

Children's Play Territorial: Understanding the Setting and Element

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INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Abstract: Territory is a form of occupation and behavior is related to social and cultural context. Understanding children's play territorial, through identifying 1) What children explore during playing in their neighborhood?. This question aims to find out how their their play area settings. 2) What are the element preferences when they play? Elements form the boundaries of children's play space. Territorial play is formed when children find elements around them. Elements automatically mark their ownership of the play space. Related to the setting, children are greatly influenced by the pattern and structure of space in their living environment. The relationship between children's play activities and the setting is clearly visible. This suggested that different play zones afford different experiences with nature, promoting ecological literacy amongst children in the kampung's transitional space. Play territoriality is closely related to their movement in their environment.

Keywords: Children; Play Territorial, Transitional Space

Abstrak: Teritori merupakan salah satu bentuk okupasi dan perilaku yang berkaitan dengan konteks sosial dan budaya. Memahami teritorial bermain anak, melalui identifikasi 1) Apa saja yang dieksplorasi anak saat bermain di lingkungan tempat tinggalnya?. Pertanyaan ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana pengaturan area bermain mereka. 2) Apa saja preferensi elemen saat bermain? Elemen-elemen membentuk batas ruang bermain anak. Permainan teritorial terbentuk saat anak menemukan elemen di sekitarnya. Elemen secara otomatis menandai kepemilikan mereka atas ruang bermain. Terkait dengan lingkungan, anak sangat dipengaruhi oleh pola dan struktur ruang di lingkungan tempat tinggalnya. Hubungan antara aktivitas bermain anak dan lingkungannya terlihat jelas. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa zona bermain yang berbeda memberikan pengalaman yang berbeda dengan alam, sehingga meningkatkan literasi ekologi di antara anak-anak di ruang transisi kampung. Teritori bermain berkaitan erat dengan pergerakan mereka di lingkungannya.

Kata Kunci: anak, teritori bermain, ruang transisi

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INTRODUCTION

Territory is a form of occupation. It is a behavior such as in defending, marking, and signing the territories (Huang, Mori, & Nomura, 2019). It shows the engagement between people and place that represented through their activities (Relph, 2016), (Loebach & Gilliland, 2016). It attached to individual (Sandseter, 2007) and shows the informal interaction social interaction (Peters, 2010), (Scannell, Williams, Gifford, & Sarich, 2021). Behavior is related to social and cultural context, and is dynamic as a result of interaction (Heft, Hoch, Edmunds, & Weeks, 2014). Furhter, children's behaviour relates to their experiences and desires toward their environment. Territorial discussions related to children have been conducted in several studies, relating to movement territory (Karsten, 2006), territorial limits (Yusof, Said, Aziz, & Rusli, 2021), independent territory (Kytta, Loebach, & Gilliland, 2019),

nevertheless this is not discussed much yet. In sum, children’s behaviors always occur somewhere, in some social and cultural context, where a dynamic, yet stable pattern of actions is generated by joint participation of two or more individuals with the support of affordances. Previous studies on children’s experiencing outdoor environments were taken in varying settings, such as playground (Aziz & Said, 2015), rural (Norazlan & Said, 2022), hinterland (Sari & Lai, 2023), coast (Yusof et al., 2021), and urban (Karsten, 2006).

Children have a propensity to repeat their visit to a place which gave them good experiences and psychological affections. active play and the factors that influenced their choice of location and activity, as well as their experiences in the outdoor environments (Aziz & Said, 2012) for children, experimentation, play, and leisure activity are elements of the process of discovery, socialization, and the expression of emerging identity (Adams, Savahl, & Adams, 2017). This research aims to define children’s play territorial through the setting and elements that they prefer when playing.

Settings and Children

Play activities are closely related to spatial. For example, at school, children and teachers become the keyplayers with the schoolyard simultaneously serves as a play space and ecological literacy (Almers et al., 2020); children spend most of their time at school and at home (Adams et al., 2017). The relationship between space and children fosters their concern for other organisms around them, to the point of connectedness and interdependence with one another (McBride, Brewer, Berkowitz, & Borrie, 2013). In the sea zone, children play freely and spread out; along the offshore and deck. they play by observing natural conditions. For example, they hunt squid during the full moon or at dawn (Yusof et al., 2021). In the sea zone, there were cold spots and not significant spots distributed between the area beyond the offshore platform and the ends of the decks. The children explained that they visited this area only once or twice a month, usually late at night during the full moon or at dawn, paddling their small boats to hunt squid. Their movement is limited by the deck (Yusof et al., 2021). This shows that children's play in transitional spaces is a time for them to actively explore and use the landscape of their homes. They observe the diversity of settings around them. Play routines that occur repeatedly foster understanding and ownership of these settings; the surrounding area of their neighborhood (Clayton & Opotow, 2018; Orr, 1992).

It is concluded that the difference in settings has an impact on the diversity of behavior and its patterns. Children's preferences in a setting when playing are influenced by the psychology and experiences they have received (Aziz & Said, 2012). The play settings are caused by the children’s psychological affection and experiences (Aziz & Said, 2015). So that children's behavioral patterns are greatly influenced by the characteristics of their play settings (Kytta, Broberg, & Kahila, 2012); the playing territorial.

Elements and Children

Local elements greatly influence children's play activities, in fact, they spend more time. The availability of a variety of elements in their living environment creates a variety of play activities. They also tend to have more friends (Loebach & Gilliland, 2016). Significant elements create physical experiences, providing new experiences, even sensations such as height and speed, for example slides, swings, rock climbing, and cycling (Sandseter, 2007). Dangerous elements such as pinning venomous fish such as lionfish and stonefish in rock pools (Yusof et al., 2021).

Interaction with elements during play allows them to recognize colors, textures, shapes, and spatial scales (Norazlan & Said, 2022). For example,

when coastal children are able to identify poisonous sea creatures, including stonefish, based on their shape and color (Yusof, Said, Aziz, & Rusli, 2021). In conclusion, the elements provide children with the opportunity to explore nature and its organisms every day. They are even able to mark and name the characteristics of the elements in detail. They understand the function of the elements and shape them as play tools (Sari & Lai, 2023).

Elements are important factors that attract children to play in the transisional space (Aziz & Said, 2012) (Almers et al., 2020) where children engage in spontaneous play (Adams et al., 2017) as intelligent learning body (Birch, 2018). The elements encountered are related to their physical health and psychological development, as well as their love for the environment (Alexander, Cocks, Shackleton, & Cocks, 2015). Elements are part of a social space that accommodates individual activities and daily contact between them (Ruiz & Díaz, 2025).

METHOD

Understanding children's play territorial, through identifying 1) What children explore during playing in their neighborhood?. This question aims to find out how their their play area settings. 2) What are the element preferences when they play? This question explained by children’s drawing that explained their play’s experience. Understanding children's preferences requires methods to obtain their stories (Alexander et al., 2015). Moreover, this information and numerous spontaneous verbal and nonverbal comments and behaviors indicated a high degree of involvement, interest, and enjoyment with the games (Evans et al., 2007). Children spend time in their neighbourhoods, and highlighting the specific settings and activities to which they are drawn (Loebach & Gilliland, 2016). Moreover, to find out children's behavior in forming their territory, a fast method is used to capture children's activities while playing, namely through snapshots. It efficiently captures activities in a brief amount of time (Can & Heath, 2015). Taking photos, walking along, and chatting demonstrate the engagement between children and the neighborhood and display the children’s emotional expressions (Askerlund & Almers, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transitional space as the first outdoor space where they live provides children with experience in exploring space independently (Kytta et al., 2019); opportunities to play (Almers et al., 2020) where the existing elements function as their social space (Ruiz & Díaz, 2025). Thus, this study discusses the elements and settings when they play, in relation to their territorial space in kampung.

Elements and Children’s Play Territorial

Children creatively discover, engineer, and even create their play elements. While in terms of finding it, it occurs spontaneously throughout their movements or throughout the duration of their play. The types of elements vary according to what is provided in their play environment. In engineering and creating it, it occurs according to their imagination. *"I found wood, this is a hook, we'll just fish here"*, a conversation between two children sitting along the river. So it can be said that their imagination of an element is their response to their play setting. Furthermore, the elements found by children while playing show their ownership of the space. For example, *"I*

found a crab here, it has many legs”. Or when children see ants lining up on the edge of the river, “here look, the ants run away if we point”.

It concluded that without realizing it, elements form the boundaries of children's play space. Territorial play is formed when children find elements around them. Elements automatically mark their ownership of the play space. Ownership of this space will end when they move or end the game. Territorial play space is spontaneous and temporary. Meanwhile, children's territorial play space is created individually or in groups. This element shows their ownership of the space in their environment. Through elements, it shows that they are able to determine territorial boundaries in line with the purpose of their game. Elements encourage children's activities in playing. In fact, elements give meaning and significance to a space. In fact, making a space meaningful and important to them so that they show their ownership. The diversity of elements owned by their living environment provides a variety of children's territorial spaces in an environment; it is said that the distribution of territorial play occurs.



Figure1. Elements and Children’s play territorial
Source: Author, 2025

Settings and Children's Play Territorial

Related to the setting, children are greatly influenced by the pattern and structure of space in their living environment. The relationship between children's play activities and the setting is clearly visible. The setting reflects everyday life and social interactions (Liu, 2012). Children build their spatial experience by utilizing what their environment has. This shows children's ownership of the space in their environment, especially transitional space. Transitional space is an important outdoor play space for children. They form their territory by marking it with activities, "this is my place.", or, "let's cycle near the cemetery". Children's play space territory is spontaneously formed when play activities take place. Children's play territory is related to children's spatial experience.

Children use the transitional space in their homes creatively and spontaneously mark it: "Let's play there again". This shows that children's territorial space is formed repeatedly. Children independently and spontaneously mark and determine their play territory in the village. The

strength of children's play territoriality is influenced by how social ties are formed between them. Furthermore, this social attachment contributes to the territorial patterns of children's play in an environment. Territoriality is caused by the existence of social ties between its inhabitants (Costa, 2012).



Figure2. Settings and Children’s play territorial
Source: Author, 2025

CONCLUSION

This suggested that different play zones afford different experiences with nature, promoting ecological literacy amongst children in the kampung’s transitional space. For children, elements are the process of strengthening their play territorial. Meanwhile, these settings should provide children with a multitude of opportunities for learning and playing in natural spaces. children's physical, social and cognitive performance, spatial skills. Children have full authority to explore their environment. They are able to determine their spatial reach or territorial boundaries. Elements and settings show their environmental skills. Meanwhile, the formation of territory in their play space that occurs in the transition space, shows the characteristics of the spatial structure of their residence. Play territoriality is closely related to their movement in their environment.

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