

# Relationship Between Residential Characteristics And Emotions In Children

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## **Abstract:**

In the literature, mostly the effects of housing characteristics on user psychology and user satisfaction studies cover adults. However, it has been widely believed that, positive and negative emotions experienced in the childhood have stronger impacts than the emotions experienced later.

House is both an economical, physical and a social formation. The socialization process of a child begins in the house and continues in the city. In the future, both our houses and our cities will be our children's. For a country such as Turkey, which has a population of young generation, it has believed that childhood experiences have to be studied in a more detailed way for the reason those experiences will later affect the life style of the adults.

The aim of the study is to determine how the children's emotions are affected by the characteristics of the house and how the image of the home is emerged and formed in this period of life. For this

reason, a case study is conducted in a squatter settlement.. In this case study, assuming the users consist of children, how the children are affected by the house they live in and what are the factors affecting user satisfaction in residents have been investigated. The case study is conducted via a questionnaire and face to face interviews.

The age of the children chosen for the questionnaire is between 8 and 16. The reason for this is, before the age of 8, children spend most of their times inside the house playing and thinking of no other function of the spaces and after the age of 16, the children are teenagers and not really 'children' anymore.

As a result of the study, data can be interpreted to reach some conclusions that can be used to rehabilitate the existing settlements and to design future projects with children in mind. Designing the residential areas according to children's' satisfaction may ease the socialization and the education process. So the final benefit of can be told as to have more secure and livable spaces and cities to live in.

## **Introduction**

As a result of the living environments that transform into more complicated urban spaces, the problems children face are increasing day by day. Especially in the last 20 years, more attention is given on studies examining children's relationships with the environments they live in. The 'Growing up in Cities' project Kevin Lynch initiated in 1970, is the first project that examines the city perception of children and their relationships with the spaces they live worldwide.

The widest definition of 'child' is; a person who is under 18 years old. In other words, child is a person who did not totally reach the maturity by means of intellectual and social issues yet. This definition can be considered as important because it reminds that children are people who are in need of help and support (Simpson, 1997).

According to Piaget (1967), the formation of the space concept first appears in the form of topological relationships, then metrical relationships. The house has an important role in defining the concept of space of a child. Childhood is characterized as a period of responsibility-free dependence. Dependence refers to fact that children spend more time at home in close proximity to their parents.

For children and adolescents, age become a critical moderating variable because time spent in the home will change as children grow (Cairney, 2005).

As Evans, Saltzman, et al. (2001) point out, children spend more time in home than in any other physical environment. If poor housing conditions can have a harmful effect on health, then more time spent at home should increase the risk of negative health outcomes (Cairney, 2005). This means that children are at greater risk for emotional and behavioral problems.

It is a widely believed that the physical and mental health of a child is major factors affecting the life as an adult later. And the data based on former studies show us that the physical and mental health partly depends on environmental factors in a child, more than any other age-group. Considering the importance of physical and social environment on later development in children, it is very important to identify environmental risk factors that effect children health mentally and physically.

Every nation needs to raise their children as healthy adults to obtain a more successful nation both in material and moral issues. Having such a young generation of % 40 percent of children in total population, in Turkey, we feel that it is very important to provide adequate development conditions for children.

On the other hand, most of the children (% 55 ) in Turkey are living in squatter settlements that are in physically poor conditions. The aim of the study is to determine how the children's emotions are effected by the characteristics of the house, how the image of the home is emerged and formed in this period of life and whether the children are effected from these conditions and from the concept of 'being a squatter settlement resident'. For this reason, a case study is conducted in two residential areas.

Studies of children's interactions with the environment may be broadly classified into two categories: environmental-use studies, environmental-attitude studies. Environmental use studies have focused on issues such as children's territorial range, play spaces, way finding, and the acquisition of environmental information. The aim of these environmental-use studies has generally been to understand the everyday geography of children's lives from infancy through adolescence (Thurber, Malinowski, 1999).

Environmental attitude studies have also been diverse. Some researchers have focused on broad landscape preferences by asking children to rank order photographs or images. Others have focused

more narrowly on attitudes towards everyday environment such as favorite places, home areas, neighborhoods and schools. The aim of these studies has been to advance our understanding of the diversity attitudes that children have toward the places where they live, learn and play. Yet, few have focused on children's emotions as factors in the human-environment relationship. Often, these studies discuss positive or negative emotions or other psychological characteristics such as child's personality (Thurber, Malinowski, 1999).

## Case Study

In the case study, two residential areas showing a high level of differentiation between each other are chosen. The first is a squatter settlement consisting of one or two storey houses and the second is a legal settlement consisting of apartment blocks. The aim of this selection of these two settlements is, to make a comparison between the children residents of these areas. The squatter settlement chosen is Derbent District, one of the biggest and typical squatter settlements in Istanbul. It is located on a sloppy land. The majority of the land the settlement is on, is owned by private owners. The legal settlement, on the other hand, is Darussafaka District, generally consisting of 5-7 storey apartment blocks. These two Districts are physically quite near.

This study can be classified as an environmental attitude study. The case study is conducted via a questionnaire, face to face interviews and observations. The questionnaire is conducted in Derbent squatter settlement, with 40 children who were consisting of 20 girls and 20 boys. The age of the children chosen for the questionnaire is between 8 and 16. The reason for this is, before the age of 8, children spend most of their times inside the house playing and thinking of no other function of the spaces and after the age of 16, the children spend less time in their houses. A questionnaire study was not possible to conduct in Darussafaka District. The reason for this is, in Derbent squatter settlement it was possible to access the children to apply the questionnaire. The children living in Derbent were all spending most of their times outside. Also the families, especially the mothers of the children were baking bread, washing dishes or talking with the neighbors outside. These situations made the researchers to apply the questionnaires easily. Yet, in Darussafaka District, there were barely children playing outside and when the researchers began to knock the doors to reach the children, they saw that most of the families did not have children of ages between 8 and 16. The families who had children between 8 and 16 were not interested in responding to the questionnaire at

all. If we interpret this situation, we can say that in squatter settlements, both children and their families are hoping for any kind of help they can get and they desperately wish for expressing themselves. Yet, in Darüssafaka District, where most of the residents are from middle and upper-middle income groups, the families do not spend any time in front of their apartment blocks and children do not play on the streets. This is one of the reasons that the children are not easy to find in that settlement. Also probably because the families in the Darussafaka District provide their children adequate conditions, they do not hope for a help, and they do not believe in such studies worth spending time on.

On the other hand, face to face interviews are conducted both with children and their parents to get accurate information of their economical, social and physical situation in both the squatter settlement and the legal settlement.

Questionnaire, interviews and observation studies focus mostly on attitudes towards everyday life such as favorite spaces in their houses, ownership of their own rooms, thoughts about their rooms or the space they sleep in or use the most, neighborhoods and education situations.

## Findings

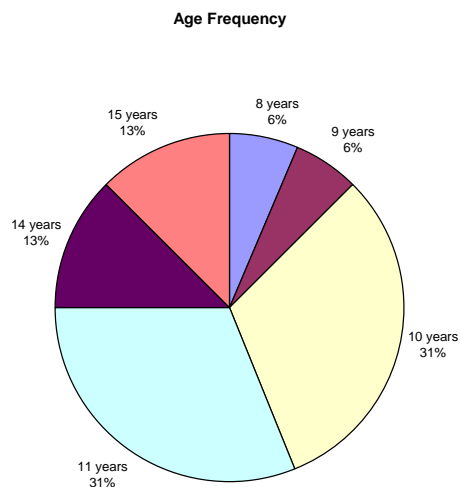


Table 1.

Have you been living here since you were born?

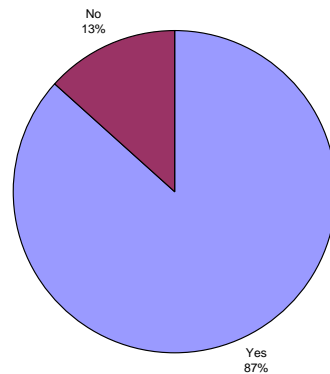


Table 2.

The ages of the children who responded the questionnaire varied between 8 and 15. With a percent of 62%, 10-11 ages took the first place. Half of the respondents were boys and other halves were girls.

87% percent of children were living in Derbent District since they were born, and 13% moved to the district a few years later they were born.

How many people are there in your family?



Which room do you like in your home?

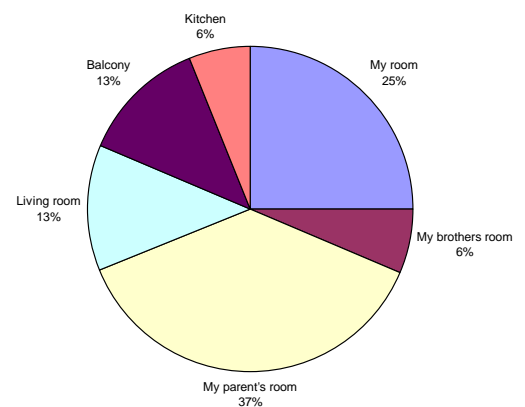


Table 3.

In order to inform about the structure of families who live in Derbent District, “how many people are in your family?” was asked the children. %2 of the children was stated that there were only their

parents in the family, while 75% of the children were stated that there were their parents and brothers in the family. Therefore, it is seen that families who live in Derbent District generally have more than 1 child.

The children who responded the questionnaires stated that they liked most their parents' room. Their own room was in the second order with a percent of 25%.



Table 4.

		Do you like your room?	
		Yes	No
Sex	Girl	25%	75%
	Boy	28%	71%
Total		27%	72%

Table 5.

Girls who responded the questionnaire were generally stated that they did not like their room as well as the boys respondents. Therefore, to define the relationship between sex and place, sex is not an important characteristic.

		Do you have your own room?	
		Yes	No
Do you own your house?	Yes	10%	90%
	No	17%	83%
Total		12,5%	87,5%

Table 6.

Almost all children both house owner and tenant were stated that they did not have their own room. Therefore, it is true to say that ownership is not an important characteristic to define the relationship between ownership and the place.

87% percent of the children were stated that they did not have their own room, while 13% percent of the children were stated they had their own room. 69% percent of the children who have a room said that they did not like their own room.

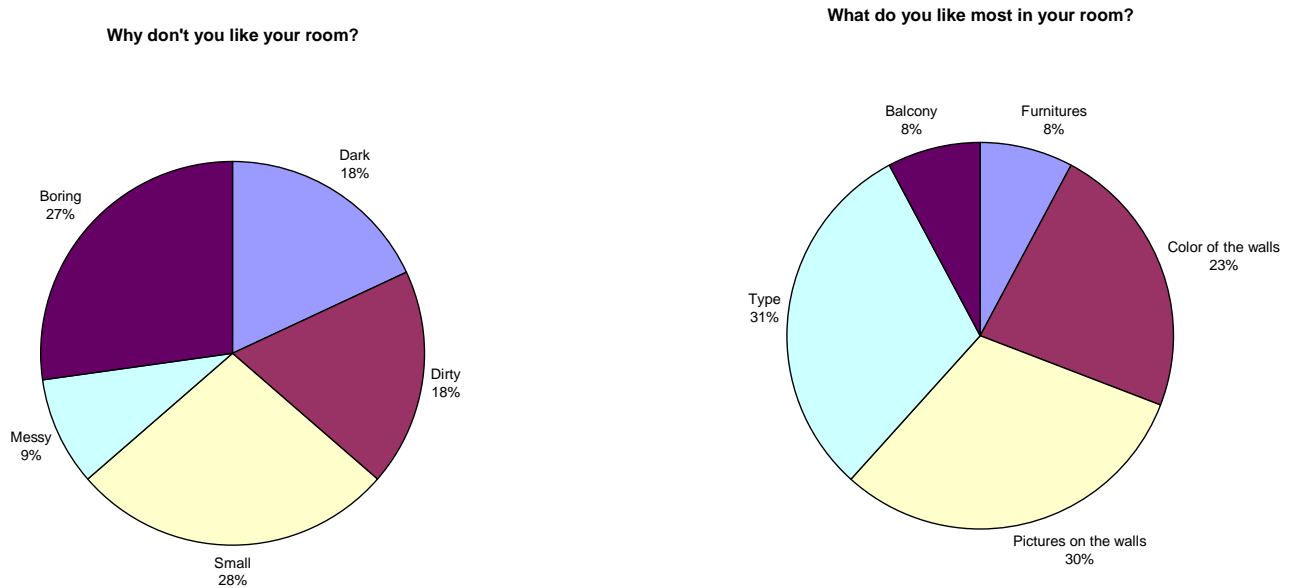
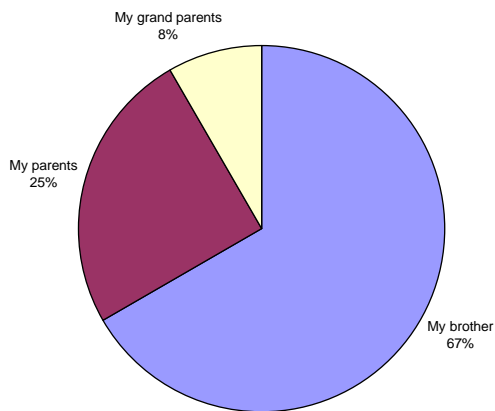


Table 7

28% percent of the children were stated that they did not like your room because it was small. 27% percent of the children were stated that their room was boring, while 18% percent said it was dirty or dark. 31% percent of the children said that they liked most the type of their room. 23% percent of the children liked most the color of the walls, while 8% percent of them liked most the furniture.



Whom do you share your room with?



Do you have enough space in your room?

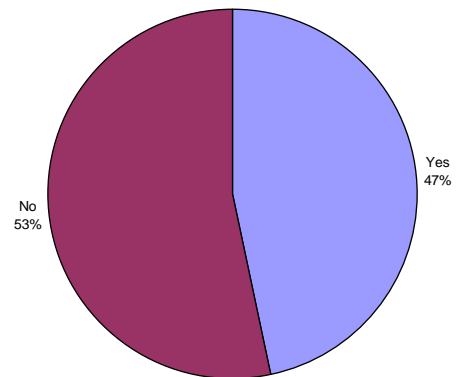


Table 8.

67% percent of the children were seen that they shared the room with their brothers, while 25% percent shared the room with their parents. 53% percent of the respondents were stated that there was no enough space in the room, while 47% percent said there was enough space in the room.

Where do you prefer to play?

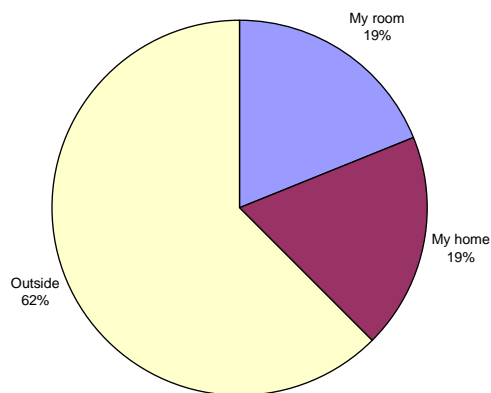


Table 9.

62% percent of the children were stated that they preferred to play in outside, while 19% percent of them preferred to play in their room. The reason of to prefer the outside were stated that the respondents' friends can not come and play with them in the home.

	Where do you prefer to play?			
	My room	My home	Outside	
Can your friends come and play with you in your home?	Yes	20%	30%	50%
	No	17%		83%
Total		18,75%	18,75%	62,5%

Table 10.

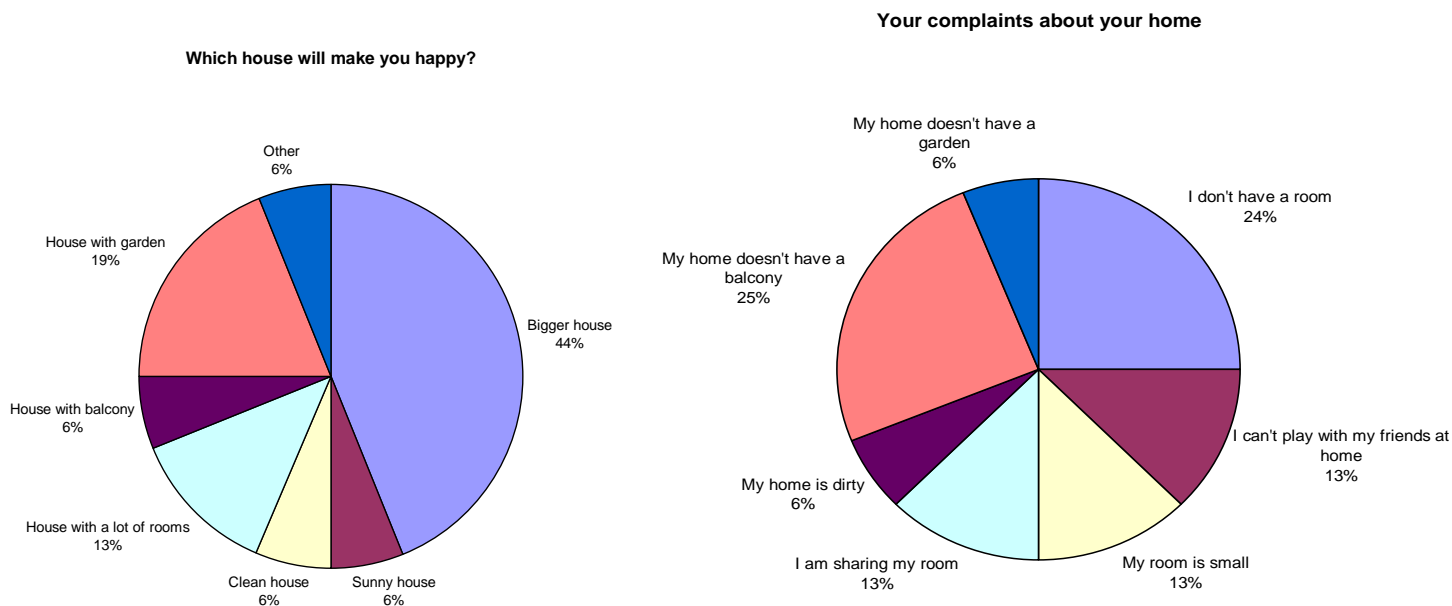


Table 11.

44% percent of the children were said that a bigger house will make them happy. 19% percent of them were said that a house with balcony will make them happy, while 13% of them are prefer to live in a house with a lot of rooms. The most important complaint of the children about the home was not having their own room. Not having a balcony in the house was in the second order.

## Conclusion

For the children living in Derbent District, opportunity of spending time in parks, playgrounds and social activities are limited. This situation gives them no choice but to spend their spare time either at home or on the streets. In fact, spending time on the streets is a considered natural for these children whose families are in low-income group.

While house spaces are considered as spaces in which the adults feel safe, the children do not feel the same. For children, house can be a boring place with lots of limitations. Especially in squatter settlements, the houses are overcrowded and the children do not have a room of their own to spend their time more freely. When examined from this aspect, it is natural for children to spend their time on the streets where they can meet other children and socialize.

It was determined that children in Derbent District generally start working in an early age as 15 or 16. The reasons for this can be explained as; the financial problems of parents, the insufficiency of children's study areas, and the big amount of unplanned and useless time spent on the streets, the unplanned and unconscious everyday life.

Houses where children spent most of their life inside play an important role in the formation of their characteristics, because of children interaction with life firstly begins in the house.

Having a space on their own is an important factor for children development beginning from infancy. The previous studies show that, even infant senses the environment. Later on, not having a room on his own causes problems in many families. In Derbent squatter settlements, a child having his own room almost does not exist. Generally, as the living room is saved for the visitors and not used, a multi-purpose room is formed. This multi-purpose room is used as a living room during daytime and bedroom for the children at night.

Children's own room and other spaces they spend time in the house should be designed as to provide comfortable and adequate usage for the children. The equipments which are chosen appropriate to children in dimension helps children to explore their abilities and to develop self-confidence.

Today, children's lives in cities are getting tougher as well as their parents and other adults. Keeping this in mind, the house is should be designed as the children can feel safe and happy. This is a necessity to raise a healthy and conscious nation.

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