



Current Status of Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens and Strategies for Improvement

Luo Yuchen, Ruan Shangyu, Ren Chunmao, Liu Xing

Zunyi Normal University, School of Teacher Education, Zunyi, 563006, China

*Corresponding to: Luo Yuchen

Abstract: With social progress, health is receiving increasing attention. Conducting quality and effective outdoor activities in kindergartens greatly guarantees children's physical health and the sound development of their personalities. This paper uses a questionnaire survey to investigate the current status of outdoor activities in kindergartens. The survey data shows that in outdoor activities, teachers lead activities, lack of autonomy among children, teachers emphasize discipline maintenance and safety protection, neglect guidance, and significant differences in venue usage frequency. These issues are not conducive to effective outdoor activities for children. Based on the current state of outdoor activities in kindergartens, the problems are analyzed, and it is recommended that teachers provide children with a relaxed environment to enhance autonomy, strengthen their guiding roles, and offer children multiple venue options. Emphasizing the implementation of outdoor activities in kindergartens enables efficient outdoor activities and promotes healthy and happy growth.

Keywords: kindergarten, outdoor activities, improvement strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

Outdoor activities in kindergartens help children gain a preliminary understanding of the world and their surroundings, which is beneficial for cultivating prosocial behavior[1]Outdoor activities are a form that children enjoy and can promote the development of their self-awareness[2]. Outdoor activities broaden children's horizons and help them stay healthy[3]. During outdoor activities, some kindergartens do not set goals in advance, organize activities arbitrarily, and lack guaranteed time for activities[4]. Some teachers, influenced by traditional views, see themselves as leaders of outdoor activities and responsible for selecting content. In outdoor activities, they do not pay much attention to children's agency, resulting in passive participation[5]. Some scholars have said that outdoor activities not only allow young children to connect with nature but also promote their brain development[6]. In addition, some scholars have pointed out that outdoor activities can make children enjoy going to kindergarten more, and can also train their arm flexibility, body balance, problem-solving abilities, and develop good exercise habits[7]In existing studies, the importance of outdoor activities in kindergartens has been recognized by many scholars, but most researchers tend to focus on one aspect of children's outdoor activities, such as studying the current conditions of outdoor activity venues. However, research on the

current state of outdoor activities in kindergartens has not fully addressed how to maximize their effectiveness and ensure the effective implementation of outdoor activities in kindergartens.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

2.1.1 KINDERGARTEN

A kindergarten is a large family, mainly serving children aged 3-6, and is a place where teachers care for and educate young children. Children can learn basic life knowledge and develop good behavioral habits in kindergarten.

2.1.2 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Outdoor activities are purposeful and planned ways to exercise the body using various materials, and come in various forms, such as morning exercises and post-meal walks.

2.1.3 KINDERGARTEN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

In this study, outdoor activities in kindergartens refer to activities conducted within the kindergarten premises in open areas, using equipment and materials as auxiliary activities.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODS



This study uses a questionnaire survey method to investigate the current status of outdoor activities in kindergartens in Zunyi City.

2.2.1 RESEARCH SUBJECT

This study randomly selected 160 kindergarten teachers in Zunyi City, including 107 teachers from public kindergartens and 53 from private kindergartens. Most teachers hold bachelor's degrees, with 118 teachers holding bachelor's degrees and 42 teachers holding associate degrees. The main purpose is to understand the actual situation of outdoor activities in kindergartens and analyze their current situation and existing problems.

2.2.2 RESEARCH TOOLS

The "Kindergarten Work Regulations" require that "kindergartens should have outdoor activity spaces appropriate to their size." [8]. The "Kindergarten Education Guidelines" mentions: the materials provided by kindergartens should be rich, considering the age characteristics of children at each stage, meeting their outdoor activity needs and providing conditions for diverse outdoor activities [9]. The "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3–6" states: "Toddlers should spend at least two hours of outdoor activities, including one hour of physical activity [10]. Based on the above foundation and the actual situation of outdoor activities in kindergartens, we investigated the venues, materials, timing, and leadership of outdoor activities in kindergartens.

2.2.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

During this process, the author first used literature review to understand the relevant standards for outdoor activities in kindergartens, focusing on distributing questionnaires to understand the actual situation of outdoor activities. Questionnaires were distributed and promptly collected: 200 questionnaires were distributed and 160 were returned, achieving a recovery rate of 80%. Finally, the effective questionnaires were organized and analyzed.

3 CURRENT STATUS OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN KINDERGARTENS

3.1 INSUFFICIENT OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TIME IN KINDERGARTENS

The duration of outdoor activities is one of the factors in evaluating the effectiveness of children's outdoor activities. The quality of outdoor activities for children largely depends on sufficient activity time. However, some kindergartens focus more on teaching relevant knowledge. When the temperature is too high, teachers find the weather hot and choose to conduct activities in the classroom; when the temperature is too low, teachers feel very cold. With air conditioning on indoors and high temperatures, they feel better to do activities indoors. This mindset causes some children to spend the entire day indoors, missing the opportunity for outdoor activities. Children of different ages have different outdoor activity times. To better

coordinate and end outdoor activities early, children often have insufficient time to play. When children are engaged, they are forced to stop. This limits the development of their thinking and leaves them wanting more, preventing them from fully engaging in subsequent activities. In fact, kindergartens need to spend more than two hours of outdoor activity a day, but many kindergartens do not meet this standard, which undermines the protection of children's physical and mental health.

TABLE 1 OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TIME STATISTICS (N=160)

Name	Options	Frequency	percentage
Outdoor activities are held every day	Yes	116	72.5%
	No	44	27.5%
Time for outdoor activities	60 minutes	31	19.38%
	1–2 hours	83	51.88%
	More than 2 hours	46	28.75%

From Table 1, it can be seen that most children engage in outdoor activities every day, reaching 72.5%; A small number of children do not participate in outdoor activities every day, accounting for 27.5%; There are still children who should engage in outdoor activities every day, but some do not, which is detrimental to their development. When outdoor activities are carried out, 19.38% of children participate in activities lasting 1 hour; 51.88% of children participate in activities lasting 1-2 hours; 28.75% participate in activities exceeding 2 hours. From this, it can be seen that when conducting outdoor activities in kindergartens, most classes have activity durations between 1 and 2 hours, which does not meet the standard activity time, indicating that teachers do not fully understand children's outdoor activities.

3.2 TEACHER-LED ACTIVITIES, LACK OF AUTONOMY AMONG CHILDREN

Teacher-led activities restrict children from freely engaging in outdoor activities, and their active nature is not prominent. Research shows that when children participate in outdoor activities, teachers take the lead, resulting in fewer choices and often following teachers' arrangements. For example, children may interfere with material selection, choose safer materials, play in teacher-arranged areas, and even control the play methods. Some lively children may not agree to let them choose their own ideas when they suggest ideas. Teachers often say, "Let's play again next time." During activities, children follow the teacher's material selection rules and may end up waiting passively and for long periods, especially in hot weather, where standing in line for long periods lowers their enthusiasm and makes them feel tired. Some children even engage in random



activities. When teachers notice this, they criticize them for not listening, which leads to low enthusiasm and autonomy when participating in other activities. Children feel uneasy and unfree during outdoor activities, and may feel hesitant about their actions. Outdoor activities are opportunities for children to express their nature. During these activities, teachers organize activities to keep children within their line of sight, facilitate management, promptly identify problems, and control activities to prevent safety accidents. Teacher control can weaken children's enthusiasm for activities and reduce opportunities for self-challenge.

TABLE 2 STATISTICS ON OUTDOOR ACTIVITY DOMINANCE (N=160)

Name	Options	Frequency	percentage
Initiative	Teacher and child discuss	71	44.38%
	Teacher	79	49.38%
	Children	10	6.25%

From Table 2, there are two parties to the initiative in outdoor activities: teachers and children. The proportion of those who discuss the initiative in outdoor activities is 44.38%; The proportion of the teacher who holds the initiative in the activity reaches 49.38%; The proportion among children reaches 6.25%. The initiative in activities mainly rests with the teacher, who decides the form and choice of materials for the activity.

3.3 THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE FREQUENCY OF SITE USAGE

There are many venues for children's outdoor activities, each divided into corresponding areas, each with its own unique name. Most kindergartens have areas such as group sports fields, throwing zones, folk play zones, and driveways, but surveys have found significant differences in usage frequency.

Regarding activity venues, some have high usage rates while others have low utilization. Teachers have subjective awareness and allow children to frequently move around certain areas. Over time, the utilization rate of these activities increases, resulting in low utilization of certain venues. When the weather is hot or cold, children should participate in outdoor activities. Morning exercises are one form of outdoor activity for children. Some kindergartens hold morning exercises daily, usually held in the group sports field, which greatly increases usage rates. However, in cold weather, because children are outdoors, teachers worry that children playing in the sandy area might get cold or catch a cold if touching ice water, so the frequency of use in the sand area becomes very low. Other areas, such as folk play zones, are relatively special activity spaces, and materials like ground cones, jump ropes, and iron rings are not very familiar to children, resulting in low usage rates.

TABLE 3 SURVEY OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY VENUES (N=160)

Name	Options	Frequency	percentage
The area where it is carried out	Collective sports field	119	74.38%
	Sports equipment area	120	75%
	Planting area	31	19.38%
	Shashui District	37	23.13%
	Driveway	61	38.13%
	Throwing area	40	25%
	Others	35	21.88%

Regarding activity venues, some sites have high usage rates, while others have low usage rates. The table below shows that the highest proportion chose the "sports equipment area" for outdoor activities, accounting for 75%; followed by the "group sports field" at 74.38%; and 19.38% chose the "planting area"; the lowest proportion. It can be seen that children's outdoor activity venues are mainly in the sports equipment area and group sports field.

3.4 THE UTILIZATION RATE OF ACTIVITY MATERIALS VARIES GREATLY

When children participate in outdoor activities, the abundant and novel materials greatly stimulate their curiosity and encourage greater engagement. In kindergarten outdoor activity materials, large combined sports equipment refers to equipment that occupies a relatively large area and is not easily moved, such as slides and climbing frames. Small and medium-sized movable equipment refers to lightweight, easily movable equipment such as carts and bicycles. Children need to participate in outdoor activities every day. When several classes participate outdoors together, the number of children in one class can reach dozens of children. In order to obtain the same activity materials, children may push and push each other. When faced with this, teachers may let one child play first while others play later, which greatly reduces children's interest in outdoor activities and may cause disappointment and is not conducive to the development of good emotions.

TABLE 4 STATISTICS ON OUTDOOR ACTIVITY MATERIAL USAGE (N=160)



Name	Options	Frequency	percentage
Commonly used material types	Large combination sports equipment	98	61.25%
	Small to medium-sized mobile devices	127	79.38%
	Construction category	65	40.63%
	Others	17	10.63%

According to surveys: When children participate in outdoor activities, the most commonly used types of materials are large combination sports equipment, accounting for 61.25%; 79.38% use small and medium-sized movable equipment; 40.63% are constructed materials; and "other" materials account for 10.63%. From this, it can be seen that the usage rate of activity materials for equipment types is relatively high, while the usage rate for other materials is low.

3.5 *TEACHERS VALUE SAFETY PROTECTION AND DISCIPLINE MAINTENANCE, NEGLECTING GUIDANCE*

Teachers have multiple roles in children's outdoor activities: they can be supporters; collaborators; or guides. The teacher's guiding role can help children form new experiences. During outdoor activities, children may interact with peers and have minor quarrels, play in a routine manner without achieving the effect of multiple plays, and have limited thinking abilities. All these require teacher guidance. Lack of guidance during outdoor activities is detrimental to children's development.

TABLE 5 SURVEY OF TEACHERS' ROLES IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES (N=160)

Name	Options	Frequency	percentage
The role teachers play in outdoor activities	Security protectors	119	74.38%
	Discipline maintainers	139	86.88%
	Event collaborators	101	63.13%
	Support facilitators	50	31.25%

The table above examines the roles teachers play in outdoor activities: 74.38% of teachers act as "safety protectors" during outdoor activities; 86.88% play the role of "discipline maintainers"; 63.13% of teachers act as "activity collaborators"; 31.25% act as "supporters and guides." This shows that when children participate in outdoor activities, teachers pay more attention to maintaining children's safety and discipline, especially lacking guidance for their activities.

4 STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN KINDERGARTEN

4.1 *REASONABLY ARRANGE CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR ACTIVITY TIME TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT ACTIVITY TIME*

Kindergarten children are in a critical period of rapid physical and mental development. Outdoor activities are an important form of educational activities in kindergartens and play a significant role in promoting children's physical and mental development[11]. Teachers and children participating together can bring them closer, promote harmonious relationships, and facilitate subsequent work. This reflects the importance of outdoor activities for children's development. Reasonable and well-managed outdoor activity time helps children's physical and mental health. Some teachers shorten outdoor activities during seasonal changes, cold weather, or hot weather, causing children's daily outdoor time to fall short of standards. This is undesirable. Teachers should fully arrange outdoor activities, make plans before activities, and carry out outdoor activities in a planned manner, ensuring that children spend no less than two hours of outdoor activity and no less than one hour of physical exercise each day. This allows children to develop their abilities in all aspects.

4.2 *PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH A RELAXED ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT TO CULTIVATE THEIR AUTONOMY*

Kindergartens should "create a good educational environment and actively provide opportunities for children's activities." Allowing children to play freely can enhance their autonomy. In outdoor activities, children can freely choose their favorite equipment, choose partners to play with, and what they want to play and how they play—all reflect their autonomy. Teachers should not view their choices from an adult's perspective but should understand their interests and choices. When children encounter problems during activities, teachers should give them some time to observe whether they can solve problems on their own. When children cannot or are afraid to participate independently due to personality or other reasons, do not impatiently choose for them; be more patient and give children ample time. They can improve their autonomy by solving problems. During outdoor activities, children should not use negative language to undermine their confidence, and do not always restrict or restrict their activities. Teachers should



encourage children to participate more in independent activities. Learn to let go and provide children with a relaxed environment for activities. During activities, respect children's ideas, and finally patiently guide them in independent activities.

4.3 PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH A VARIETY OF VENUE OPTIONS

The "Six Major Liberations" were proposed by the famous educator Tao Xingzhi, and it mentions liberating children's space so they can connect with nature and society. Therefore, teachers should provide them with a variety of activity venues as much as possible, as these venues are indispensable for outdoor activities. Teachers can make reasonable use of the limited resources in the kindergarten to allow children to engage in outdoor activities. Activity venues should be as varied as possible. Through my investigation, I found that traditional activity spaces in kindergartens are used more frequently. This leads to a certain gap in the frequency of space usage. For example, the usage rate of planting areas in kindergartens is very low, causing children to have little understanding of plant growth characteristics. Therefore, activity venues should be as varied as possible to give children more choices.

Liveliness and energetic nature are characteristic of young children, and their desire to explore and curiosity are strong. Things lacking novelty rarely attract children's attention for long. Children play in the same place for long periods, and after a few plays, they feel tired or bored, and may even develop boredom. They often have many changes during activities, and more venue options can make them feel fresh during activities. Children enjoy constant exploration and often switch from one activity to another, developing from one venue to another. Teachers can plan outdoor activity times within the planned area during the corresponding periods. Changes in activity locations give children different experiences.

4.4 EFFECTIVELY DISTRIBUTE MATERIALS TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S UTILIZATION OF MATERIALS

Materials play an important role in children's outdoor activities. Effective distribution by teachers can improve children's utilization of materials. Each outdoor activity area is equipped with corresponding materials, and each area has different materials. Therefore, when providing activity materials, one can consider the characteristics of each area. For example, in the sand and water area, some materials such as shovels, carts, buckets, and funnels can be placed to facilitate children's play and play with sand. The types of materials should be diversified so that children find more ways to play and the activity more interesting. At the same time, materials must meet children's needs. If children do not receive the required materials during activities, they will lose their sense of participation.

The distribution of activity materials should be layered so that children do not feel overly fatigued from start to finish, and are given some buffer time. During outdoor activities, teachers may not know which materials to choose, but at this time, materials can be distributed according to the children's development goals.

To train children's jumping ability, hurdling games can be chosen. In the middle of the activity, adjusting and placing equipment increases the difficulty of the activity. For example, increasing the number of hurdles means children will spend more time passing; in the later stages, materials can be arranged as before, allowing children to relax physically and mentally. Children can feel the challenge of the activity and the pride of completing the activity.

Activity materials also need to be novel and cannot always be the same as before. Outdated materials are something children know how to play with, and after playing with them too often, they may find these materials boring, which reduces their usage. Even if new materials are introduced, teachers should provide guidance. Some children may lose interest because they don't know how to play. Teachers can first let children explore ways to play with the materials themselves. For children who really don't know how to play, teachers can demonstrate to help them master the play and improve the utilization of materials.

4.5 TEACHERS SHOULD PROVIDE EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE TO PROMOTE THE ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

During children's outdoor activities, teachers should take the children as the main participants, encouraging them to explore independently and learn and enjoy themselves through play[12]. Teachers should play a guiding role, respect children's initiative, affirm their behavior with firm eyes and encouraging words, understand their behavior, give them enough trust, and trust them to proceed smoothly. When encountering difficulties and hesitation to move forward, they should patiently encourage them, guiding them to build confidence and boost their courage. If some children are especially timid and afraid to participate, teachers should be more patient, give them some time to adapt, guide them to participate independently, and cultivate their independence. Teachers can guide children to play games through questions. For example: "Children, think about how to play this?" "How many ways are there to play?" These questions can encourage children to think. When children become interested in a particular piece of equipment during an activity, they may find no new ways to play and may not want to play. At this point, teachers can use inspiration and guidance to help children regain interest. If children use hurdling materials, teachers can use language or actions to guide them to discover new ways to play, such as combining those materials into shapes they recognize, such as simple triangles. Children may develop special ideas during this process, and teachers should respect and respond promptly.

5 CONCLUSION

Kindergartens frequently organize outdoor activities, allowing children to interact through activities, feel the power of cooperation, and experience the joy of helping others. This article proposes strategies to improve the current situation of outdoor activities for children. First, it is hoped that this study will attract the attention of kindergartens and teachers; second,



it is hoped that the proposed strategies will help children achieve better development.

Additionally, this survey had shortcomings and overlooked the important role of home-kindergarten co-education. Besides outdoor activities at kindergarten, children also need outdoor activities at home. Parental attention also greatly benefits children's physical and mental development. Therefore, teachers can communicate with parents to raise their awareness and help children grow up healthy and happy.

REFERENCES

- [1]Hu Chenchen. The Value, Current Situation, and Organizational Strategies of Outdoor Play Activities in Kindergartens [J]. Parents, 2020, (3): 131-132
- [2]Yuan Fangfang. Research on Organizing Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens from the Perspective of Gamification [J]. Master Teacher Online, 2021, (5): 51-52.
- [3]Tang Fang. Strategic Research on the Effective Organization and Implementation of Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens [J]. Reading and Writing, 2021, Vol. 18(29): 248.
- [4]Luo Haiyan. Exploration of the Effectiveness of Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens [J]. Children and Health (Reference for Preschool Teachers), 2021, (2): 50-51.
- [5]Li Min. Analysis of the Organization Status of Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens from the Perspective of Core Competencies [J]. Parents, 2021, (6):173-174.
- [6]Chen Yuewen, Hu Biying, Li Kejian. The Relationship Between the Quality of Outdoor Activities in Kindergarten and Children's Motor Development [J]. Preschool Education Research, 2013, (4):25-32.
- [7]Yang Junxi. A Brief Analysis of Outdoor Activities for Preschool Children [J]. New Curriculum (Early Month), 2015, (6): 189.
- [8]He Jianmin, Fan Rulai, Sun Gu. Current Status, Problems, and Suggestions of Outdoor Activity Venues and Ground Materials in Kindergartens [J]. Education and Equipment Research, 2016, (11):17-22
- [9]Fei Li, Hai Yue. "Germany Values Improving Opportunities and Safety for Early Childhood Physical Activities" [R]. Materials of the Shanghai Preschool Education Delegation to Germany, 2001.
- [10]Li Yan. A Brief Discussion on the Organization and Implementation of Outdoor Activities in Kindergartens [J]. Seeking Studies (Educational Research Edition), 2021, (13).
- [11]Chu Ruiyao, Luan Xiaohui. Current Situation and Optimization Strategies for Outdoor Activities in Families of Children Aged 3—6—A Case Study of Chengyang District, Qingdao [J]. Forest District Teaching, 2021, (3): 121-124.
- [12]Gao Yuanyi. Strategies to Improve the Effectiveness of Outdoor Sports Activities in Kindergartens [J]. Master Teacher Online, 2022, (4):92-94.