# Playing Safely: An Exploration of Irish Parental Attitudes Towards Risky Play and Its Impact on Play Opportunities for Children

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**Abstract :** Playing is an instinctive and universal human behavior, is a child's way of learning and an outlet for their innate need of activity. Risky play can be defined as any play that is thrilling or exciting involving the risk of injury. The benefits of risky play have been acknowledged as helping children to explore and conquer fears, develop confidence, reduce anxiety, and develop risk-management skills. Studies indicate that children learn sound judgment by assessing and confronting risks in relation to their own capabilities through exposure to carefully managed play experiences. Risky play has been associated with danger and increased risk of injury, with families focusing on risk aversion and protecting children from the risks inherent in the modern world. Despite children needing cultural, social, emotional, physical, and geographical space to play, the opportunity for children to play is diminishing. Aim: This study explores play behaviors and risky play in an Irish context by investigating parental attitudes to risky play. Methodology: This is a mixed methods study involving the State of Play survey and semi-structured interviews exploring parental attitudes to risky play. Data will be quantitatively analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using IBM SPSS and qualitatively analyzed via thematic analysis using NVivo. Conclusion: The information gathered could advise stakeholders regarding the creation and provision of developmentally appropriate, challenging, stimulating, adaptable, accessible, and safe as necessary outdoor play areas. This research can inform parents, planners, architects, and authorities involved in creating environments for play and contribute to policy development.

**Keywords :** child development, parental attitudes, play opportunities, risky play

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