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Public Space and Security: Samsun/Batipark Sample

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Abstract

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This study examines the perception of security in public spaces and the parameters that determine this perception in the context of open and green spaces. Globalization, economic transformations and global pandemics have changed the way public spaces are used and increased the importance of the concept of security. Within the scope of the study, the public use and security status of Batipark in Samsun city was analyzed. In the research, the intended use of the park, visitor profile, security measures and security perception were systematically addressed through survey and observation techniques. Surveys with 180 participants revealed that factors such as lighting, security personnel and regular maintenance directly affect the perception of security. The study reveals the need for improvements in design and management processes to increase the perception of security in public open-green spaces.

Keywords: Public space, green space security, public space and security, security perception, open public space.

1. INTRODUCTION

With globalization, economic developments, privatization processes and urban transformation projects, public spaces have become one of the most discussed topics in today's urban planning and architecture disciplines (Uysal Bilge, 2021). Public spaces are physical environments that shape the social and cultural fabric of cities, where individuals can come together to socialize, relax and engage in various activities (Amen 2021; Amen and Kuzovic 2018b; Aziz Amen 2022; Al-Dujaili, and Amen 2018). In this context, especially the functional roles of open public spaces in urban life are becoming more and more important day by day. Global health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have increased individuals' need for open spaces and revealed how vital it is to organize these spaces in a safe, accessible and sustainable manner. Throughout history, pandemics have directly affected the spatial structure of cities and the use of public spaces (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

Public spaces should be considered not only as physical spaces but also as social platforms where social interactions, democratic practices and common life take place. According to Habermas' public sphere theory, these are spaces where members of civil society come together to engage in critical discussions and negotiate social and political issues (Habermas, 1989). While the qualities of public spaces directly affect the quality of life of city dwellers, the security of these spaces is a decisive factor in users' decision to actively use these spaces (Mehta, 2014). Inadequate perception of security may cause individuals to move away from these spaces; therefore, security elements should not be ignored in the planning process of public spaces.

The main research question of this study is “How is the perception of security in public open spaces formed and how does this perception affect user satisfaction?”. In this framework, the forms of public use and security situation in Batipark, which is located in Samsun province and has the status of a city park, will be examined. The main purpose of the study is to understand the security perception of users in Batipark, to analyze their satisfaction levels, and to

develop remedial suggestions for the area based on the data obtained. In line with this goal, the study aims to contribute to the planning of open public spaces by providing both user-oriented and site-specific solutions. The research was conducted with the survey technique, one of the quantitative data collection methods. The questionnaire form was prepared to include demographic information of the participants, frequency of park use, purpose of use, perception of safety and service satisfaction. This form, in which open-ended and closed-ended questions were used together, was applied both face-to-face and online methods. The sample size was calculated as 179 with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error based on the population of İlkadım district of Samsun (336,501 people), and a total of 180 people were surveyed. In addition, plan documents for Batıpark were obtained from Samsun Metropolitan Municipality, and spatial analysis of the area was supported by on-site observations. The results of the research will provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the role of security in the design of open public spaces by revealing the security perception, park usage habits and satisfaction levels of Batıpark users. The recommendations to be developed in line with the findings can provide guidance not only for Batıpark, but also for the planning and management processes of other similar urban parks. In this context, the study aims to contribute to the literature on open public space security in the Turkish context and to shed light on local government policies. In the remainder of the article, firstly, a theoretical framework on the concepts of public space, open public space and security will be presented, and then the methods of the field research conducted in Batıpark will be detailed. In the findings section, analyses based on the survey results will be presented; finally, in the discussion and conclusion sections, inferences will be made based on the findings obtained and recommendations for practice will be developed.

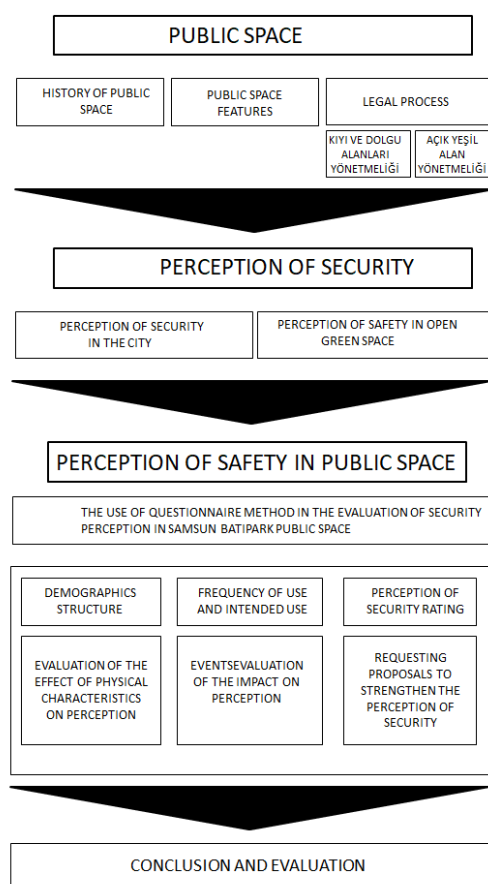


Figure 1. Structure of the Study.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SPACE

Discussions on the public sphere have not yet reached a consensus. There is often no clarity between the concepts of public and private space. Arendt and Habermas argue that the blurring of these concepts is often due to the lack of a clear understanding of the public sphere in contemporary life. In reality, the public is “open, visible, collective and accessible to all”. Private is closed, invisible, individual and forbidden territory (Peters & Cmiel, 1997).

Habermas explained the concept as follows. “By 'public sphere' we mean, first and foremost, a space in our social life in which something akin to public opinion can be formed. Access to this space is guaranteed to all citizens. In every speech situation in which private individuals gather in a public body, a part of the public sphere comes into

being” (Habermas, 2004, p. 95). Habermas defines the public sphere as a space in social life where individuals discuss and express their thoughts, accessible to everyone (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

The public sphere is the sphere of freedoms and is a sphere in which one should participate free from the obligations inherent in human nature. The private sphere, on the other hand, is truly related to the home. The elements necessary for the reproduction of life exist here; slaves, women, children, events such as death and birth take place under the umbrella of the oikos despotism (Habermas, 2010).

According to Habermas, the public sphere is a space that belongs to unspecified people, that 'everyone' can use, that has no borders, that is free, that is a space to spend time together, not daily troubles. While talking about this definition, Habermas made a distinction between public and private spheres. He mentioned this distinction in his work 'The Structural Transformation of Publicness'. For him, the private sphere is the home.

When we look at the historical origin of the concept of public in Habermas, we encounter the Greek city-states. In mature Greek city-states, the sphere of the polis (koine), which was shared by free citizens, was strictly separated from the sphere of the oikos (idia), which belonged to individuals. The public sphere “bios politikos” takes place in the market square, the Agora, but is not spatially bound. The public can take the form of deliberations, which can also take the form of court and parliamentary deliberations, as well as communal actions, such as in war or war games. The equal citizens of ancient Greece speak of the human person in the openness of the public. The public sphere is a space where the common interest and truth are discussed (Habermas, 2010).

The fact that participation is open to everyone, that everyone involved in participation is equal and free, that speeches are public, that the obstacles to citizens' participation are removed, that access to this space is guaranteed, that the public sphere is located outside of state institutions and that it is related to the common good are the features that emerge from Habermas “s definition of the public sphere. (Erciyes, 2013)

In Fraser's words, the public sphere is conceptually separate from the state, and in principle a space where critical discourses against the state are produced and circulated. In the Habermasian sense, the public sphere is also conceptually separate from the official-economy; it is a space of discursive relations, not market relations; a stage for discussion and negotiation rather than buying and selling (Asrak hasdemir, Kemal coşkun, 1990).

The 'open to all' meaning of 'public' is most evident in Arendt's conceptualization. Arendt defines the public sphere as “open to all”, a place where people come together in harmony and act together without restriction, in a sense, a place where “freedom can manifest itself, a stage of appearances” (Arendt, 1994: 74-75). According to Arendt, if one characteristic of the public sphere is that it is the space of appearance, another characteristic is that it is the world that holds us together. The public sphere as a space of appearance means that everything can be seen and heard by everyone in the clearest possible way (Sarıbay, 2000, p. 5).

Arendt defines the concept of public sphere as a common world shared, met and discussed by individuals. In this world, each individual has his/her own position and an area of communication and action in which he/she is active. Arendt likens the concept of public space to a table that holds the people sitting around it together and allows them to relate to each other. She argues that if the table disappears, sharing and communication will disappear (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

People are here to excel, to be respected and to transcend the mortality of being human. This is the space where organized remembrance is created. Arendt “s other view of publicness is called ‘combinatorial’. According to this view, such a space emerges wherever and whenever, in Arendt's words, “people act together in harmony”. In this model, public space is the place where “freedom can manifest itself” (Ercins, 2013).

For example, a crowded city square is not a place where people act together in harmony. A meeting hall where people come together to listen to a speech, or a wooded area where people come together for an environmental action are examples of the “combinatorial” view. Here, there is no clarity about how and by whom the agenda will be determined. In Arendt's conceptualization of the public sphere, public appears in the sense of “open to all”. According to her, the public sphere emerges wherever and whenever people act together in harmony. In a way, the public sphere is the place where “freedom can manifest itself” (Benhabib, 1996) (Ercins, 2013).

Unlike these theorists, Sennett, on the other hand, deals with public space by associating it with urban space. He emphasizes the loss of the function of the public sphere and investigates the reasons for turning towards the private. Sennett emphasizes that with the effects of capitalism, social relations and interaction in the public sphere have decreased and there has been a return to individualism and the family environment. He explains that this leads to the decline of public life by revealing new relations of production (Uysal Bilge, 2021, P.142).

The public sphere is a space where different individuals, different social segments and different ideas can coexist and compete in a civilized and democratic manner; it is a space where freedoms and rights are realized and lived; it is not a space where freedoms are destroyed. In other words, it is a space where people live together, interacting with each other, and where all kinds of differences find a life of their own. The state is one of the actors in the public sphere. The public sphere is not the space that belongs to the state (Ercins, 2013).

Gehl emphasizes the activities related to public space and daily life. He explains that the diversity of these activities depends on the physical environmental conditions. He emphasizes that the use of public space in everyday life consists of voluntary, compulsory and social activities (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

Madanipour explains the definition of public space as physically accessible areas where social interaction and activities are open to everyone (Madanipour, 2003). In parallel with this view, Lynch argues that human activities are important in outdoor life and argues that spaces where human relationships are created should be designed (Lynch, 1981).

With the same view, Carmona and Carr argue that the most important factor affecting the physical environment is human activities and define the public space as a common area where daily activities take place (Uysal Bilge, 2021). Jacobs also argues that the public space is a social common space that develops through the activities of the citizens (Jacobs, 1961). Whyte emphasizes that the active use of the city is through public spaces and that these spaces accommodate the daily activities of the urbanites (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

According to Thompson, public open spaces create an ecological environment by providing a healthy environment and micro-climate with the green areas and vegetation they harbor (Thompson, 1998). Public open spaces meet the physiological and psychological needs of the city dwellers and offer comfortable and cozy spaces (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

1.1.1. HISTORICAL CHANGE OF PUBLIC SPACE

Table 1. Compiled from ÇALIŞKAN O. 'Network Society in the Context of Public Sphere and the Search for a New Public.

PERIOD	THE IDEA OF PUBLIC SPACE
ANCIENT GREEK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear distinction between the public and the private sphere. - The political sphere represents the public sphere, the household the private sphere. - The public sphere is dominated by aristocrats (elite men). - It is not open to everyone (Karadağ, 200)
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no public sphere in Europe that can be separated from the private sphere (Habermas, 2004). - Symbols of sovereignty (such as seals) are considered representative public space. - The representative public sphere is not on the side of the governed.
FEODAL PERIOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feudal structure and representative public sphere views exist. - Bourgeois class initiates public debates with economic and political power. - The bourgeois class initiates public debate with economic and political power.
CAPITALIST PERIOD (late 17th century and the first half of the 18th and 19th centuries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The literary public, a preliminary test of the political public. - Practices of reasoning and collective decision-making (Habermas, 2005) - The public sphere expands, new actors are added. - Indirect negotiations begin with media developments. - The debate on power from the people is strengthened.
SOCIAL STATE UNDERSTANDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The problems created by the capitalist era are tried to be solved by the social welfare state. - The effects of political administration and law on the public sphere. - The entry of the "state" into the public sphere brings feudalization again (Habermas, 2004).
NEOLIBERAL POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalization and neoliberal policies accelerated in the 1980s. - Media shifts from public service broadcasting to commercial functions (Verstraeten, 2002). - The change in media structure enables the control of the public mind (Chomsky, 2003). - The rise of global media organizations and criticism of commercial broadcasting.
TODAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing public sphere models do not respond to needs. - Emphasis on fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy and pluralism. - The need for a new public sphere model (Karadağ, 2006). - The public-private distinction should be overcome, private issues can be public (Kejanhoğlu, 2004). - Arendt's understanding of the public sphere should be reconceptualized in terms of the principles of freedom, equality and pluralism (Karadağ, 2006).

1.1.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC SPACE

Table 2: Universal positive qualities for public space; (public space, p.15).

- Clean and organized	- Functional
- Accessible	- Distinctive
- Attractive	- Safe
- Comfortable	- Strong
- Public	- Green
- Applicable	- Belonging

1.2. LEGAL PROCESS

1.2.1. ABOUT THE REGULATION ON COASTAL AND EMBANKMENT AREAS

In the 1926 civil code, the content related to the coastal areas is as follows: "Unclaimed property and property belonging to the public interest are under the control of the state". The important development on the coast was realized with the 1972 constitution. With the Law No. 1605 dated 11.07.1972 and Articles 7 and 8 added to the Zoning Law No. 6785, the first legal regulations regarding planning and construction on the coastlines of seas, lakes and rivers and the coastlines that are the continuation of these places were realized. Nevertheless, it is not possible to talk about a regulation directly related to coasts at that time. The first legal regulations on coasts were made with the 1982 Constitution. Article 43 of the 1982 Constitution enshrined the principle of the use of the coast for public benefit, and with this article, the coastal areas were taken under the sovereignty and savings of the state. In addition, the statement "The public interest shall be given priority in utilizing the coasts of seas, lakes and rivers and the

coastal lines surrounding the coasts of seas and lakes” was put into effect. Again in this period, the following provision was introduced: “The depth of the coasts and coastal lines according to the purposes of use and the possibilities and conditions of the people to benefit from these places shall be regulated by law”. Later, with the Coastal Law dated November 27, 1984 and numbered 3086, the provisions related to the coasts were gathered in a single law. With this Coastal Law, the principles of utilization of coasts were determined, the principle of equal utilization was introduced, and concepts such as coastal line, coast, coastal edge line and coastline were defined and entered into legal terminology. However, this law did not remain in force for a long time. Approximately 1.5 years after its adoption, it was annulled and abrogated by the Constitutional Court in 1986. During the following four-year period, coastal issues were carried out by a circular issued by the General Directorate of Construction Works of the Ministry of Housing and Settlement in 1987. Law No. 3621 dated 04.04.1990 and its implementing regulations numbered 3830, 4971, 5398, 5728 and 5801, which introduce additions and amendments to its implementation, are the coastal laws that still cover and govern the legislation related to the coasts in Turkey. (bİB, 1987; KK, 1972; KK, 1982; KK, 1984; KK, 1990; KKİ,1986; KKUDY, 1992a; KKUDY, 1992b; KKUDY, 2003; KKUDY, 2005; KKUDY, 2008a; KKUDY, 2008b; TOK, 2008).

Pursuant to Article 43 of the Constitution, the coast is an area open to the equal and free use of all and must be used in the public interest. Within the framework of this constitutional principle, the public interest in the use of the coast is ensured by restrictions on both the form of ownership and construction. In other words, the coasts are under the sovereignty and disposal of the state and are not subject to ownership, i.e. registration in the title deed. Construction rights on the coasts are extremely limited. According to this article, the coasts are under the sovereignty and disposal of the state; public interest shall be the primary consideration in the utilization of the coasts of seas, lakes and rivers and the coastlines surrounding the coasts of seas and lakes; the depth of the coasts and coastlines according to their intended use and the possibilities and conditions for people to benefit from these places shall be regulated by law. Green areas, parking lots, outdoor sports areas, outdoor pools, restaurants, casinos, tea gardens, exhibition units, administrative buildings, etc. can be built in coastal and filling areas.

The purpose of this Regulation is to determine the determination of the coastal edge line in the sea, natural and artificial lakes and rivers, the use and protection of the coasts, and the principles of planning and implementation on the coasts, areas gained through filling and drying, and coastlines that are the continuation of the coasts of the seas and lakes.

The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization is the ministry to which the Regulation reports. Article 4 of the Coastal Law defines the coast. In summary; the line formed by the junction of the points where the water touches the land in the sea, natural and artificial lakes and rivers, except in cases of flooding, is defined as the coastline. The natural boundary of sandy, gravelly, rocky, stony, reedy, marshy and similar areas where water movements are created in the land direction after the coastline defines the coastal edge line and the area of at least 100 meters horizontally in the land direction from the coastal edge line defines the coastline (Özkan, Tanrıverdi, 2015).

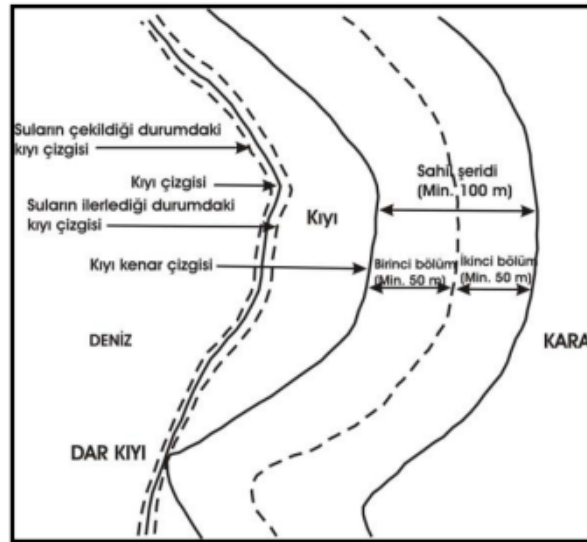


Figure 2. Sketch showing the definitions in the Coastal Law (KKUDY 1992-a, KKUDY 1992-b).

According to Article 7 of the Law: “In cases where the public interest requires, land may be obtained by filling and draining in seas, lakes, and rivers, considering ecological characteristics, with the decision of the implementation zoning plan.” In this process, the proposal submitted by the relevant authority is sent to the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement along with the opinion of the governorship. The Ministry examines the proposal and, if deemed appropriate, the relevant authority prepares an implementation zoning plan (Coastal Law No. 3621). Article 9 of the same law also defines a similar process for determining the coastal boundary line (Özkan, Tanrıverdi, 2015).

In planning and construction in coastal and filling areas, the fundamental elements are the balance between protection and use, sustainability, and public interest (the interests related to the continuity of society's existence) (Coastal Law No. 3621).

Filling and draining operations can only be carried out for public interest. In addition, it is required that a necessity or an obligation arises for filling and draining to take place. For this use, there must not be a more appropriate option. In some cases, filling is impossible. For example, drinking and domestic water sources cannot be subject to filling. Filling and draining cannot be done in areas designated as wetlands or those protected by legislation or international agreements.

Filling and draining operations can be carried out in seas, rivers, natural and artificial lakes only if the aforementioned conditions are met. In these areas, any regulation on the coasts requires the preparation of an implementation zoning plan.

The Coastal Law No. 3621, published in the Official Gazette on April 17, 1990 (Issue 20495), and the "Regulation on the Implementation of the Coastal Law," published on August 3, 1990 (Issue 20594), provide detailed explanations on when land can be gained through filling and draining and the principles of planning and construction in these areas.

In this context, the types of buildings that can be constructed in coastal and filling areas are as follows:

Infrastructure facilities that can be built to protect the coast or for public use of the coast, or filling areas necessary for such structures, including piers, harbors, shelters, docking sites, quays, breakwaters, boathouses, saltworks, fish farms, lighthouses, bridges, culverts, retaining walls, treatment and pumping stations.

According to the relevant provisions of the law and regulations, in filling areas along the coast, structures such as roads, squares, open parking lots, parks, green areas, fairs, children's playgrounds, and facilities for sea, air, and land transportation can also be constructed.

Structures and facilities that, by their nature, can only be built on the coast, such as shipyards, ship dismantling areas, and aquaculture production and breeding facilities.

However, there are certain structures that can be built for public use on the coast without the need for an implementation zoning plan. These structures include non-permanent showers, pergolas, changing cabins, mobile toilets that do not require a septic system and do not cause pollution, kiosks no larger than 6 m² and placed at least 150 meters apart, and wooden piers.

1.2.2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF OPEN AND GREEN SPACES

According to Öztan (1968) and Özbilen (1991), the concept of open space is defined as one of the essential basic elements of urban fabric, referring to voids or open areas that are outside architectural structures and transportation spaces (Önder and Polat, 2012, p.73).

Green spaces, on the other hand, are areas located within and around the city that consist of living (such as trees, shrubs, ground covers, grass) and non-living elements (such as roads, water elements, urban furniture), performing functions such as recreation, landscaping, and hydrology. These areas include forests, groves, parks of various functions and sizes, cemeteries, medians, and building gardens (Pamay, 1978). Berke (2006) indicates that open spaces include areas designated for the definition, separation, or buffering of developed land uses, aimed at providing a green belt on the edge of the urban area and ensuring that the land is suitable for specific future urban uses. According to Mpofu (2013), open and green spaces encompass all vacant or undeveloped urban land and are often utilized by planners as part of future urban planning and development.

According to legal regulations, green spaces are classified as social infrastructure areas. Social infrastructure areas refer to the general term for open and green areas such as parks, playgrounds, recreational areas, and other spaces that are built by the public or private sector to meet the cultural, social, and recreational needs of individuals and society and to enhance the quality of life with a healthy environment (Spatial Planning Regulation, Article 5).

In the Planning Areas Construction Regulation, green spaces are defined as the total of playgrounds, children's gardens, rest, promenade, picnic, entertainment, and recreational areas designated for public use (Metropolitan-scale fairs, botanical and zoological gardens, and regional parks fall within these areas). Green areas, as mentioned in Article 19, include functions and construction conditions and include:

Children's gardens: Areas that meet children's play and rest needs, with plant cover and the necessary play equipment, and where no other facilities can be constructed, except for a 6 m² kiosk, ornamental fountains, pergolas, and public toilets.

Parks: Areas allocated for the green vegetation of the city where residents can meet their rest needs, and where uses as specified in Article 19 can also be included.

Picnic and recreation (recreational) areas: Areas designated for recreation, rest, and picnic needs, which primarily address the city's open and green space needs and are located within the city and surrounding areas, designated for day-use through zoning plans.

National gardens: Large green areas designed to connect the public with nature, fulfill recreational needs, and serve as gathering points for the city during disasters. These areas are determined according to criteria related to location,

size, functions, and design, which will be outlined in the National Gardens Guide prepared and enforced by the Ministry (Spatial Planning Regulation, Article 4).

Within the legal framework, walking distances have also been established as a criterion for accessibility to green spaces. Walking distances in zoning plans are determined based on the service area population’s ability to access educational, health, and green spaces, considering topography, construction, density, existing fabric, and natural and artificial barriers. In cases where the conditions mentioned in this paragraph are met, the minimum walking distances specified in the second and third paragraphs are adhered to (Spatial Planning Regulation, Article 12/1).

In zoning plans, the following functions should be included in the service areas that can be reached on foot:

Children’s gardens, play areas, open neighborhood sports fields, family health centers, daycare centers, kindergartens, and primary schools: approximately 500 meters

Secondary schools: approximately 1,000 meters

High schools: approximately 2,500 meters (Spatial Planning Regulation, Article 12/2).

Table 3. Spatial Plans Construction Regulation, annex-2).

POPULATION GROUPS			0 - 75.000		75.001- 150.000		150.001 - 500.000		501.000 +	
			m ² /pers on	Minimum Unit Area (m ²)	m ² /pers on	Minimum Unit Area (m ²)	m ² /pers on	Minimum Unit Area (m ²)	m ² /pers on	Minimum Unit Area (m ²)
INFRASTRUCTURE AREAS	IN PLANNING WITHIN THE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES	Children's Playground	10,00		10,00		10,00		10,00	
		Park								
		Square								
		Neighborhood Sports Field								
		Botanical Park								
		Recreation Place								
	IN THE PLANNING MADE WITHIN THE PROVINCIAL BORDERS	Zoo	5,00		5,00		5,00		5,00	
		Urban Forest								
		Area to be afforested								
		Fair, Fair and Festival Area								
	Hippodrome									

1.3. PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

1.3.1. SAFETY PERCEPTION IN THE CITY

Harvey (2003, p. 13) states that “security cannot be treated as a thing in itself” and points out that security can be examined in both everyday and academic terms within social, historical, and economic contexts. The concept of security was first used in Old French, derived from the words seurté, seürte, and encompasses meanings such as “shelter,” “keeping one’s word,” “providing,” “absence of fear,” and “road safety.” By the 16th century, in France, it began to express the state of being protected from dangers posed by a social group (Bal, 2003, p. 20).

Security is seen as one of the most important factors in determining the quality and attractiveness of public spaces. This is because an individual's perception of the safety of a space has a strong impact on their decision to either use or avoid that space (Mehta, 2014, p. 60).

The perception of security allows people to move freely without fear and interact with other individuals in society, playing an important role in strengthening both social and economic security. This situation makes the feeling of security one of the fundamental components for the sustainability of social life. When physical protection becomes difficult due to reasons such as danger, social disorder, war, or natural disasters, individuals experience deep concern about their personal safety and protection (Affleck, Gardner, 2019, p. 7).

People living in the city develop an awareness or perception of the urban spaces they use in their daily lives (Ataç, 2008, p. 55). Space is perceived through movement, and perception occurs via the senses. With perception, space is experienced, meaning that the formal and objective characteristics of a place or space are temporarily stored in memory. Depending on the length of stay and the variety of uses in the space, that space gains meaning for the individual through specific memories. The entire perception process can vary depending on the individual, their worldview, and the culture of the geographical area they live in (İnceoğlu and Aytuğ, 2006, p. 133). Security, too, is a feeling and perception formed as a result of experiencing urban space. The physical characteristics of the environment, design features, elements within it, and environmental conditions in urban areas affect individuals' sense of security and fear of crime (Şahin, 2016, p. 107).

Among the factors that distance a city from being safe are:

- Rapid population growth, population mobility (the movement of refugees and locals), migration, and the reduction of social control,
- Strangers and undesirable persons (homeless, drug addicts, beggars, street children, and stray youth),
- Increase in crime and criminal rates,
- Organized crime and terrorism,
- Local conflicts and social violence (Kaypak, 2012, p. 17),
- Chaos and disorder,
- Economic conditions (unemployment and low income levels),
- Traffic problems,
- Events such as fires and accidents,
- Natural disasters (earthquakes, sudden climate events, and floods),
- Environmental issues (air, water, soil, and noise pollution),
- Spatial features (urban decay areas, abandoned and unused places, defenseless areas, dark, dim, and secluded spaces, neglect) (Şahin, 2016; STD, 2012).

The emergence of the policing profession is closely related to the history of urban development. Apart from mercenary armies, the need to maintain law and order in daily urban life led to the formation of paid security officers and armed bureaucracy employed by the state. Professions such as night watchmen and municipal police also emerged in response to these needs (Castel, 2004).

In his study on the feeling of trust/mistrust in Latin America, Greene (2003) identified six factors that create the perception of trust/mistrust in urban spaces, based on surveys and collaborative work with space users in selected urban spaces.

	- Lighting
VISIBLE AREA	- Trees and bushes
	- Street widths
	- Urban grid system
SOCIAL NETWORKS	- Level of acquaintance with neighbors
	- Neighborhood information
	- Neighborhood relationshipsKomşuluk ilişkileri
	- Presence of police
POTENTIAL ASSISTANCE	- Entrance doors of houses
	- Presence of phone booths
	- Commercial units
	- Windows facing the street
VISUAL CONTROL	- Presence of bus stops
	- Transparency of dividers
	- Positions of other pedestrians
USE OF SPACE	- Vehicle flow
	- Bus routes

RISK FACTORS

- Urban furniture
- Entertainment venues/alcohol-selling places
- Abandoned and desolate islands
- Poverty level
- Young criminal groups
- The effect of the night

Table 4: Greene (2003), six factors that constitute the perception of security/insecurity

Greene (2003)'s research results have identified five variables that are important in feeling security:

- Lighting, parks, streets, and bus stops have been defined as fundamental factors related to security.
- It is believed that pedestrian flow increases security and even reduces the risk of being robbed.
- Spaces that provide more visual control in open areas are preferred; spaces that involve "less mystery" have been positively characterized.
- Tree and bush areas are generally seen as a source of insecurity. Trees and bushes are thought to create potential hiding places for criminals due to the shade and dark areas they produce.
- Different opinions have emerged regarding boundary elements. One group has considered them safe because they feel they increase security in the streets, while another group has considered them unsafe because they feel they restrict freedom in the streets (Greene, 2003, p. 9,10).

1.3.2. PERCEPTION OF SECURITY IN OPEN GREEN AREAS

According to Keleş (1984), open spaces are urban areas left in their natural state or designated for agricultural purposes, where people continue their daily lives, and green spaces are common areas regulated by city administrations to prevent them from becoming densely built, allowing people to rest and children to play in cities and towns (Yılmaz, 2016). Urban open spaces are public spaces without buildings that connect different sections and structures of the city and are used by all people living in the city, not just those living in the area. Urban green spaces, on the other hand, are the total of children's play areas, rest areas, walking areas, picnic areas, entertainment areas, and coastal areas, providing people with opportunities to gather, socialize, and improve their social and community relationships (Budak, 2010).

Open-green spaces are one of the most important elements of urban planning with their features, such as limiting the negative effects of urban development, providing microclimatic benefits, offering recreational opportunities, and enhancing urban aesthetics (Yılmaz, 2016). Urban parks and open-green spaces create "land organization, recreation, education, social and cultural, health, aesthetic, ecological, and economic functions" for the city, social life, and people (Uyanık, 2016). Parks also allow citizens to take advantage of open spaces for leisure activities, promoting emotional stability and improving the quality of life (Ünal & Uslu, 2018).

It is expected that security and safety feelings, as a fundamental element of a successful space, will be associated with it (Arjmand, 2017, p. 129). The design of a park can directly affect people's perceptions of security and their willingness to use the space. A study conducted by "Project for Public Spaces" listed the physical characteristics associated with high-risk environments by park users in the table below (Project for Public Spaces [PPS], 2009).

Table 5. Physical characteristics that create risk in parks (PPS, 2009).

FACTORS CREATING RISK IN OPEN GREEN AREAS IN TERMS OF SECURITY	
<i>Poor Lighting</i>	<i>Tree and shrub areas</i>
<i>Confusing layout</i>	<i>Hiding spots</i>
<i>Physical and auditory isolation</i>	<i>Neglect, insufficient maintenance</i>
<i>Poor visibility</i>	<i>Vandalism/damage</i>
<i>Lack of access to assistance</i>	<i>Presence of unwanted individuals</i>

2. SAMSUN BATIPARK

Samsun Batıpark, as one of the most important and extensive green areas of the Black Sea Region, has made significant contributions to the social and cultural life of the city. Located in the İlkadım district of Samsun, Batıpark extends over a wide area along the coastline. This park has become a major attraction for both local residents and tourists in terms of recreation, sports, and leisure activities.

Establishment and Development Process

The history of Batıpark began in the context of Samsun's urban transformation projects towards the end of the 20th century. In the 1990s, with the initiatives started by Samsun Metropolitan Municipality, Batıpark was planned as a breathing space within the increasingly concrete structure of the city. During this period, the growing urban structure

and increasing population also led to a heightened need for green spaces. In this context, Batıpark was designed both to preserve the city’s natural texture and to meet the social needs of the public (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

The first phase of the park’s construction began with the arrangement of the coastal strip, the construction of walking paths, and the creation of various recreational areas. During this process, various infrastructures such as walking paths, bicycle tracks, children’s playgrounds, and sports facilities within the park were developed. Furthermore, the park aimed to preserve Batıpark’s natural beauty and to allow visitors to spend time in close contact with nature (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

Modern Era and Innovations

In the 2000s, efforts to develop and modernize Batıpark gained momentum. During this period, projects for renovating existing areas and adding new sections to the park were implemented. The Samsun Metropolitan Municipality made various innovations to make Batıpark more functional and attractive. For example, various sports facilities, an amphitheater, botanical gardens, and event areas were constructed within the park. These spaces became venues where park visitors could engage in various activities and participate in social events (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

Batıpark is more than just a physical resting area; it also hosts the social and cultural life of Samsun. Various events, festivals, sports competitions, and cultural programs are organized in the park throughout the year. These events attract both local residents and visitors, increasing the vibrancy of the park.

Especially during the summer months, concerts, theater performances, and art events held in Batıpark transform the park into a social center. In addition, the park’s vast areas provide an ideal environment for activities such as picnicking, outdoor sports, and nature walks (Uysal Bilge, 2021).

In May 2024, the Metropolitan Municipality proposed a plan to redesign the Batıpark area as a “Nation’s Garden” (Millet Bahçesi), which was subsequently rejected.

PUBLIC GARDEN PLAN



ZONING PLAN IN FORCE



3. FINDINGS AND EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS

3.1. Evaluation of the Demographic Structure

This survey was conducted to measure the perception of public space, its characteristics, and the perception of safety in public spaces. Through the questions asked to the participants, the study aimed to explore what safety-related elements should be present in a park area and to what extent these elements are available in Batıpark. The survey was conducted with 180 participants with different demographic backgrounds.

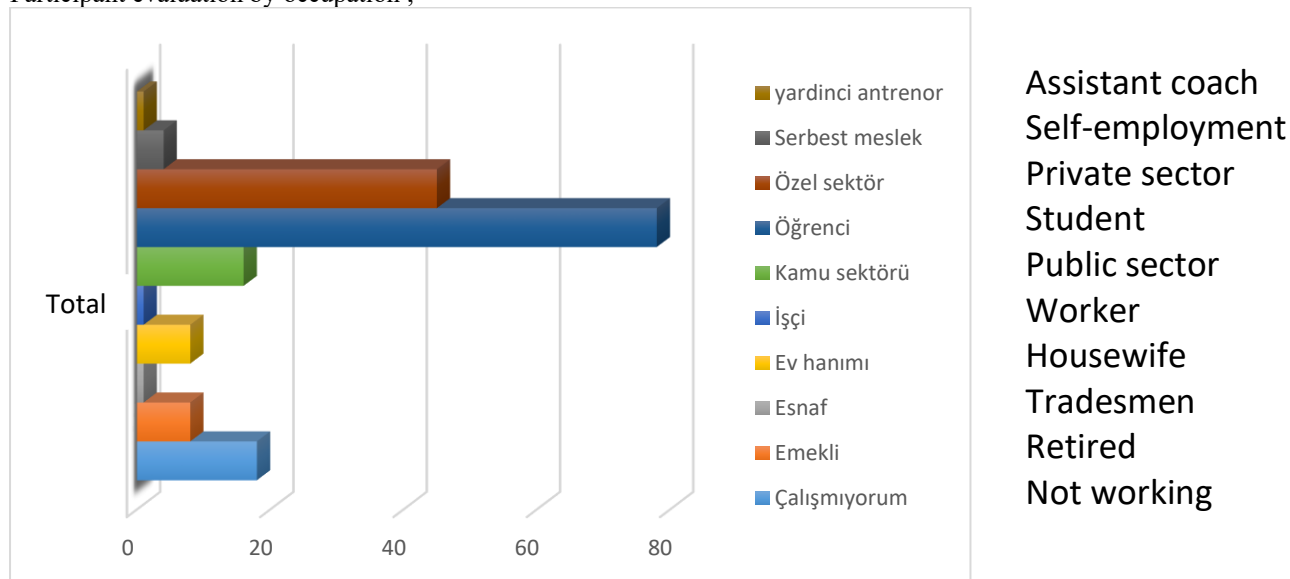
Yaş ve cinsiyete göre katılımcıların sayısı ;

Age Group	18-24	25-40	41-55	56-60	65and over	Total
Male	36	10	14	7	5	72
Female	55	35	14	2	2	108
Total	91	45	28	9	7	180

Educational attainment by gender ;

Row Labels	PhD	Housewife	Primary School	High School	Illiterate	Middle School	University	Master's Degree	Total
Male			3	27	1	6	35		72
Female	1	1	3	35	1	7	53	7	108
Total	1	1	6	62	2	13	88	7	180

Participant evaluation by occupation ;

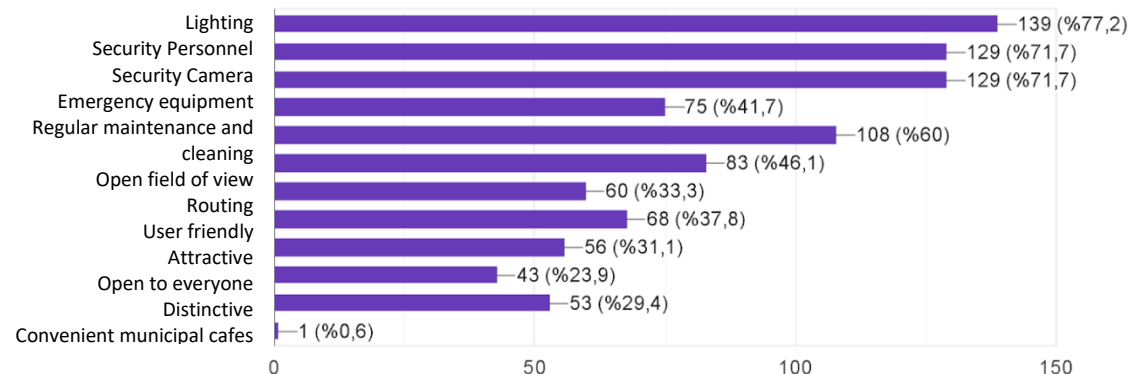


60% of the survey participants were female and 40% were male. When evaluated in terms of age, 54% were between the ages of 18-24, and 26% were found to be in the 25-40 age group. Based on the demographic data obtained from the field survey, it was determined that the area is predominantly used by the younger population and that the number of female users is higher than male users. In terms of professions, it was found that 43% of the participants were students, and 25% were working in the private sector.

3.2. Evaluation of the Responses to the Question: What Elements Should a Safe Park Include?

Bir park alanına güvenli olmak için hangi unsurları içermeli ?

180 yanıt



In this question, participants were instructed to select multiple options. When the responses were analyzed, 72% of participants stated that lighting is important. The presence of security personnel and security cameras were also among the desired elements. While 29% of participants wanted the park area to be distinctive (constantly monitored and individuals acting inappropriately to be removed), 23% argued that it should be open to everyone. According to the data, 60% of the participants also identified regular maintenance and cleanliness as components of safety. Participants did not associate the presence of municipally operated cafés with safety.

In the park area, there are walking, resting, café, sports, playground, picnic, and lake activity zones. Based on user comments, it was found that 86% of them use the area for picnicking and 78% use it for walking. Participants also stated that although there are currently no events held in the area, they would participate if there were.

3.3. Evaluation of the Frequency and Purposes of Use of Westpark

How often do you visit the Batı Park?

	Once a Month	Several Times a Month	Less Often	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Every Day	Total
Male	5	15	24	7	20	1	72
18-24		11	17	1	7		36
25-40		1	5	1	3		10
41-55	2	2	1	2	6	1	14
56-60	1			2	4		7
65 and over	2	1	1	1			5
Female	17	24	43	7	14	3	108
18-24	9	15	22	2	5	2	55
25-40	5	6	13	3	7	1	35
41-55	2	3	6	1	2		14
56-60	1		1				2
65 and over			1	1			2
Total	22	39	67	14	34	4	180

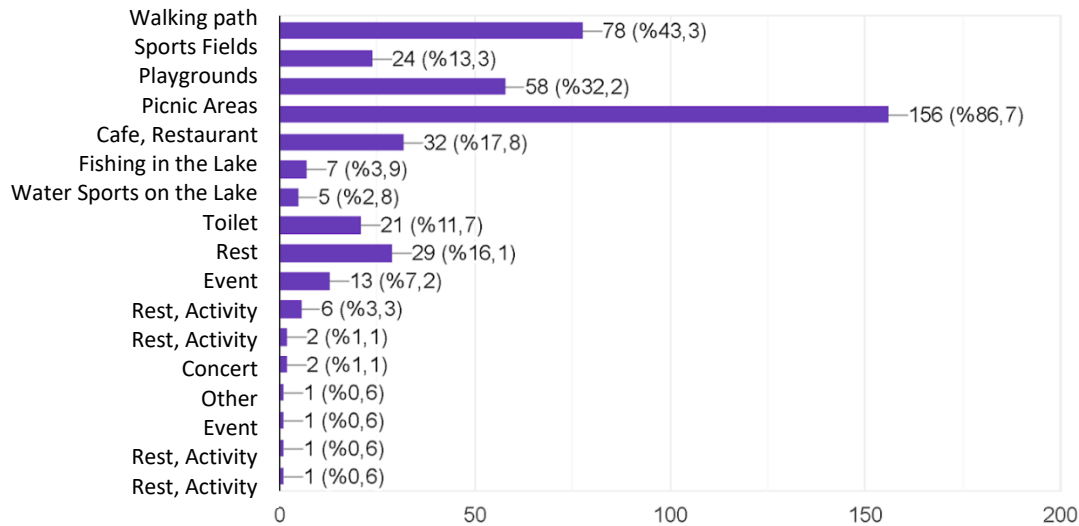
When the age groups are examined in terms of the frequency of Batıpark usage, it is determined that the most frequent users of the park area are those in the 18-24 age group and students. Following this, the second most frequent visitor group consists of individuals aged between 25-40. Within this age group, it has been identified that the predominant professions are students and private sector employees. As the age range increases, the frequency of park usage decreases.

	Once a Month	Several Times a Month	Less Often	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Every Day	Total
18-24	9	26	39	3	12	2	91
Not Working	1	2	3	1			7

Public Sector			1				1
Student	7	20	30	2	11	1	71
Private Sector	1	4	4		1		10
Self-employed			1				1
Assistant Coach						1	1
25-40	5	7	18	4	10	1	45
Not Working		3	3		1		7
Housewife	1		1				2
Public Sector		1	3		3		7
Student	1		4		1		6
Private Sector	2	3	7	4	5	1	22
Self-employed	1						1
41-55	4	5	7	3	8	1	28
Not Working		1	1				2
Retired			2				2
Tradesman					1		1
Housewife	1		2	1	1		5
Public Sector	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Private Sector	2	3	1	1	4		11
Self-employed					1		1
56-60	2		1	2	4		9
Not Working			1				1
Retired				1	2		3
Worker					1		1
Public Sector	1			1			2
Private Sector					1		1
Self-employed	1						1
65 and over	2	1	2	2			7
Not Working		1					1
Retired	1		1	1			3
Housewife				1			1
Student			1				1
Private Sector	1						1
Total	22	39	67	14	34	4	180

Which services do you use in Batu park?

180 yanıt



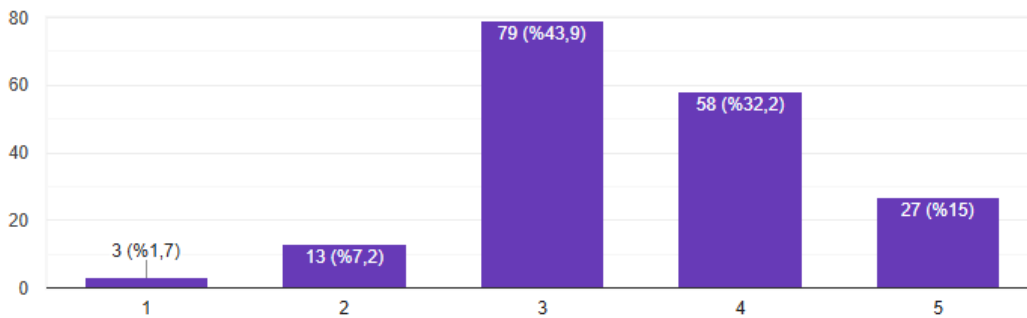
Walking, resting, cafés, sports areas, playgrounds, picnic areas, and lake activities are available in the park area. Based on user comments, it is observed that 86% of them use the area for picnicking and 78% use it for walking. They also stated that no events are currently held in the area, but if events were organized, they would participate.

3.4. Measuring the Perception of Safety in the Batpark Area

In response to the question “Do you feel safe in Batpark? Rate between 1-5 (1: do not feel safe at all, 5: feel completely safe),” the answers were as follows:

Do you feel safe in West Park?

180 replies

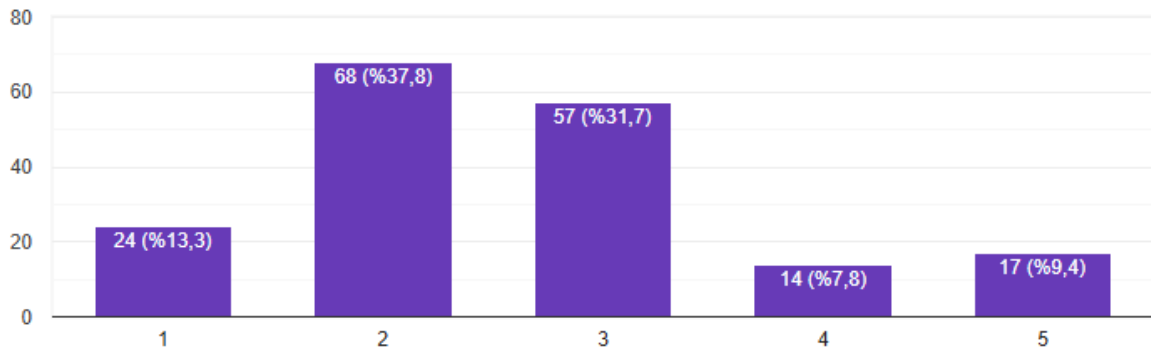


43.9% of the participants stated that they feel moderately safe. The number of participants who responded “I feel safe” constitutes 32.2% of the total. Overall, people feel safe in the park.

In response to the question “Do you feel safe in Batpark at night? Rate between 1-5 (1: do not feel safe at all, 5: feel completely safe),” the answers were as follows:

How safe do you feel in West Park at night?

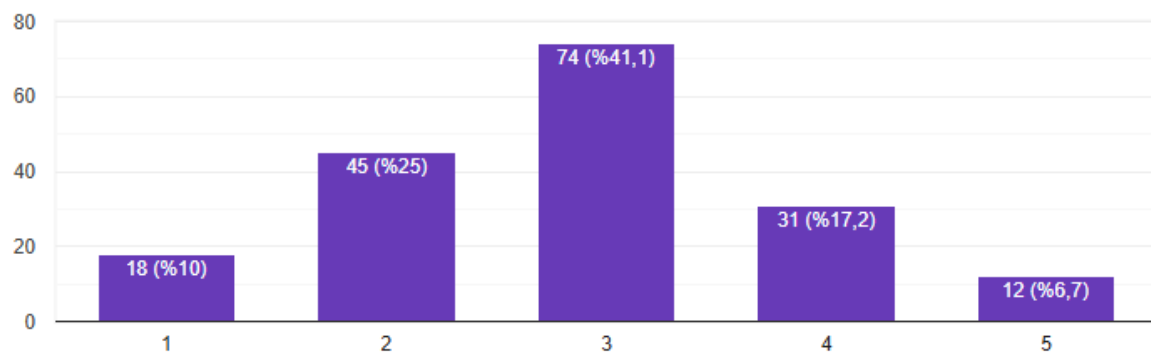
180 replies



When asked the question “Do you feel safe at night in Batipark?”, 37.8% of the participants responded that they do not feel safe. 31.7% stated that they feel moderately safe. Participants who feel safe during the day also mentioned that they do not even prefer to come to the park at night. However, 88.9% of the participants stated that they have not experienced any safety issues within the park.

Do you find the lighting in West Park sufficient?

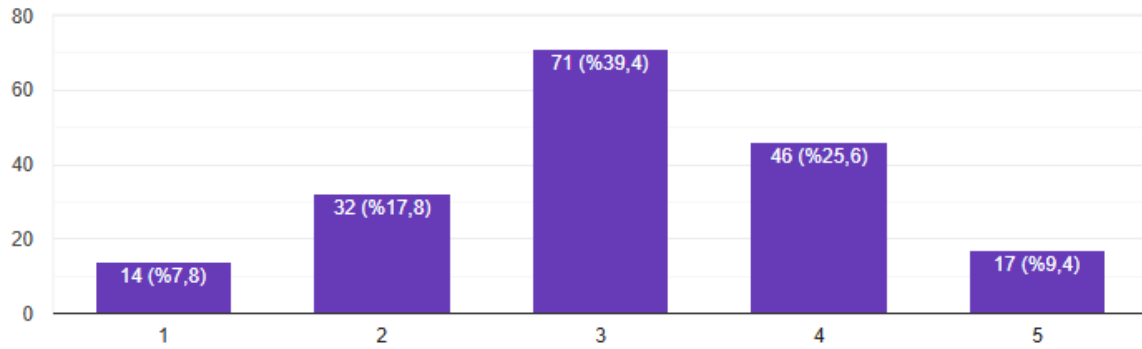
180 replies



Lighting, which is one of the most important practices for increasing safety in a park area, was evaluated by Batipark users as moderately sufficient at a rate of 41.1%, while 25% considered it insufficient. During face-to-face interviews with participants, many stated things like “I don’t really know because I don’t prefer to come at night.” The data that can be derived from this is that due to insufficient lighting in Batipark, there is a problem of it being less preferred and a sense of insecurity. It was also mentioned that secluded and dark areas are frightening at night and therefore avoided.

How satisfied are you with the general cleanliness and order of Batı Park?

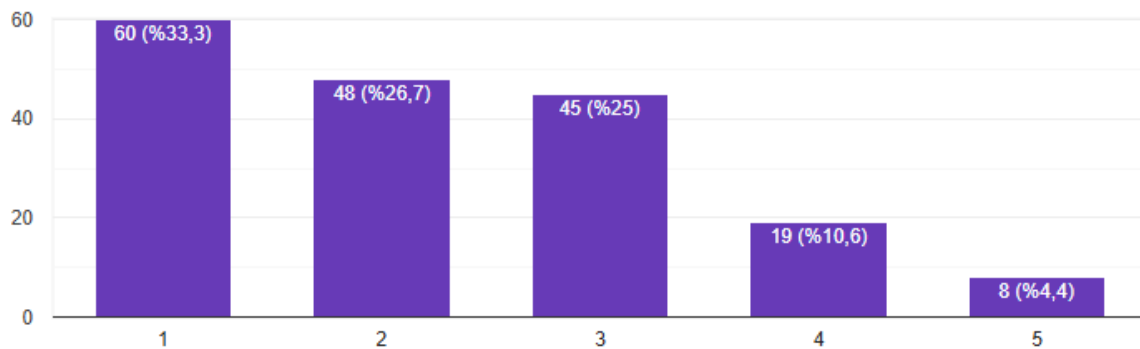
180 replies



When the cleanliness and orderliness of the Batı Park area were evaluated, 39.4% of respondents indicated it was moderately clean, while 25.6% responded that it was clean and orderly. Overall, the park was determined to be clean and orderly.

Do you encounter any security guards when you are in West Park?

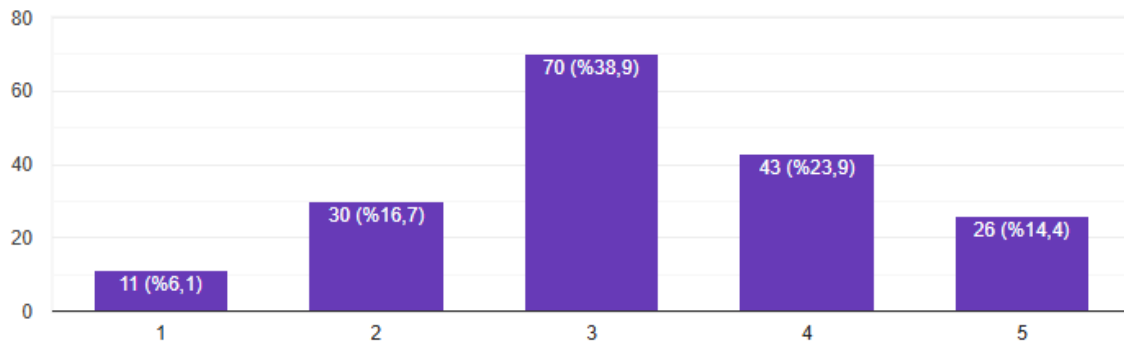
180 replies



When asked about the presence of security personnel, which is one of the most important factors affecting the perception of security, 33.3% responded that they have never seen any. Additionally, 25% stated that they sometimes see security personnel. Based on this evaluation, it can be said that there is a lack of security personnel within the park, which creates significant insecurity.

Do you feel like you belong to that area when you are in West Park?

180 replies



Responses to the question of whether individuals feel adapted and belong to the area while spending time in the park were positive. 38.9% of the participants answered moderately, and 23.9% responded that they do feel a sense of belonging.

3.5. Evaluation of the Effect of Activities on Security Perception

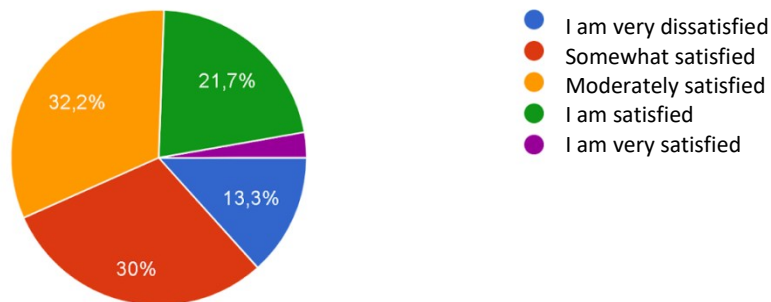
An evaluation will be made by cross-tabulating the responses to the question “What do you think about the frequency of activities?” and the age ranges.

	Very Rarely	Always	Rarely	Often	Sufficiently Often	Total
18-24	9	2	37	5	38	91
25-40	6		21	2	16	45
41-55	1	1	14	2	10	28
56-60			5		4	9
65 and over	1		2	1	3	7
Total	17	3	79	10	71	180

Regarding the frequency of events, 39% of participants stated that it was sufficient, while 44% expressed that events were infrequent. When evaluated according to age groups, the view that the frequency of events was sufficient increased with age.

What do you think about the security of the events organized in Batı Park?

180 yanıt

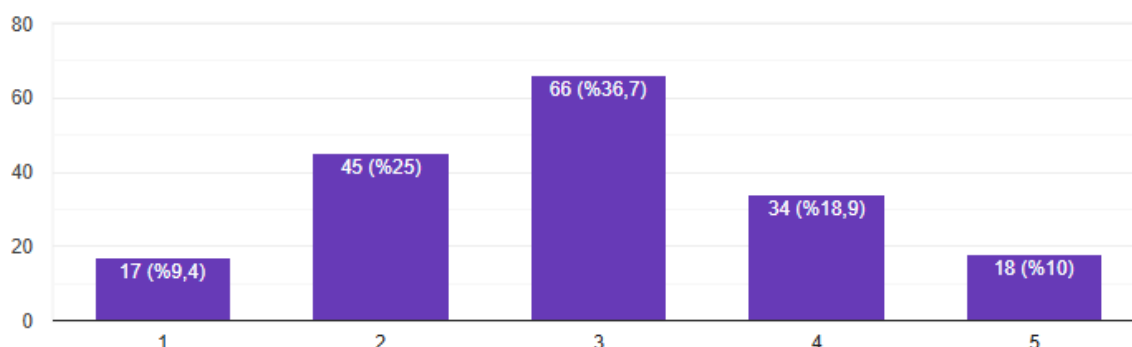


	Slightly Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Satisfied at All	Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Total
Male	17	3	11	14	27	72
Female	37	2	13	25	31	108
Total	54	5	24	39	58	180

In general, since the events organized in the park area are affiliated with the municipality, security and health measures are adequately provided. However, disputes and fights occurring among different age groups greatly affect people's satisfaction levels. In this context, 34% of participants selected “somewhat satisfied,” and 29% chose “moderately satisfied.” Additionally, 12% responded that they were “not satisfied at all.”

Do the events held in the western park area increase your sense of security?

180 replies



When the effect of events on the perception of security was examined, 36.7% indicated that events moderately increased their sense of security, while 25% stated that events did not increase it.

3.6. What practices can be implemented to increase your sense of security in the Batı Park area?

- Continuous monitoring of blind spots and designing accordingly
- Increasing nighttime lighting
- Lighting
- Security personnel
- Increasing the number of security personnel and enhancing lighting in green areas
- Patrol by security guards; security guards can be assigned within the park
- Preventing the presence of gypsies; organizing refugees
- Event planning with citizen feedback
- Removal of hard materials such as stones around the area
- Increasing lighting and activities such as concerts
- Lighting should be increased
- There should be security personnel
- The number of events should be increased
- Security personnel should be more frequent
- More seating areas
- Frequency of patrols
- Frequent and clean restrooms
- Banning horse-drawn carriages
- There should be a button on trees (for emergency situations)
- Frequent patrols by security personnel, with people being warned when they pass by, especially in the evening hours; frequent inspections by security personnel will increase the sense of security
- People who use substances that may disturb the peace should be kept away from this area
- Children's playgrounds should be safer
- More lighting is needed
- Blind spots can be eliminated through more events

The answers provided are as above. Many users especially commented on the need for increased security personnel and enhanced lighting. From the participants' remarks, they provided responses aimed at solving problems such as

insufficient lighting, lack of personnel, and the continuous lack of monitoring of individuals who reduce the sense of belonging. In particular, parents interviewed around the children's playgrounds stated that they want a safer environment for their children. It was also noted that previously a mother lost her child inside the park and had to search for the child herself.

4. Conclusion

This research was conducted using the example of Batipark to examine the effect of security perception on the use of urban parks and open green spaces. Harvey (2003) emphasized that security cannot be considered as an isolated category; rather, the concept of security must be evaluated within social, historical, and economic contexts. The study focused on understanding how participants' perceptions of security influence their decisions to use or avoid park areas.

The historical origin of the security concept derives from the Old French words "seurte, seürte," carrying meanings such as "shelter," "keeping one's word," "assurance," and "absence of fear" (Bal, 2003). In the 16th century, the concept of security began to express the state of being protected from dangers posed by a social group. This historical development provides an important basis for understanding how the perception of security is shaped in social and public spaces today.

The research findings revealed how the perception of security in Batipark is influenced by social and physical environmental factors. Participants emphasized that their sense of security is a decisive factor in their decisions to use the park. Particularly, elements such as lighting, the presence of security personnel, and regular maintenance are critical for park safety. According to the survey results, participants tend to avoid using the park during nighttime hours, primarily due to insufficient lighting, the presence of dark and secluded areas, lack of security personnel, and neglect in some parts of the park.

Demographic data of the participants showed that the most frequent users of the park were young people and students aged 18–24. The proportion of female users was higher compared to males, indicating that the park is an important social space for young people and women. However, these groups tend to avoid the park at night due to security concerns. Among the factors increasing the perception of security, lighting was most frequently highlighted. With a rate of 72%, participants stated that lighting is important; moreover, the presence of security personnel and security cameras were also indicated to positively affect the sense of security. While 60% of the participants identified regular maintenance and cleanliness as security elements, some requested more frequent monitoring and prevention of deviant behaviors.

When examining usage habits in Batipark, the most common activities were identified as picnicking and walking. Eighty-six percent of participants reported using the park for picnics, and 78% for walking. These activities indicate that the park serves as an important area for social interaction and physical activity. However, the low use of the park during nighttime reveals that security concerns hinder these activities. Overall, positive evaluations were made regarding the park's cleanliness and orderliness. Thirty-nine point four percent of participants found the park moderately clean, while 25.6% described it as clean and orderly. Nevertheless, some participants noted that cleanliness and orderliness were insufficient. This suggests that while the park is generally well-maintained, certain areas require improvement.

The insufficiency of security personnel within the park was identified as a significant shortcoming by participants. Thirty-three point three percent stated they have never seen security personnel in the park, while 25% reported seeing security personnel only occasionally. This is an important factor negatively impacting the perception of security and indicates a need for increasing the number of security personnel. In conclusion, the perception of security in Batipark is shaped by social and physical environmental elements. Lighting, security staff, and regular maintenance and cleaning are critical for perceiving the park as a safe place. It was determined that the park is heavily used by young people and women, but usage decreases at night due to security concerns.

To address this situation, it is necessary to strengthen the park's lighting systems, increase the number of security personnel, and continue regular maintenance and cleaning efforts. Additionally, diversifying and increasing the frequency of events held in the park will contribute to perceiving the park as a more lively and secure place. These measures will help make Batipark a safer and more attractive space for its users. Participants' experiences within the park indicate that security perception is shaped not only by physical factors but also by social interactions and spatial arrangements. Although the park generally has a positive image, the insecurity felt during nighttime weakens this positive perception.

In summary, the perception of security is one of the most important factors determining the quality and attractiveness of urban spaces. As observed in the case of Batipark, improving lighting, security personnel presence, and regular maintenance are essential for ensuring safety. These improvements will make the park safer and more user-friendly, thereby contributing to increased use of the park for social and physical activities. A secure park area enables users to utilize the park freely and comfortably, while simultaneously strengthening the community's overall sense of security.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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