

## Portfolio

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## The value of outdoor play for children's well-being in the early years?

### Literature review

This study aims to demonstrate the importance of outdoor play for young children's wellbeing. Looking into previous research, practice and theorist's views to help practitioners understand the importance and well-being. Play is an important part of learning for pupils according to Sahlberg and Doyle (2019) the importance part of learning for children is play, for children to be able to thrive and grow play is needed. Being active and physical the primary route children are educated and learn of the world around them and of selves. Supporting of regular part with all children's daily life of active play should be encourage. Burnham (2018) suggests that children will develop resilience and be better equipped to handle a variety of life circumstances thanks to the experiences and abilities they acquire from play. Children will get experience and life skills in a variety of areas. These include abilities like critical thinking and problem solving, which will improve children's self-esteem and confidence. According to Nolan *et al.* (2013) It is impossible to overestimate the significance of a young child's early years because research indicates that these early years create the groundwork for all subsequent development.

There is a significant amount of research according to Bento (2017) supporting the idea that play is important for children's healthy development. Play is a natural and engaging activity that fosters physical, mental, social, and emotional health while providing the ideal environment for children to grow and learn. Through play, the child can experiment, solve problems think creatively, work with others, and obtaining a better knowledge about his/herself and the world.

According to Bento (2017) there are various play opportunities that are difficult to duplicate indoors due to the unique characteristics and stimuli of the outdoor setting. One way to define the outdoors is as an open, ever-changing space where children can feel freedom, experience movements, and interaction with the natural world. Children benefit from exposure to sunlight, the outdoors, and the elements when they play outside because these factors promote bone development, a better immune system, and physical exercise.

According to Johnson (2025) physical development children can develop their strength, coordination, and endurance through outdoor play activities including running, climbing, balancing, and digging. These developmental milestones have importance for children's general health and for getting them ready for later, more structured physical activity. Increasing creativity and Imagination the natural world has a certain attraction. A patch of grass turns into a jungle, a puddle becomes a pond, and a stick into a wand. Since children are naturally creative, outdoor settings encourage a wide range of imaginative play. Outdoor play promotes open-ended discovery, where there are no right or wrong ways to play, only limitless options, in

contrast to many controlled indoor activities. Johnson (2025) also suggests the encouragement of Independence and risk awareness, risks in outdoor settings are frequently manageable, you can jump a bit farther, climb a little higher, and balance a little longer. Through these experiences, children learn how to safely assess and manage risks while also developing resilience and self-confidence. Boosting social abilities, compared to indoor play, outdoor play frequently requires greater teamwork. Children collaborate to construct obstacle courses, build dens, or play group games. These cooperative activities naturally promote communication, problem-solving, and teamwork all essential life skills. Johnson (2025) also claims that developing a connection with nature, early exposure to nature fosters inquisitiveness, respect, and awareness of the environment in children. Enhancing emotions and reducing Stress, children's and adult's wellness and stress levels have been demonstrated to improve when they spend time outside. Fresh air, natural light, and movement all help people feel happier, sleep better, and control their emotions, all of which promote learning and growth. In its most beneficial form, outdoor play is learning itself, not only a diversion from it. Many essential abilities, including as problem-solving, storytelling, teamwork, and resilience, are developed outside of the classroom.

According to Conkbayir (2014) Froebel was a strong believer of the outside environment's ability to foster healthy growth, especially for underprivileged and impoverished children. Currently, regular opportunities for outdoor learning are just as important because of the rise in childhood obesity, the obsession with computer games, isolation, increased traffic, and the fear-based negative attitude of parents toward outdoor play, all of which keep children from enjoying the wonders that the outdoors has to offer. As a result, children today are growing up with little opportunity for outdoor play, which limits their ability to develop critical life skills like focus, determination, and stress management.

According to Play.Wales (2023) children should engage in a range of physical activities throughout the day, including active and outdoor play, for at least 180 minutes (three hours) per day. More is preferable, and regular to moderate physical exercise should last at least 60 minutes. One of the simplest and most natural methods for children of all ages to get the recommended amounts of physical activity is through active play. During playtime, children are likely to engage in physical activities such as running, leaping, dancing, climbing, digging, pushing, pulling, and lifting. Unstructured play may be among the greatest ways for children to get physical activity, and active play is the most popular kind of physical activity children engage in after school.

Play needs to be a significant aspect of daily life, According to Gov. Wales (2024) every child has the fundamental right to play. This is acknowledged and encouraged by high-quality education, after-school care, and childcare services. Method of promoting children learning and growth is through the pedagogy of play work. Encouraging play and exploration is important but so is allowing children to lead the activities. Play helps children build attachments, friendships, healthy relationships, and resilience with both adults and other children. Play enhances interest development, decision-making, and

problem-solving abilities. Additionally, studies demonstrate that play fosters the growth of self-awareness and logical thinking, which are linked to long-term benefits from early childhood play, learning, and care, including improved communication.

### Methodological considerations

The chosen research includes a small group of 6 children who attend the morning nurse in a local school in Port Talbot. This will take part in the outdoor area of the foundation yard in the school. The reason for choosing this sample in researching is based with a small group of children to focus on whilst being able to study each one individually in more depth.

Researchers can learn more about children's perspectives on issues that impact them by conducting research with them according to NSPCC (2023) however, any study that involves children must strike a balance between the study's objectives, their safety and wellbeing, and their right to take part in studies that affect them. Researchers can guarantee that children feel valued and can engage safely by offering the proper assistance and understanding when to respond appropriately.

According to Siegle (2015) types of sampling is when a process of the individuals or events in which the research is interested. In general, this is done by gathering information from a sample. Therefore, defining the population is the first stage in the sampling.

However, Roberts-Holmes (2018) claims that purposive sampling involves when a researcher selects scenarios or individuals to be observed. Put differently, purposive sampling lacks both a cross-section representative sample and a random selection. The setting or set of children may offer a useful example of the subject being studied when applying purposive sampling.

However, Hopkins (2014) suggest that it is frequently helpful to pose some structuring questions to help define the goal of the observation before creating the checklist. These inquiries serve as examples, for what reason is the observation being made, what is the observation's focus, which student/teacher behaviours are the most important to watch, and which techniques for collecting data will be most effective for this purpose, also how will the data be used.

Therefore, according to Mukherji and Albon (2018) the focus of observations related to the practice is different, it is to help children's learning and development, either to influence planning or assessments or provide information that will improve the quality of work done in the environment. However, the children or the activities in the context may not immediately benefit from observation for the research topics. In research, observations are intended to provide insight into the overall purpose of the study or to address research issues.

In view of this, the current research the structured method of gathering observations is time sampling. According to Brodie (2017) when conducting a time sample

observation, you watch a child every five minutes for a certain amount of time, usually an hour. Although the observations are brief, they do cover the child's activity, the area of the nursery they are in, and their level of involvement at that specific moment. It will take less than a minute to record each observation, but you will need to be able to make them frequently, which can be difficult in a free-flowing setting. This kind of observation is highly helpful in documenting a child's disposition and degree of interest in various activities. This type of observation can make it clear, for instance, that a child spent an hour in several locations of the nursery but was always involved in building activities, or that a child never participated in writing activities despite playing in multiple areas with writing chances.

Also undertaking a questionnaire, exploring if children are more engaged indoors or outdoors. The questions will also communicate more clearly what you want to know according to Hiebert *et al.* (2023).

Standard and open responses on a variety of topics from a significant sample or population are advantages of using questionnaires. According to Cohen *et al.* (2017) they might be inexpensive, dependable, trustworthy, quick, and simple to finish. Questionnaire design is a broad field. A popular and practical tool for gathering survey data, the questionnaire offers structured, frequently numerical data that may be delivered without the researcher's presence and is frequently very easy to analyse. For smaller-scale research or for those parts of a questionnaire that encourage responders to provide an honest opinion in addition to checking boxes, the open-ended question is an appealing tool. However, Cohen *et al.* (2017) also suggests that participants can write freely in their own words, clarify and qualify their answers, and get beyond the restrictions of pre-established response categories when they are asked open-ended questions. The range of answers that a respondent can select from is specified by closed questions.

Another sampling technique is interviews, they are purposeful exchanges when a researcher aims to find out what someone else knows about a subject, as suggested by Coe *et al.* (2021) as well as what that person has experienced, feels about it, and what importance or meaning it may have. Effective interviewing depends on a carefully thought-out interview guide to make sure you cover the subjects you want the individuals being interviewed to discuss. After reading each question and recording the answer given by the respondent, the following question is read, and so on. However, a more open structure is used for more in-depth interviews. Your guide will outline the main topics of discussion for each session rather than using pre-written questions. However, Coe *et al.* (2021) also suggests that although conducting interviews has long been a basic method in qualitative research, opinions have frequently been expressed from many sources.

The phenomenon known as the Hawthorne effect describes how people alter their behaviour just because they are aware that they are being watched. Helpful Professor Explains (2025) claims people frequently perform better or be more productive when

they are aware that they are being watched, not always because their surroundings or tasks have changed. According to the Hawthorne effect, human behaviour can be greatly influenced by attention and observation, which may result in short-term alterations that do not correspond to natural patterns.

However, according to Helpful Professor Explains (2025) although it is true that being watched might affect behaviour, experts contend that other factors, including personal motivation or outside rewards, may be more important. This is only one of the criticisms levelled against the Hawthorne effect, which is sometimes overstated or misunderstood.

Another criticism is that it can be challenging to measure the Hawthorne effect because behavioural changes are frequently transient and modest, making it difficult to separate them from other factors that could affect the results of a study or workplace experiment. The third criticism is that the findings from multiple investigations are inconsistent.

A cognitive bias known as the halo effect, which was first recognised by psychologist Edward Thorndike in 1920, according to Psychology Exposed (2024) affects how people view and assess other people. It happens when a person's positive or negative trait has a significant impact on the overall impression, causing an assumption of their other attributes; in other words, our perception of a single charlatanic trait may influence judgments of unrelated qualities.

Both good and negative impressions can be affected by the halo effect, which is evident in a variety of settings, including social interactions, the workplace, and marketing. According to Psychology Exposed (2024) our brains use cognitive methods or heuristics to simplify complex information processing, which is assumed to be the source of the halo effect. By depending on these heuristics, we may make decisions and form impressions fast, even when doing so may result in influenced or incorrect judgments. Both good and negative impressions can be affected by the halo effect, which is evident in a variety of settings, including social interactions, the workplace, and marketing.

According to Roberts-Holmes (2018) triangulating different types of qualitative and quantitative data is one of mixed research's unique advantages. For instance, there is good agreement between two distinct but complementary data sources if the qualitative and quantitative data sets agree. This enhances the validity of the research findings and provides the researcher with confidence in their accuracy. It may be said that the research was instructed by this agreement amongst the various study approaches.

Roberts-Holmes (2018) also suggests that the process of analysing and integrating data from multiple sources to gain a deeper comprehension of the research issue is known as triangulation. Triangulation lends credibility to research and strengthens the conclusions. It gives researchers the chance to verify their findings from a variety of sources and entails the researcher gathering a range of evidence using a variety of

research techniques. It helps to try to acquire other viewpoints. For example, it wouldn't be enough simply inquired about a teacher's practice during an interview if you were interested in their methods. Additionally, you would need to see what they did and perhaps get the children's opinions about their teacher.

### Ethical considerations

#### Consent

To gain consents from participants according to BERA (2024) It is usually expected that researchers will remain aware of the possibility that participants may wish to withdraw their consent at any time and for any reason, and that they will obtain their voluntary informed consent to participate in the study at the outset. The Association defines voluntarily informed and continuous consent as the state in which individuals, free from pressure, comprehend and accept the terms and implications of their involvement.

Participants should be informed that they are free to leave at any time without having to give a reason. Researchers need to be aware of nonverbal cues that participants who have already given their agreement may not want to. In some circumstances, consents should be renewed and sought.

However, BERA (2024) claims researchers have to make every effort to guarantee that all possible volunteers are as well-informed as possible about the nature of a study. The purpose of their participation, what they will be required to do, if anything, what will happen to the data they supply, and how and to what the data will be reported should all be explained to them. They should also be made aware of the data's sharing, retention, and any secondary usage. In information sheets and consent forms, researchers who are members of BERA may, when appropriate, include a declaration of membership that explicitly states that members are required to abide by BERA guidelines as part of the association's code of conduct, which includes a complaints procedure that may be of use.

According to UWTSD (2022) the university will not process research data using consent as the legal justification under the UK GDPR. This means that while researchers usually require permission from participants to take part in research projects to ensure compliance with ethical standards, they do not need consent for evaluating participants personal data.

Most individuals agree that competent, reasonable persons should be given the freedom to choose for themselves. Therefore, the foundation of ethical research is respect for the individual's right to make their own decisions.

A key element of social research that is legally acceptable is obtaining informed consent. Three fundamental ideas are so applicable. Consent must be Informed provided with the principal's knowledge and comprehension of the relevant information. Competent provided by someone who can make a free, thoughtful

decision due to their age development, and mental stability. Voluntary provided voluntarily and not in response to actual or perceived coercive pressure.

However, UWTSD (2022) suggests In particular, it is necessary to make sure that the potential research participant is fully aware of and understands the following, what the research is about, why it is being conducted, who is funding what the study's purpose is and what will happen to the results, where the results will appear and who is likely to have access to them, what will be expected of them if they agree to participate and how long their participation will take, what anonymity and confidentiality mean in practice and an understanding that the participant does not have to participate and after having agreed to participate, they can withdraw at any time without suffering any consequences.

### Assent

According to BERA (2024) consent rules are applicable to both adults and children. For people who are not yet of legal consenting age, this is known as acquiescence.

BERA supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) children who can form their own opinions should be given the freedom to express those opinions and have them taken into consideration in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Information sheets and consent forms should be suitably designed for participants who may differ in such factors as age, reading ability, and attention span. However, children of different ages vary in their capacity to make informed decisions.

BERA (2024) also suggest researchers who follow to the UNCRC will consider the rights and obligations of individuals who are legally responsible for children, such as guardianship.

Researchers should thoroughly investigate strategies to support potential participants who may have limitations in their ability, age, or situations that may limit the amount to which they can be anticipated to consent voluntarily to participate in the study. It is important to make sure that oral and written information are as understandable as possible. In such cases, researchers should also seek the involvement and approval of those responsible for such individuals.

According to UWTSD (2022) young persons between the ages of 16 and 18 who are sufficiently informed can consent fully to take part in research without the involvement of their parents or guardians. Parents or those in the role of parent should give their consent when research with children under the age of sixteen is conducted. Nonetheless, it is ideal for children to actively participate in the consent procedure themselves. It is debatable whether children may participate in research as partners and whether they have the right to information, to be heard, to have their desires and feelings considered, and to agree or not if deemed capable of doing so.

However, the child's wishes should take precedence if consent is obtained from the appropriate adult, but the child expressly refuses or displays anxiety.

### Anonymity and confidentiality

According to BERA (2024) conducting ethical research necessitates handling participant data appropriately. Researchers should acknowledge that institutions and individual participants have a right to privacy. This could entail using pseudonyms, anonymization, or fictionalizing techniques when reporting in these cases, researchers should thoroughly explain how and why they have taken these actions.

It might also be necessary to reconsider anonymity considering certain visual approaches. For example, the analysis of gestures and facial expressions as well as the growing use of video and multimodal data pose concerns about whether identity concealment is always practical or suitable.

According to UWTSD (2022) the Data Protection Act of 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation of 2018 the UK GDPR impose duties on the University as the data Controller and researchers as employees.

Anonymity is the process of concealing participant identities in all research related documents, while confidentiality is the process of determining who has access to the information that participants have contributed.

### Safeguarding / DBS

According to UWTSD (2022) the purpose of the Disclosure and Barring Service is to assist public, private, and voluntary organizations by identifying applicants who might not be qualified to work with children or to fill specific roles. A person under the age of eighteen is considered a child in this sense.

Notification is sent via the RS1 form (Permission to Recruit form) when it is determined that a specific position will need a DBS check. However, UWTSD (2022) suggests the Human Resources Department is responsible for administering DBS checks.

The Director of Human Resources, the Chair of the Ethics Committee, and the Chair of the Research Committee will investigate the case if the University learns of a criminal record that prevents a person from participating in the suggested regulated activity. The applicable Human Resources policy will govern how things are handled.

### Risk to participant

There are a few risks that could harm the participant, one being according to BERA (2024) researchers should make sure that data is stored safely and that any publication or distribution (such as at a conference) does not, directly or indirectly, breach the confidentiality agreement. The use of secure computer networks, making sure that hard copy data is kept under lock and key on secure premises, scanning resources and destroying the originals, using password protection and/or data encryption for electronic data, using courier or secure electronic transfer when moving data, and

making sure that any third-party users of the data agree to an appropriate data-sharing agreement are all examples of accepted practices for keeping data secure, though they vary over time. Researchers should be mindful that anonymity may be jeopardized by certain online services, including automated transcribing.

However, the data storage would reduce the risk of loss of data according to UWTSD (2022) the University's responsibilities as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 should be followed while processing research data needed for studies conducted inside and by the University. This law outlines the University's obligation to guarantee that suitable organisational and technological safeguards are in place to secure personal information. The University's Research Data Management Policy, which must be consulted during the Ethics review process, lays out the legal requirements for data protection in research.

Another risk according to BERA (2024) every child has the right to withdraw from the research program for any reason, and researchers should acknowledge this right and explain those involved how to go about doing it.

According to UWTSD (2022) parents or those in loco parentis should give their consent when research with children under the age of sixteen is conducted. Nonetheless, it is ideal for children to actively participate in the consent procedure themselves. It is debatable whether children may participate in research as partners and whether they have the right to information, to be heard, to have their desires and feelings considered, and to agree or not if capable of doing so.

#### Risk to researcher

There are a few risks that could affect the researcher according to BERA (2022) Information sheets and consent forms should specify that there are situations in which confidentiality may need to be breached. Researchers should carefully consider disclosing information to the proper authorities if they believe that participants adherence to confidentiality agreements would likely lead to unlawful or harmful conduct.

According to UWTSD (2022) Supporting and making sure the correct procedures are in place, research projects involving one-on-one or other unsupervised contact with children will be examined by staff members and students at all levels. Based on the nature of the activity, the researcher and supervisor should determine whether a check is necessary. In addition, the Ethics Committees have the authority to suggest DBS checks for projects they examine.

#### Risk to Institution

As stated by UWTSD (2022) while performing research, researchers must continue the legal action process. Researchers must correctly follow the ethical guidelines for behaviour. The legal procedure for data loss must be followed by researchers.

Confidentiality and anonymity BERA (2024) suggest the data protection act 2018 and any later relevant laws or regulations, such as legislative amendments to account for the post-Brexit changes to UK data privacy law, specify the legal requirements for the storage and use of personal data in the UK, and researchers have to comply by these requirements.

According to UWTSD (2022) although maintaining confidentiality and anonymity are the fundamental principles of social research, they are not absolutes. In certain circumstances, the researcher may have an obligation to disclose information that was given in confidence or that the researcher learned while speaking with the participant. However, privacy and anonymity must be protected. This means that, whether a specific promise has been made, identities and research records should be kept private. Care should be used when determining whether sensitive information or personal data should be preserved.

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