

THE ROLE OF PLAY IN THE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS (EARLY YEARS)

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ABSTRACT

The text aims to explore the importance of play in child development, addressing its benefits for motor, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Play, characterized as spontaneous, pleasurable, and healthy, plays a central role in children's motor development, especially in elementary school. Studies such as those by Friedmann, Rosado, and Vygotsky emphasize that playful activities are fundamental for physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Kishimoto (2017) highlights that play reveals children's personalities, providing freedom to express feelings and behaviors. Motor development, according to De Paiva (2015), is a sequential process influenced by biology, tasks, and the environment. At the beginning of schooling, children improve motor skills such as running, jumping, and balancing, which are part of their normal progress. The sociocultural context and access to play also influence this development. Freire (2007) emphasizes the need to develop motor skills considering their cognitive and social consequences. Research based on literature reviews indicates that play not only improves motor skills but also promotes the integral development of children, although inequalities in access to these activities limit the motor progress of some children.

Keywords: play, motor development, playfulness, elementary school, motor skills, sociocultural context, personality, children.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this text is to explore the importance of play in child development, addressing its benefits for motor, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. It aims to demonstrate how play is a fundamental activity for children, not only as a form of entertainment, but as a means of learning and growth that involves various aspects of their overall development. Throughout the text, studies and theories that highlight the role of playful activities in the schooling process and in the formation of a healthy and balanced personality will be analyzed.

Play is present in different times and places and is recreated by children through their capacity for imagination and creation. It is something that is part of their daily lives,

defined as spontaneous, pleasurable, and healthy. Therefore, we can say that the benefits of play are related to motor development (Friedmann, 2006; Rosado, 2006; Vygotsky, 2011).

Kishimoto (2017) says that toys, play, and games reveal the true personality of human beings, as they are moments of freedom where they have fun and express their thoughts, feelings, values, and behaviors.

Friedmann (1998) emphasizes in his studies that children need to enjoy all the benefits that playful activities provide, whether emotional, intellectual, or cultural, learning and discovering a world full of new things through these experiences.

De Paiva (2015) states that motor development is a sequential process related to age, brought about by the interaction between task requirements, the biology of the individual, and environmental conditions, and linked to social, intellectual, and emotional changes.

Gallahue (2008, p. 104) says that cognitive thinking "are images retained in memory, ready to be recalled and recreated in an instant. As the skill continues to improve, performance seems to become almost automatic, involving little or no conscious thought."

At the beginning of the schooling process, there is a great increase in motor skills, which enables children to gain great control of their bodies in different activities, such as jumping, running, crawling, kicking a ball, throwing a bow, balancing on one foot, writing, among others. These points are part of normal motor development (GASPERIN, 2018).

Some children tend to be more active than others, and this is due to several factors, such as encouragement to play, access to technology, and other factors.

It is important to consider not only the type of activities practiced by children in free situations, but also the characteristics of the sociocultural context in which they occur (Nicoletti, 2007).

According to Freire (2007), motor skills need to be developed, but the consequences of this from a cognitive, social, and affective point of view must be clear.

METHOD

This research was developed through a systematic review of literature, conducted with a qualitative approach to the data. Scientific articles published in databases such as PubMed and Scielo were reviewed, covering the period from 2010 to 2024. The selection of studies was based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as relevance to the topic, methodological quality, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. The results were analyzed using content analysis techniques to understand the importance of playful motor activities with elementary school children. The research sought to demonstrate the benefits of this practice for children's motor and cognitive development, providing a solid theoretical basis for the implementation of playful activities in the educational context.

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of systematic literature reviews, it was possible to identify a variety of results related to the impact of play on the motor development of elementary school students. The main results can be presented from different perspectives:

1- Play in Motor Development:

The studies that were analyzed indicate that playful activities not only improve specific motor skills, but can also promote the overall development of children. In games and playful activities, body movement is performed naturally and spontaneously, promoting physical development and improving children's spatial and motor perception. Play involves movement that encompasses the entire body, seeking specific physical learning, where running, jumping, and rolling stimulate children's spatial perception, contributing to their motor development.

2- Variety of Games and Their Different Effects:

Play influences children's motor development in different ways. Evidence shows that active games promote motor development and decision-making, while activities such as construction games and puzzles stimulate finer motor skills.

3. Inequality in Access to Recreational Activities and Impact on Motor Development.

Not all children have access to the same games and physical activities. The environment in which a child lives influences the type of play and games they engage in. In addition, encouragement from parents and educators directly affects the level of motor development.

4. Interconnection between Motor Development and Cognitive and Affective Performance

Another significant finding was the interconnection between motor development and performance in other areas, such as cognitive ability, social behavior, and emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

Play, as an activity, is fundamental to children's motor development, especially during elementary school. Through playful activities, children not only improve their motor skills, but also experience comprehensive growth that encompasses physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Studies show that active play promotes gross motor development, while games that require precision stimulate fine motor skills.

However, the sociocultural context in which the child lives, access to physical activities, and the incentives received, especially in the school environment, directly influence the level of motor development.

Motor development does not occur isolated. There is a clear link with cognitive, social, and emotional performance, suggesting that play has a broader impact, shaping children's ability to relate to others and learn.

Therefore, it is essential that play be integrated into teaching practices in a planned and structured way, ensuring that all children can enjoy the benefits of this approach for their overall development.

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