely so that the games remain fun. It is all fun until someone gets hurt. Every environment has hazards that expose the users to risks hence the need for the knowledge of risk management. Risk management involves a high level of judgment based on the understanding of the balance between risks and benefits. Play is a safe and beneficial activity cherished by children. Adults especially play providers' judgment is required to derive the best benefits while ensuring that the children are not exposed to unnecessary risks.

In order to effectively manage risks associated with children at play, conventional risk management strategies should be adopted. These strategies aim at reducing the occurrence of both potential risks and their impacts. According to Corporate Finance Institute (2022), the process of risk management involves identification, assessment, control of risks and review of control measures. In other words, for risks associated with children at play to be effectively managed, the source of the risk should be known, the risk should be evaluated to determine the extent of harm they can cause, their effects should be mitigated and the mitigation process should be reviewed with time to ensure compliance.

Precisely, the following principles should be an integral part of management strategies for risks associated with children at play.

(1) Make the risks as clear as possible to children and let them understand the risks in their play environment and the harm they can cause.

- (2) Ensure that the precaution are practicable, appropriate and reflect the level of risks in the environment.
- (3) Adults especially play providers should ensure that the evaluation and control measures proposed are proportionate to the risks. The control measures should be emphasis and children should be informed why they are necessary.
- (4) Risks, and benefits should be assessed when designing and providing play opportunities, attention should be more on controlling the more serious risks and those that are irrelevant to the play activity.
- (5) Strike, the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to enjoy the benefits of play.
- (6) Children should be encouraged to be safety conscious by adhering to safety precaution, and promptly reporting incidents, accidents and near misses.
- (7) There should be appropriate emergency responses plan in case of accident or incident. There should also be proper investigation of any accident or incident.

CONCLUSION

Children are the hope of future but the most vulnerable to risks of diverse nature in virtually everywhere they are found, since they lack the skills to protect themselves. It is the responsibility of adults to assess and managed the risks so that children would have the opportunity to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposure to unacceptable risks.

Risk is part of daily activities which affect everyone in one way or the order. It is taken by everybody in order to sustain healthy future hence risks cannot be totally eliminated, however, it should be acknowledged, controlled and managed. Children at play encounters many risks. It is important to understand the basic principles of risk management and how they can be utilized to mitigate the effects of risk on children at play. Health and Safety Executive (2012) acknowledged that no child will learn if he is wrapped in a cotton wool. Play is essential and vital part of children's life which influence their well-being and development.

Play which is basically for fun can occur alone or in groups, it can be spontaneous or planned. Considering the importance of play in the life of children, unacceptable risks should be adequately managed. Adults should ensure that children are not at risk while playing.

Recommendation

Based on the role of play in the life of children, the following recommendation are made;

- 1) Every adult in children's play environment should know that he/she has the responsibility of protecting children at play.
- 2) Adults especially parents should encourage children to be safety conscious by teaching them precautionary measures against risks they may encounter at play.
- 3) Play providers should have safety signage in their facilities and have 'safety moment' with children before they set out to play.
- 4) Play providers should employ safety stewards that would assist the children while at play.
- 5) Seminars and workshops should be organized by the government, corporate bodies and philanthropists to educate play providers on the legal liability of exposing children to unprotected play environments.
- 6) Institute of safety professional should organized risk management seminars and workshops in play providing organization for staffs and parents.

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