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What are the Benefits of Outdoor play in Children?

Abstract

The research project conveys the multiple benefits outdoor play and the benefits and effects it has on children and their development. (Early Education 2022) Kilgallon talks about the new times of technology and the effects it has on children who are stuck indoors, and the numerous benefits children seek from outdoor play. (Kilgallon 2016). The literature review also covers the role of the adult in outdoor play and contrasting the different views. Bell (2017) states that having a sample group makes it easier to create data. The focus sample of this research project is 3 small group of 8 children in each, the 3 groups will be based across 3 different school in Wales to give a broad idea of the data from across the country. A small focus group is more reliable as Faber and Fonseca (2014) states that a large sample size can have an impact on the research and the outcome results. The method that would be used to collect the data is a qualitative method of observations, Nolan states that Qualitative data is normally recorded using words and visuals. According to Bell (2017) Qualitative research is more thorough as it conveys in more depth of a specific topic. Smith (2011) states that the participation right of a child are important to ensure that the child is made aware of their right and that consent is acquired. The BERA code of ethical research states that participants are entitled to confidentiality and anonymity and researchers should be aware of the participants rights and be respectful and sensitive. Also, in accordance with the GDPR the participants are lawful allowed to be made aware of where their data is being kept, how safe it is and what kinds of data is being kept and for what purpose.

Literature Review

The subject of this research project is about the multiple benefits of outdoor play has on children, this subject has been chosen as the importance of outdoor play and the benefit of outdoor learning is recently being recognised by practitioners in a child's development. (Early Education 2022)

Kilgallon 2016 states that the new era of technology and children spending most their time indoors means that people are forgetting the importance of outdoor play and the numerous benefits it has on children and the detrimental effects it can having on their development. (Kilgallon 2016)

Tinney 2022 said that Outdoor play includes all the type of play that happens outside. Outdoor lay includes natural features such as, in the park or at the beach. It can include nature like leaves, trees, the sea, stones, or sticks. Using resources outdoors giving the children ample opportunities to create and play, as natural outdoor resources can be used imaginatively, for example a stick could become a magical wand, or grass and water can be used to make soup. The possibilities are endless and encourages children to be creative and imaginative.

Early education 2022 coveys that children are curious learners who expand through learning and playing, by giving children the opportunities to investigate, be imaginative and inventive, this allows them to experience authentic real-life experiences. Playing and learning outdoors allows children to explore, be curious learners, and to build up their confidence and self-esteem. Intrusting children to guide their learning is a big factor in the new curriculum. (Early Education 2022)

According to NiDirect no date a child's play helps them to learn and to develop, outdoor play gives children the opportunities to learn, explore, and use their imagination. Spending more time outside can have positive impacts on a child's health. When children play outside it can have many benefits on their physical and emotional well-being as well as benefits on their development. Running and jumping can increase a child's fitness and stamina as well as increasing their bone density. Climbing can help develop coordination, balance, and strength. Playing outdoors can give children a break from routines and timetables in class. It gives them the freedom to be creative let off steam and be active (NiDirect no date). Tassoni and Hucker (2005) state that Play can present in many different forms, which can variety across

the age ranges. Play can be defined as 'occupying or amusing oneself in an activity or game'. Play is perceived as a primary need of a child. This can also be compared to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The role of the adult in play is vital to ensure play is successful at home and in a setting. Games played with babies are often adult led or adult taught or the adult will need to provide the resources to encourage play. Play offers opportunities for children to enhance their, personal, social, emotional, and physical development, it can assist them in developing confidence, building relationships with others and creating positive attitudes. (Tassoni, Et, al. 2005)

To contrast Tassoni states that an adult's role in supporting play is important and they are needed to support and encourage play, however Bruce (1999) conveys that the involvement and intervention of an adult in a child's play can cause effects and damage to a child's development (Williamson 2016)

Piaget states that children can develop understanding of the world around them through exploring and experimenting. Having space in which to play and move around in is important as it can enhance gross motor skills. Giving children the time to explore and lead their play, means they are getting more out of the time and develops their independence and development. When children play outside they develop learning in multiple ways, they are learning cognitively, enhancing their social skills and language. Outdoor play also offers opportunities for cross-curricular Learning. (Tinney 2022)

The new curriculum for early years talks about the multiple different areas of learning and about the enabling adult and enabling environment and experiences, this also ties in with outdoor play as when following the new curriculum, it gives practitioners more opportunities to tie in the areas of learning and develop the learning and the play outdoors. (Welsh Government 2021)

Methodological Considerations

This research will look into the benefits of outdoor play in the early years. Bell (2017) states that the sample in a research project is an important factor, sampling is the process of choosing a group of people in the population to carry out the research on. The sample will be a group of people that take part in the research, also known as

the participants. Having a sample group makes it easier to create data from the participants rather than the whole population, to then generate and generalize results. The sample for this research subject will be probability stratified sampling (Bell 2017). Mcleod 2023 states that Stratified sampling is where the population is divided up into groups before they are selected into sampling frames, such as sorting the population by age, gender, or income, this method is more efficient and makes it easier to observe and relate to the topic. (Mcleod 2023).

Through the stratified sampling a sample group of children aged 3 and 4 who are in nursery in a school setting are chosen from 3 different schools across Wales, the 3 groups include 8 children in each group to ensure that a through sample can be taken and to enhance a deeper understanding and connection. Faber and Fonseca (2014) states that a large sample size can impact the research and the results. (Faber and Fonseca 2014)

The researchers sample method of children ages 3 and 4 across 3 schools in Wales helps to provide a large area to gain results to see differences and likeness across Wales. The age range was chosen as at the younger age they have more opportunities to play and engage in outdoor play. Especially with the new curriculum as it has the areas of learning and development stages of a child, which allows and gives more opportunity of outdoor play. (Welsh Government 2021). By completing the research across 3 different schools it helps to collate enough data to see if playing outdoors has an impact on a child's development. The research will take place inside the school's outdoor play area, the researcher would ensure that the areas are as they would normally look to ensure the children are familiar with the surrounding. The researcher would also ensure that the practitioners that are normally with the children are involved to ensure the environment is as familiar as possibly, this helps to ensure the validity of the research and to ensure the data collected is accurate. The researcher can conduct interviews with the parent or teacher to gain better understanding of the children before the research conducts, this will have the researcher to see the progression the children have made over the research project.

Bell (2017) states that the researcher may end up in unintentional roles, for example a child may ask the researcher questions or for help or to be a part of a game. The

researcher will also have a responsibility to ensure the children's safety and confidentiality whilst undergoing the research. To ensure more accurate research the researcher would spend one month in each school, this ensures that the researcher get a true representation of the environment and the children, also it helps the children to familiarise themselves with the researcher and that the children will feel safe and act as they normally would within their school. The researcher would request some information related to the children before the project takes place so that when the research is taking place the researcher would be able to notice the developmental changes and the benefits outdoor play is having on the child. (Bell 2017). A qualitative methodology will be used, the method the researcher will use will be observation. Observation is to observe and watch someone or a group of people which helps to give the researcher to gather data and give an insight into behaviours, processes and interactions. observations can allow a researcher to gain a deeper insight into what's going on. According to Nolan, Qualitative data is normally collected from small scale projects and is presented in the form of words or visuals, it focuses more on one experience. Whereas Quantitative data is data collected in a numerical way, this can often be used to create statistics (Nolan, et, al. 2013). Bell (2017) states that the used of qualitative research is positive because it can focus more in depth on a specific topic, it can provide an insight into, emotions personalities, and beliefs. It allows the researcher to gain an inside view of the topic, and it has move flexibility. (Bell 2017)

In order to complete the observation, the researcher must gain consent from the schools, the teacher, the parents of the children and any other relevant persons. Machan (2016) states that observations are essential and help adults to find out a child's interests and skills and the different ways they play and learn (Machan 2016). A type of observation that the researcher will use to conduct the project will be a running record, Lorina (2021) states that running records are written in the present tense as the event is taking place, it gives a minute by minute description about the work taking place. It gives the researcher the opportunity to record the behaviours and conversation as they are happening which can then be used to track the child's development. This observation type is less structured and is more flowing (Lorina 2021). Bilton and crook state that when the researcher is observing its important to remember who they are observing and the reasoning behind the observation. The

more the research and observation is detailed the more reliable the research data would be. The observation will be to monitor the groups behaviour and the learning and development over the month. (Bilton and Crook 2016)

Bell (2017) states that a qualitative method can be a limitation because the ethics and the research can be lengthy and time consuming as well as being more complicated. The research cannot be considered with statistical figures, and sometimes the finding cannot be generalized or compared to the whole population, also there is more of a chance that the researcher can impact the results of the research (Bell 2017). Lorina (2021) states that some disadvantages of using observational running records are that they can be very time consuming, as well as it can be difficult to keep up with the child's actions as writing every account of actions can be time consuming. Also, on some days of the observation it might not be a true reflection of the child. (Lorina 2021)

Bell (2017) states that interviews are a good way to collect information to back up an observation when collecting qualitative research data, however some participants may not want to be interviewed, such as the parents may not want to conduct in the interview and the child itself due to the age may not have an understanding or the ability to give consent. Using multi methods to collect the research helps with the validity of the research data. (Bell 2017). According to Kumar 2019 another limitation may be the Hawthorne effect, this is where the children may change their behaviours in a response if they know they are being observed which would have an impact on the research data, however as this research participants are 3 to 4, it would be unlikely that they are aware they are being observed. (Kumar 2019).

Triangulation is a tool that is used in order to assess the validity of data by using data from more than 1 source. It can be multiple types of research methods that are used, however they all methods are all focused on the one topic, for example, using a survey and observation to look at the main topic. This gives the researcher the opportunity to see the research from multiple perspectives. (Bell 2017). Nolan, 2013 states that Triangulation can be made up in 4 different ways the triangulation of data means to use research data from multiple difference sources all linking to the 1 topic. The triangulation of methods means to use multiple different methods to obtain information about one topic. Triangulation of researchers means to use more than

one researcher to research the topic. Finally, the triangulation of theory means to use multiple theories to interpret data about the same topic. (Nolan, et, al. 2013)

Ethical Considerations

Nolan States that will qualitative researcher trust is required. The validity of the research comes from the trustworthiness of the researcher to provide ethical research. (Nolan, et, al. 2013).

According to Smith (2011) The UNCRC brought about children's right in 1989, this gave children a voice and for some basic human rights, the children's right document is a reconciliation which respects adults and children in partnership. The rights are in 3 sections, provision, protection, and participation and apply to all children. A big part is children having a voice and having the right to take part in decisions that affect them.

Smith (2011) States that Participation rights are vitally important when constructing research around children, also the protection right is important to support children from discrimination or ill treatment. The interactions and relationships between the children and the practitioners and researcher are important as it increase the child's capacity to be able to express themselves and their emotions in their environment. Developing close relationships with the parents and teachers is important for the researcher. It is important that consent is not only from the parents but also consent is gained from the children. Adults can often have negative influences on the selection process of the children involved and sometime put forward certain children with 'good' attributes, this can be negative to the results of the research as the selection process had been unethical and biased. (Smith 2011). Munford and Saunders (2001) states that as soon as children are able to communicate verbally, consent must be given by the child. Also, an insight into what they are consenting to is required either by the researcher or the parent. (Smith 2011). In this project the researcher would gain permission from the school, the parents the teacher and the children involved. To begin with the school and teachers would be approached to gain consent from the research to happening in their school/class. The researcher would ask the schools and teacher to randomly select 8 children, this would be done by selecting all the names of the children aged 3-4 in that specific school and picking every 3rd child on the register which is in alphabetical order to make it a fair selection process.

The parent of the children will then be invited along to a meeting to meet the researcher and for the researcher to explain to the parents everything that is involved, the parents, teacher and school bodies would be given a copy of what the research entails, how the data will be protected also a copy the University's ethic code of practice as well as the BERA (2023) code of ethical research practice. The parent can then consent to whether or not they want their child to partake in the observations. According to Harcourt, Perry and Waller (2011) Gaining consent is a sensitive topic which would need to be handled with care. Then gaining consent from the child is forming a relationship with the child and asking them if the researcher can observe them and then consent again comes within the observation, if the child is playing outdoors and then don't want to then the consent will have ended, the child cannot be forced into playing outside therefore the observation can only take place when the children decided they want to play outside, if they then decided they no longer want to play outside the observation has ended, or if a child decided that one day they no longer want to be observed then the research would need to end. Harcourt, Perry, and Waller (2011).

Giving the all the relevant bodies an information pack containing all aspects of the research project is important, containing the reasoning and rationale for the project also the sensitive side of the consent and the data protection and where the information will be stored also who has access to what information. it's also important that the participant is made aware their right to withdraw consent at anytime during the research project. Also included will be all of the participant and families' rights. Its vital to make sure all parties are thoroughly informed of all information before consent is made. UNCRC states It's important that the children in the research are continuously reminded of the UNCRC and their right as well as the researcher continually being considerate of the child's rights and having the best interest of the child at heart. (UNICEF no date)

BERA (2023) states that participants are entitled to the right of confidentiality and anonymity and researchers should be sensitive and respectful. Also, if a participant wants to be identified in a study a researcher also needs to be respectful of the personal decision. Researchers need to note that participants have the right to change their mind at any time when considering their confidentiality, and to also keep log of any changes within the research project. In accordance with the GDPR all participants

are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, what it is being used for and who has access to it. All data must be protected and handled sensitively. When research is released researched must make sure that it doesn't know directly breach the participants confidentiality or anonymity. When storing information on computers ensuring the files are password protected and ensuring all paper copies are filed under lock and key. When the research project is completed all names of participants and schools will be kept anonymous to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Its vital to ensure all personal information that is collected is kept confident, meaning to be locked away and it is not easy access, relaying information at the beginning to participants and their family explaining all information will be kept confident. BERA (2023). Following university guidelines in ensuring that all relevant risk assessment is completed. All data that is collected would be stored in the appropriate manner in line with the current guideline and legislation. Also, to reduce the risk on the university, the university have a legislation document on the research ethics and integrity code of practice. This document would also be made available to participants family and the other relevant persons. (UWTSD 2023). Nolan (2013) states the participants who are under the age of 18 are classed as at risk or vulnerable, this is due to their age, this means the ethics need to be more through to ensure the participants are not at a disadvantage and to safeguard the children from any harmful practice. The ethical respond cycle is a framework to assist researchers with the ethics side of their research projects. Children perspectives must be considered as they influence the research topic. Body language is a big part of giving consent as someone who is non-verbal would not be able to communicate consent however, by looking at the body language if the child is happy and content and enjoying, but if the child is in distress and unhappy, they are unwilling to be there, the body language can be used as the child's voice and the actions must be respected and acknowledged by the researcher. (Nolan 2013)

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