

Abstract – 233 Words.

This study will explore how risky play affects children's holistic development. The aim of this research project will compare the behaviours and attitudes towards risky play of Children aged 3-5 and the viewpoints of practitioners which will be carried out in a Nordic-inspired forest school and an early years setting with an indoor and outdoor learning environment that are located in South Wales. The hypotheses is to find the right balance between the risks and dangers of children, the worries and anxiety of parents and the challenges that practitioners face as a result of this. Findings will be analysed to discover the advantages and challenges or stigmas that that surround risky play. A sample of 10 children, 2 Practitioners and 1 Leader will be the participants of the research project which derives from purposive sampling. An analysis of triangulation and the mixed methods that have been selected to be used for this line of enquiry will be discussed. The last section of this chapter will contain the ethical considerations prior to the research study, whilst adhering to BERA and ERIC. Informed consent and the right to withdraw at any time will be discussed at length and the reassurance that this information will be offered to participants prior to the research project and that data will be gathered and stored securely in accordance with data protection GDPR to have their identity remained confidential.

Literature Review. – 809 Words.

According to Bell (2018), a hypothesis is a term that identifies an idea or a question that a researcher possesses to collect and analyse data to form a stronger understanding of a topic. The hypothesis of this research project is whether risky play has an impact on young children's holistic development, and the attitudes of practitioners, children and parents towards risky play are in South Wales. Obee, Sandseter and Harper (2020) describe the advantages of taking part in risky play, such as physical health, enhanced motor skills, learning to assess risks and consequences to their actions, enhanced mental and emotional well-being through attempting and mastering skills of potentially dangerous activities, developing personalities with their confidence and high self-esteem, developing skills of regulating and expressing themselves emotionally and the resilience to manage conflicts and challenging situations. Jidovtseff et al (2022) argues that Children who participate in risky play enter what is referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), discovered by Lev Vygotsky, a theorist who suggested this is central to where learning is most effective (Aubrey and Riley, 2013). Children are often observed welcoming challenge and being aware of their physical strengths and limitations and they can gradually increase the task's difficulty at their own pace, making them the leaders of their own physical development, which in turn supports their mental wellbeing and self-esteem. Play without interference from adults in this regard can help them conceptualise their surroundings and discover for themselves what are potential hazards they face to overcome. Jidovtseff (2022) argues that Children require opportunities to be exposed to these environments in order to become resilient, confident and fearless individuals. Cheng et al (2022) endorses risky play through suggesting that effective learning takes place when children can freely explore and create where they follow their interests and instincts in the open air without adult direction or pressure for results. Children learn social and risk

management skills, resilience, and creative thinking, all of which establish the groundwork for positive interpersonal interactions and problem-solving. The viewpoint of Hinchion, McAuliffe and Lynch (2021) is that Children's opportunity to become "daredevils" enhances independent decision making and sense of competence are improved and negative behaviour is regulated. Social interaction skills are mastered, alongside behaviour and emotional regulation. This is partially attributable to the adaptability the risky play offers, the natural world allows for a higher level of risk in children's play and offers more affordances for the challenge.

Obee et al (2020) describes the largest challenges in attitude towards risky play is the assumption that children are not capable of learning to be careful in risky activities, the pressures that practitioners face in ensuring the health and safety of children under their care and protecting them from harm and parents that are cautious of their children taking part and becoming injured as a result. Jidovtseff et al have highlighted another challenge that has arisen in society in recent years that has resulted in the decline of encouraged outdoor activity. This includes the increase of popular technologies that are offered such as computer games and television that are used as indoor activities. Cheng et al (2022) explore the method of the barriers that practitioners face when promoting risky play by utilising the map of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022). They discovered that microsystem issues were the competencies and resilience of children engaging in risky play, mesosystem concerns which concerns disagreeing beliefs involving risky play between parents and practitioners, exosystem concerns which involves curricula, policies and procedures and macrosystem concerns which is the overall idea that Children need to be overprotected. Hinchion McAuliffe and Lynch (2021) describe the significance to risk aversion as a challenge, where the perspectives of some practitioners and families are to eliminate all forms of risk within the environment in order to avoid any possibility of accident, injury or in rare cases, a loss of life. They also refer to the term "adult neglect" which could mean the inconsistencies of opinions of whether child-directed risky play and the supervision of adults from a distance could be perceived by parents as this when their child is involved in an accident as a result. Tytler (2016) and Little (2015) have argued that if every health and safety procedure is adhered to then any opportunity of providing risk-rich experiences would not be offered and believes that children need to learn and manage their own risks to learn to keep themselves safe, and become competent adults when they have grown. Button and Wilde (2019) have explored the contrast between parental anxiety towards their children's safety between an early years setting and nordic inspired forest schools. They found that parents were more comfortable with their children attending forest schools and engaging in risky play as they believed the practitioners were more experienced in supporting risky play than in early years settings.

Methodology – 1549 Words.

The purpose of this research project proposal is to answer questions that surround risky play and to reshape policy and practice to maximise outcomes for young learners (Newby, 2014). Shortcuts TV (2018) indicated the target population is a term that identifies children, practitioners, or parents as a whole and sampling is the smaller portion of the population that are selected to be studied to give the researcher a general idea for analysis to answer a hypothesis. The sample of the

target population for this research project is purposive sampling, where comparisons will be analyzed in each environment on the promotion of risky play. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Flom (2018) contrasts purposive sampling with other methods of sampling, where purposive means to explore issues with a purpose, rather than selecting participants at random like random sampling. They also suggest that a primary limitation of this sampling is that it renders a wide range of incorrect statistical techniques and therefore questions of accuracy will be addressed. Although certain purposeful sample methods have been established, they are more complicated and less refined than those for random samples. Campbell et al (2020) agrees that Purposive sampling selects targeted groups of participants as well as the environment or circumstances that are explored to meet the aims and objectives of the research project. A wide and varied volume of participants may be overpowering and highlight statistical differences that are not entirely essential (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). A sample size of 10 participants has been advised by Campbell et al (2020) for each method of a purposive sampling as this will accumulate a large amount of data in a time-effective fashion.

Quantitative research gathers numerical data and uses statistical techniques to analyse it. The goal is to generate factual data that can be measured and quantified. Making forecasts, seeing trends, and testing hypotheses are common uses for quantitative research. Comparatively, qualitative research gathers non-numerical, subjective experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, frequently through observation and interviews. Rich, in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon being examined are produced through qualitative research, along with new understandings and implications (Mcleod, 2023).

According to Bell (2018), mixed methods research uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data. The research hypotheses or statements of belief are both quantitative and qualitative. This is known as triangulation, and it is a key component of the mixed methods approach. The results from various data sources can be confirmed using various methodologies to answer the questions of the hypothesis (Bell, 2018 and Wellington, 2000). Early childhood researchers extensively use mixed methods, which is an effective approach that entails a contribution from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and approaches. Compared to using only one strategy, it results in a more thorough and comprehensive grasp of the research topic. So, for instance, integrating an observation with a method of research that is thorough and rich in evidence, such as an informal interview strengthens the research because it is supported by the advantages of both methodologies. Another strength of using a combination of methodologies is that the data that is gathered from one method can support how the researcher conducts and alters another line of questioning (Roberts-Holmes, 2018). Noble and Heale (2019) discusses the limitations of triangulation, that it could potentially make the research more difficult and time-consuming. It may not be accomplished in a consistent manner when utilised as a tool for merging research methodologies. Additionally, there may be circumstances where the comparing of results of two or more sources can yield inconsistent or contradictory results. Triangulation does not always effectively address flaws in the study methodology that is used. Triangulation requires an experienced analyst due to its complexity. However, Roberts-Holmes (2018) argues that research is given validity by triangulation, and the conclusions are stronger as a result through analysing the evidence across a variety of sources. Triangulation will be implemented to this research project as the researcher collects data on the behaviours of children during

observation and the viewpoints of practitioners surrounding risky play and whether it supports children's holistic development.

The researcher's aim is to spend a week in a forest school setting and a week in an early years setting with indoor and outdoor learning environments in South Wales and carry out observations in each setting who will be the children themselves.

Papathodorou, Luff and Gill (2013) recommends that the consideration of selecting a setting that has clear processes to make observational research easier. Spending a week in each setting will allow the researcher a stronger understanding of the participants that they are researching as individuals, how they behave and interact to attain stronger knowledge and collect a reasonable amount of data for their research project (Burton and Bartlett, 2009).

They intend to record children's behaviour, attitudes, interactions with others and respond to challenge and their resilience to trial and error surrounding risky play and if children appear to be fearful or avoid aspects. (Jidoftseff et al, 2022). Quantitative data will be gathered from the areas of the risky play equipment that are the most popular and which different behaviours are observed and how they reflect on overall development. The method of observation that will be implemented will be a semi-structured observation, where there is a probable idea of what the researcher is looking to attain in evidence, however the researcher is able to accommodate the flexibility of the child-initiated play and the circumstances of the setting and participants in order to attain the answers that they are searching for (Sharp, 2012). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) agree that a semi-structured observation can record evidence to highlight the questions and make it simpler to analyse and manage than an unstructured observation but the rigidity of the exact system of what they hope to find is less than a structured observation. This evidence has advised them to utilise the same semi-structured method for interviewing also as a result.

The researchers role in the observation process will be participant observation.

Getting to know the children and interacting with those that are being observed helps them feel more relaxed during the process and the researcher will gain some real research insight. (Sharp, 2012). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that there may be challenges, where if the researcher is participating in the play with the children themselves that there may potentially be unreliable outcomes for the observers findings as they would be too focussed on interacting with the Children. Sharp (2012) have suggested a solution to this problem, where taking notes as a method for recording evidence may be an issue for participant observation, and recommend an audio-visual recording of the observations to collect the evidence whilst the observer is participating in the play for the data to be analysed at a later date. This is also an effective method for capturing the non-verbal actions of the child as well as the interactions with others. This is the method of recording data that will be utilised for the interviewing process also. Burton and Bartlett (2009) and Sharp (2012) advise that the capturing of the physical environments, room plans and lesson plans of both settings can provide the researcher with an initial understanding of where the observations will be carried out and plan their recordings. This can also allow the researcher the opportunity to conduct a small-group scan of the environment, which areas are the most popular and if the how the physical environment is beneficial in enhancing children's overall development (Knauff, 2018). The second aspect of this mixed-method approach is interviewing practitioners. Quantitative data will be collected through answers that practitioners offer during the interviews on the number of accidents that have occurred as a result of aspects of

risky play, such as: heights, speed dangerous tools, near dangerous elements, rough-and-tumble play and play where children can disappear or get lost (Jidovtseff et al, 2022). The qualitative data will be gathered to understand the feelings and opinions of practitioners and using a variety of methodologies and techniques to examine a topic from several angles to gain a deeper understanding of it. The aim of this method would be to collect data regarding the more in-depth and complex issues surrounding the influence of practitioners' views and anxieties on the risk-rich experiences that children are offered, the flexibility of risky play between both of the settings and the challenges that they face in adhering to health and safety procedures and whether it is supported by parents in this regard and suggest whether negotiations and compromises are made between the two for effective practice (Button and Wilde, 2019 and Spencer et al, 2021).

The atmosphere of an interview enables a greater comprehension of participants' experiences, convictions and justifications for their strategies for encouraging risky activity. (Peters and Halcomb, 2015).

Interviews were selected instead of questionnaires for this research project because of their ability to collect a detailed account of practitioners' viewpoints and allow the researcher to explore subjects that are more complex and ask additional follow-up questions if required. Questionnaires may not provide the same detail of information as the interviewing method. Additionally, interviews allow researchers the opportunity to get to know their subjects, which promotes trust and openness and can result in responses that are more sincere. (Braun and Clarke, 2019. Smith, 2015. Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Ethical considerations. – 1425 words.

According to Smith et al (2015), Jones (2017) and Johnson (2019), in order to protect the rights, and wellbeing of research participants, ensure the integrity of results, ethical guidelines and procedures are required to be adhered to.

Researchers can promote collaborative research environments, maintain the confidence of participants and the general public, progress knowledge, and ultimately protects society by upholding ethical norms. Therefore it is crucial for modern research endeavours to comprehend and uphold research ethics. Ethics are to protect everyone involved in research and in particularly important in Early years research.

Williams (2016) highlights the significance of informed consent prior to carrying out observations or interviews for a research project. In order to respect participants' autonomy and guarantee their voluntary involvement, informed consent must be obtained. Brown (2016) emphasizes the value of informed consent, that it enables participants to make free choices about taking part in the study. Johnson (2017) argues that to achieve the integrity of research findings, voluntary participation is essential. BERA (2018) advises the researcher should obtain participants' informed consent to participate in a study prior to conducting the observation or interview. They should be sensitive and prepared for the possibility that the participants will withdraw and have the right to do so at any stage of the research process without needing to offer a reason and not under any circumstance should they ever be coerced or incentivized to participate. With regard to this research project, Children will also be offered information in an age-appropriate manner about what is expected of them to participate, that they are just able to play freely outdoors as they normally would and the researcher will be there to join in if they are happy with this and that

the researcher will observe how they keep themselves safe and take risks. They should be informed that they are all welcome to participate or to go and play elsewhere and if they do wish to take part they can finish the play on their terms. At this age of 3-5 years of age, some children may not fully understand the consequences of what they are agreeing to when they say they would like to participate in an activity and the circumstances around the nature of the observation. NSCPCC Learning (2023) refers to this as informed assent and in order to achieve informed consent of child participation it is vital to ask that parents provide informed consent. (UCL Ethics, 2019). Walling (2005) suggests asking all parents to consent to their children being involved in the research projects, therefore if Children who do not wish to participate enter the camera shot then ethical considerations are protected.

Do no harm.

Reducing the risk of harm to the participants should be an ethical requirement in research. Johnson et al. (2018) highlight the significance of reducing harm in research on risky play and disclose techniques to ensure the well-being, safety, and comfort of all participants are protected as a priority above all. BERA's Ethical Guidelines (2018) describe harm as something that can entail any form of distress, discomfort or offense inflicted upon them as a result of the research study, whether it be physical or emotional. They argue that researchers have a responsibility for the well-being of the participants and the duties of the researcher will depend greatly on the well-being of the participant during the process and should be consistently observant of any signs that a participant may be experiencing distress, discomfort, or offense.

Risk to participants.

Risky Play can potentially result in causing accidental injuries. (Hinchion McAuliffe and Lynch, 2021). Tytler (2016) and Little (2015)'s previous argument suggests that researchers should perform a risk assessment so they are aware of every risk involved but they share the duty of risk management with the children as the participants. Another risk could be that risky play often entails physical activity which raises the ethic of inclusion and discrimination and bias (NSPCC Learning, 2023). The risk can be mitigated by ensuring there a wide-range of opportunities for reasonable risk-taking that are made accessible for all to participate, for example, a workbench, hammers, nails, and saws that are stationary could be implemented as well as other areas of risky play that entail physical body movement. (Jidovtseff et al, 2022).

Risk to Parents.

Button and Wilde (2019) have highlighted a risk that parents may feel uneasy or anxious about consenting for their children to take part in risky play, and may only have a negative view.

The risk could be mitigated the risk by fully informing parents of why, reassurance, and sharing some literature on the benefits of risky play on the consent form.

Risks to the investigator.

Personal health and safety – a child injuring the investigator through risky play.

The risk will be mitigated by conducting a risk assessment and observing from afar, and intervening only if the child is at risk of injury (Health and Safety Executive, 2012).

Being left alone with the children, a risk of accusation of harm.

The risk will be mitigated by always ensuring the correct adult-to-child ratios are implemented and always having a member of staff accompanying the researcher. Researchers are obligated to undertake a DBS check prior to entering the setting (Cooper, 2020).

Risks to the University.

Professional conduct – if any researcher representing the university conducts themselves poorly, for example, poor storing and collecting of data or breaches in confidentiality.

The risks will be mitigated by providing the students/researchers with the knowledge they need to carry out an effective research project and adhering to the university's code of practice. (UWTSD Research Ethics, no date).

Risk of concerns raised of a Child being abused.

Ethical Research involving Children (no date) have highlighted the potential circumstance that may occur during the observation that a child may disclose to the researcher that they have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected in some manner. NSPCC Learning (2023) have advised that in the event that this is raised that the observation is to be halted immediately and to adhere to the setting's Child protection procedures and report to the relevant authority.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and confidentiality legislation in the United Kingdom are the primary sources to be adhered to ensure that participants' privacy and that data collection, handling, storage and sharing practices are ethically sound. The GDPR which is a branch of the Data Protection Act 2018, provides leading guidance on how to protect the rights of the Children and the Practitioners regarding their personal data. Where confidentiality is concerned, it is the duty of the researcher to protect the privacy of the data of participants at all times and that their identity remained anonymous. Sociology Group (2023) has described a limitation of observations and interviews is that the participant does not have the opportunity to have their identity remain anonymous like in a questionnaire. However, the aim of the researcher for this study is that although they will not be remained anonymous from the researcher, however the data that is recorded, handled, shared and stored through the protection of a password on a laptop can allow the identities of the Children, the practitioners and the names of the settings be made anonymous, if deemed appropriate (Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance on GDPR and data protection).

As a part of this research project, there will not be any recordings of data in regard to the age of practitioners, race, political or religious beliefs, sexual orientation or trade union membership. The only characteristics of a child that will be recorded is their age in months and any health or learning requirements so they will have the full support they require to be included in the observation if they choose (The University of Wales, Trinity and Saint David's Research, Ethics and Integrity: Code of Practice, 2022).

The responsibility of the researcher is to agree with the participants on the degree of anonymity and confidentiality and ensure that the level of privacy is secured by using the correct storing procedures of data (BERA guidelines, 2018). The Data Protection Act 2018 state that any participant that wishes to withdraw from the research has the right to have the data that involves removed from the recordings. The overall duty of this researcher is to ensure that data protection guidelines are managed effectively to strengthen the integrity of the research project. The only circumstance that it would be vital to breach confidentiality is in the event that a Child discloses a safety concern of abuse or neglect (Ethical Research Involving Children, no date).