

# **Attitudes of Primary School Teachers towards Outdoor Risky Play in the Netherlands**

Master thesis

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## Abstract

Allowing children to engage in risk during outdoor play is a contentious issue among professionals working with children. Teachers often experience a tension between societal expectations to keep children safe and children's need to engage in risky play. Researching teachers' attitude towards risky play is important because it determines the opportunities children have for risky play at (pre)schools. This study explored primary school teachers' attitudes towards risky play in the Netherlands and the ways they navigate social pressures. Additionally, it identified a number of social factors that influence the attitudes of groups of teachers differently within the Netherlands. This study seeks to add to the existing literature on risky play in the Dutch context, which, to date, has been given little scientific attention. Furthermore, this study highlights that variations exist in teachers' attitudes within a country. This is a largely ignored issue in the literature on risky play. This study employed a mixed-method design, using survey with 142 teachers working with children aged 4-8 and semi-structured interviews with ten survey participants. Quantitative data from the survey was analysed using SPSS. Qualitative data from the interviews was analysed using content analysis. Results of this study indicate that teachers have a positive attitude towards risky play activities that might lead to minor injuries. However, most teachers have a negative attitude towards activities potentially leading to more serious injuries. Findings suggests that social pressures to keep children safe play only a limited role in teachers attitudes. They developed strategies to resist social pressures. Furthermore, avoiding serious injuries for children is often their own personal preference. Gender, age, religion and location of school has been found to play a role in teachers' attitudes towards risky play.

**Key words:** Risky play; Attitude; Educators; Teachers; Social pressure; Social factors; Within-country variations

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# 1. Introduction and theoretical exploration

## 1.1 Introduction

Children naturally and intentionally seek opportunities for taking risks during play (Bruner et al., 1976; Little & Wyver, 2010; Sandseter, 2009b; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Tovey, 2007). Risky play is part of free outdoor play and can be defined as “thrilling and exciting forms of play that involve a risk of physical injury” (Sandseter, 2009a, p. 4). Sandseter (2007) identified six categories of risky play, namely, play with great heights, play with high speed, play with dangerous tools, play near dangerous elements, rough-and-tumble play, and play where children can disappear or get lost. The benefits of risky play for children’s health and development are well-established in the literature. These benefits, which are too many to mention here, include healthy cardiovascular system, healthy brain development, improved well-being and self-confidence, increased motor and spatial orientation skills, and improved social competence (Boreham & Riddoch, 2001; Brussoni et al., 2015; Dodd & Lester, 2021; Erickson et al., 2015; Hinchion et al., 2021; Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023; Sando et al., 2021).

Despite the benefits of risky play, the time children spend outdoors has been decreasing since the 1950s (Brussoni et al., 2012; Cotterink & Cornelissen, 2022; Karsten, 2005), due to a variety of underlying factors. For instance, urbanisation has led to the decline in children’s outdoor play spaces (Karsten, 2005). Growing parental fear about children’s safety, related to, for example, traffic accidents or fear from strangers, limits children’s prospects to play outdoors (Clements, 2004; Furedi, 2001; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997; Veitch et al., 2007). Additionally, as a result of new technological developments, children spend a considerable amount of time indoors with, for example, watching television and playing video games (Veitch et al., 2007). Furthermore, children spend increasingly more time indoors with preparation for school or with different educative activities after school (Brussoni et al., 2012; Kobakhidze & Suter, 2020; Zhang & Bray, 2020).

Access to risky play in most Western and European countries is further restricted during outdoor play (Sandseter et al., 2020; Wyver et al., 2010); mainly as a result of a shift in society’s perception of risk (Cotterink & Cornelissen, 2022; Furedi, 2001). Since the first half of the 20th century, children have been increasingly viewed as precious and vulnerable (Levin, 2013), and therefore in need of protection from risks (Stearns, 2009). Risk is not seen as a challenge anymore, instead, it is identified with danger (Furedi, 2001). This has led to policy and cultural

changes (Lee et al., 2010), with a significant impact on children's access to risky play. For instance, to reduce the possibility of injuries, safety regulations and standards for designing safe playgrounds have been introduced (Copeland et al., 2012; Stearns, 2009). Furthermore, new societal norms, requiring the constant supervision of children by parents and educators, aim to ensure that children are kept safe (Cotterink & Cornelissen, 2022; Karsten, 2005; Little, 2006). Pressure from society on adults to prevent children from taking risks can create an atmosphere of anxiety (Furedi, 2001; Lee et al., 2010) and a culture dominated by fear of risk (Gill, 2007; Wyver et al., 2010). Parents and educators who allow children to take risks are often seen as irresponsible (Furedi, 2001; Gill, 2007).

Educators often experience a tension between societal expectations of keeping children safe and the recognition of the benefits of risky play. Research suggests that the majority of educators are aware of the importance of risky play, however, due to safety regulations, fear of litigation and pressure from parents to prevent injuries, they tend to restrict access to risky play (Bundy et al., 2009; Copeland et al., 2012; Kernan & Devine, 2010; Little et al., 2011; van Rooijen et al., 2020). Considering the benefits of risky play, however, reducing children's opportunities for taking risks or limiting the level of risk can hinder their development (Brussoni et al., 2012). This is at odds with the role of educators which includes, amongst others, the enhancement of children's development (Sanyal, 2018).

Children's access to risky play in (pre)schools are largely determined by the attitudes of educators. Their attitude significantly impacts on the extent they allow children to engage in risky play and on the way they facilitate risky play (Little et al., 2012; Stephenson, 2003; van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017; Waters & Begley, 2007). Their attitude determines, for instance, the level of control and surveillance that they place on children's play (Sandseter, 2007, 2014; Stephenson, 2003; Waters & Begley, 2007). Therefore, exploring educators' attitudes towards risky play and the ways they deal with societal pressures to keep children safe can provide an insight into children's opportunities to engage in risky play. Furthermore, it can, potentially, expose the challenges that educators face as regards supporting children during risky play. This, in turn, can be useful in finding ways to support them in facilitating children's risky play (van Rooijen et al., 2020).

The following sections will discuss relevant studies and the theoretical perspective adopted in this study. First, the role of educators in supporting children's risky play will be explored, followed by discussing their attitudes towards risky play. Afterwards, the research aims, the research gap and the research questions will be introduced. Subsequently, the research design and the data analysis methods will be discussed, followed by presenting the findings of

this study. The findings will be situated in the wider literature in the discussion section. Finally, the strength and limitations of this study, and recommendations for further research and practice will be briefly discussed.

## **1.2 Risky play and the role of educators**

In the concept of risky play, risk is distinguished from hazard. Hazard can be understood as a potential source of serious injury that a child might not be able to manage (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Risk, on the other hand, can be seen as an uncertainty of outcome that should be assessed, and ultimately, chosen to be taken by the child. Accordingly, the concept of risky play adopts a positive approach to risk. Injuries, such as scratches, bruises, muscle contusions or fractures, that do not result in permanent damage, disability or death are seen as natural part of children's play (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011).

The role of educators relating to risky play involves a balance between keeping children safe and allowing them to take risks (Stephenson, 2003; van Rooijen et al., 2020). This can imply keeping children *as safe as necessary* rather than the currently dominant strategy of keeping them *as safe as possible* (Brussoni et al., 2012). Keeping children *as safe as necessary* entails a hazard-free environment where children are allowed to take and manage risks, but are protected from serious and disabling injuries (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023; Little & Wyver, 2010). Creating a hazard-free environment can include, for instance, daily safety checks and regular risk assessments (Coe, 2016; Knight, 2011). Regarding risk taking, research suggests that children as young as three years old are capable of recognising and managing risk in a safe manner. They are able to identify risky situations, and are aware of the potential consequences of risk as well as of their own physical capabilities (Coe, 2016; Hinchion et al., 2021; Nikiforidou, 2017; Sandseter, 2010). Additionally, they adapt the level of risk to their abilities (Hinchion et al., 2021; Kleppe et al., 2017; Obee et al., 2020; Sandseter, 2009b), step by step, in a gradual way (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011).

Educators can play an important role in supporting children's risk management. In a study carried out by Coe (2016), exploring risky play experiences of children in a Canadian preschool, practitioners created a caring environment. Attentiveness strengthened trust between staff and children, and as a result, children turned to practitioners with their worries and problems. Similarly, Kleppe (2017), in a study examining child-staff interactions in a Norwegian preschool, found that warmth, responsiveness, attention and trust increase the likelihood that children choose to take risks when the staff is present. These studies suggest



that, if given the choice, children prefer to take risks in the presence of supportive staff rather than alone, without any support. Supporting children to manage risks in this sense entails a warm, caring and attentive demeanour that allows the development of trust between children and educators. At the same time, the risks to be taken and the ways risks are managed should be decided by the children (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). When children do not have enough support and opportunities to take positive risks, they are likely to look for risk in other, potentially, unsafe places (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023). This might include getting involved in illegal or anti-social behaviour during adolescence (Brussoni et al., 2015; Hansen & Breivik, 2001). Thus, paradoxically, allowing children to engage in risky play and supporting them in managing risks promote not only their health and development but also their safety.

### **1.3 Educators' attitudes towards risky play**

Attitudes can be understood as “likes and dislikes – favourable and unfavourable evaluations of and reactions to objects, people, situations, or any other aspects of the world” (Atkinson et al., 1993, p. 725). According to the classic tripartite model developed by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), attitude comprises three processes. The *affective* component consists of emotions and feelings, ranging from pleasurable to unpleasurable (Breckler, 1984). The *behavioural* processes comprise of actions and behavioural intentions, varying from favourable and supportive to unfavourable and hostile. *Cognitions* consist of thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and knowledge structures, varying from favourable to unfavourable, for instance, supporting or dismissing an argument.

The role of the environment in shaping teachers' attitudes has been highlighted by scholars. Van Rooijen and Newstead (2017) conducted an international literature review and developed an ecological framework identifying five factors that impact on the attitude of practitioners towards risky play. First, educator's *constructs of children* influence the extent children are supervised, and the way children's competency to assess risk is viewed. Second, professionals' *personal attitudes to risk*, influenced by their values, beliefs and experiences, has an impact on the extent they allow children to take risks during play. Third, the *professional-parent relationship* influences the extent they exchange views about children's risk taking and the extent risky play is enabled. Fourth, *regulatory factors*, such as safety measures and policies, impact on the risks that children are allowed and not allowed to take. Fifth, *cultural factors* influence how risk is understood within a culture and how it is applied in practice. These five interrelated and complex factors are often a source of tension and

dilemma for educators about how to balance children's need for risky play with their need for safety (van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017).

Further studies examining influences on the provision of risky play are largely consistent with the model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017). The study of Spencer et al. (2021), exploring practitioners' perspectives of risky play in Canadian preschools, identified themes that are aligned with this model. Obee et al. (2021) examined the influence of social factors on affordances of risky play in a Norwegian preschool. *Constructs of children and personal attitudes to risk* were identified as influencing factors, in line with the model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017). However, Obee et al. (2021) also emphasised the impact of pedagogical approaches on affording risky play; which could, potentially, be included in the category *cultural factors* of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017)'s model. The model of Rooijen and Newstead (2017) has been adjusted to the Dutch childcare context in a study with 59 professionals (van Rooijen et al., 2020). In the adjusted version, *constructs of children* is replaced by the *view on the individual child* to emphasise the difference in the needs between individual children. Furthermore, *regulatory factors* in the adjusted model are replaced by two different categories, namely, *external regulations* and *organisational policies*.

Recent studies call attention to the impact of the country-context on the way educators deal with children's risky play. McFarland and Laird (2018) used a mixed-method survey with 26 educators in Australian and US preschools to compare their attitudes towards risky play. They found that most educators (N=20) believed in the importance of risky play. However, Australian practitioners regarded risky play opportunities more important than US educators. The researchers concluded that educators are supported or constrained differently in the provision of risky play by the context of their countries. The Australian early years framework stresses the importance of risky play, whereas that of the US does not mention risk taking. Additionally, the US is the top country in the world with a high litigation culture, and fear of litigation is likely to imprint on educators' perception of risky play.

Liu and Birkeland (2022) also conducted a comparative study, exploring practitioners' perceptions of risky play in Norwegian and Chinese preschools. In this study, Norwegian educators did not report any barriers to providing risky play opportunities. However, Chinese educators identified their own lack of understanding of risky play and parents' negative attitude towards risk as limitations to implement risky play. The researchers explained the difference between Chinese and Norwegian educators with the difference in the cultural context of the two countries. Norway does not only take a permissive approach to risky play but, similarly to Australia, risk taking is encouraged in the early years framework (Ministry of Education and

Research, 2017). Educators in China, on the other hand, do not have this kind of support system and this makes it more challenging to provide access to risky play. Surprisingly, McFarland and Laird (2018) found no difference between practitioners in Australia and the US regarding barriers to providing opportunities for risky play. According to the researchers, the likely reason is that educators from both countries have a good understanding of risky play.

The study of Višnjić et al. (2022), similarly to that of Liu and Birkeland (2022), highlights the impact of country-specific factors on the way risky play is implemented. This study was carried out in a single country, namely, Croatia, using survey with practitioners from 184 preschools. It was found that Croatian educators, regardless of their attitude towards risky play, did not have the competence to implement risky play in practice. The researchers explained this with the Croatian pre-school policy which is heavily focused on safety and the protection of children from risks.

Within-country variations in the attitudes of educators towards risky play is not researched extensively. There are only a few studies that examined social factors potentially impacting on attitudes within a country. Gender has been explored by Sandseter (2014), and Storli and Sandseter (2017) in Norwegian preschools, concluding that male practitioners have a more liberal and allowing attitude towards risky play than their female colleagues. Višnjić et al. (2022) looked at level of education among educators in Croatia. They suggest that those with a higher level of education have a more positive attitude towards risky play than those with a lower level of education. McFarland and Laird (2018) compared the attitudes of practitioners in rural and urban areas in both Australia and the US, finding no significant differences. Sandseter (2013) compared preschool practitioners' perceptions of risky play based on their age, and found no differences. Van Rooijen et al. (2020) compared Dutch professionals working in childcare with those working in education in terms of their perception of the six categories of risky play identified by Sandseter (2007). Although significant differences were found between the two groups, the researchers did not take these differences into account when developing their ecological model for the Dutch context.

#### **1.4 The present study**

The literature suggests that educators' attitude and the societal pressures they face in connection with risky play are influenced by the social and cultural context of the country in which they operate. Most studies about risky play have been carried out in Norway, Canada, the US and Australia. Research exploring the attitudes of educators towards risky play in the

Dutch context is scarce. Additionally, research exploring social factors that might influence educators' attitudes differently across groups is absent in the Netherlands. This study examined the attitudes of primary school teachers towards outdoor risky play in the Netherlands. Additionally, it explored how teachers navigate societal pressures and the social factors that might influence their attitudes differently across groups. Primary school teachers have been chosen for this study because research to date about risky play has focused on preschool contexts, whereas research in a formal school setting is lacking.

This study explored the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of primary school teachers towards outdoor risky play in the Netherlands?
2. How do primary school teachers in the Netherlands navigate societal pressures to keep children safe during outdoor risky play?
3. What social factors can be identified that might influence the attitudes of groups of primary school teachers towards outdoor risky play in the Netherlands?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research design

To research the attitude of teachers, this study employed a mixed-method design. The aim was to integrate findings from quantitative data collected from surveys and qualitative data from interviews. Since mixed-method research is not limited to one single approach, it is suitable to answer complex research questions and, at the same time, provides an in-depth understanding and establishes greater rigour (Denzin, 2012; Flick, 2017; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Respondents of surveys often answer complex questions in a short amount of time and in a simplistic way (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), limiting the validity of the results. Survey in this study was therefore complemented with semi-structured interviews. Interviews were chosen to complement data from surveys because they are suitable for investigating people's perspectives and experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This study employed a sequential way of data collection (Greene et al., 1989), meaning that findings from the survey informed themes to be explored in the interviews.

#### 2.1.1 Survey design

The survey design was based on the tripartite model of attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960) and on the ecological model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017), described in the previous chapter. The tripartite model (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960) was used to explore teachers' attitude towards risky play, in order to answer the first research question. Multiple questions were designed for each component of the attitude specified in the tripartite model. The *affective* component included multiple-choice questions asking participants to choose options from a list of emotions that they potentially experience in connection with children's risky play. Examples of emotions that participants could choose from included enthusiastic, happy, proud, amazed, concerned, scared, anxious, panicky or angry. The part dealing with the *behavioural* component consisted of Likert scale questions about teachers' general behaviour and actions linked to risky play. Additionally, a number of questions were adopted from the Tolerance of Risk in Play Scale (Hill & Bundy, 2014), adjusted to be suitable for Likert scale questions and translated into Dutch. These were used to ask questions about specific risky play situations and were selected so that all categories of risky play identified by Sandseter (2007) are included.

The *cognitive* component of the tripartite model included Likert scale questions about teachers' beliefs and knowledge structures about risky play.

The ecological model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017), identifying factors that influence teachers' attitude towards risky play, was used to answer the second research question. Considering that these factors are a source of tension for educators (van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017), exploring them can, potentially, provide an insight into how teachers' navigate social pressures to keep children safe. Questions designed for this model were mostly Likert-scale questions but included a number of single-select multiple-choice questions. The part of the survey dealing with the factor *constructs of children* included questions about teacher's views on children. The factor *personal attitude to risk* consisted of questions related to teachers' own childhood experience about risky play and their views on risk taking. The factor *professional-parent relationship* asked questions about the extent participants discuss the development and activities of children, including risky play, with the parents. The part dealing with *regulatory factors* included questions about school policies, safety measures, child-staff ratio and the hours children spend outside. Questions designed for the *cultural factors* asked about participants' nationality, country of origin, the type of school they work at, the decade they were born in and the attitudes of other colleagues.

Both the tripartite model of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) and the ecological model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017) were used to compare different groups within the research population, in order to answer the third research question. The design template for the survey can be found in Appendix A.

All Likert scale questions offered five possible answers where participants could indicate their level of agreement or disagreement as follows: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Likert scale questions were chosen because they are commonly used when measuring attitudes (Bohner, 2001; Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). In addition to the closed questions, the survey included a space for remarks in case participants wished to share their thoughts about the survey or about risky play.

Survey questions were transferred into the Qualtrics survey design programme. They were grouped into blocks according to themes to make the questionnaire more logical for the participants and easier to fill in. The blocks included themes such as general questions, emotions, behaviours, views about children and risky play, regulations, relationship with parents, relationship with colleagues and own childhood experience with risky play. A link to the questionnaire was created to be shared with potential participants. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

The quality of the measures used for designing the survey was evaluated before creating the survey. The tripartite model of attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960) is often used in research to measure attitudes (Bohner, 2001) and it has been validated by Breckler (1984) who demonstrated that the three components of attitude are distinguishable. The five factors specified in the model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017) are aligned with the findings of other studies, as discussed in the previous chapter. Although the model of van Rooijen et al. (2020) is claimed to be adjusted to the Dutch context, it was not used in this study due to concerns with small sample size. Additionally, it applies to a pre-school context rather than to a formal school context. The reliability and validity of the Tolerance of Risk in Play Scale was measured by Hill and Bundy (2014) using Rasch modelling, to estimate whether the answers given to the individual questions are consistent with the assumed answers when considering the overall score for risk tolerance of the participants. Internal consistency of the survey questionnaire for the present study was measured by using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and it was found to be high (0,880). A definition of risky play was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire, to ensure that participants' understanding of children's risk taking during outdoor play is consistent with that of the researcher.

### *2.1.2 Interviews*

In this study, a neo-positivistic approach to interviewing was adopted, which is often used in mixed-method designs (Roulston, 2010). The aim of this approach is to access the authentic self of the interviewee in order to generate valid findings. Therefore, the researcher of this study adopted a neutral and non-leading role to minimise her influence on the interviewees (Roulston, 2010). This approach is suitable to explore research questions about attitudes, perspectives and beliefs. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over unstructured interviews so that themes arising from the survey data could be explored. They were chosen over structured interviews to allow participants to talk about what they consider important (Brinkmann, 2020).

The interviews, for reasons of feasibility, were short (max. 30 minutes) and took place online or via telephone, depending on the preference of the participants. At the start of the interview, participants were briefly reminded of the research aims. Six open-ended questions, some including sub-questions, were prepared in advance of the interview. The first question was a broad question, asking participants about their views in general about children's risk taking during outdoor play. This served to open up the space for participants to express their

thoughts and views. The rest of the questions were kept flexible, implying that they were asked in the order that the researcher found the most suitable during the interview, with the aim to keep the natural flow of the talk as much as possible. The way the questions were asked was also adjusted to the particular situation of the interview. Depending on the answers of the interviewee, the sub-questions or other follow-up questions were asked in order to explore their views further. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

## **2.2 Research participants**

The participants of this study are teachers working or having worked in the past with group 1, 2, 3 and 4 (with children aged 4-8) in primary schools in the Netherlands. Teachers working with this age group were chosen because the literature suggests that risky play is a prominent part of children's lives during this age. The directors of primary schools were approached via email and were asked to share a document (Appendix D) with the teachers in their schools working with the relevant age group. The document contained information about the background, purpose and methods of the research, contact details for the researchers and the link to the survey. The schools were purposively selected in order to include a representative sample with a variety of different types (Denscombe, 2014) of schools. The sample included schools with different religious and non-religious, and traditional and non-traditional approaches, and from all 12 provinces of the Netherlands. Additionally, teachers were recruited through the informal and professional network of the researcher. The demographic composition of participants can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

In total, 151 teachers filled in the survey, however, nine of them were excluded from the data analysis because they completed less than 70% of the questionnaire. From the 142 respondents who were included, 137 completed 100% and five completed approximately 80% of the questionnaire. Those participants who, at the end of the survey, expressed their interest in a follow-up interview received a consent form (Appendix E) together with an information sheet (Appendix F), explaining their right to withdrawal, confidentiality and anonymity. Ten of these participants, who signed and sent the consent form back to the researcher, were interviewed.



**Table 1***Demographic composition of survey participants*

<b>Gender</b>					
Female	Male	Both	Neither	Rather not say	
123	17	1	0	1	
<b>Nationality</b>					
Dutch	Other				
142	0				
<b>Country of birth</b>					
Netherlands	Sint Maarten				
141	1				
<b>Born between</b>					
1950-1969	1970-1989	After 1990			
51	61	30			
<b>Province</b>					
Utrecht	Flevoland	Drenthe	South Holland	North Holland	Overijssel
15	13	10	6	13	18
Friesland	Gelderland	North Brabant	Zeeland	Limburg	Groningen
10	10	11	11	8	17
<b>Place of the school</b>					
City	Village				
75	67				
<b>Type of school</b>					
General public primary school	Protestant	Catholic	Generic Christian	School for refugees	Dalton
66	35	23	8	1	1
Montessori	Jenaplan	Waldorf	Special needs		
1	3	1	3		
<b>Total: 142</b>					

**Table 2***Demographic composition of interview participants*

<b>Gender</b>		
Female	Male	
9	1	
<b>Nationality</b>		<b>Country of birth</b>
Dutch		Netherlands
10		10
<b>Born between</b>		
1950-1969	1970-89	After 1990
7	2	1
<b>Background of school</b>		
Religious	Non-religious	
4	6	
<b>Total: 10</b>		

**2.3 Data analysis***2.3.1 Survey*

Survey data was transferred from Qualtrics to the SPSS software and was statistically analysed. Responses asking participants to indicate emotions that they potentially experience in connection with children's risky play were grouped into categories for each individual participant. Responses identifying only pleasant or unpleasant emotions within a question were labelled as *positive* or *negative* respectively, whereas responses indicating a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant emotions were labelled as *mixed*. Responses indicating the trigger of no emotions were labelled as *neutral*. After grouping the emotions, frequencies were calculated to explore the percentage of teachers experiencing positive, negative or mixed emotions, or no emotions when they see children engage in risky play activities.

The Likert scale questions were analysed using mean scores in order to calculate the overall level of agreement of the participants. To calculate mean scores, the five points of the Likert scale were coded with numbers as follows: Strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree =2 and Strongly Disagree=1. Means were categorised based on Pimentel (2019)'s interpretation scheme as follows: 1.00-1.7=very low level of agreement, 1.80-2.59=low level

of agreement, 2.60-3.39=moderate level of agreement, 3.40-4.19=high level of agreement and 4.20-5.00=very high level of agreement. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare participants based on age (born in 1950-69/born after 1990), gender (female/male) location of school (urban/rural) and type of school (religious/non-religious).

### 2.3.2 Interviews

After rough analysis of the data collected from the survey, topics for interviews were formulated. Interview questions mostly served to clarify findings from the survey that are seemingly conflicting or contradictory. For instance, despite believing in the importance of risky play and in the ability of children to manage risk safely, participants indicated the need for supervision during children's risky play. Additionally, when they were asked to rate statements about allowing children to engage in specific risky play situations, they mostly scored with a low or moderate level of agreement. Therefore, interviewees were asked about their views on risky play, children and supervision. This gave the possibility for the researcher to ask follow-up questions about participants' attitudes to injuries and accidents, to gain an insight into the degree of risk they are prepared to tolerate in children's outdoor play. Interviewees were asked how they balance between providing opportunities for risky play with keeping children safe, and about any potential tension or pressure they experience. This helped to gain insight into how teachers navigate societal pressures and provided opportunities to ask follow-up questions about regulations, relationships with parents and colleagues.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and analysed using qualitative content analysis, following the steps suggested by Schreier (2014). Every part of the material that was relevant to the research questions was examined and used to build a coding frame. Three concepts of interest, namely *Teachers' views on risky play*, *Societal pressures* and *Strategies to navigate societal pressures* were constructed to help answer the research questions. Each concept of interest was assigned codes generated from the data. In total, 12 codes were generated, to which segments of the interview data were ascribed. For the category *Teachers' views on risky play*, the following codes were generated: *Children*, *Risk taking*, *Injury* and *Own childhood*. The category *Societal pressures* was assigned the following codes: *Colleagues*, *Parents*, *Regulations* and *Attitude of society*, and the category *Navigating societal pressures* the followings: *Supporting children*, *Supervision*, *Agreements with colleagues* and *Discussions with parents*. To ensure that codes are clear and mutually exclusive, each of the 12 codes were assigned a definition, and the coding was conducted twice by the same

researcher with an interval of seven days. Segmentation of the interview material was carried out according to thematic criterion. The coding sheet used for the main analysis can be found in Appendix G.

## **2.4 Ethical considerations**

This study was approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Science of the University of Groningen, and conforms with the Dutch Personal Data Protection Act (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.), as well as with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (EUR-Lex, n.d.) of the European Union. Participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the nature and purpose of the study, the methods, as well as confidentiality and anonymity. It was explained that participation is voluntary and withdrawal from the study is possible at any time during the research process. Written consent from participants was obtained before the interview. All data is kept in a password protected computer and the participants were informed that all data will be deleted after the results are analysed and written up, latest in September 2023. Data from the Qualtrics software was deleted after transferring it into SPSS. Data within the SPSS software is stored on the computer workspace of the University of Groningen, which is secured with password and authenticator code. Before designing the survey as well as before the interviews took place, the researcher examined and reflected on her own attitude, perspective and biases about children's risky play. This is to facilitate the process of setting aside biases and prejudices so that they had the least possible influence on the design of the survey questions and on the views of participants during interviews.

## **2.5 Positionality statement**

The researcher is a non-Dutch citizen living in the Netherlands, with a different socio-cultural background from most teachers in this country. This might have had an influence on how participants' perspectives and their socio-cultural context are interpreted in the findings. Additionally, the fact the researcher is a non-Dutch citizen and speaks the Dutch language with a foreign accent might have affected the course of the interview. It is possible that participants, all of whom are Dutch citizens born in the Netherlands, interacted differently and shared different views with the researcher than would have done with a researcher grown up in the Dutch culture and language. Furthermore, the researcher has a strong view about the importance of risky play, which called for thoughtfulness to bracket biases during the

interviews and data analysis. Also, the researcher is a professional with experience in working with children, which required careful consideration to position herself as a researcher rather than a “colleague” during the interviews.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Attitudes towards risky play

To answer the first research question, survey participants were asked to rate statements about the three components of their attitude, based on the tripartite model (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). Regarding the *cognitive* component, teachers believe that risky play is beneficial for children's physical (agreement level=4,20/very high) and cognitive development (agreement level=4,13/high). Furthermore, they believe that, by engaging in risky play, children learn to better assess their limits (agreement level=4,16/high). Similarly, interviewees asserted the importance of risky play for children's development. They spoke about its positive effect on motor development, brain development and body strength, and how risk taking is part of growing up that helps children to learn about their physical limits.

Results examining the *affect* component suggest that the greater the severity of a potential injury is, the more likely that the activity triggers emotions and that the triggered emotions are negative. Several participants who indicated no trigger of emotions noted that injuries are a natural part of play.

With regards to *behaviour*, teachers are more likely to present negative or unfavourable behaviour towards risky play activities that might, potentially, lead to serious injury than towards activities that might result only in scratches or bruises. This is a similar pattern to that of the *affect* component. However, there is an inconsistency between these two components of attitude. More than one-fifth (22%) of the respondents associated risky play activities potentially leading to scratches or bruises with only negative emotions, and yet, the overwhelming majority (94%) of respondents agreed (=4) or strongly agreed (=5) to allow children to engage in these activities.

When interviewees were asked about their emotions and behaviour regarding potential injuries, most of them indicated to regularly experience negative emotions, such as anxiety or fear. However, because they consider minor injuries a natural part of children's play, they believe, similarly to most survey participants, that risky play activities potentially leading to minor injuries should be allowed. On the other hand, most interviewees, in accordance with responses from the survey, believe that serious but not life-threatening, as well as fatal injuries should be prevented.

Survey participants were asked further questions regarding their general *behaviour* linked to risky play. Results indicate that they provide opportunities for children to engage in risky play (agreement level=3,89/high) and that they wait to see if children can handle challenges before interfering (agreement level=4,17/high). However, encouraging risky play awarely is rated with a lower overall level of agreement (=3,20/moderate). In line with these results, interviewees indicated that they provide opportunities for risky play. Encouraging children to engage in risky play, however, depends on the individual child. Children who dare a lot are not encouraged, rather, held back and protected from themselves, whereas children who are more cautious might be occasionally encouraged to take risks.

Despite the high level of agreement with statements about general *behaviour*, participants scored mainly with a very low (=1,68) to moderate (=3,25) level of agreement on statements about allowing children to engage in specific risky play situations. Teachers showed a high level of agreement only with allowing children to go head first down the slide (=3,44) and with allowing them to play in a bush unsupervised (=3,56). Responses from the interviews and open survey questions indicate that many activities children regularly engage in at school during outdoor play are, potentially, less risky than those listed in the survey. The most popular activities at school include football, basketball, rope skipping, cycling and roller skating (on flat surface), running, fantasy play, climbing on the climbing frame, sliding on the slide or playing in the sand. Teachers' level of agreement in relation to risky play situations can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Teachers' level of agreement, calculated from the mean score, in relation to risky play situations*

Statements	Level of agreement (mean score) (N=142)
I would let children cycle down a hill at full speed.	2,73
I would let children go head first down the slide.	3,44
I would let children climb a tree as high as they want.	2,99
I would let children jump down from 2 metres.	2,53

I would let children play rough with each other.	3,25
I would let children play-fight with sticks.	2,59
I would let children run close to open fire.	1,68
I would let children walk on slippery rocks close to water.	2,07
I would let children play in a bush unsupervised.	3,56
I would let children use a hammer and nails unsupervised.	2,85
I would let children use a sharp knife under supervision.	2,50

*Note.* Interpretation of level of agreement is based on Pimentel (2019)'s scheme as follows: 1,00-1,79 very low; 1,80-2,59 low; 2,60-3,39 moderate; 3,40-4,19 high; 4,20-5,00 very high

### 3.2 Societal pressures to keep children safe

To help answer the second research question, survey participants were asked to rate statements about factors potentially influencing their attitudes towards risky play, based on the model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017). Results about *regulatory factors* show that on average, children spend four hours per week playing outdoors and the average child-staff ratio is 28:1. Teachers in general feel that they have the autonomy to make decisions about children's risk taking (agreement level=3,65/high). They moderately agree that the school policy includes protocols about risky play (=2,61) but they agree that the school playground offers enough opportunities for risky play (=3,50). The views of interview participants on regulatory factors are divided. Some are aware of safety regulations and school policies, while others are not. Some interviewees mentioned safety regulations, such as restrictions on the height of climbing frames. Others commented on the limitations posed on risky play opportunities by the inspection authority. Most interviewees believe that regulations are not limiting because, as reported in the survey, they think that children have enough opportunities to engage in risky play. Since most regulations are out of teachers' control, interviewees mostly accept that they need to obey them. However, some of them indicated a fear of litigation because it is their responsibility to make sure that children use the equipment safely. High child-staff ratio was also reported as a cause for anxiety because it is difficult to pay attention to all children and make sure that each of them is safe.



Regarding *constructs of children*, survey respondents believe that children are resilient (agreement level=4,41/very high). However, they also expressed a moderate level of agreement with the statement that children are vulnerable (agreement level=3,11). They believe that children have the need to take risks (agreement level=4,20/very high) and that they have the ability to manage risk (agreement level=3,54/high). In line with these results, interviewees agreed that children are resilient and are able to manage risk. Some of them mentioned that risky play, if accompanied by trust and safety, helps children become resilient. Some participants said that children are resilient but made vulnerable by the environment, for instance, by constant control and surveillance, and by the increasing influence of technology. One participant stated:

“Basically, children can learn a lot but they are made vulnerable by the environment in my opinion...because if you give children safety and confidence, then they are not vulnerable...then they can manage themselves. But often they are made vulnerable by...yes...by someone always being on top of their neck, or always telling them they're not worth anything.” (Interview 7)

Concerning teachers' own *personal attitude to risk*, survey participants reported that they liked taking risks when they were children (agreement level=3,44/high) and that they view risk as a positive experience (agreement level=3,95/high). In accordance with survey results, most interviewees liked taking risks in their own childhood. Several of them noted that risk taking in their childhood was seen as normal.

Results about *professional-parent relationship* suggest that most teachers do not feel pressured by parents not to let children engage in risky play (agreement level=2,53/low). However, they only moderately agree that parents support their approach to risky play (=3,17). According to the interviewees, parents expect teachers to keep children safe at school. Some teachers reported to experience a feeling of responsibility and fear of liability, which often leads to a dilemma between keeping children safe and promoting their development. The comment below illustrates this:

“I think you do sometimes come into conflict with parents, because sometimes parents are very protective, whereas as a teacher you know that it's just very important that children can push their boundaries. And yes....that's where you sometimes have a conflict with yourself or with a parent.” (Interview 5)

Most interviewees, however, often choose not to allow parents' attitudes to influence children's opportunities for risky play at school. As one teacher put it:

“Some parents are very precise...for example, they let their children go to school with very neat clothes...yes...then....there will be a hole in the clothes or paint on them...then I think yes....sorry, that's not my responsibility, that's the responsibility of parents ...you shouldn't let your children go to school in neat clothes.” (Interview 1)

Regarding *cultural factors*, concerns were expressed during the interviews about the attitude of society towards risk. Most interviewees believe that society is more limiting towards risk than it was in the past. In their views, we are not used to risk as a society anymore and therefore, there is more anxiety among parents and teachers about potential dangers and serious injuries. Interviewees commented on occasional disagreements and conflicts with colleagues because they have different opinions about children's risk taking. Differences in attitudes among teachers is reflected in the survey, where participants only moderately agreed that their colleagues support their approach to risky play (=3,37). However, they agreed that they would be supported by their colleagues in case of an injury (agreement level=3,72/high).

### **3.3 Navigating social pressures**

To fully answer the second research question, interview data was used to gain insight into how teachers deal with social pressures. This was complemented with results from the survey. One of the ways interviewees navigate social pressures is discussing risky play activities with colleagues and parents. According to most interviewees, it is important to make agreements with colleagues and discuss differences of opinions so that tensions can be prevented. They find it important that all colleagues have the same rules about risky play. Similarly, it is important to have discussions with parents and to support them with their anxiety. The importance of talking about risky play with parents is reflected in the survey responses. Participants rated discussing risky play activities with parents with an overall high level of agreement (=3,49/high). However, they expressed a lower level of agreement with discussing risk taking with their colleagues (=3,23).

Interviewees felt that supporting children during risky play is an important way to keep them safe. In their views, supporting children involves talking with them about risk taking and the consequences of risk. Additionally, they believe that supporting children to manage risks

implies that children know that teachers care about them and that they are there to support in case of an accident. They also commented that children are different and therefore, support needs to be tailored to the individual child. The comment below illustrates how children might be supported by teachers:

“...if you see that a child can't do it and doesn't want to, I wouldn't be so quick to do that anyway. But if I see that a child can't do it and wants to, then I will try to support him and help him cross that threshold. So if you really don't dare, but I see you want to, then I ask: do you want to? Yes, well, then you will do it together and once he has explored that threshold and sees that he can do it anyway, then he can do it himself. So I would then continue to support, as long as necessary, but again on the child's call, say starting from the child.” (Interview 9)

Interviewees agree that supervision is necessary to keep children safe during outdoor play. They think it is important that a teacher is present if an accident happens. In line with the interview data, responses from the survey indicate that teachers believe that supervision during outdoor play is needed (agreement level=3,71/high).

### **3.4 Differences across groups**

To answer the third research question, survey responses were compared based on gender, age, religious or non-religious background of school, and location of school. In each of these four categories, significant statistical differences were found between participants regarding their attitudes towards risky play.

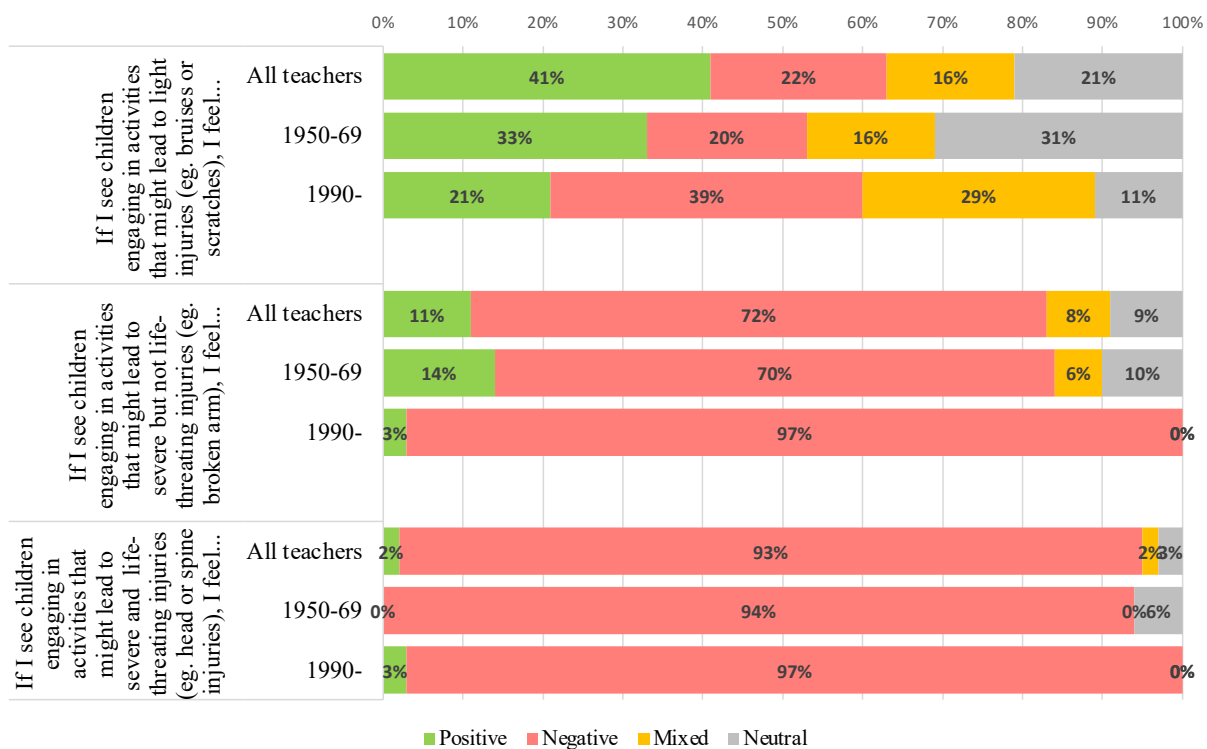
#### *3.4.1 Age*

The attitudes of participants born between 1950-69 were compared with those born after 1990. Results indicate that the younger age group is more likely to associate risky play activities with negative emotions than the older age group. Additionally, the younger age group showed a lower level of agreement with allowing children to engage in activities potentially resulting in serious injuries. Furthermore, significant difference was found between the two age groups regarding statements about specific risky play situations. In four risky play situations the younger age group expressed a lower level of agreement than the older age group. Figures 1

and 2 show emotions and behavioural responses to risky play activities, broken down to percentages and age groups.

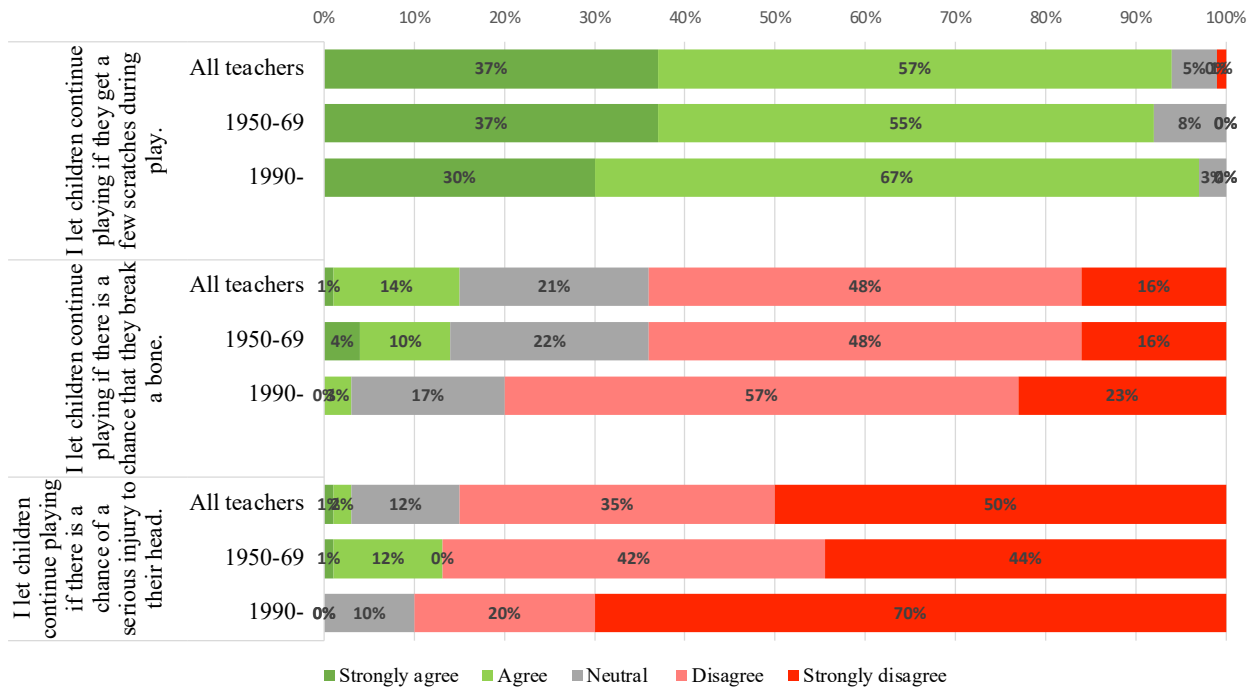
**Figure 1**

*Percentage of teachers responding to risky play activities with positive, negative or mixed emotions, or with no emotions (neutral)*



**Figure 2**

*Teachers' level of agreement regarding activities with different severity of potential injuries, broken down into percentages and age groups*



With regards to social pressure, teachers born after 1990 showed a lower level of agreement with the notion that children are resilient. Furthermore, they expressed a lower level of agreement with the statement that children have the ability to manage risk. Additionally, they perceive risk in a less positive way than the older age group. Moreover, they feel less autonomous in their daily practice. They are less likely to discuss risky play with parents and colleagues. Table 2 summarises where significant statistical difference was detected between the two age groups.

**Table 2**

*Participants' level of agreement (mean scores) regarding statements about risky play, broken down into age groups with p-values*

Statements	Level of agreement (mean scores)			Significance (p-value)
	All teachers' (N=142)	Teachers born between 1950-69 (N=51)	Teachers born after 1990 (N=30)	
I would let children climb a tree as high as they want.	2,99	3,14	2,70	,049*
I would let children run close to open fire.	1,68	1,82	1,37	<,001*
I would let children use a hammer and nails unsupervised.	2,85	3,10	2,20	<,001*
I would let children use a sharp knife under supervision.	2,50	2,71	1,97	,007*
Children are resilient.	4,41	4,57	4,27	,008*
Children have the ability to manage risk.	3,54	3,53	3,30	,030*
I see risk as a positive experience.	3,95	4,06	3,73	,010*
I feel I have the autonomy to decide independently in daily practice about how much risk children take.	3,65	3,73	3,32	,025*
I discuss children's risk-taking with parents.	3,49	3,84	3,16	,001*
I regularly discuss children's risk-taking with my colleagues	3,23	3,37	2,92	,018*

\* Difference is significant where p-value is lower than 0,05

### 3.4.2 Religion

Interviewees were not explicitly asked about their personal faith conviction. An examination of the effect of personal religious affiliation is a very big subject and falls outside of a study focused on risky play. However, survey responses indicate that teachers at schools with a non-

religious background are more likely to offer opportunities for risky play than teachers at schools with a religious background. Furthermore, where a potential minor injury might arise, teachers from non-religious schools are more inclined to permit the activity. Additionally, they are more likely to stay in the background during children's risky play. They are also more likely to allow children to play in a bush without supervision and to climb on trees as high as they want to. Teachers at schools with a religious background reported that they felt more under pressure by parents not to let children engage in risky play than teachers at schools with a non-religious background.

#### *3.4.3 Rural and urban areas*

Surprisingly, survey responses show no significant difference between schools located in rural and urban areas in terms of opportunities for risky play. In the interviews, however, some participants from the older age group spoke about the differences in the past between cities and villages. They reported that schools in urban areas in the 1970s did not have playgrounds or only had a square of asphalt; lacking in green area and play equipment. Possibility for risky play was constrained by the lack of amenity. By contrast, participants noted that schools in rural areas at that time already had playgrounds with more amenities.

Regarding teachers' attitudes, survey responses showed significant differences between schools located in rural and urban areas. Teachers at schools in rural areas are more likely to allow children to engage in activities that might result in a few scratches or bruises. Additionally, they are more likely to stay in the background during children's risky play and encourage children to take risks. Teachers in urban areas expressed a higher level of agreement with the statement that children need to be constantly supervised during outdoor play.

#### *3.4.4 Gender*

Three statements from the surveys illustrate the differences in responses between male and female teachers in connection with risky play. Males are more likely to allow children to cycle down a hill at full speed, to jump down from two meters and to run close to open fire. One female interviewee noted that there should be more males at schools because they have a more permissive approach to risky play. The only male interviewee spoke about the school playground that he had built. His playground was built with the purpose to provide opportunities for risky play.

Additionally, survey responses indicate that males are more likely to feel under pressure from parents not to allow children to engage in risky play. The male interviewee talked about the pressure he faces from parents:

“There are parents who come to me with...with pieces asbestos. Yes, that was then...from another house during a storm. Yes, but I found this in the school playground and that is life-threatening...so then I have to pick up a certificate because I once had the school playground inspected that it is asbestos-free. Then I grab the certificates and then say: look, my school playground is asbestos-free and inspected, and this has come from somewhere else...” (Interview 2)



## 4. Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to gain insight into primary school teachers' attitude towards outdoor risky play in the Netherlands and into the ways teachers navigate societal pressures to keep children safe. Additionally, it examined how attitudes might differ between teachers across groups in relation to age, gender, religious or non-religious background of the school, and location of the school.

### 4.1 Teacher's attitude towards outdoor risky play

Results of this study indicate that the attitudes of teachers in the Netherlands largely depend on the severity of a potential injury. Most teachers view activities that might lead to minor injuries as a natural part of children's play, and therefore, they allow them. However, they limit those activities that might, potentially, result in serious injuries, such as a broken bone or head injury.

In this study from the Netherlands, teachers' attitudes were examined using the tripartite model of attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). Regarding *cognition*, the overwhelming majority of the participants believe that risky play is important for children's development. Recent studies carried out in Australia, the US, Croatia, China and Norway also concluded that most educators are aware of the benefits of risky play (Liu & Birkeland, 2022; McFarland & Laird, 2018; Višnjić et al., 2022).

The severity of potential injury arising in risky play is reflected in the *affect* component of teachers' attitudes. The potential of a serious injury gave rise to being anxious, nervous, worried or panicky, in line with the findings of previous studies conducted in Australia (Little et al., 2011), Canada (Spencer et al., 2021) and the Netherlands (van Rooijen et al., 2020). In accordance with these studies, interviewees of this present study spoke about fear of litigation, caused by safety regulations and negative attitude of parents. The interviewees of this study, however, emphasised high child-staff ratio and differences in the attitudes of colleagues as additional sources of anxiety. The findings of van Rooijen et al. (2020), suggesting that Dutch childcare professionals do not attach any importance to the opinions of colleagues, are at odds with the findings of this study.

Findings regarding teachers' *behaviour* in connection with risky play are comparable to that of Višnjić et al. (2022)'s study, carried out in Croatia. Participants of both studies indicated that they like providing opportunities for children to engage in risky play. However,

when they were asked to rate questions about specific risky play activities, adopted from the Tolerance to Risk in Play Scale (Hill & Bundy, 2014), their responses were more negative. The most likely explanation is that the risky play situations listed in the Tolerance to Risk in Play Scale are, potentially, more risky than the activities provided by the educators participating in Višnjić et al. (2022)'s and this present study. Some teachers of this study explained during the interviews that small injuries are part of children's play but serious accidents should be prevented, and, therefore, some risky play activities should not be allowed. These findings, however, raise questions about the appropriateness of using the same questionnaires about risky play across different countries. The Tolerance to Risk in Play Scale was developed in Norway, based on the Norwegian model of risky play (Hill & Bundy, 2014). As mentioned in the first chapter, risky play is encouraged in Norway on policy level, whereas this is not the case in the Netherlands or in Croatia.

As seen above, this study has found an inconsistency between the *cognitive, behaviour* and *affect* component of attitude. Most teachers allow risky play activities with a potential for a minor injury despite experiencing negative emotions. Teachers are aware of the benefits of risky play, yet, most of them would not allow children to engage in activities that might result in a more serious injury. Breckler (1984) notes that there is often a lack of consistency between the three components because they are products of different learning processes. There are possible explanations for the inconsistency between components of attitudes found in this study. First, it is possible that, despite the fact that the term 'risky play' was explained at the beginning of the survey, participants' understanding of risky play is different from that of the researcher. Teachers might consider only play with the potential for minor injuries as risky play, towards which they have a positive attitude. They are supportive towards these activities even if they trigger negative emotions because they are aware of their benefits. Play with a potential for more severe injuries are not considered as risky play, rather, it is seen as play that is dangerous and therefore need to be avoided. The second explanation is that teachers' understanding of risky play is similar to that used in this study, but due to social pressures to keep children safe, they only allow activities that might result in minor injuries, despite being aware of the benefits. The third explanation could be that their understanding is similar to that used in this study but they personally find only minor injuries acceptable. Therefore, not allowing play that potentially leads to serious injuries is a personal choice rather than a result of societal pressures; or more likely, a mixture of personal choice and societal pressures.

## 4.2 Navigating societal pressures to keep children safe

Findings suggest that teachers in the Netherlands do not fully comply with the pressures exerted by society. They developed strategies to resist influences. These strategies include supporting children to manage risk safely, supervising children, and discussions and agreements with parents and colleagues. Most teachers of this study feel that they have the autonomy to make decisions about children's risky play in their daily practice.

The ecological framework of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017) was used in this study to gain insight into societal pressures that teachers might face in connection with children's risky play. *Regulations* in this study was found to be experienced as a barrier to providing risky play opportunities only by a minority of teachers. Most teachers believe that the outdoor play area of the school provides enough opportunities for risky play. This is contrary to the findings of studies carried out in Canada (Spencer et al., 2021) and Croatia (Višnjić et al., 2022). Educators of these studies reported that safety regulations negatively impact on their abilities to provide risky play opportunities. Participants of this present study is likely to be able to provide those risky play activities that they find acceptable, namely those with a potential for a minor injury, within the frameworks of laws and regulations. The Netherlands conforms to the European norms of regulating the safety of playground equipment (NEN-EN 1176-1:2017, 2017) and it also has its own law about playground safety (Warenwetbesluit attractie- en speeltoestellen, 2023). These regulations aim to limit risks, amongst others, by specifying conditions for the placing of a shock absorbing surface. However, they define the maximum fall height of equipment in three metres (Speelprojecten, n.d.), which does not prevent teachers from providing those risky play activities that they find acceptable.

Similarly to regulatory factors, the attitude of *parents* is not experienced as a barrier by most participants of this study. Although they believe that many parents expect them to keep children safe, most of them find it more important to provide opportunities for risky play, in order to promote children's development. This is contrary to the experience of Chinese educators in the study of Liu and Birkeland (2022), in which parents' attitudes were seen as barrier to providing risky play opportunities. The findings of this present study point towards the observation made earlier, suggesting that teachers in the Netherlands do not fully comply with social pressures. Results of this study regarding the influence of parents' attitudes and regulations are not compared with that of van Rooijen et al. (2020), although both studies were carried out in the Dutch context. This is because of concerns with inconsistency between

responses from closed and open-ended questions in the survey of van Rooijen et al. (2020)'s study.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers' *constructs of children* in the Netherlands are in contrast with the current societal view of children described in the literature (Levin, 2013; Stearns, 2009). The overwhelming majority of the participants of this study see children as resilient, only made vulnerable by the environment. Additionally, in accordance with our current knowledge about children's ability to deal with risk (Coe, 2016; Hinchion et al., 2021; Nikiforidou, 2017; Obee et al., 2020), they believe that children are capable of recognising and managing risk safely. It is possible that the claim that children are viewed by society as vulnerable is a misconception; or that this societal view is not prominent in Dutch society. Findings from the interviews, however, rather suggest that teachers do not internalise society's view of children. Interview participants raised concerns about the changes in society regarding views of children and risk taking. The changing attitude of society was one of the themes emerged from the interviews. Consistent with the literature, interviewees commented on the shift in our perception of risk, resulting in the overprotection of children (Cotterink & Cornelissen, 2022; Furedi, 2001; Gill, 2007; Karsten, 2005; Little, 2006; Wyver et al., 2010). This is another finding that is contrary to that of van Rooijen et al. (2020)'s study. That study found that educators do not attach importance to the Dutch socio-cultural context around risk and children.

This study found that teachers develop strategies to navigate societal pressures. One of the most important strategies is *supporting children* in managing risks during play. Consistent with studies highlighting the importance of warm and trusting staff-child relationships (Coe, 2016; Kleppe, 2017; Liu & Birkeland, 2022), interviewees of this study see trust, safety and support as vital. In line with the study of van Rooijen et al. (2020), some interviewees of this study asserted the importance of tailoring support to the needs and abilities of the individual child.

Another way for teachers to manage social pressures is to *supervise* children during outdoor play, in order to make sure they are safe. According to the literature, constant supervision of children by adults is a new societal norm (Cotterink & Cornelissen, 2022; Karsten, 2005; Little, 2006). This raises the question whether supervision should be viewed as a strategy to deal with social pressures or, rather, as a form of compliance with social pressures. Considering that the findings of this study so far suggest that participants do not fully comply with social pressures, it is more likely that supervision is the own personal choice of teachers; or at least partly. According to the literature, the level of surveillance during risky play depends

on the attitudes of teachers (Hansen Sandseter, 2007; Stephenson, 2003; Waters & Begley, 2007). As previously discussed, this present study suggests that teachers want to avoid serious injuries and they allow risky play only with minor potential injuries. Therefore, it is likely that they want to exercise constant supervision on children during outdoor play, to ensure that serious injuries are avoided.

Discussing risky play with other adults responsible for children was found to be an important strategy for the teachers of this present study. *Discussions with parents* seem to be vital for educators across countries. This is borne out in the findings of studies from Scotland, Norway (MacQuarrie et al., 2015) and UK (Hewitt-Taylor & Heaslip, 2012), as well as in the results of this present study. Absent in the literature, *agreements with colleagues* were found to be significant for teachers taking part in this study, especially for preventing conflicts.

Other strategies described in the literature, such as regular safety checks and the creation of a hazard-free environment (Coe, 2016; Knight, 2011) were not a common theme during the interviews; they were mentioned only by one participant.

### **4.3 Variations in attitudes within the Netherlands**

This study identified a number of social factors, such as age, gender, religion and location of school, that influence the attitudes of teachers in the Netherlands. Regarding *age*, this study found that teachers born after 1990 have a more negative attitude towards risky play than teachers born between 1950-69. They see risk in a less positive way and are less allowing towards risky play than the older age group. Findings also indicate that they feel less autonomous in their daily practice and that they consider children less resilient than their older colleagues. This suggests that they are more likely to comply with social pressures to keep children safe. Expectations and constraints relating to age, posed by society, are highlighted in the literature (Buchmann, 1989; Kautonen, 2012; Mortimer & Moen, 2016). It is possible that teachers born in the 1950s-60s experience the pressure to keep children safe less strongly than the younger age group. This is because they were born in an era when risk taking, according to them, was seen as normal. Teachers born after 1990, on the other hand, might have never experienced living in a society where risk taking was considered to be normal.

With regards to *religion*, findings of this study suggest that teachers working in a school with a non-religious background are more likely to offer opportunities for risky play and are less likely to feel under pressure by parents. A likely explanation is that the norms and values of schools and teachers with a religious and non-religious background are different, and this

has an impact on their attitude towards children's risk taking. A study involving 1137 teachers in Hungary, examining the differences in educational values between teachers with a religious (Protestant and Catholic) and non-religious background, found a difference in their educational values (Pusztai et al., 2021). Teachers with a non-religious background rated originality, imagination and determination more important than those with a religious background. Teachers with a religious background on the other hand, found altruism, selflessness, national identity and respect for traditions more important than those with a non-religious background. From a sociological viewpoint, religion is a social construction that sets norms and values for its believers (Giddens, 2009). It can, therefore, be considered as social pressure influencing the attitude of teachers towards children's play. Since *religion* is defined by sociologists as "a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals" (Giddens, 2009, p. 677), it could potentially fall under the *cultural factors* of the model of van Rooijen and Newstead (2017).

This study, in line with other studies conducted in Norway (Sandseter, 2014; Storli & Sandseter, 2017), found that male teachers are more allowing towards risky play than female teachers. This study, however, also found that male teachers feel more under pressure from parents; which could be a consequence of being more allowing towards risky play. Gender can be seen as a social construction that refers to the difference in attributes, roles and behaviours that society assigns to males and females (Denmark & Paludi, 2008; Giddens, 2009). There is an extensive international and Dutch literature on how gender stereotypes influence differently the behaviour of males and females from childhood to adulthood (eg. Baker et al., 2016; Endendijk et al., 2013; Endendijk et al., 2017; Master & Meltzoff, 2016; National Education Union, 2013; Nowicki & Lopata, 2017). In this sense, similar to religion, gender can also be considered as a social pressure impacting on the attitudes of teachers.

Concerning *location of school*, this study has found no significant differences between rural and urban areas in terms of opportunities for risky play. However, significant differences were detected in the attitudes of teachers depending on the location of the school. Teachers working in rural areas are more allowing and encouraging towards risky play than teachers in urban areas. Teachers in urban areas, on the other hand, find the constant supervision of children during outdoor play more important than teachers in rural areas. It is possible that, although the outdoor play environment of schools provides enough opportunities for risky play in both urban and rural areas, the conditions in the two contexts are different; which has an impact on teachers' attitudes. For instance, school playgrounds in cities might be located in busy neighbourhoods implying the need for more supervision. Restrictions on risky play might be necessary to prevent children from ending up on the road among the passing traffic.

#### **4.4 Strengths and limitations**

The impact of religion on educators' attitudes towards risky play is completely absent from the literature. This study highlights that differences in the attitudes of teachers exist not only between countries but also within countries. Because research on risky play in the Netherlands is scarce, this current study contributes to the body of scholarship on this subject. Another strength of this study arises from the use of mixed-methods that facilitated comparing and contrasting findings from survey with that of interviews.

One of the limitations of this study is linked to the neo-positivistic approach to interviewing. Since the existence of a true self and the possibility of accessing it have been questioned (Roulston, 2010), the accuracy and honesty of the responses of the interviewees can also be questioned. Additionally, respondents to my request for information from schools were a self-selected cohort of educators comprising mostly teachers with an interest in risky play. They were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of risky play. What is missing from this study are contrary or opposing views. The positionality described in the second chapter has undoubtedly introduced bias despite all attempts to minimise it. Limitations around the generalisability of this study also has to be recognised. A sample size of a 142 is indicative and not generalisable.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

This study has highlighted that significant differences exist in attitudes towards risky play among primary school teachers within the Netherlands. Age, gender, location of school and religious or non-religious background of school are social factors affecting teachers' attitudes and behaviour. It seems from the findings that teachers find strategies for navigating social pressures and the regulatory environment. To some extent, teacher's attitudes and behaviours are a personal choice but it is clear that social pressures affect their choices. Teachers are more likely to be positive towards risky play when the likelihood of serious injury is absent. From the results of this study, it can be argued that what uppermost in the minds of teachers in the Netherlands is the safety of the children in their care. It can also be argued that the attitudes of teachers towards risky play constrain its availability in the Netherlands. The majority of the literature on this subject comes from the literature outside the Netherlands. The attitudes of teachers in some of those countries positively supports and encourages risky play to an extent that appears to be limited in the Netherlands. It can also be argued that the relative scarcity of male teachers in primary education constrains the availability of access to risky play.

## 4.6 Recommendations for further research and practice

The impact of social factors on teachers' attitudes towards risky play is a legitimate area for further research. Parents' choice of schools with a religious ethos for their children has effect on the availability of risky play for their children. This is also a legitimate subject for further research. A follow up study might want to compare the attitudes of parents and other caregivers with that of teachers. The paucity of studies which have included the authentic voice of children and explored their attitudes towards risky play indicates an area for further research.

The law on primary education (Government of the Netherlands, 2023) in the Netherlands contains provision for promoting a positive pedagogical climate in the school plan. It could be argued that educational institutions have the latitude to promote risky play because it is beneficial for children. This is an area for policy improvement. It should not be assumed that the attitudes of teachers towards risky play is entirely constraining. There is evidence that teachers know about the benefits of risky play. The constraint therefore comes from a regulatory environment focused more on safety than on the benefits to children at school. There is a relative absence of provision for play in the law for primary education.

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## Appendix A – Survey design template

Rosenberg & Hovland (1960)'s model		<b>Research questions:</b> <b>1. What are the attitudes of teachers towards outdoor risky play in primary schools in the Netherlands?</b> <b>3. What social factors can be identified that influence the attitudes of primary school teachers towards outdoor risky play across groups in the Netherlands?</b>	<b>Type of question/Possible answers</b>
Affect (emotions)		Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot lichte letsels (zoals blauwe plekken en schrammen), voel ik me .....	Enthousiast   Tevreden   Trots   Wanhopig   Ongelukkig   Paniekerig   Zenuwachtig   Ongerust   Bezorgd   Nerveus   Angstig   Wantrouwend   Geïrriteerd   Furieus   Boos   Verwonderd   Blij   Bang   Bedroefd   Anders
		Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot ernstige maar niet levensbedreigende letsels (zoals gebroken arm), voel ik me .....	Enthousiast   Tevreden   Trots   Wanhopig   Ongelukkig   Paniekerig   Zenuwachtig   Ongerust   Bezorgd   Nerveus   Angstig   Wantrouwend   Geïrriteerd   Furieus   Boos   Verwonderd   Blij   Bang   Bedroefd   Anders
		Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot ernstige en levensbedreigende letsels (zoals hoofd- of wervelkolomletsel), voel ik me .....	Enthousiast   Tevreden   Trots   Wanhopig   Ongelukkig   Paniekerig   Zenuwachtig   Ongerust   Bezorgd   Nerveus   Angstig   Wantrouwend   Geïrriteerd   Furieus   Boos   Verwonderd   Blij   Bang   Bedroefd   Anders
Behaviour (actions, intentions, behaviour)		Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als ze tijdens het spelen een paar schrammen oplopen.	Likert

		Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als er een kans is dat ze een bot breken.	Likert	
		Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als er een kans is dat ze een ernstig letsel aan hun hoofd oplopen.	Likert	
		Ik stimuleer kinderen bewust om risico's te nemen.	Likert	
		Ik bied graag mogelijkheden voor kinderen om risico's te nemen.	Likert	
		Ik wacht af of het kind de uitdagingen zelf aankan voordat ik me ermee bemoei.	Likert	
		Ik hou me zoveel mogelijk afzijdig, zodat het kind zelf het verloop van het risicovolle spel kan bepalen.	Likert	
	<b>Tolerance of Risk in Play Scale (Hill &amp; Bundy, 2014)</b>	Ik zou kinderen op volle snelheid een heuvel af laten fietsen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen met hun hoofd naar beneden laten gaan op de glijd baan.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen zo hoog in een boom laten klimmen als ze willen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen van 2 meter hoogte naar beneden laten springen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen ruig laten spelen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen laten spel-vechten met stokken.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen dicht bij open vuur laten rennen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen laten lopen op gladde rotsen dicht bij water.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen zonder toezicht in een struik laten spelen.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen zonder toezicht een hamer en spijkers laten gebruiken.	Likert	
		Ik zou kinderen een scherp mes laten gebruiken.	Likert	
Cognition (beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, knowledge structures)			Het nemen van risico's heeft een waarde voor de fysieke ontwikkeling van kinderen.	Likert
			Het nemen van risico's heeft een waarde voor de cognitieve ontwikkeling van kinderen.	Likert
		Door risico's te nemen, leren kinderen om veilig te spelen.	Likert	
		Kinderen leren hun grenzen beter inschatten als ze risicovol spelen.	Likert	
<b>van Rooijen and Newstead (2017)'s model</b>		<b>Research question:</b> <b>1. How do teachers in primary schools in the Netherlands navigate societal pressures to keep children safe during outdoor risky play?</b> <b>3. What social factors can be identified that influence the attitudes of primary school teachers towards outdoor risky play across groups in the Netherlands?</b>		
Constructs of children		Kinderen zijn kwetsbaar.	Likert	
		Kinderen zijn veerkrachtig.	Likert	

		Kinderen hebben de vaardigheden om risico's te inschatten.	Likert
		Kinderen hebben de behoefte om risico's te nemen.	Likert
		Kinderen kunnen omgaan met risicovolle situaties.	Likert
		Kinderen moeten onder toezicht staan als ze buiten spelen.	Likert
		Ik vertrouw erop dat kinderen veilig kunnen spelen zonder constant toezicht.	Likert
Teachers' attitude towards risk (personal experience, attitudes, beliefs, values, gender)		Als kind moedigden de volwassenen om me heen me aan om risico's te nemen.	Likert
		Als kind, nam ik graag risico's.	Likert
		Ik zie risico's als een positieve ervaring.	Likert
		Met welk geslacht identificeert u zichzelf?	Man   Vrouw   Beide   Geen van beide   Liever niet zeggen
Relationship between professionals and parents		Ik bespreek de ontwikkeling van de kinderen met de ouders.	Likert
		Ik bespreek de schoolactiviteiten van de kinderen met de ouders.	Likert
		Ik bespreek het nemen van risico's door kinderen met de ouders.	Likert
		De ouders steunen mijn aanpak over risicovol spel.	Likert
		Ouders volgen mijn advies op over de ontwikkelingen van kinderen.	Likert
		Ik voel me onder druk gezet door ouders om kinderen geen risico's te laten nemen.	Likert
		Ik denk dat ouders positief staan tegenover risicovol spel.	Likert
Regulatory factors		Risicovol spelen is ingebed in het beleid van de school.	Likert
		De buitenspelomgeving van de school biedt kinderen mogelijkheden voor fysieke uitdagingen.	Likert
		Er zijn natuurlijke elementen in de buitenspelomgeving van de school, zoals bomen, struiken of heuvels.	Likert
		Ik vind dat ik de autonomie heb om in de dagelijkse praktijk zelfstandig te beslissen hoeveel risico's kinderen nemen.	Likert
		Ik weet dat ik bij een eventueel letsel van een kind volledig gesteund word door mijn leidinggevende.	Likert
		Het pedagogisch beleid van de school bevat protocollen voor specifieke risicovolle activiteiten.	Likert
		Hoeveel uur per week spelen de kinderen die u lesgeeft/lesgaf vrij buiten tijdens de schooluren?	

		Wat is de verhouding tussen kinderen en personeel bij het vrij buitenspelen?	
Cultural factors		Wat is uw nationaliteit?	
		In welke provincie woont u?	
		In welk land bent u geboren?	
		In welk land zijn uw ouders geboren?	
		Wat is/was het beroep van uw ouders?	
		In welke provincie is de school waar u werkt/werkte?	
		Waar is de school waar u werkt/werkte?	In een dorp   In een stad
		In wat voor soort school werkt/werkte u?	Protestants-Christelijk   Rooms-Katholiek   Gereformeerd vrijgemaakt   Openbaar   Reformatorisch   Evangelisch   Islamitisch   Anders
		Ik praat regelmatig met mijn collega's over het nemen van risico's door kinderen.	Likert
		Mijn collega's steunen mijn aanpak over het nemen van risico's door kinderen.	Likert
		Ik weet dat ik bij een eventueel letsel van een kind volledig gesteund word door mijn collega's.	Likert
		Er is en verschil tussen risico en gevaar.	Likert
		Was u bekend met de term 'risicovol spel' voordat u aan dit onderzoek deelnam?	Ja   Nee

## Appendix B – Questionnaire

### “DE HOUDING VAN LEERKRACHTEN IN HET BASISONDERWIJS TEGENOVER RISICOVOL SPEL”

Hartelijk dank dat u mee wilt werken aan dit onderzoek. Graag stel ik u enkele vragen over het nemen van risico's door kinderen tijdens buitenspelen. De antwoorden die u geeft worden anoniem verwerkt. Het invullen kost ongeveer 20 minuten. Indien een vraag voor u niet van toepassing is mag u ze openlaten.

De vragen gaan over kinderen in groep 1 t/m 4. Indien u met meerdere leeftijdsgroepen werkt/werkte, geef dan uw antwoord in relatie tot kinderen in groep 1 t/m 4.

Bij vragen die gaan over de school waar u werkt/werkte: Als u niet meer op een school werkt en op meerdere scholen hebt gewerkt, geef dan uw antwoord in relatie tot de school waar u het laatst hebt gewerkt.

**Wat is risicovol spel?** Bij risicovol spelen gaan kinderen aan de slag met spannende, uitdagende en avontuurlijke activiteiten. Daarbij bestaat een risico op een verwonding. Voorbeelden van risicovol spel: op bomen klimmen, slingeren, hard fietsen, vuurtje stoken.

### Algemene vragen

1. Met welk geslacht identificeert u zichzelf? *Man | Vrouw | Beide | Geen van beide | Liever niet zeggen*
2. Geboortjaar: *< 1950 | 1950-1969 | 1970-1989 | > 1990*
3. In welke provincie woont u? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In welk land bent u geboren? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Wat is uw nationaliteit? \_\_\_\_\_
6. In welk land zijn uw ouders geboren? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Wat is/was het beroep van uw ouders? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Aan welke groep(en) geeft/gaf u les? \_\_\_\_\_
9. In welke provincie is de school waar u werkt/werkte? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Waar is de school waar u werkt/werkte? *In een dorp | In een stad*
11. In wat voor soort school werkt/werkte u? *Protestants-Christelijk | Rooms-Katholiek | Gereformeerd vrijgemaakt | Openbaar | Reformatorisch | Evangelisch | Islamitisch | Anders*
12. Was u bekend met de term 'risicovol spel' voordat u aan dit onderzoek deelnam?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Hoeveel uur per week spelen de kinderen die u lesgeeft/lesgaf vrij buiten tijdens de schooluren?
14. Wat is de verhouding tussen kinderen en personeel bij het vrij buitenspelen? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Wat voor soort activiteiten ondernemen kinderen regelmatig op het schoolplein waar u werkt/werkte tijdens vrij spel?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**De volgende vragen gaan over de emoties die u heeft als u kinderen ziet tijdens vrij buitenspelen. Kies de vragen die op u van toepassing zijn (u kunt er meer kiezen).**

16. Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot lichte letsels (zoals blauwe plekken en schrammen), voel ik me .....  
*Enthousiast | Tevreden | Trots | Wanhopig | Ongelukkig | Paniekerig | Zenuwachtig | Ongerust | Bezorgd | Nerveus | Angstig | Wantrouwend | Geïrriteerd | Furieus | Boos | Verwonderd | Blij | Bang | Bedroefd | Anders: \_\_\_\_\_*
17. Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot ernstige maar niet levensbedreigende letsels (zoals gebroken arm), voel ik me .....  
*Enthousiast | Tevreden | Trots | Wanhopig | Ongelukkig | Paniekerig | Zenuwachtig | Ongerust | Bezorgd | Nerveus | Angstig | Wantrouwend | Geïrriteerd | Furieus | Boos | Verwonderd | Blij | Bang | Bedroefd | Anders: \_\_\_\_\_*
18. Als ik kinderen activiteiten zie doen die kunnen leiden tot ernstige en levensbedreigende letsels (zoals hoofd- of wervelkolomletsel), voel ik me .....

*Enthousiast | Tevreden | Trots | Wanhopig | Ongelukkig | Paniekerig | Zenuwachtig |  
Ongerust | Bezorgd | Nerveus | Angstig | Wantrouwend | Geïrriteerd | Furieus | Boos |  
Verwonderd | Blij | Bang | Bedroefd | Anders: \_\_\_\_\_*

**De volgende vragen gaan over wat u doet of zou doen wanneer de kinderen die u lesgeeft/lesgaf vrij spelen buiten (bv. op het schoolplein of tijdens een schoolreisje). Kies in hoeverre u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

19. Ik vertrouw erop dat kinderen veilig kunnen spelen zonder constant toezicht.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
20. Ik bied graag mogelijkheden voor kinderen om risico's te nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
21. Ik stimuleer kinderen bewust om risico's te nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
22. Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als ze tijdens het spelen een paar schrammen oplopen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
23. Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als er een kans is dat ze een bot breken.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
24. Ik laat kinderen doorspelen als er een kans is dat ze ernstig letsel aan hun hoofd oplopen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
25. Ik wacht af of het kind de uitdagingen zelf aankan voordat ik me ermee bemoei.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
26. Ik hou me zoveel mogelijk afzijdig, zodat het kind zelf het verloop van het risicovolle spel kan bepalen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
27. Ik zou kinderen op volle snelheid een heuvel af laten fietsen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
28. Ik zou kinderen met hun hoofd naar beneden laten gaan op de glijbaan.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
29. Ik zou kinderen zo hoog in een boom laten klimmen als ze willen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
30. Ik zou kinderen van 2 meter hoogte naar beneden laten springen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
31. Ik zou kinderen ruig laten spelen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
32. Ik zou kinderen laten spel-vechten met stokken.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
33. Ik zou kinderen dicht bij open vuur laten rennen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
34. Ik zou kinderen laten lopen op gladde rotsen dichtbij water.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
35. Ik zou kinderen zonder toezicht in een struik laten spelen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
36. Ik zou kinderen zonder toezicht een hamer en spijkers laten gebruiken.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

37. Ik zou kinderen onder toezicht een scherp mes laten gebruiken.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

**De volgende vragen gaan over hoe u denkt over kinderen en het nemen van risico's door kinderen. Kies in hoeverre u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

38. Ik zie risico's als een positieve ervaring.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
39. Kinderen hebben de behoefte om risico's te nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
40. Kinderen moeten onder toezicht staan als ze buiten spelen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
41. Er is en verschil tussen risico en gevaar.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
42. Kinderen zijn kwetsbaar.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
43. Kinderen zijn veerkrachtig.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
44. Kinderen hebben de vaardigheden om risico's in te schatten.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
45. Kinderen kunnen omgaan met risicovolle situaties.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
46. Door risico's te nemen, leren kinderen om veilig te spelen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
47. Kinderen leren hun grenzen beter inschatten als ze risicovol spelen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
48. Het nemen van risico's heeft een waarde voor de fysieke ontwikkeling van kinderen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
49. Het nemen van risico's heeft een waarde voor de cognitieve ontwikkeling van kinderen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

**De volgende vragen gaan over schoolbeleid, en de relaties die u heeft/had met ouders en collega's op de school waar u werkt/werkte. Kies in hoeverre u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

50. Ik bespreek de ontwikkeling van de kinderen met de ouders.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
51. Ik bespreek de schoolactiviteiten van de kinderen met de ouders.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
52. Ik bespreek het nemen van risico's door kinderen met de ouders.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
53. Ouders worden betrokken bij het opstellen van het curriculum.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
54. De ouders steunen mijn aanpak over risicovol spel.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

55. Ouders volgen mijn advies op over de ontwikkelingen van kinderen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
56. Ik voel me onder druk gezet door ouders om kinderen geen risico's te laten nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
57. Ik denk dat ouders positief staan tegenover risicovol spel.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
58. Ik weet dat ik bij een eventueel letsel van een kind volledig gesteund word door mijn leidinggevende.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
59. Ik weet dat ik bij een eventueel letsel van een kind volledig gesteund word door mijn collega's.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
60. Ik praat regelmatig met mijn collega's over het nemen van risico's door kinderen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
61. Mijn collega's steunen mijn aanpak over het nemen van risico's door kinderen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
62. Risicovol spelen is ingebed in het beleid van de school.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
63. De buitenspel omgeving van de school biedt kinderen mogelijkheden voor fysieke uitdagingen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
64. Er zijn natuurlijke elementen in de buitenspel omgeving van de school, zoals bomen, struiken of heuvels.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
65. Ik vind dat ik de autonomie heb om in de dagelijkse praktijk zelfstandig te beslissen hoeveel risico's kinderen nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
66. Het pedagogisch beleid van de school bevat protocollen voor specifieke risicovolle activiteiten.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

**De laatste twee vragen gaan over uw ervaring met het nemen van risico's tijdens vrij buitenspel in uw kindertijd. Kies in hoeverre u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

67. Als kind moedigden de volwassenen om me heen me aan om risico's te nemen.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*
68. Als kind nam ik graag risico's.  
*Helemaal eens; Eens; Neutraal; Oneens; Helemaal oneens*

**Opmerkingen** \_\_\_\_\_

**Geef aan of u geïnteresseerd bent in deelname aan een kort follow-up interview (online).** Ja – e-mailadres of telefoonnummer: \_\_\_\_\_ | Nee



Geef aan of u geïnformeerd wilt worden over de onderzoeksresultaten. Ja – e-mailadres:

\_\_\_\_\_ | Nee

**Bedankt voor de tijd die u heeft genomen om aan deze enquête deel te nemen.**

## **Appendix C – Interview Guide**

- i. Goedemorgen/middag + mezelf voorstellen
  - ii. Bedankt voor uw deelname aan mijn onderzoek
  - iii. Het doel van het onderzoek: inzicht te krijgen in de houding van leerkrachten tegenover risicovol spel
  - iv. Risicovol spel is een soort avontuurlijk spel waarbij het risico van lichamelijk letsel bestaat, bijvoorbeeld in bomen klimmen, slingeren, vuur maken of ondersteboven hangen
  - v. Dit is een kort interview, het zal niet meer dan 20-30 minuten duren
  - vi. Meedoen aan het onderzoek is vrijwillig. U kunt op elk moment stoppen met het interview.
  - vii. Toestemming vragen voor opname
  - viii. Ik heb een paar vragen voor u. U kunt zo kort of lang antwoorden als u wilt.
- 
- 1) Mijn eerste vraag gaat over hoe u denkt over risicovol spel in het algemeen. Wat is uw mening over risicovol spel/het nemen van risico's door kinderen tijdens buitenspelen?
  - 2) Hoe zorgt u voor een evenwicht tussen risico's toestaan en kinderen veilig te houden? (En is het eigenlijk belangrijk?)
  - 3) Voelt uw zich in tweestrijd met betrekking tot risicovol spel? (Is er een conflict tussen hoe u risicovol spel ziet en sommige factoren uit uw privé- of beroepsleven, uit de maatschappij?) Of, is dit niet het geval?
  - 4) Hoe ziet u kinderen in het algemeen? En in verband met risicovol spel? (Zijn ze kwetsbaar, weerbaar, kunnen ze zelf met risico's omgaan?)
  - 5) Hoe denkt u over toezicht op kinderen? Moeten ze onder toezicht staan als ze buiten spelen?
  - 6) Kunt u me iets vertellen over risicovol spel in uw eigen jeugd? Nam u risico's? Hebben de volwassenen om u heen u aangemoedigd of ontmoedigd om risico's te nemen?
- 
- ix. Bedankt voor uw tijd en voor uw deelname.

## Appendix D – Invitation for participating in research



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### Uitnodiging voor leerkrachten om deel te nemen aan onderzoek

Leerkrachten in het basisonderwijs moeten elke dag, wanneer kinderen buiten spelen, beslissen in hoeverre zij kinderen toestaan om risico's te nemen. Actief spelen en leren omgaan met risico's zijn belangrijk voor de ontwikkeling van kinderen. Leerkrachten worstelen echter vaak tussen enerzijds de maatschappelijke verwachtingen om kinderen veilig te houden, en anderzijds hen toe te staan risico's te nemen. Dit laatste is ook een controversiële kwestie onder leerkrachten. Het is belangrijk te onderzoeken hoe leerkrachten denken over het nemen van risico's door kinderen, omdat zij bepalen hoeveel risico's kinderen nemen.

**Het doel van het onderzoek:** Inzicht krijgen in de houding van leraren ten opzichte van risicovol spel.

**Wat is risicovol spel?** Het is een soort spel waarbij het risico van lichamelijk letsel bestaat, bijvoorbeeld in bomen klimmen, slingeren, vuur maken of ondersteboven hangen.

**Wie zoek ik?** 120 leraren in groep 1, 2, 3 of 4 uit heel Nederland. Ik nodig leraren van alle leeftijd uit, inclusief gepensioneerden.

**Wat gaan we precies doen?** Als u deelneemt, zult u een online vragenlijst invullen die bestaat uit vragen over u perspectief en houding ten opzichte van risicovol spel. Aan het eind van de vragenlijst kunt u aangeven of u wel of niet geïnteresseerd bent in deelname aan een online interview.

**Wat gebeurt er met uw gegevens?** De gegevens worden op een veilige computer opgeslagen, beveiligd met een wachtwoord. Ze worden geanonimiseerd. In rapportages worden nooit gegevens gepresenteerd die terug te leiden zijn naar u als persoon.

Als u geïnteresseerd bent in deelname aan het onderzoek, vul dan even deze **vragenlijst** in:

[https://rug.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cHo9CBkOIPyGYN8](https://rug.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cHo9CBkOIPyGYN8)

Het duurt ongeveer 15-20 minuten om de vragenlijst in te vullen.

Als u hier vragen over hebt, kunt u contact opnemen met mij via telefoonnummer 0616653340 of via email: [i.posta@student.rug.nl](mailto:i.posta@student.rug.nl)

Hartelijk bedankt!

Ildikó Pósta

Masterstudent

MSc Pedagogical Sciences – Ethics of Education (MSc Pedagogische Wetenschappen)

Faculteit Gedrags- en Maatschappijwetenschappen, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

# Appendix E – Consent form



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## GEÏNFORMEERDE TOESTEMMING

### “DE HOUDING VAN LEERKRACHTEN IN HET BASISONDERWIJS TEGENOVER RISICOVOL SPEL”

Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoek gelezen. Ik heb genoeg gelegenheid gehad om er vragen over te stellen.

Ik begrijp waar het onderzoek over gaat, wat er van me gevraagd wordt, hoe er met mijn gegevens wordt omgegaan, en wat mijn rechten als deelnemer zijn.

Ik begrijp dat deelname aan het onderzoek vrijwillig is. Ik kies er zelf voor om mee te doen. Ik kan op elk moment stoppen met meedoen. Als ik stop, hoef ik niet uit te leggen waarom. Stoppen zal geen negatieve gevolgen voor mij hebben.

Ik geef hieronder aan waar ik toestemming voor geef.

#### Toestemming voor deelname aan het onderzoek:

Ja, ik geef toestemming voor deelname

Nee, ik geef geen toestemming voor deelname

#### Toestemming voor het maken van audio-opnames tijdens het onderzoek:

Ja, ik geef toestemming voor het maken van audio-opnames van mij als deelnemer.

Nee, ik geef geen toestemming voor het maken van audio-opnames van mij.

#### Toestemming voor de verwerking van mijn persoonsgegevens:

Ja, ik geef toestemming voor de verwerking van mijn persoonsgegevens zoals vermeld in de onderzoeksinformatie. Ook als ik besluit om te stoppen met deelname, kan ik hierom vragen.

Nee, ik geef geen toestemming voor de verwerking van mijn persoonsgegevens.

Volledige naam deelnemer:	Handtekening deelnemer:	Datum:

Volledige naam onderzoeker:	Handtekening onderzoeker:	Datum:
Ildikò Pòsta	<i>Ildikò Pòsta</i>	8 mei 2023

*U heeft recht op een kopie van dit toestemmingsformulier.*

## Appendix F – Information sheet for interviews



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### INFORMATIE OVER HET ONDERZOEK EN HET INTERVIEW

#### “DE HOUDING VAN LEERKRACHTEN IN HET BASISONDERWIJS TEGENOVER RISICOVOL SPEL”

##### ➤ **Waarom krijg ik deze informatie?**

Fijn dat u misschien wil meedoen aan dit interview! U wordt uitgenodigd om deel te nemen omdat u onlangs een vragenlijst hebt ingevuld waarin u aangaf geïnteresseerd te zijn in deelname aan een interview.

##### ➤ **Moet ik meedoen aan dit onderzoek?**

Meedoen aan het onderzoek is vrijwillig. Wel is uw toestemming nodig. Lees deze informatie daarom goed door. Stel alle vragen die u misschien heeft, bijvoorbeeld omdat u iets niet begrijpt. Pas daarna besluit u of u wilt meedoen. Als u besluit om niet mee te doen, hoeft u niet uit te leggen waarom, en zal dit geen negatieve gevolgen voor u hebben. Dit recht geldt op elk moment, dus ook nadat u hebt toegestemd in deelname aan het interview.

##### ➤ **Waarom dit onderzoek?**

Dit onderzoek gaat over hoe leraren denken over risicovol spel van kinderen. (Risicovol spel is een soort avontuurlijk spel waarbij het risico van lichamelijk letsel bestaat, bijvoorbeeld in bomen klimmen, slingeren, vuur maken of ondersteboven hangen.) Het doel van dit onderzoek is om inzicht te krijgen in de houding van leraren ten opzichte van risicovol spel.

➤ **Wat vragen we van u tijdens het onderzoek?**

U wordt gevraagd om deel te nemen aan een kort online-interview. Het interview duurt ongeveer 20-30 minuten. Tijdens het interview zou ik u enkele vragen stellen over uw perspectief en houding ten opzichte van risicovol spel. Voordat u aan het interview deelneemt, uw toestemming tot deelname wordt gevraagd.

**Hoe gaan we met uw gegevens om?**

Uw gegevens worden op een veilige computer opgeslagen, beveiligd met een wachtwoord. Ze worden geanonimiseerd. Na de scriptieverdediging, uiterlijk september 2023, worden ze verwijderd. In de scriptie en rapportages worden nooit gegevens gepresenteerd die terug te leiden zijn naar u als persoon.

➤ **Wat moet u nog meer weten?**

Dit scriptieonderzoek is opgezet door masterstudent Ildikó Pósta en goedgekeurd door de Commissie Ethiek van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. U kunt altijd vragen stellen over het onderzoek: nu, tijdens het onderzoek, en na afloop. Dit kan door de onderzoeker te e-mailen ([i.posta@student.rug.nl](mailto:i.posta@student.rug.nl)) of te bellen (0616653340).

Heeft u vragen/zorgen over uw rechten als onderzoeksdeelnemer of de uitvoering van het onderzoek? U kunt hierover ook contact opnemen met de Ethische Commissie Gedrags- en Maatschappijwetenschappen van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen: [ec-bss@rug.nl](mailto:ec-bss@rug.nl).

## Appendix G – Interview coding scheme

Category	Description	Code	Definition	Example
Teachers' views on risky play	Teachers' views, beliefs, perceptions and behaviours regarding different aspects of outdoor risky play.	Children	Teachers' views on children and childhood in general or linked to outdoor risky play.	“Ja, dus ik, zo kijk ik een beetje naar kinderen. Ik denk dat ze gewoon mensen zijn die aan het begin van hun leef carrière staan en dus daar in een ontwikkeld proces zitten. En al wat als ze aan het spelen, aan het leren, aan het bewegen en aan het doen zijn, alles wat ze doen in hun leven staat in het teken om in een verdere fase van hun

				leven zelfstandig te kunnen functioneren.”
		Risk taking	Teachers’ views, beliefs and knowledge structures about the benefits or importance of risky play regarding children’s learning and development.	“Nou, over het algemeen vind ik persoonlijk dat dat risico's nemen, dat dat dat dat eigenlijk moet, dat dat erbij hoort. Ik ben zo opgevoed, zelf ook van je weet je vallen en opstaan, dat hoort er allemaal bij en gaat maar gewoon proberen.... Dus ik vind dat risicovol spel wel belangrijk is, omdat ze daarmee ook hun grenzen leren kennen.”
		Injury	Teachers’ views about accidents and injuries that are the result of risky play.	“Ja, maar mijn mening is dat dit van kleine verwondingen juist.”
		Own childhood	Teachers’ experiences and memories about risky play during their own childhood.	“Ja, ik, ik was wel iemand die de grenzen opzocht en ik wist ook wel dat het niet altijd goed was en ik deed....deed ook wel dingen die niet mochten van mijn ouders...en.. zo ben ik ook wel een keer gaan fietsen met de ogen dicht en ben ik het kanaal ingereden....Nog moest ik gered worden en ik ben ook wel een keer op mijn rolschaatsen achter een brommer aangegaan en heel erg gevallen en ik wist dat dat niet mocht, maar ik zocht wel die grenzen op. Ik heb ook wel eens een keer een vuurtje gemaakt dat uit de hand liep, dus ik heb zelf...als kind heb ik wel de...de grenzen opgezocht en mijn broer was daarin nog extremer...”
Social pressures	Factors that influence teacher’s behaviours, actions and reactions to risky play in a negative way. For example, they cause dilemmas for	Colleagues	Attitudes of colleagues towards risky play that cause dilemmas, tensions, conflicts or pressure for teachers.	“Ja, dat...dat verschilt ook, want dat hangt heel erg vanaf hoe jij als mens bent. Maar daar hebben we het wel over, want het kan best zijn dat ik zeg van nou, ik vind het goed dat deze leerling een bol van de daad en dat een andere collega denkt van oh, nee, dat moet je echt niet doen, maar ik vertrouw dan wel op het kind, want een kind die het niet durft, gaat het niet doen. En dan zeg ik van nou, als ik

	teachers or result in tensions or conflicts with parents or colleagues, or lead to expectations towards teachers, or teachers experience them as pressure.			erbij ga staan, ik weet van deze leerling dat hij het kan en als je het wil doen, zorg ik dat ik in ieder geval bij als er wat gebeurt, en dat is soms wel lastig. Dat kan wel zorgen voor een conflict, of in ieder geval een discussie, maar daar heb ik het dan wel over.”
		Parents	Attitudes of parents towards risky play that cause dilemmas, tensions, conflicts or pressure for teachers.	“Maar daar zit wel een beetje de grens, omdat je op school natuurlijk verantwoordelijk bent voor kinderen en en ja, de ouders geven jou het vertrouwen om goed voor die kinderen te zorgen.”
		Regulations	Factors that are outside of the control of teachers and cause dilemmas, tensions, conflicts or pressure for teachers. For example, safety regulations, laws or child-staff ratio.	“Ja...als de toestellen goedgekeurd zijn, ze zijn goedgekeurd.....er is een.....ze hebben het sticker ‘veilig’, he..., gemarkeerd dat niets aan de kwaliteit van de speeltoestel, of...ja....de opdrachten die we geven zijn eigenlijk .....ja....passen bij de leeftijd van het kind.....dan denk ik ja, kunnen wij niks aan doen, want je kunt kinderen niet helemaal veilig houden en overal.....van alle risico’s beschermen. Maar ja, soms is het wel.....dat je voel je wel verantwoordelijk natuurlijk dus....ik let aan wel op van....”
		Attitude of society	Attitudes of society as a whole towards risk and risky play that cause dilemmas, tensions, conflicts or pressure for teachers.	“Mensen kunnen steeds minder en dat heeft ook te maken met dat ze ergens in hun jeugd niet niet al aangeleerd hebben om met hun handen bepaalde handelingen te maken, risico's te nemen, zichzelf hun eigen lijf leren kennen.”
Strategies to navigate social pressures	Strategies, approaches or actions used to manage societal pressures regarding risky play, and to ensure children’s safety	Supporting children	The ways teachers support children’s outdoor risky play.	“Dan leg ik ze ook altijd wel uit waarom dit dus niet kan. Nou, stel, je bent aan het klimmen op een glijbaan dan kan je uitglijden met je hoofd tegen de glijbaan aanbotsen en nou ja, ik kan het verergeren dus daar probeer ik wel altijd in aan te geven wat misschien verstandig is...om niet te doen en wat verstandig is om wel te doen, uit

during risky play.			te proberen. En we proberen ook vaak... stel, ze moeten over iets heen klimmen, dat we daar niveaus in aanbrengen, dat...dat kinderen zelf kunnen kiezen. Oké, dat klimmen, daar ben ik heel goed in, dus ik pas pak het moeilijkste niveau, want ik denk dat ik dat wel aankan of ik vind dat klimmen toch wel een beetje spannend. Nou, dan kan ik wat lager beginnen, bijvoorbeeld...dus we proberen daar niveaus in aan te brengen. Ik denk op die manier dat je daar ook wel een beetje het evenwicht inhoudt en ze gewoon heel duidelijk uit te leggen van dit mag je wel doen, dit kan je niet doen, want dan kan er dit gebeuren. Of gaat dit juist proberen?...alleen doet, op een veilige manier. Ik denk gewoon vooral heel veel, ook gesprekken erover voeren en als je iets ziet wat....wat...wat niet helemaal oké is het daarover te hebben van oh wat gebeurde er nou, wat heb je gedaan? Waarom deed je dat? Nou?"
	Supervision	Supervision by teachers during children's outdoor play at school.	"Dus ja...en dat is...dat is ook risicovol hè dat je dan zo vast... dat je voor je leven ongelukkig is. Dus daarom denk ik dat er altijd wel iemand op het plein moet zijn die de in de gaten, hè."
	Agreements with colleagues	Discussions and agreements made with colleagues about risky play.	"De ene collega is iets voorzichtiger dan de ander maar we hebben wel dezelfde regels."
	Discussions with parents	Discussions with parents about children's risky play.	"Dus ja, van daaruit probeer ik ook wel ouders die die dat moeilijk vinden en dat zijn vaak hun eigen angsten ook daar wel in te begeleiden."