

**Title:** Early Childhood Teachers' Views and Teaching Practices in Outdoor Play with Young Children in Singapore

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## Summary

Play plays a crucial role in the development of young children, as evidenced by previous research. It has been found, for example, that physical development is intricately connected with neurological and cognitive development. Outdoor play, in particular, offers numerous benefits to children, encompassing the enhancement of motor skills, the refinement of muscle control and coordination, the development of spatial awareness, and the cultivation of self-confidence through safe risk-taking. Additionally, outdoor play provides children with an opportunity to disconnect from digital devices, alleviating mental overload and fatigue associated with their use. Recognising the importance of physical activity, international health organisations such as the WHO have formulated guidelines specifying the appropriate levels of physical activity for children today.

However, research conducted in various countries, including Australia and the United Kingdom, has revealed that children are not engaging in the necessary levels of physical activity essential for their healthy growth and development. This issue is particularly pertinent in urbanised countries like Singapore, where children's crowded living environments and busy after-school schedules restrict their time, space, and opportunities for outdoor play. Furthermore, as one of the most technologically advanced nations globally, Singapore has witnessed the integration of technology into children's lives, further diminishing the time allocated for physical activities outdoors. In light of this context, the study by Ebbeck et al. (2019), titled "Early Childhood Teachers' Views and Teaching Practices in Outdoor Play with Young Children in Singapore", examines teachers' perspectives on the value of outdoor play and their instructional approaches for children aged 2 months to 3 years in childcare settings within Singapore.

A mixed-mode approach was employed to develop a questionnaire, encompassing both open-ended questions for qualitative data and closed questions for quantitative data. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 432 currently employed early childhood teachers in Singapore. The majority of participants fell within the age range of 20-29 years (61%), and approximately half of them had been working in the early childhood education field for 2-5 years (50%).

The findings regarding teachers' perspectives on the value of outdoor play are encouraging. The majority of teachers (91%) acknowledged that outdoor play contributes to two crucial aspects of child development: physical and social/emotional development. Furthermore, when asked to rate their confidence and enjoyment levels in conducting outdoor activities for young children on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), teachers expressed relatively high levels of confidence (mean = 3.7) and enjoyment (mean = 4.3). These results demonstrate that teachers not only recognise the significance of outdoor play but also actively support it.

Regarding teachers' practices in facilitating outdoor play, approximately half of the respondents (46%) reported that children in their childcare institutions are given daily opportunities to engage in outdoor activities. The duration of outdoor playtime varied, ranging from less than an hour to one hour per day. The researchers highlight that this figure is relatively low, considering that some children remain in childcare settings from 0700 to 1900, which amounts to almost 11 hours spent indoors\*.

Teachers were also asked to provide insights into the challenges they encounter when organising outdoor play activities for their students. Out of the 570 responses received, the three most prevalent challenges were identified as follows: health and safety concerns (n = 145), limited availability of physical resources (n = 132), and difficulties in managing the classroom during outdoor play (n = 121). In response to these concerns, the authors of the study engaged in follow-up discussions with the participating teachers, resulting in the formulation of several recommendations: (1) recruit parents to assist with outdoor play



supervision, (2) organise nature walks in the immediate environment, (3) conduct listening walks and subsequently create books with photographs taken during the activity, (4) seek nearby safe, suitable, and open spaces where children can engage in spontaneous play.

To find out more, you may email [us](#).

\*The data collected for this study was before the implementation of Singapore's Early Childhood Development Agency's (ECDA) one hour a day requirement for outdoor play in late 2017