

Childrens' Play in the Pandemic or Otherwise: A literature review

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Introduction

Children who are in preschool to first grade are at a quintessential age in their lives where their bodies and minds are developing rapidly and absorbing the world around them like sponges. At this age they develop the motor skills, creativity, and teamwork abilities that will last them a lifetime. It is a critical part of their education and it is every child's constitutional right to be able to play (Lourenço, Martins, Pereira, & Mendes, 2021). Evidence has shown that play is closely linked to childrens' physical and mental health, along with their cognitive and social development (Lundy, & Trawick-Smith, 2021). In the last decade, childrens' accessibility to play has been gradually decreasing with dwindling resources put into other aspects of education which are more quantifiable such as academic performance, instead of qualitative aspects such as play and physical education. Most recently, the occurrence of the pandemic made clear that having a rich and meaningful play experience was deemed least important and was the education system's last concern. However, research seems to show how wrong that notion truly appears to be.

Play on Physical Health and Education

Play is an extremely important factor for children which impacts their physical health and cognitive development, and how they grow up and contribute to society. Engaging in play at home and school has been linked to better health and fitness, and a lower risk of obesity and chronic illness in adulthood. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that children participate in at least one hour of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day. Recent research has found that frequent active play is associated with better academic achievement and cognitive abilities. While most studies have focused on physical activity and achievement among elementary school students, some have also linked physical

activity in preschool to early math and literacy learning (Lundy, & Trawick-Smith, 2021). This seems to imply that physical activity or play should be integrated into the education system to encourage students to perform better in class and absorb knowledge more efficiently. Children play in different places like at home, school, playground, and neighborhood. Each of these places has its own benefits, affecting children's health and activity in different ways. Playgrounds offer different activities for children, such as climbing, jumping, swinging, and running. When children are free to move around the playground without adult control, they can take advantage of the playground's activities, and it increases their physical activity level (Stanton-Chapman, & Schmidt, 2021). The best outdoor environments for children are designed to challenge their skills and offer a variety of stimulating experiences. They should also be connected to nature, easily accessible, and allow for reasonable risks during play (Miranda, Larrea, Muela, & Barandiaran, 2017). This is most effective right before a period of studying, earlier in the day outdoors and can facilitate students paying more attention in the classroom. Studies have shown that there is a stronger correlation seen in this phenomenon when the participants are from low socioeconomic status, and that these students have a more significant improvement in performance compared to their peers from other backgrounds (Lundy, & Trawick-Smith, 2021). This highlights the importance of effective play opportunities which lead to healthier and better performing children who oftentimes do not have sufficient resources, giving them the potential to elevate their communities.

Play on Mental Health and Social Skills

Children enjoy playing and it helps them explore and understand the world.

Unfortunately, there is a concern that in recent years, children are playing outside less and taking

fewer risks, thus limiting their own abilities. At the same time, mental health issues in children have increased within the last decade. It is thought that the decrease in outdoor play and risk-taking might be contributing to this rise in mental health issues (Dodd, Nesbit, & FitzGibbon, 2022). This correlation can also be a potential causation due to the fact that adventurous play can have anti-phobic effects on children by exposing them to stimuli that may otherwise be feared, such as heights and water. The increasing rates of mental health problems in children are mostly due to these causes, particularly internalizing problems like anxiety and alarm. Studies suggest that sufficient adventurous play experiences during childhood may help prevent anxiety in children by providing a positive window for exposures to uncertainty, coping, and physiological arousal. Through such play, children may have a profound and motivating educational experience. These characteristics mean that there is more likelihood of positive personal, socioemotional, and cognitive development in children (Miranda, Larrea, Muela, & Barandiaran, 2017). This can further help them learn how to act and handle themselves during unpredictable situations and emergencies and provide them with a stronger hold on their psyche (Dodd, Nesbit, & FitzGibbon, 2022). The sense of fun and relaxation they gain from playing and similar activities is a significant catalyst to a positive mental state. Research supports the proposition that children value play as a means of exercising autonomy, pursuing their own interests, developing social relationships, and having fun and relaxing (Howe, 2016). The effects of play on mental health can be small each day, but they add up over time. Small changes can have big effects over time, especially when the outcomes are important, like mental health. As it stands, supporting children's access to and engagement in adventurous play could be a simple and enjoyable way to improve their mental health (Dodd, Nesbit, & FitzGibbon, 2022). A crucial part of play at school is its involvement in forging positive social interactions and relationships

between children, thus contributing to their mental health and well-being. Children would rather play with friends than alone, and in this setting several competencies such as negotiation, cooperation, problem-solving, perseverance and self-control are developed (Lourenço, Martins, Pereira, & Mendes, 2021). Additionally, children interviewed in studies have collectively mentioned that having friends is what drives them to play and have fun. Lack of play may cause children to become inhibited and lose their ability to socialize which may lead them to be socially isolated from their peers.. They may also have emotional and social problems compared to more outgoing children, such as lower self-esteem, difficulty making friends, and experiencing internalizing problems (Coplan, Schneider, Matheson, & Graham, 2010). This establishes that children have a right to play and enhance their social skills through it, so that they are not held back later in life, and that schools should give as much importance to childrens' enjoyment and mental health as is given to academic achievements.

Play in the Pandemic

With the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic, every corner of the world was affected and went into government mandated lockdowns, social distancing, and a multitude of restrictions. In the education sector, huge changes occurred in nearly every front, most notably with online education and lack of in-person interactions. Naturally, childrens' outdoor play was affected as well. Children's play was a key contributor to children's mood and wellbeing. The majority of studies have found that children have reduced their time spent on physical activity, particularly outdoor activities. Due to restrictive measures in many countries, parents were either prohibited or discouraged from using playgrounds or participating in outdoor sports, resulting in limitations on outdoor activities (Kourti, Stavridou, Panagouli, Psaltopoulou, Tsoia, Sergeantanis, &

Tsitsika, 2021). Educational institutions were naturally concerned with implementing precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus, but they may have overlooked the importance of providing a stimulating physical environment that could support children's activities while balancing safety, risk-taking, active play, and children were confined to specific spaces within schools for the entire week (Lourenço, Martins, Pereira, & Mendes, 2021). During the Covid-19 lockdown, children who engaged in adventurous play had fewer internalizing problems and experienced more positive emotions, while those who engaged in less adventurous play experienced less negative emotions. This suggests that children who engaged in adventurous play may have coped better with the uncertainty of the pandemic and lockdown. Additionally, children who typically played more adventurously were reported to be happier during the first Covid-19 lockdown than those who did not (Dodd, Nesbit, & FitzGibbon, 2022). These findings are extremely relevant to the current times as it can be used by schools to plan ahead and adjust to changes and crises for when a similar phenomenon occurs such as in flu season. If a way can be found to change the system to incorporate a more holistic play structure utilizing both the physical and social development aspect while still keeping the safety in check, that could be utilized in schools around the world and provide children with a richer and meaningful childhood experience.

Conclusion

The findings from the sources brought out in the open the importance of play on children within the age range of preschool to first grade and the contrast between the effects of play on physical and cognitive development and the effects of play on mental health and social development. Most of the studies used interviews and surveys as their research methods and

were conducted in a diverse variety of settings and thus provided robust results. Active and risky play in an outdoor setting seemed to improve academic performance and overall physical health and was a precursor to future fitness and a balanced life (Lundy, & Trawick-Smith, 2021).

Adventurous individual and group play suggested a more positive mental health and outlook of life and resulted in less cases of internalizations of fear and anxiety, with the bonus of learning important socializing skills giving children a solid platform for future personality development (Dodd, Nesbit, & FitzGibbon, 2022).. A deconstruction of the current school system was shown through the example of the pandemic which drastically changed and reshaped most of the school system, including play, and revealed that schools are gradually decreasing their focus on rich playing environments in favor of academics, The difference in data from before and after the pandemic showed that there was a decrease in both outdoor physical activity and social interaction during the pandemic, and that the restrictions were not fully lifted even after the pandemic was over (Lourenço, Martins, Pereira, & Mendes, 2021).

A topic to further research would be how children coped indoors within the restrictions of the pandemic. Whether they were able to supplement the lack of physical play at school at home by cycling, walking, or going to community playgrounds. There is also a lack of mention of indoor play within these existing sources, and this could be a potential area to explore, because since the pandemic, many young people turned to indoor activities such as video games, where they could socialize with peers online and also enjoy themselves, supplementing the lack of social interaction from school. Contrasting these differences within diverse backgrounds could bring to light external factors which contribute to childrens' physical and mental health such as socioeconomic status, family status, and gender. In future experiments and surveys, a bigger sample size can be used and in addition to the methods used, more quantitative methods could be

introduced such as hormone tests to measure mental health changes and MRI scans to measure neurological developments. Future research similar to this is significant in highlighting the resources needed to provide children a healthy and fulfilling childhood and advocating for children who do not get access to the resources needed, as play is a right of every child.

References

Coplan, Schneider, B. H., Matheson, A., & Graham, A. (2010). "Play skills" for shy children: development of a Social Skills Facilitated Play early intervention program for extremely inhibited preschoolers. *Infant and Child Development*, 19(3), 223–237.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.668>

Summary

Around 15% of young children are considered extremely inhibited, and they experience fear and anxiety in the presence of peers, often withdrawing from opportunities for peer interaction. These children are at increased risk for developing anxiety disorders, particularly social anxiety disorder, in later childhood and adolescence. Inhibited children are prone to a host of socio-emotional problems and are also more likely to experience other problems related to early school maladjustment, including peer rejection, social isolation, loneliness, academic difficulties, and school refusal. Long-term outcomes of inhibition in adolescence and adulthood include feelings of loneliness and depression, lower self-worth, a less active social life, and delays in adult life events such as work-related achievements, marriage, and parenthood. The aim of the study was to develop and evaluate a social-skills-based early intervention program specifically designed to assist extremely inhibited preschoolers.

Terms

behavioural inhibition; early intervention; social skills

Reflection

This study was very useful to my research because it deals with social development which was one of the key points I wanted to focus on. It clarified some developmental stages of social relationships and showed unique methods to bring to light various ways of forming relationships in playgrounds. This article had something unique where it discussed children with social disabilities and late developmental issues as well.

Quotables

“Moreover, during free play at preschool, inhibited young children tend to withdraw from social interaction with peers, are less likely to initiate social interactions with peers, and spend comparatively more time with teachers (e.g. Coplan et al., 2004; Coplan & Prakash, 2003; Ladd & Profilet, 1996).” (pg.224)

Dodd, Nesbit, R. J., & FitzGibbon, L. (2022). Child’s Play: Examining the Association Between Time Spent Playing and Child Mental Health. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-022-01363-2>

Summary

This study researches the relationship between children’s mental health and time spent playing. Playing is differentiated into adventurous and non-adventurous, which are outdoor activities and indoor activities respectively. The goal of this study is to find out the differences between mental health during COVID-19 Lockdown of the children and what impact playing took part in it. Two studies are conducted, one in Northern Ireland and the other in Great Britain. The introduction states that children’s play in the UK has been at a steady decline while children’s mental health problems are increasing in the overall population. The primary hypothesis is that children who spend more time playing adventurously will have fewer internalizing symptoms, as well as less negative affect and more positive affect during the COVID-19 lockdown. Study 1 uses an opportunity sample of 427 parents/caregivers living in Northern Ireland with a child aged 5 to 11

years, recruited through social media and newsletters, while Study 2 uses a large nationally representative sample of parents living in Great Britain. In both studies, children's play and mental health are measured using the same parameters, including long-term symptoms of internalizing and externalizing problems as well as short-term positive and negative effects. The Children's Play Scale (CPS) is used to estimate the time spent playing adventurously, time spent indoors, and time spent playing outdoors. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule for Children-P (PANAS), and the Kessler-6 (K6) are used to assess mental health. Demographic characteristics are also collected. The results were consistent across the two studies and were standardized after controlling for socio-demographic factors. However, the effect sizes were small. The interaction between adventurous play and household income suggested that adventurous play may be more closely related to positive effects for children from low-income families. The studies did not find any significant association between adventurous play and externalizing problems. The limitations of the studies include their cross-sectional design and the potential for reverse causation. Additionally, the study could not differentiate between the effects of adventurous play and other structured activities.

Terms

Play, Child mental health, Anxiety, Internalising problems

Reflection

This study is useful for my research because it has a clear distinction between indoor and outdoor play and ties it in with mental health, which is a strong continuation from other studies.

It being recent enough to mention COVID also makes it more relevant to current research. The methodologies have some unique terms and there being two studies gives the experiment more generalizability and validity. Some critiques are that the questionnaires rely too much on self reports which may be unreliable. Additionally, the results do not show causation to a satisfiable degree, only correlation.

Quotables

“To capture mental health broadly, in both studies we evaluate long term symptoms of internalizing and externalizing problems as well as shorter term positive and negative effects, which were assessed during the first weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown.” (pg.2)

“Our primary hypothesis follows relevant conceptual models: that children who spend more time playing adventurously will have fewer internalizing symptoms. In addition, we hypothesize that children who typically spend more time playing adventurously will have less negative affect and more positive affect during the Covid-19 lockdown, which we conceptualize as indicating better coping under uncertainty. To evaluate the specificity of these associations, we also examine associations between adventurous play and externalizing symptoms, as well as associations between mental health and both time spent playing unadventurous and time spent playing outdoors.” (pg.2)

“There was some missing data, in particular on three of the time questions on the CPS. Missing data were imputed using the mice package in R [30] and pooled results are reported. Where variables were skewed they were transformed and outliers were Winsorized.” (pg.3)

Howe. (2016). What play means to us: Exploring children's perspectives on play in an English Year 1 classroom. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 24(5), 748–759. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2016.1213567>

Summary

The article discusses the importance of play and self-initiated activity for children's learning and development in early childhood settings, and how this can be lost as children progress into school. It draws on findings from a qualitative study that looked at children's perspectives on play and self-initiated activity when they experienced a more content-oriented curriculum and opportunities for play-based learning were restricted. The study used data from children in the form of photographs, conversations, and drawings, as well as observations and interviews with parents and teachers. The findings support the view that children value play and self-initiated activity as a means of exercising autonomy, pursuing their own interests, developing social relationships, and having fun and relaxing. The article concludes by discussing the implications for considering children's perspectives in pedagogy and curriculum design.

Terms

play, curriculum, children's perspectives, child-directed activity, transition

Reflection

This study is useful to my research because it deals with firsthand experiences of children at a young age and analyzes how playing affects their education. Some critiques I can give is that the sample is too small, and the findings are not diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, race, or gender. But the data is useful as it also gives a glimpse at children's mental health, education, and play which is relevant to my research.

Quotables

“During transitions children need to make sense of new experiences and negotiate new roles and relationships, and while this can be both exciting and challenging, leading to accelerated learning and development, it can also have the opposite effect and be experienced as alarming or ‘disheartening’ (Brooker 2008, 31), which has the potential to cause disruption to children’s learning (Rudduck). James’ negative reaction to the transition from Reception to Year 1 (above) is therefore somewhat concerning and is not unique” (pg.749)

Kourti, Stavridou, A., Panagouli, E., Psaltopoulou, T., Tsolia, M., Sergentanis, T. N., & Tsitsika, A. (2021). Play behaviors in children during the covid-19 pandemic: A review of the literature. *Children (Basel)*, 8(8), 706–. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children8080706>

Summary

Play is a constitutional right for children and is essential for their social, emotional, and mental health. Play can be divided into three stages: embodiment, projection, and role play, and different types of play can allow children to explore the world, develop their skills, and enhance resilience. The relationships formed during play engagement can also help children develop social skills. During the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns have been raised about the limited opportunities for learning and play for children due to school closures, home confinement, social distancing, and lack of access to outdoor activities. This review examines how the pandemic has affected children's play quantitatively and qualitatively, and how these changes have impacted their everyday life and wellbeing.

Terms

Play, children, COVID-19, wellbeing, psychosocial development

Reflection

This study is useful to my research because it deals with firsthand experiences of children at a young age and analyzes how playing affects their education. Some critiques I can give is that the sample is too small, and the findings are not diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, race, or gender. But the data is useful as it also gives a glimpse at children's mental health, physical health and education, and play which is relevant to my research. It also compiles many existing sources and gives valid and recent data regarding the pandemic which was extremely helpful.

Quotables

“During lockdown, a Mexican study examined the changes in children’s play behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic [27]; according to their parents’ observations, 21.7% of children were more engaged with active games, 18.4% with board games, 16.4% with videogames, and 11.7% preferred manipulative games with toys (games using objects to explore a concrete idea), while an increase in violent games compared to before COVID-19 was noted (10.5%).” (pg.10)

Lundy, & Trawick-Smith, J. (2021). Effects of Active Outdoor Play on Preschool

Children’s on-Task Classroom Behavior. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49(3), 463–471. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01086-w>

Summary

The experiment focuses on the association of physical activity and early cognitive development in early childhood. The ages of the children under investigation range between three to five years. Two theories are tested out, the first of which is the chronic aerobic exercise theory which links increased physical activity with greater blood flow to the brain and improved functionality of regions of the brain in charge of mental processes, which can be a predictor for academic success. The second theory is the acute exercise theory, which implies that the brain waves that suggest better attention span and focusing ability are enhanced after exercise, meaning that children who learn immediately after or during physical activity or play learn more effectively. The method includes taking consent of the students and observing them every morning and afternoon after an hour of free play time. The difference in on-task behavior levels between weeks when play was held and weeks when it was not held forms the majority of the measures.

On-task behavior is defined as a level of positive engagement such as looking toward the teacher or following directions and off-task behavior is defined as distracting or interruptive behavior such as misbehaving or looking the other way. The results show that children who engage in play involving physical activity have increased on-task behavior and thus better learning outcomes. Further dissection shows that this effect is more noticeable in boys and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, who in previous studies show higher levels of off-task behavior. From this study, it can be concluded that the inclusion of play in younger ages and primary school education will work toward reducing differences in learning across children from genders and socioeconomic statuses.

Terms

Motor play, Playground play, Physical activity level, On-task behavior

Reflection

The study tackled the issue of the challenge of compiling data on young children. It presented the research questions and the purpose of research in the introduction and gave sufficient background on the topic itself. This will be of use in my research as I want to study the impact of children's play on their educational gains. One critique I could provide is in the results of the study which suddenly shifts focus on gender and socioeconomic status which was not mentioned or alluded to in the introduction or methods section. A question I am left with is the reason why socioeconomic status is a factor that influences the results to such an extent.

Quotables

“1. Do preschool children exhibit greater on-task behavior in a whole group classroom learning experience that directly follows a free play period on the playground? 2. Do children who play at a more active level on the playground directly prior to a learning experience subsequently demonstrate greater on-task behavior than those who are more sedentary?” (pg. 464)

Lourenço, Martins, F., Pereira, B., & Mendes, R. (2021). Children Are Back to School, but Is Play Still in Lockdown? Play Experiences, Social Interactions, and Children's Quality of Life in Primary Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(23), 12454–. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182312454>

Summary

This experiment focuses on children's right to play and its result highlights the decrease of systems of play for children in the school system after the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants are 370 children with a median age of 8.65 years old. The purpose of the study is the effect of play on children's health and social skills and the metric of HRQOL which is impacted by the pandemic. Recess as a medium of play is emphasized and evidence is provided showing that effective recess improves peer interaction, classroom productivity, and overall learning prowess. The aftermath of the pandemic is shown, as schools cut down funding towards recess and materials for sports or other recreational activities and the end product is less play time for children and an increased hyperfocus on academics. To find out how the play experiences of

children were affected due to the pandemic and whether it impacted their quality of life and social development, an exploratory survey was conducted using a questionnaire which contained five sections about details on recess such as opinions, activities, and materials and the responses were coded to four dimensions which are physical, emotional, social, and school. The results show that most of the children never felt alone during recess which showed its impact on social interaction, most children also mentioned that they did not have enough time for recess which shows how much they enjoy it and that it is a positive for their mental health, and a quarter of children commented how they feel restricted after COVID-19, showing the significant lack of autonomy and independence allowed in recess post-pandemic. The article mentions having a balance of protection of children against the virus but also keeping their mental health in mind by providing enriching play experiences to foster a healthy atmosphere of peer-to-peer support and learning.

Terms

children, COVID-19, HRQOL, play, primary education, school, peers

Reflection

The study is relevant to my research because it deals with the influence of peer interactions through play and it also delves into a particular niche of play, which is recess which falls under indoor play. The specificity of the key measures of HRQOL is also useful in getting to know the impact of the pandemic which is a relevant phenomenon needing further study. My critique would be that the results section felt biased because of the emphasis on one quarter of the entire data and not fully expanding on the rest of the three-fourths of it. Overall, it brought up many

valid points in the conclusion which align with my research. A question I am left with is whether the habits of the children are permanently affected by the changes in the pandemic and what sort of measures should be taken to preserve the education curriculum if a similar phenomenon occurs again.

Quotables

“This paper aims to understand children’s play experience in primary education during the pandemic” (pg.1)

“A group of 370 Portuguese children answered a questionnaire on play and social interactions, alongside with Peds 4.0TM on health-related quality of life (HRQOL). The results showed that recess still emerges as a significant element of children’s daily lives, but COVID-19 has brought limitations on play experiences and peer-interaction. It might also have impacted HRQOL, especially in emotional functioning. Since play, health and well-being are closely connected, play opportunities at school are crucial in helping children to thrive in the pandemic, and should be invested in.” (pg.1)

“. Another crucial point of play at school is children’s peer interactions: recess can promote healthy relationships amongst children, as well as prevent bullying and social exclusion [7]. Children would rather play with friends than alone [11], and in this setting several competencies such as negotiation, cooperation, problem-solving, perseverance and self-control are developed” (pg.2)

“In 2020, profound changes took place in children’s physical and social environments due to COVID-19, with the pandemic impacting different matters in children’s daily lives [14].

Children were deprived of going to school, one of the most important settings for their overall development.” (pg.2)

“Educational institutions were deeply focused on these precautionary measures to combat the spread of the virus, overlooking the need to promote a rich physical environment that would support children’s activities and balance safety, risk-taking, and active play” (pg.2)

Miranda, Larrea, I., Muela, A., & Barandiaran, A. (2017). Preschool Children’s Social Play and Involvement in the Outdoor Environment. *Early Education and Development*, 28(5), 525–540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1250550>

Summary

The article discusses the positive influence of high-quality early childhood education and outdoor activity on various aspects of child development. Preschool attendance has increased in European countries, and high-quality preschools are associated with improved cognitive and

language skills, as well as greater well-being and an improved social and emotional balance among children. Play is of fundamental importance at this stage of a child's life, as it is associated with learning and development. The article examines the relationship between social play and involvement in the outdoor school environment, which is seen as a natural context for development and learning. Outdoor activity promotes children's social competence, motor skills, physical health, concentration, imagination, creativity, and appreciation of nature. It also reduces levels of aggressiveness and conflict by encouraging affiliative behavior. Many researchers believe that optimal outdoor environments are those whose design tests the psychomotor skills of children, provides a stimulating environment with different types and levels of challenges, is closely connected with the natural environment, and allows easy access. The article stresses the importance of valuing outdoor environments as precursors of pedagogical environments that facilitate play, learning, and child development.

Terms

Not explicitly stated

Reflection

This study was very useful to my research because it deals with social development which was one of the key points I wanted to focus on. It clarified some developmental stages of social relationships and showed unique methods to bring to light various ways of forming relationships in playgrounds.

Quotables

“In early childhood, play and formal education are two mutually dependent aspects that form part of what constitutes quality in schools. Play is of fundamental importance at this stage of a child’s life, as it is associated with learning and development (Pellegrini, 2011; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983; Smith & Hart, 2004). Consequently, one of the goals of early education is to enable children to play and to offer them the resources they need to do so in positive, enjoyable, and learning environments” (pg.525)

Stanton-Chapman, & Schmidt, E. L. (2021). How Do the Children Play? The Influence of Playground Type on Children’s Play Styles. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 703940–703940. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.703940>

Summary

The article discusses the importance of play in child development and how physical environments and affordances impact children's play and physical activity levels. The article also talks about different types of playgrounds in the USA, including school and community playgrounds, and how they affect children's play behaviors. The article highlights the need for more research on how the type of playground setting affects children's play behaviors.

Terms

play, playgrounds, environmental context, peer relationships, play skills, setting

Reflection

This article was useful in detailing the outdoor play environment needed for children to truly excel and have sufficient physical and cognitive development which is very important. Some critiques I can give is that the sample is too small, and the findings are not diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, race, or gender.

Quotables

“The affordances of the physical environment are what the environment offers the child and the complementarity of the child and the environment. For example, a preschool classroom’s affordances are the physical size of the classroom, the toys and materials available, the number of peers for potential play partners, and adults who set up the play environment, ensure its overall safety, manage the day-to-day operations, and interact with the students.” (pg.2)