

Evaluation of the status of children's gardens and its impact on attracting visitors to Al-Urjuwan Park in the Al-Musayyib district , Babylon province

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Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate the reality of children's parks in Al-Urjuwan Park, which is affiliated with Al-Musayyib District, Babil Governorate. It is considered the most important park currently because it is the only park that contains some recreational activities, in addition to its distinguished location, which is located on a vital road, so it is considered a rest stop for them. This study was conducted in two stages, which included the first stage. The field study evaluated the design standards followed, the park area, the natural and structural elements, and identified the current problems at the site. The results showed the following:

The duration of stay in the park is 3 hours (50%), followed by 1-2 hours (35%), and the lowest percentage is (15%) for those who wish to stay less than an hour.

As for the marital status of the park's visitors, it was found that the married group, whose percentage reached (65%), are more likely to limit visits during holidays and occasions for families, compared to. (35%) the single group, whose percentage reached.

As for the answer about the health services provided, they were (60%) poor, (25%) acceptable, and (15%) expressed their conviction about the health services available in the park.

We conclude that adding intellectual and electronic games has an effective role in attracting visitors and encouraging and developing the mental abilities of children, and that adding new entertainment activities increases the number of visitors and activates the entertainment activities in the park.

introduction

Gardens and parks are considered places for social and cultural exchange and are the lungs of the city's breathing by creating a suitable place for the person in which he searches for tranquility, fresh air, fragrant smell, greenery and beauty, and giving the opportunity to contemplate the nature surrounding him, in addition to their effective role in preserving the natural balance of the environment and its components (Al-Qai'i, 2007). Recreational parks are public places where one can practice many social and cultural activities, carry out many different recreational events, and enjoy nature. Public parks and green spaces are also considered necessary and basic elements for

improving the quality of life of cities, as they encourage their residents to pay attention to the various elements of nature around them. They are a means of obtaining an attractive and enjoyable view of the city. As a result of the rapid growth and increase in the number of cities' population, the need for this type of land use has emerged due to its environmental importance. The need for green spaces is one of the main problems that city dwellers suffer from, and the percentage of spaces allocated to parks within the city decreases, especially in old residential areas, in addition to their lack of functional efficiency. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, public parks were designed in order to encourage citizens to care

about nature, surrounding and knowledge of various plant species (Armstrong, 2000) (Hashim et al., 2012). Green spaces work to create opportunities for acquaintance among members of the community and to strengthen social relations between them, in addition to increasing their cultural and environmental awareness, in addition to their role in creating cohesive, good and safer communities, as they constitute the basic and largest part of the various playing fields. Perpetual greenery helps to provide joy and pleasure in the soul. Especially in health resorts and around hospitals and educational facilities, one of the most important factors that must be taken into account when people choose their places of residence and living is allocating places for walking and sitting Kuo and Frances (2001) and Kaplan. (2009)

As the years passed, life's difficulties increased, the small size of housing units, climate change, and other problems of the modern era, gardens became an urgent and necessary need due to their social, recreational, economic, and environmental importance. In light of the development that included most of life's facilities, gardens and parks developed and their area increased to include the various activities and events carried out by humans and for various purposes. Ages and for both genders. Universities and colleges that teach the science and art of garden design according to modern scientific foundations have established standards for all types of gardens and various activities. Children's gardens in any park have become an important part of its components due to their importance in developing the mental and health capabilities of children, as children prefer a safe place to play and run freely without being exposed to harm. For different dangers, therefore, its own design

standards were developed for each age group of children (Wicker, 2017). Badr and others (2003) stated that psychologists defined play as a behavior and activity for children that means innovation and creativity for them, as the child discovers himself in play and is considered a measure of his mental and physical ability. Al-Urjuwan Park in Al-Musayyib district of Babil Governorate is considered the only park in the city, and the city administration classified it as a park at the level of the entire district because it is the only one in the city and occupies a large area and includes many activities and events for different ages, including children's gardens, due to their importance and being an important part of the park and a major factor in To attract visitors, garden engineering specialists have focused on designing this important part of the park because it deals with children who have not yet reached the stage of intellectual maturity, by adopting international standards for design and choosing its natural and structural components to achieve the goal of its establishment, which is to enable children to enjoy playing, moving, and running, and to ensure their physical safety, in addition to spreading the spirit of Innovation and intellectual and physical activity in them. The problems of the lack of an actual design for the children's park arose, as children's toys were distributed randomly throughout the park without being confined to a specific place that represents a special garden for children and their families, while providing the necessary space for the children to play and move freely. Do not choose modern toys that develop the child's sensory and mental abilities. Also, some toys pose a danger to children under 5 years old, so the garden must be designed according to the ages of the children, and each part has its own space and its own toys.

Work methodology:

The work methodology included two stages- :

The first stage is the field study, which includes: evaluating the design standards followed, the park area, natural and structural elements, and identifying current problems at the site.

The second stage is the questionnaire to find out the desires and requirements of the park users, develop a program for the problems and requirements, propose solutions, then the results and recommendations to achieve them and submit it to the administration responsible for the park.

-1The first stage

Field study:

Al-Urjuwan Park is located in the Musayyib District of Babylon Governorate in the Middle Euphrates region at longitude (44.297858o)

and latitude (32.797187o) Figure (1) on the road linking Baghdad, Babylon and Karbala Governorates, which gives it great importance and it is a strategic location that increases the importance of the park. The area of the park is 19 dunams, and its population, according to the latest estimate of the Department of Statistics of the Musayyib District for the year 2022, is 53,904 people. The number of visitors to the park observed at peak times is approximately (1000) people during holidays and occasions. This park is classified by the Musayyib Municipality as a level park. District, and the reason for the small number of visitors to the park is due to its current bad situation and the limited activities in it, as it includes only three activities, which are the Picnic area, the children's garden, and an area designated for sports and fitness.



Figure (1) An aerial photograph showing the location of the park in relation to latitude and longitude
A study of the status of the children's garden:

The children's garden is located in the last part of the park on one of the sides of the park on

the side of the road linking Baghdad and Karbala. The location of the park was chosen

without study and planning away from international design standards for the distribution of events.

- Access to the children's park

There are roads and corridors in the park, which are channels designed in a natural pattern that works to achieve a link between the main and secondary roads, and they are paved with bricks. The children's garden is reached through a secondary walkway made of cement stone with a width of 1.80 m, according to international design standards.

- Garden area

The area of the children's garden is 244 square meters, where it contains a number of children's games surrounded by a few seats for parents to sit on to monitor their children at the time of play and the number of children who use the park at peak times is 120, while the number of games in the park is only 6 games, which are insufficient and not compatible with modern games that develop the mental and physical ability of children, as they are old and need maintenance.

- Vegetation

Plants are among the important elements in the design and coordination of green spaces in the park, which give true beauty and provide comfort to humans through their environmental, recreational and health importance to park visitors (Jasim et al., 2015). It was observed through the field study that the most important characteristic of the vegetation cover in the park is the *Conocarpus* and *Albizia* trees scattered on the sides of the park, in addition to the *Dodonaea* shrubs, which are in the form of specific fences for roads and paths and a few areas of hay, and it was also found that there is no suitable ground in the playing areas, as the green surface turned into a dirt area due to the large number

of trampling and the high level of soil salinity due to dependence on tourist irrigation and the unevenness of the land, which led to damage to the green surface.

- Irrigation system

With regard to the irrigation system in the garden, there is more than one irrigation method used, including sprinkler irrigation and Surface irrigation, which is the dominant irrigation system and is an old system that causes many problems, including waste of water and not distributing it regularly.

- Lighting elements

The lighting poles are distributed regularly in the park and on the sides of the main streets, corridors and entrances. Through the field study, it was found that most of the lighting poles do not work and need maintenance.

- Seating benches

It is one of the most important components of gardens and parks because it provides comfort to visitors and makes them feel fun and relaxed. Through the field study of the park, it was found that there are individual and group seating made of concrete and others of wood randomly distributed throughout the park and dimensions that do not conform to international standards and were lacking maintenance and some of them Not suitable for sitting.

- rubbish container

An important element in maintaining the cleanliness of the parks is the waste containers, which had only four containers in the park and were worn out and devoid of aesthetic standards.

- Health facilities

Sanitary facilities are among the necessary services that must be available in the park. A field survey of the park showed that there are only one facility divided for men and women, and it was neglected and unfit for use due to

the lack of water and the lack of a cleaner to maintain it, Table (1).

Table (1) shows the natural and artificial components and their numbers in the park Reference (Directorate of Al-Musayyib Municipality)

Numbers	Synthetic ingredients	numbers	Natural ingredients
119	lighting poles	299	<i>Conocarpus</i>
145	Seating benches	233	<i>Dodonaea</i>
5	Shades	3	<i>Date palm</i>
6	Skate game	6	<i>Washingtonia</i>
7	Swivel chair game	38	<i>Albizia</i>
6	swing	1	<i>Eucalyptus</i>
1	Balance game	1	<i>Ziziphus</i>
1	Waterfall	2,11147	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>

The second stage

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is considered the important and followed tool for measuring the research aim, and through repeated field visits and recording observations about the park, a questionnaire form was prepared that included a field survey of the reality of the situation and the development of proposals and solutions for its development. Forms using Microsoft office Excel and calculating the results as a percentage according to the following equation:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Repetition} (\%)}{\text{The number of respondents}} \times 100$$

The questionnaire included two axes:

The first axis: general information about the respondents, such as age, gender, and marital status.

As for the second axis: it included questions about the park in general and children's parks in particular, Appendix (1).

Results and discussion

First: the characteristics of the respondents

After completing the questionnaire process and collecting the results of the respondents, the results obtained from the questionnaire were converted into percentages:

*Sex

It was found that most of the visitors to the park are of the female sex, as their percentage reached (76%), because the majority of women are responsible for accompanying children, while males reached (24%) (Fig. 2). The park administration does not allow young people to enter the park with their families

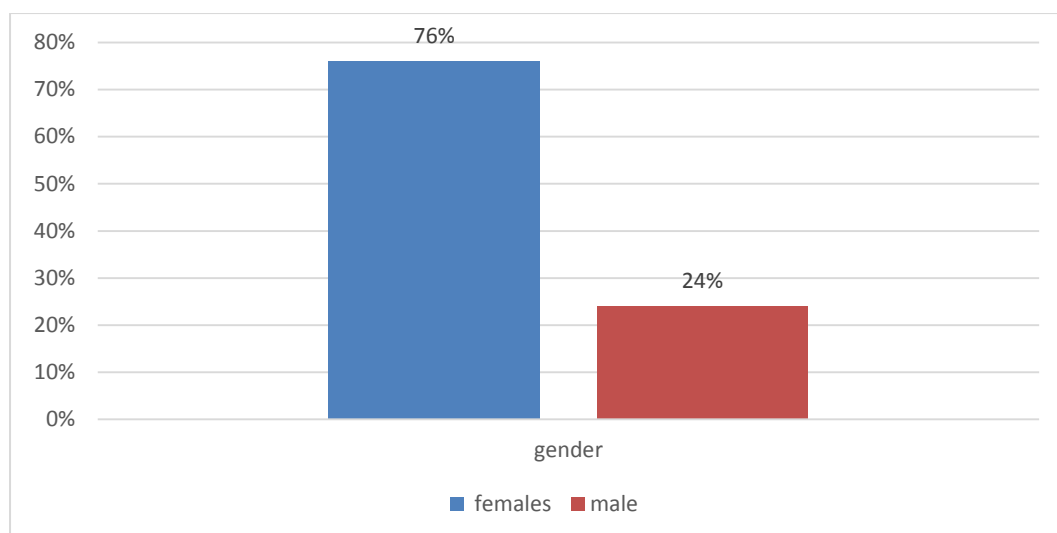


Figure (2) The percentage of male and female visitors to the park

*Age

With regard to the age group, it became clear from (Figure 3) that the visitors to the park were of different ages, as the group whose age ranged from (25-35 years) was the most, and their percentage reached (55%) according to the results of the questionnaire, while the group whose age ranged from (18-25 years) Their percentage was (30%) because those

ages were not allowed to enter without their families on the days of events, while the group whose age was (over 35) got the lowest percentage (15%) due to the lack of appropriate amenities and entertainment for them, such as the presence of a restaurant or casino.

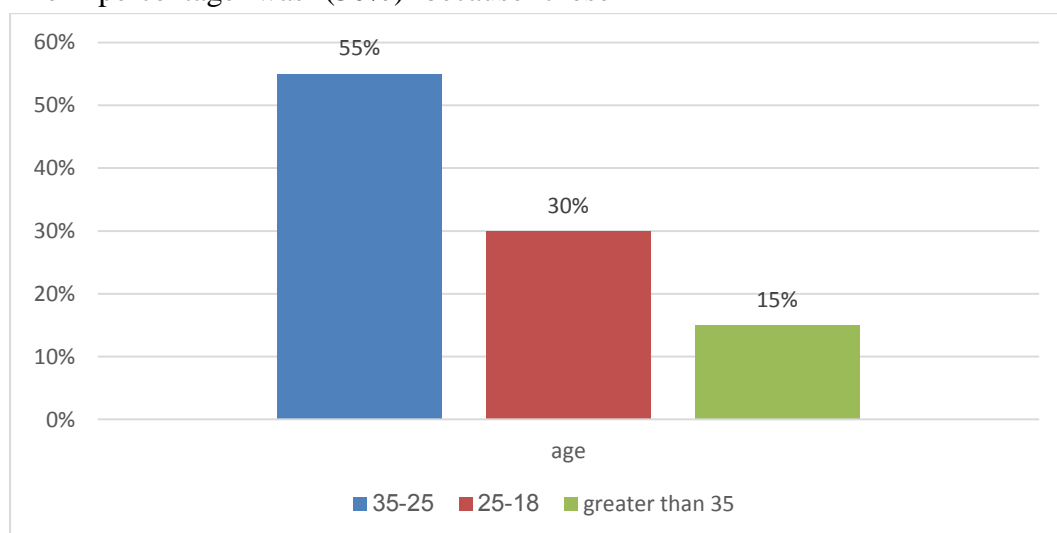


Figure (3) shows the ages of the park visitors

*Social status

With regard to the marital status of the visitors to the park, it was found that the married category, which amounted to (65%), are the most likely to limit visits during holidays and

events to families, compared to the single category, which amounted to (35%) (Figure 4.)

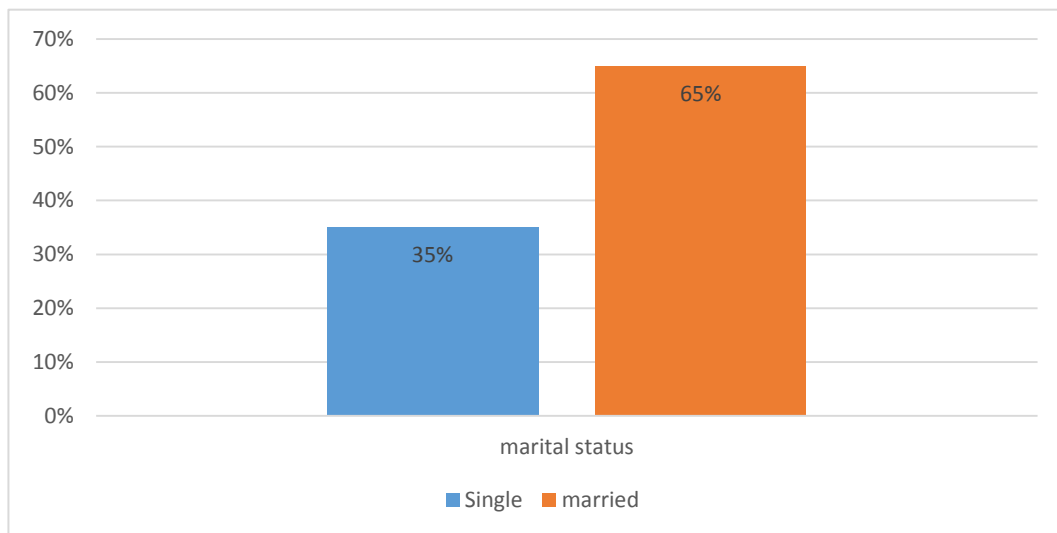


Figure (4) presents the marital status of park visitors. 35% of visitors are single, and 65% are married. The chart shows that a majority of park visitors are married, with 65% of the total respondents being married and 35% being single.

Second: General questions about children's gardens

*Do you visit the park on (normal days, events and feasts, official holidays.)

The results of the questionnaire (Figure 5) showed that (50%) of the respondents prefer to

visit the park on holidays and special occasions, and (45%) of them prefer to visit the park on official holidays, while the lowest percentage was (5%) on regular days, due to their preoccupation with work.

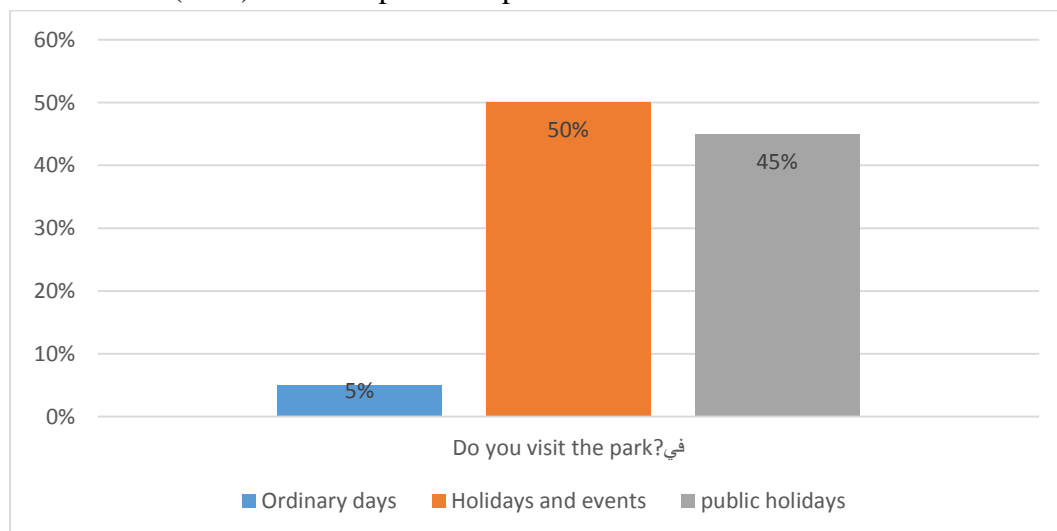


Figure (5) shows the preferred times to visit the park. 50% of visitors prefer to visit on holidays and events, 45% prefer to visit on public holidays, and 5% prefer to visit on ordinary days. The chart indicates that most visitors prefer to visit the park on special occasions or holidays rather than on regular days.

*What do you think about existing children's games (good, bad, somewhat)

The results of the questionnaire showed that (62%) (Fig. 6) of the park visitors expressed

their dissatisfaction with the children's games in the park, due to their deteriorating condition, lack of number, and lack of interest and maintenance.

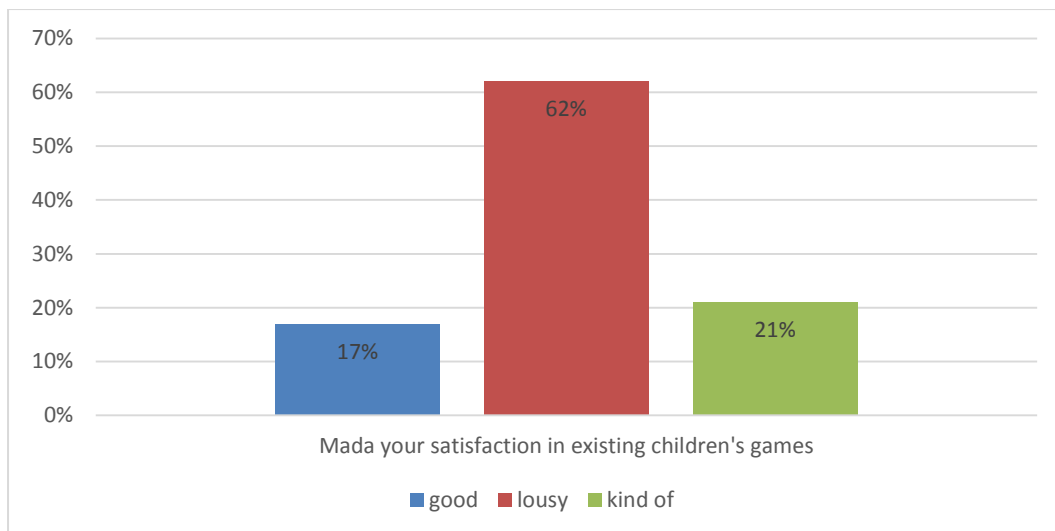


Figure (6) The opinion of the respondents about the children's games inside the park

*Do children use existing toys (Yes, No.)

The results of the questionnaire showed that (51%) (Fig. 7) of the respondents expressed their unwillingness to use the current games,

because most of them are not valid (broken) and they are also old and not safe.

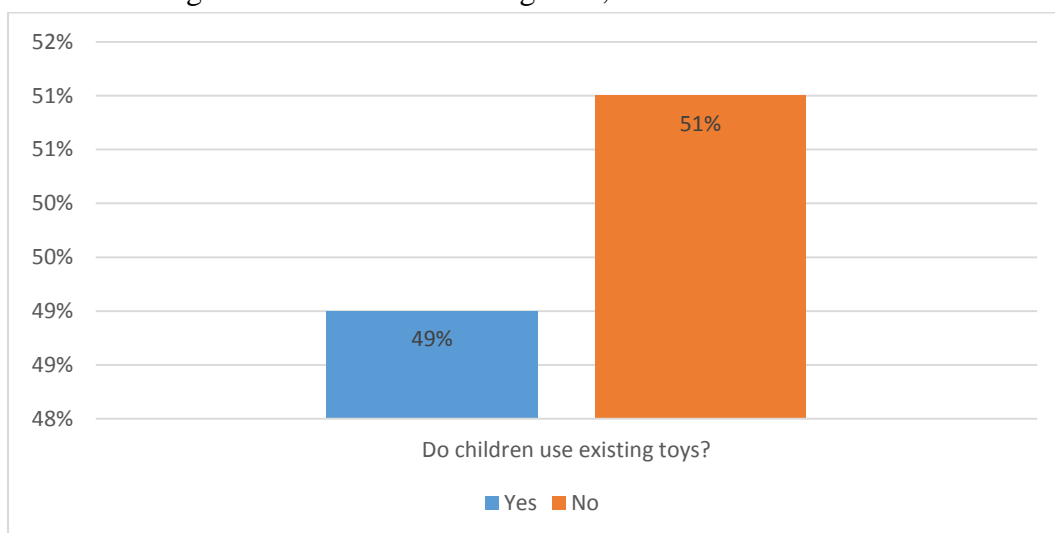


Figure (7) shows children's use of current games

*Is there a security element in the garden (Yes, No.)

(%90) of the respondents confirmed the lack of a safety element in the park, due to the absence of a safety element in the games and

their floors, and the lack of a specific space for the garden, which leads to a lack of control over the movement of children throughout the park (Fig. 8.)

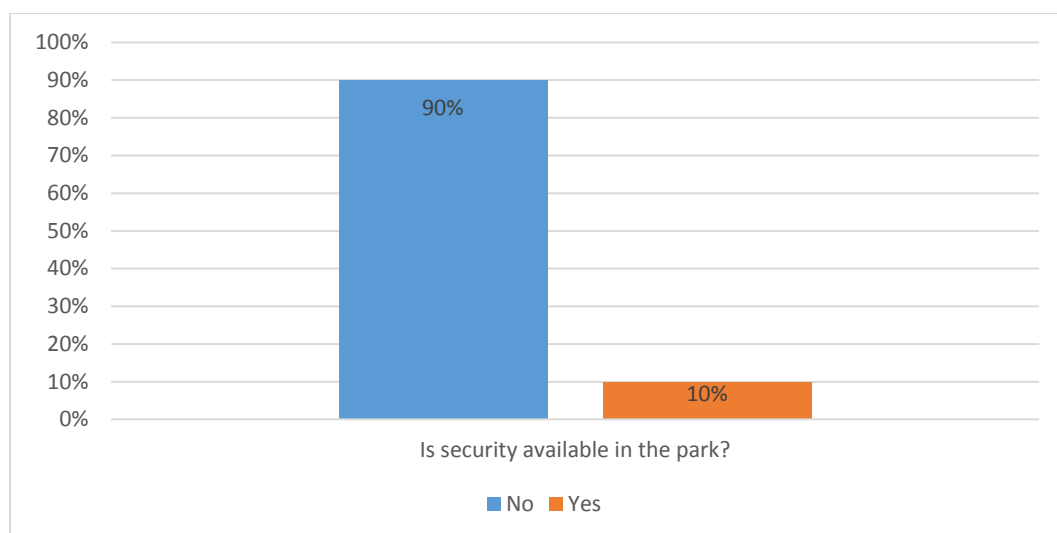


Figure (8) Availability of safety in the park

*What do you think about health services (good, poor, somewhat.)
 The respondents had another opinion about the health services, where their response rate was (60%) poor, (25%) acceptable, and (15%)

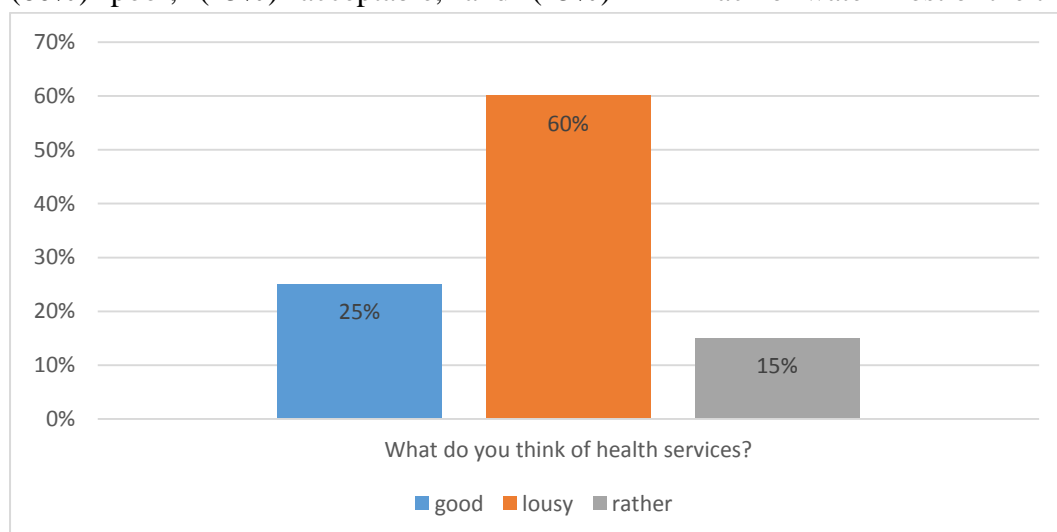


Figure (9) Health services in the park

*How long will you stay in the park (less than an hour, 1-2 hours, more than 3 hours.)
 According to the results obtained from the questionnaire about the duration of stay in the park, (50%) was more than (3) hours, because many of them depended on the length of their

stay in the park on the children until they completed playing, followed by a period of (1-2) hours at an average of (35%) or less. (15%) for those who would like to stay less than an hour due to the lack of services and the absence of fun in the park (Fig. 10.)

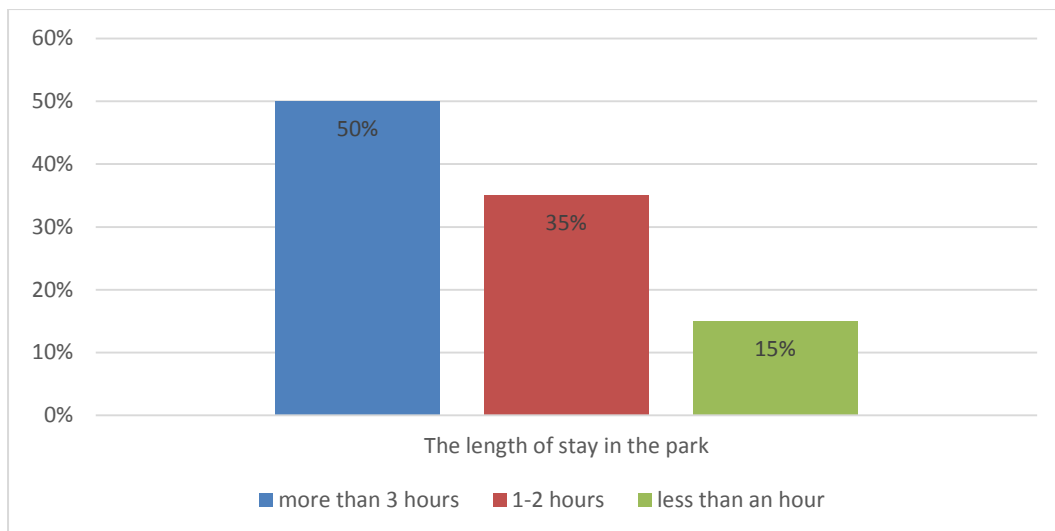


Figure (10) Duration of stay in the park

*Do you support the addition of new entertainment activities (Yes, No.)

Regarding the addition of new entertainment activities, the results were (100%) yes, and this is due to the lack of efficiency and poor

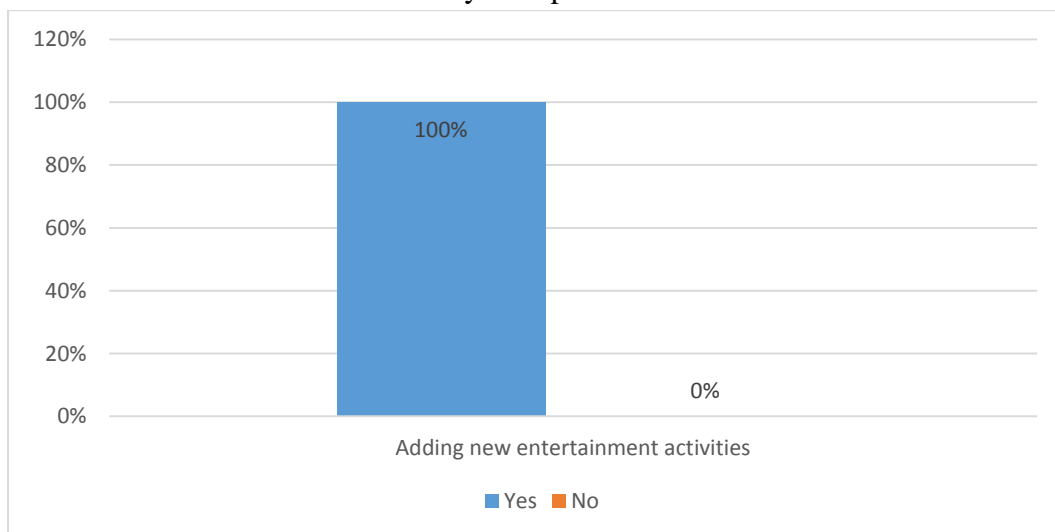


Figure (11) Adding new entertainment activities

*Are the floors suitable for children to play (yes, no, somewhat.)

The results of the questionnaire about children's playing floors were uneven, as (69%) of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the floors because of the

damage to the green surface as a result of the large number of trampling and dry soil in the summer, and (22%) their opinion was somewhat, and (9%), which is the lowest percentage. The respondents expressed their satisfaction with the floor (Fig. 12.)

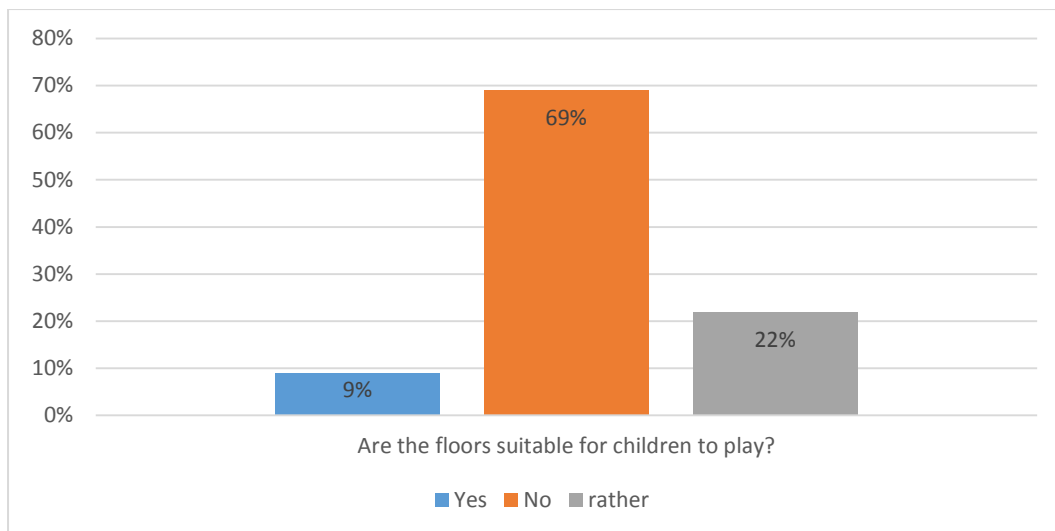


Figure (12) The suitability of floors for children to play and electronic games, the percentage was (100%) yes, for its effective role in attracting visitors and encouraging and developing children's mental abilities (Fig. 13.)

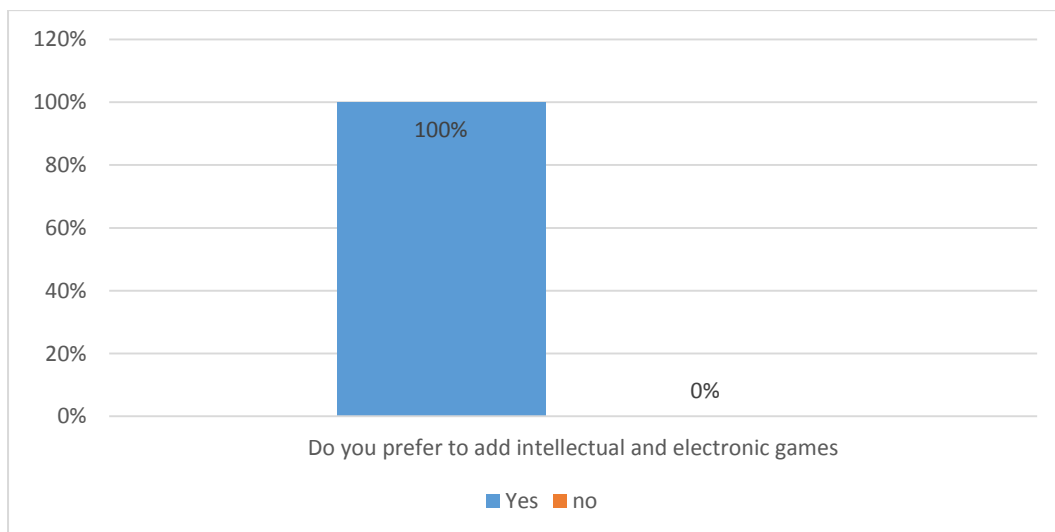


Figure (13) Addition of intellectual and electronic games for children to increase the spaces for children's games, due to the crowding that occurred on holidays and special occasions.

*Do you support increasing the space for children's games (Yes, No)
The results of the questionnaire (Fig. 14) showed that (100%) of the respondents agreed

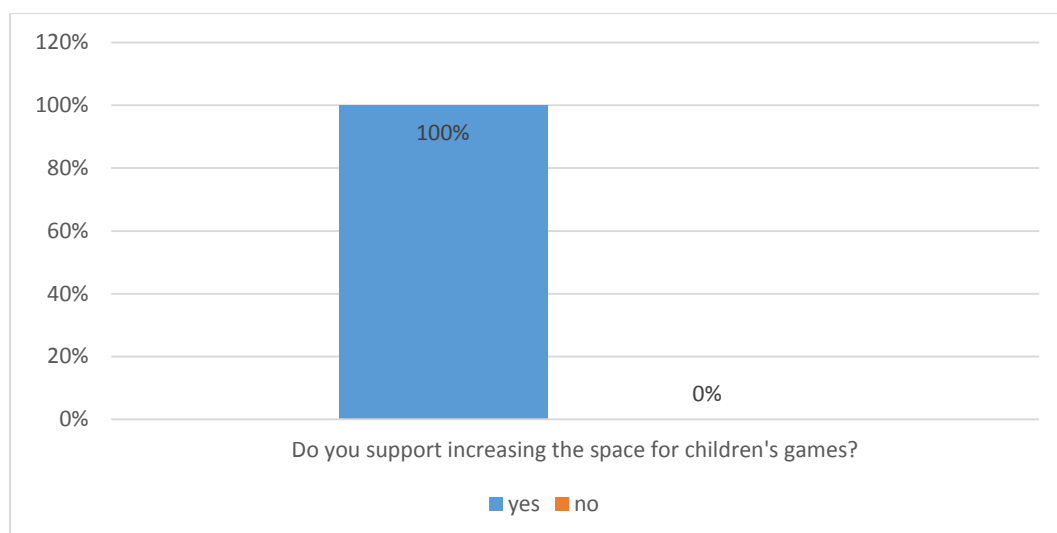


Figure (14) Increasing the space for children's games

Conclusions

-1 There is no lighting in the park, which causes the park not to be used in the evening.

-2 Entertainment activities lack international standards, in addition to their small number and incompatibility with each other.

-3 Not using modern irrigation systems (sprinkler irrigation) currently used in most parks.

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Do you visit the park on: Regular days
Holidays and events public holidays

What do you think of the existing children's games: good rather poor

Do children use existing toys:
Yes No

Is there a security element in the garden:
Yes No

What do you think about health services:
good rather poor

How long will you stay in the park:
Less than an hour (1-2) hours More
than three hours

Do you support adding new entertainment activities: Yes No

Are the floors suitable for children to play:
Yes No

Do you prefer to add intellectual and electronic games for children Yes
No

Do you support increasing the space for children's games: Yes No

Appendix 1(questionnaire form

Gender : Male Female
Age: (18-25) years (25-35) years (over 35) years
Marital status: Married, single
Children's ages: (2-5) years old (5-12) years old (over 12) years old