



USING NATURE TO INCREASE SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY AMONG CHILDREN IN CHILD CARE CENTERS

¹Javad Divandari, ²Asma Khamechian*, ³Ahmad Danaeena and ⁴Fariborz Sedigh Arfaei

^{1,2}Department of Architecture, University of Kashan

³Academic Trainer, Department of Architecture, University of Kashan

⁴Department of general psychology, University of Kashan

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ABSTRACT

Childhood has important role in human growth and his mental health, Based on educational psychology, it is required to have special attention to children education in this period, unless it causes disorder and various psychological diseases among children.

Among children, orphans, are more vulnerable than normal children, According to researches, lack of confidence and sense of security are the most important factors psychological disorders of these children and it is necessary to resolve the problems by some solutions. Nature is one of the effective factors on human mental aspect, and it can be used to improve mental diseases. This study attempted to answer this question, "what is the effect of nature on sense of security and increasing self-confidence of children in child care centers?"

This study is applied and the method of collecting data is library researches and the descriptive- Analytical research method is used. Based on the results of the study, orphans with contact with nature, have better mental health, and nature with its order and beauty, creates a sense of support and security and makes children self-reliant and increases their self-confidence, and this is a very important factor in their future life. It is hoped that the results of the study are useful for managers to influence the nature and using it in child care and educational centers.

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INTRODUCTION

Children are the most vulnerable social groups and they can considerably be inspired by surrounding environment, people and activities they perform, and the problem in their life causes some challenges in the current and future condition of society. Among children, orphans are mostly exposed to social and mental problems. The most important problem of these children, is low self-confidence and security. If we neglect the important points in child growth and the requirement of personality and social growth, they will have great problems in future and this also affects society. These requirements have high advantages motivating the children and helping them to suffer less from mental problems.

This study answers the following questions "what is the capability of nature to affect the mental aspects of children? What is the role of self-confidence and security in children life?, By which we can understand about the mental effects of nature on children and their security and self-confidence and the results of this study can help to increase self-confidence and sense of security among children in child care centers.

Review of literature

The main fields of the study are including psychology and

architecture. Child psychology and effective factors on his soul includes wide range of studies, but few researches have been conducted regarding the effects of nature on children, the most important example is child and nature book written by Dr. Abdollahosse in Vahabzade investigating the effects of nature on child. He found that nature has positive effect on mental aspects of children and he also evaluated the effects. In addition, some of the studies considered population and evaluated the effects of nature on children and students (See Zolmajd, 2007, Mozafar, 2009, Mehdinejad, 2012, Ebrahimi 2011). In addition some studies regarding self-confidence and security are in this field. For example, Behpazuh (2010) investigated children self-confidence and the solutions to improve it and Melat (2008) in an empirical test proved the effect of self-confidence on social behaviour. No independent study has been conducted regarding the effect of nature on self-confidence and children security and this is the purpose of the present study.

Study method

The present study is qualitative in which the child is dependent variable and self-confidence, security and nature are independent variables. The study applied library method and the results of other researchers and field study and children behaviour observation were also applied. The

*Corresponding author: Asma Khamechian
Department of Architecture, University of Kashan

collected information is investigated by analytical-descriptive method. At first, the child and his needs are investigated, then orphans issue and their specific needs and the role of self-confidence and the role of sense of security in life are evaluated. Finally, the nature is investigated in terms of effective capabilities on children needs.

Child

Determining age range of child is different in various countries. According to the first article of child rights convention, child is a person below 18 years old. In accordance to article 1 of children right support law ratified in 2002, a person below 18 years old is considered as child.

Table 1 Maslow needs hierarchy

| Based on the need in special environment of child | Needs |
|--|---------------------|
| Comfort, easiness, adequate facilities, ecological- based balance | physiological needs |
| Supervision and care, restriction, hierarchy, clarity and prediction, child-based behavior, observing private fields, influence | Safety |
| Belonging feeling, visual consistency, identity, social relations with other children, participative game of children and adults | Love and belonging |
| Ownership, individuality, belonging to group and place, childhood scale, flexibility | Self-esteem |
| Diversity, challenge, opportunities for personalization, participation in building perspective | Self- actualization |

The separation of age groups of children is as following: infant, 0 to 2 years, pre- primary school 2 to 5 years old, primary school 5 to 11 years old, adolescents, 11 to 14 years old, adolescent 14 to 18 years old (SaeediRezvani and Habibi, 2008).

Considering the children and their health determines the future health of society. Childhood provides the best ground for excellent personality, educational developments, high inclination to collective life and participation. Considering a suitable environment for child growth and familiarity with his needs and natural tendency required in childhood provides appropriate personality, educational development as future healthy generation. This factor is effective on providing social health of next-generation and reduction of multiple aspects in social issues and problems of urban life (Mehdinejad, Damavandi, Sabri, Abaspour, 2012).

The present era psychologists showed that sensory, mental and ethical reactions of a person are associated with childhood period and his mental and emotional development, and his environment. Therefore, it is required to consider environmental factors of children and pay attention to constituent components of environment. Children see the world different from adults and they understand the affairs via direct experience with surrounding environment (Mozafar, Bagheri, Azemati, 2007). It is required to achieve this perception as basic necessity of development is based on 3 cases:

1. The necessity of perceiving environment and developing identification
2. The necessity of health, security and development of physical skills
3. The necessity of fulfilling emotions, linking with environment and developing motivations (Sarvari, 2000).

Fundamental needs of Children

One of the most important goals of child development study is to help the child nurses to have effective

relationship with children. To do this, it is required to put the information of children in a framework to facilitate its understanding. To keep mental balance of children, it is required to consider eliminating their mental needs.

There are a lot of needs and if they are not met on time, they have not important role in child growth form. Being informed of the importance of needs and how to meet them should be considered by nurses. To design a space in accordance with child needs, we should be familiar with his requests. The child needs in an environments are shown in table 1 based on Maslow hierarchy.

Maslow believed that the needs are based on hierarchy. Food, sleep and game are fundamental needs of children. It is required to consider these needs seriously and we

should know which one we cannot meet effectively. The satisfaction of mental needs such as the need to security, love and belonging, freedom of being accepted should be on priority. To be successful in family and school, people should achieve self-esteem and self-actualization. When the child needs are not met appropriately, it has great effects on his responses and reactions to situations. Therefore, he is prepared for aggressiveness, rejection, late learning and escaping school. The main duty of child nurses is to meet logical needs of children and avoid the inclination to adverse outcomes (Parsa, 2010).

Orphans

Generally, the children in single parent families, the children adopted for a long time or temporarily, the children living in boarding schools, homeless children and those living in unsuitable families have many similar and different problems. It seems that homeless children and those living in boarding schools are deprived of living with their parents and they have more problems. Many of these children are kept in various families (e.g. relatives, applicants of child adoption) or boarding schools. Orphans have many problems including the lack of safety and not meeting the demands and the low self-confidence and self-conception.

The children in unsuitable families, orphans and children in boarding schools have some problems such as frequent movements (from one center to another, one house to another and from one house to boarding school and vice versa), the change of boarding school employees, the change of policies of child care under the coverage of well-being organization or boards and the shortage of various welfare and recreational facilities. All these items lead to instability, lack of safety and the lack of various needs satisfaction. Instability and insecurity lead to some feelings as guilt, shame and perceiving the world as a dangerous place.

The researches about comparison of self-confidence and self-conception of normal children and those living in

child care centers showed various results. However, most of them indicated low self-confidence and self-conception among children in child care centers. The study (Babayi, 1990) in child care centers of Teheran province and the study of (Sufivandi, 1996) in child care center of Kermanshah province showed that these children have low self-confidence and they trust others less and they have non-mature self-conception. In another study (Mortezavi, 1993) showed that the self-confidence of these children is reduced by going to higher grades as there is a significant difference between the children of 1st and 2nd grades and the children in fourth, fifth and first of guidance school.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is one's recognition of self, qualifications and values considering for his ability in various fields. Self-confidence means real and positive evaluation of self, self-belief and his own capability, self-reliance, it means having true and positive feeling of self, abilities, talents and limitations (Behpazhuh, 2010). The psychologists believe that success path is based on self-confidence. If we don't have any self-confidence, there is fear and we lose our comfort and as we are not confident, we are uncertain about any event and there is only failure (Riahi, 1956).

Self-confidence is based on self-knowledge, assurance of one's abilities, learning, acting and achieving required skills in life. Self-confidence is not equal in all dimensions as people capabilities are different. It is possible self-confidence is formed in some dimensions such as physical, emotional, cognitive and social aspects (Behpazuh, 2010). Socialist skill-disorder can affect all aspects of life (Melat, 2008). The lack of self-confidence is not genetic and it is acquired by learning. Some factors including being alone at young age, Being threatened to be thrown out of house or school. Insecurity and emotional problem, loneliness and helplessness and the lack of social and mental supports are threatening factors of self-confidence (Behpazhuh, 2010).

Safety

At first, the most important environment of a person is house. House is a place in which the child achieves everything naturally. Separation of child from house and family and joining social environments with different conditions is an excited or fearful event. In order that the children can adapt themselves easily with new environment, it is required to recognize their position in environment appropriately, otherwise they feel insecure. The experiments insist on the necessity of avoiding ambiguity in defining and designing the buildings. Inconsistent children should easily see the functions of each space they enter, otherwise they feel insecure. Any sector, space and path should be evident in building (Azmude, 2012).

Children like cozy places and they have no dream and clear thinking in crowded places. These cozy places are good for loneliness. They feel secure on the corners of the space and they can concentrate and think about the issues, talk with themselves, draw or talk quietly with their friends (Azmude, 2012).

Nature and children

Nature is physical and materialistic world, time and place, the world we live in and we are related to it with our

senses (Motahari, 2003). Music, poem, nature, happiness and optimism are required vitamins of child. If the needs of child are not fulfilled, he will be an imbalanced and problematic person (biddulph, 2005). The specific consideration of Quran to nature and emphasis on observation of its phenomena show the important role of nature in human education. Nature is the continual creature of God, it is systematic, indicating God attributes and names, it has love and wisdom, it has also two worldly and divine aspects. It creates human being and is controlled by him (Beheshti, Shekarinia, 2011). The salvation of human being is possible via worldly life or by natural factors and there is no alternative except the thoughtful relationship with nature and using nature benefits (Beheshti and Shekarinia, 2011).

From practical aspects, children achieve more materialistic, spiritual and physical rewards of nature. From aesthetic aspects, nature is attractive and it is due to its diversity and having similarities and differences. In human term, children prefer to be related to nature as it is not man-made and it has infinite variety. From nature studies, children consider nature as the platform of searching for new discoveries. There are many evidences that natural environment has positive effects on adults health including more mental health, best cognitive performance, less physical diseases and rapid improvement of diseases. The researches presented clear evidences of the effect of nature on children and it is due to high flexibility of children. Nature reduces the effect of stress on children and helps them to cop up with the hardship of life. The more we are exposed to nature, the more its benefits (Wells, 2003). This attraction causes that environment creates security for the child and if he is in nature, he has no fear as nature is his friend.

It is clear that nature is most important ground for achieving experience by children and natural environments have great capabilities for exploration, observation, interpretation and experience of children (Mozafar, Mehdizade, Seraj, Seyed, 2009), the sensory and emotional interest of children to nature is developed earlier than their logical and abstract view. It is required to let children develop love to nature and land and nature is the best teacher of children than many books and papers. Leisure time of children as the maximum time of their life should be dedicated mostly to their interest (Shieh, 2006).

To improve child senses, the relationship of child with nature, better training of concepts to him among his peers, the design of various spaces, participation of child in creating space and considering the children scale in space (Ebrahimi, Saeedi, Rezvani, Maani and Manjili, 2011), participation and training besides intellectual progress of child causes that he is proud of this capabilities and increase his self-esteem.

Child experience of nature

In the middle of childhood, the children are prepared genetically to discover the surrounding environment and linking with nature. In other words, they learn how the surrounding world works and they are encouraged to understand the natural world via playing. Direct relation with environmental factors let the children discover, imagine and find everything (Olds, 1989).

Childhood experiences via contact with nature forms our interests. In the important childhood period, we are not indifferent to natural factors including live and dead, plants, insects, tree, waterfall, thunder and rain are not man-made equally. We react to them and our contact with these factors in childhood forms our tendency to nature in adulthood (Kahn and Kellert, 2013). The nature experience has important effect on children physical, cognitive and emotional growth (Kan and Kellert, 2013). The experience of children of nature can be classified into direct, indirect, symbolic or vicarious methods.

Direct experience is physical and real experience of nature elements and live creatures. Direct experience is the one not being planned and no specific organizing is considered for them. Direct experiences of game or self-motivated activity of child in the yard, forest, lawn, river or park near the house or a deserted land are considered. Indirect experience of child of nature is physical and real experience of natural habitats and non-human creatures but as limited, planned and managed. For example we can refer to the children encountering plants and animals, habitats in a zoo, aquarium or aquatic plants and animal's exhibition or in botanical garden and etc. Another type of indirect experience is including pets and plants in house namely the elements and creatures present as inseparable part of house or family life of child. Relationship with flowers and vegetables of flowerbed and products and gardens and farms animals are in this group.

Symbolic or vicarious experience is the one in which there is no real and physical contact with nature and what is experienced by child is the representation or mixed views of nature and sometimes they are realistic and also they can be seriously symbolic or dependent upon definite style (Kahn and Kellert, 2013). Nature in a major part of human completion history is one of the most important fields a child deals during his sensitive puberty period. It can be said if direct and indirect experience of nature is one of the most effective elements of physical, emotional, perception and ethical development of human being, this is right in future. Despite such possibility, our scientific awareness of the effect of nature is weak during various childhood stages (Kahn and Kellert, 2013). Nature experience is an opportunity to form values and criticism of values. Nature experience can lead to criticism and rejecting materialistic tendencies (Kahn and Kellert, 2013). The researchers showed that positive contact of children with nature can lead to environmental morality development (Chawla, 1988). It is necessary self-knowledge feeling of younger children regarding nature and as a part of it can be developed. The researches show that children understanding of human and nature are not complete and it is built in the early childhood. Educating children with irregular contact with nature causes that during socialization process, the children are considered separated from nature not as a part of it. Contact with nature can have deep effect on cognitive evolution namely in the mid-childhood and the early adolescence years. Identification, naming, classification and learning regarding nature can help the growth of one's abilities to classify and keep information and ideas. At a relatively early age, children encounter in nature a vast array of objects for labeling and discriminating features and properties (Kahan and Kellert, 2013).

Nature is the richest informational context people ever likely to encounter. In addition, this raw matter is continually available for all children. Near their house or as metaphorically and indirectly. Contact with nature namely in the middle-childhood plays important role in emotional- exciting receiving and responding power of child (Kahn and Kellert, 2013). If direct experience of children of nature is not very original, it has vital importance. Direct contact with nature provides unique progress opportunities in discovery, creativity and autonomy. Even in relatively normal nature, children experience wonder, learning and deep personal satisfaction (Kahan and Kellert, 2013). Nature-based intelligence is the skill in recognizing and classification of various species of plants and animals and individual environment or other phenomena as formation of cloud, mountains and distinguishing live and dead creatures are in this group. Nature-based intelligence develops directly in relation to natural environments and motor, physical and interpersonal (social) are facilitated in natural ground (Mozafar *et al.*, 2009). Familiarity with surrounding nature and developing creativity power regarding natural elements is a golden opportunity to achieve autonomy and self-efficacy. Direct experience of nature plays important role in emotional, cognitive and value evolution of a person (Kahan and Kellert, 2013).

Enjoyment feeling in a child is increased by emotional-affective attraction of nature and interaction with diverse nature gives excitation to the child and actualizes requires emotions for learning and it has considerable effect on his personality. Nature includes a wide range of child emotions. Wonder, satisfaction, enjoyment and other issues as challenge, fear and anxiety. In other words, although nature motivates enjoyment in a child, it also is with uncertainty, risk and fear (Kahan and Kellert, 2013). The effects of nature on child senses are changed along continual spatial and temporal changes and improve awareness, diagnosis and reaction of child and compared to man-made environments, they are more dynamic and it involves awareness and consideration of children (Kahan and Kellert, 2013).

Nature has important effect on correcting children behaviours and reduction of aggressive behaviours among them. The most important solution to improve mental and physical condition of a child is using sun and fresh air. The studies showed that plants in internal space affect the children moods (Shibata, 2004). The trees and keeping lawn can increase security and comfort of children. Also, game and children creativity are doubled in the places full of trees and lawn fields and this shows the physical and mental consistency of children with natural environments (Zarghami *et al.*, 2013). One of the most important factors on creative behaviour after inherent and internal factor is environmental factors. Making architecture space and nature consistent, the child motivation is increased for playing and self-motivated learning in environment. The contact with animals and plants facilitates recognition growth and encourages fantastic games and senses are stimulated (Ghaemi, 2010). The children opportunity for direct relation with nature is an experience that is removed gradually from childhood period (Mehdinejad *et al.*, 2012).

There are some values in nature evolving one's values. Previous studies classified 9 fundamental values developed by nature in a child. These values show consistency with nature and they play important role in human evolution (Kellert, 1996). As the child has low biological ground in these values, these values and their functional and consistency rule are based on some factors including learning, culture and experience (Lumsden, 1993). The quality and intensity of these values are different among people and groups. This variety is not limited from biological aspects and is done in definite range (Vahabzade, 2011).

Table 2 Typology of natural values

| Definition | Value |
|--|---------------------|
| Attraction of nature | Aesthetic |
| Dominance and control of nature | Dominionistic |
| Affective link with nature | Humanistic |
| Ethical and spiritual relation with nature | Moralistic |
| Searching in nature | <i>naturalistic</i> |
| Fear and uncertainty in nature | <i>negativistic</i> |
| Identification of nature | <i>scientific</i> |
| Language as the source of fantasy | <i>symbolic</i> |
| Language as the source of the materialistic and physical rewards | <i>utilitarian</i> |

*Aesthetic value indicates physical attraction of nature. The completion of this value helps the abilities of child to receive and discern order and organization and form ideas about symmetry, harmony, and balance and stimulate a child's curiosity, imagination and discovery.

*Dominionistic value indicates the necessity of dominance and control of nature. The consisting benefits of this value including security, protection, independence and autonomy, to explore and discover, to take risks and confront the unknown, resourcefulness and expressing boldness.

*Humanistic value emphasizes on strong emotional and affective bond with nature. Such link with nature increases intimacy, close relation, trust and some capacities for social relation and unity and increases the self-confidence and self-esteem of child via receiving, giving and sharing emotions.

*Moralistic value indicates ethical and spiritual closeness with nature. Consisting benefits with formation of this value include formation of a deep feeling of meaning, order and goal, tendency to protect and good behaviour with nature and the sociability of child is improved by shared spiritual and ethical beliefs.

*Naturalistic value is the inclination for close contact with nature. The functional benefits of this value are searching, discovery, curiosity, imagination and increasing self-confidence via showing skill and consistency in nature and keeping carefreeness and fighting with the issues via temporal and spatial intelligence.

*Negativistic value is improved in avoidance, fear and rejecting nature. The functional and consisting benefits of this value are avoiding injury, minimizing risky and uncertain behaviours and the view with respect and fear to nature and recognizing nature destructive power.

*Scientific view indicates the empirical and systematic study of nature. The fundamental benefits of this value are achieving mental skill, critical thinking, problem solving capabilities, the capacities for observation and empirical analysis and analysis of various processes of nature.

*Symbolic value indicates the role of nature in forming and helping humanistic relations and thoughts. The consisting benefits of this value include enhancing classificatory and taxonomic skills, capabilities of using language and counting, analysis of difficult aspects of mental-social evolution via imagination and increasing communication and discourse via using symbols.

Finally, *utilitarian* value indicates materialistic and utilitarian attraction of nature. Various benefits of this value include achieving physical and materialistic security, self-confidence and self-esteem via learning the techniques and skills in nature and distinguishing the physical dependency of people to systems and natural processes (Kellert, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Childhood prepares the best ground for personality, educational development and more inclination to collective life and participation of human being. Considering a suitable environment for child growth and familiarity with his natural needs as required in childhood, provides appropriate ground of personality, educational growth as healthy future generation. During this period, we can meet the physical and mental needs of child and meeting his affective need. The child needs have various levels like adults and they start from physical needs at low level and go to the high needs as self-actualization. When child needs are not met appropriately, it has great effect on his responses to stimulations or situations. Thus, an effective ground is prepared for aggressiveness, rejection, late learning and escaping school.

The researches regarding the comparison of the self-confidence and self-conception of normal children and those living in child care centers showed the low self-confidence and self-conception among children living in child care centers. Thus, the conditions are more difficult for children in unsuitable families as without parents; they cannot meet some of the needs. According to the researches, the most important problem of these children is low self-confidence and security, some factors as frequent movements, changing the center employees, changing the policies of child care centers lead to instability, insecurity and not meeting various needs. Low self-confidence leads to great problems for children and affects all of his life aspects. Security plays an important role in evolving child personality. Without security, the child cannot have intellectual and cognitive development and nature experience is a good tool to meet child needs. Children experience nature by three forms, first direct experience is physical and real experience of nature elements and live creatures, second indirect experience of child of nature some items as physical and real experience of natural habitats and non-human creatures as limited, planned and managed and third vicarious or symbolic experience in which there is no physical and real contact with nature and what is experience by child represents some mixed views of nature. Direct and indirect experience of nature is one of the most effective elements of physical, emotional, perceiving and ethical development of human being. Even in relatively normal nature, children experience surprise, learning and deep personal satisfaction. Natural environment has positive

effects on adults' health including more mental health, best cognitive performance, less physical diseases and rapid improvement of diseases. Nature reduces the effect of stress on children and helps them to cop up with the hardship of life. Relationship with nature namely in the middle childhood plays important role in emotional-affective receiving and responding ability of child, interaction with diverse and mysterious nature gives excitation to children and required emotions for learning are motivated and it has important effect on his personality formation.

Searching and exploration in nature increases imagination power and it increases self-confidence of child. Totally, nature causes the child can have high self-confidence by better recognition of themselves and their abilities and feel more secure and comfortable during presence in nature and contact with it.

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