



28. PLAYGROUND DANGERS: A COMPREHENSIVE INVESTIGATION INTO CHILDHOOD INJURIES AND PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction. Playgrounds represent environments that occupy a significant point in shaping children's daily activities by providing room for social interaction and self-development. However, this role comes with a spectrum of associated risks, rendering playgrounds to potential injuries. Therefore, falls are depicted as the prevailing mechanism of harm across various types of playground equipment, with the incidence ranging from 58.7% for seesaw injuries to 90.1% for climbing equipment injuries.

Aim of study. The overall aim is assessing children's safety at the outdoor playground and parents' behaviour regarding children's safety at the playground.

Methods and materials. An observational mixed study using a questionnaire for evaluating outdoor playgrounds and a qualitative study using face-to-face interviews with parents of children under 7 years of age. Coding was done using MaxQDA qualitative research software in conjunction with narrative analysis. Parents or other carers of children under 7 were the study unit. The data were collected over 3 months and assess the hygiene aspects of outdoor playgrounds within Chisinau municipality, randomly selected from all 5 districts. A checklist was used to assess the state of hygiene and playground equipment in Chisinau municipality. For face-to-face interviews with parents, a guide with questions related to children's safety at outdoor playgrounds.

Results. In this research study, individual interviews were conducted near playgrounds in close proximity to playgrounds. Parents identified slides (7 out of 18), sandboxes (5 out of 18), and swings (4 out of 18) as the most hazardous play elements. Concerns raised by parents included insufficient sun protection, challenges in observing or maintaining vigilance over children at elevated heights, and the belief that a playground is only safe under constant supervision. The documented trauma incidents occurred during the summer of 2022. Contributing factors to these accidents were found to be parental inattention and the presence of aging elements in the playground. Parents reported accidents stemming from their children falling from elevated positions, such as slides, or slipping due to loose gravel.

Conclusion. This is the first research in the Republic of Moldova on playground injuries and is an encouragement to study this problem. The analysis of the interviews with parents gave a general idea about their knowledge in different aspects (from their perspective about the playground elements to the injuries that occurred or first aid). The study showed that playgrounds in Chisinau have more disadvantages than advantages. Based on this research, further preventive measures will be taken.