

The Role and Optimization Strategies of Peer Relationship Development in Sports Games for Children in Senior Kindergarten: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract: As an important form of kindergarten education, sports games have a unique value in promoting the development of children's peer relationship. Through observation method, case analysis method and interview method, this study makes an empirical analysis on the sports game behavior of children in middle and senior classes in 3 kindergartens in Heilongjiang Province. The results show that sports games can effectively enhance children's cooperative consciousness, language expression ability and social initiative, but there are still some problems in practice, such as serious self-centered children, blocked cooperation behavior and insufficient coordination between family, school and community. Based on this, the paper puts forward some optimization strategies, such as creating cooperative sports games, constructing supportive teacher-child relationship and strengthening the coordination mechanism of the family, school and community. This study provides theoretical and practical reference for kindergartens to promote children's social development through sports games.

Keywords: Sports games; Middle and senior class children; Peer relationship; Cooperative behavior; Home-school-community cooperation

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1. Introduction

Early childhood is a key stage in the formation of peer relationship, and good peer relationship has a profound impact on children's social adaptability, emotional health and cognitive development (Zhang Wenxin, 1999). The Guidelines for Kindergarten Education (Trial) emphasize the cultivation of children's communication ability through games, and sports games become an important carrier to promote children's peer communication due to their fun and dynamic interaction (Zhang Jie, 2023). However, there are some problems in the current kindergarten sports game design, such as emphasizing physical ability over social interaction and insufficient family and social participation, which restricts the full realization of its educational value.

This study focuses on the influence of sports games on the development of children's peer relationship between 4-6 years old, reveals the current problems through empirical analysis, and puts forward targeted optimization strategies, aiming to provide scientific basis for kindergarten teachers to design high-quality sports games and build a cooperative education mechanism of family, school and community.

2. Literature Review

(1) Theoretical correlation between sports games and peer relationships

Sports games provide practical scenarios for children's social learning through rule guidance and cooperative tasks (Yang Shuangfeng, 2018). Studies have shown that competitive games (such as tug-of-war) can strengthen

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children's sense of teamwork, while group games (such as eagle chasing chicken) promote verbal communication and emotional resonance through role division (Klein, 2000). In addition, the conflict resolution process in sports games helps children understand the perspectives of others and gradually overcome self-centralization (Piaget, 1965).

(2) Influencing factors of peer relationship development

Children's personality traits, family rearing styles and teacher support strategies significantly affect their social behaviors (Parler & Seal, 1996). Introverted children tend to be passive participants, while aggressive children are prone to conflict due to resource contention (Wang Zhili, 2018). The lack of coordination between family, school and community further aggravates the unbalanced development of children's social skills (Tao Xiaojuan et al., 2021).

3. Research Design

(1) Research objects

In this study, 15 children aged 4-6 years old from 3 kindergartens in Heilongjiang Province were selected for investigation, and their teachers and parents were interviewed for research. All the children were intellectually normal (they had not participated in professional sports psychology training, except for normal participation in kindergarten learning and activities).

(2) Research methods

In this study, the most common types of play in kindergartens were selected, and according to the physical and mental characteristics of children aged 4-6, the play activities were divided into two types: group play and competitive play (see Table 1). The interactive behaviors of children in 8 types of sports games (Table 1) were recorded by observation, focusing on cooperation frequency, conflict resolution strategies and emotional performance.

Table 1 Types and names of sports games

| Types | Name | Rules and Features |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Group play | Eagle with chicken | Among them, the infants become mother chickens, the infants become eagles, and the rest become baby chickens. The baby chickens lead the clothes in a line behind the mother chicken, the eagle stands on the opposite side, and the mother chicken protects the chicks behind. The eagle circled and clawed while the other chicks ducked and dodged behind them. |
| | Glue bubble gum | Small children in a circle to hold hands, walking while singing children's songs: sticky sticky bubble gum, a sticky sticky head. Say stick to stick to what part of the body, enhance the fun of the game, can let children stick to each other and interact. |
| | 2. Guess who I am | Ask a child to come on stage, back to the child, the teacher designated a child's head, the child said in a different tone: "Guess who I am?" After finishing, sit down, and the children on the stage turn to guess who it is. |
| | Jumping Goat | Make an arch for every 2 children, 5-6 groups, and the rest of the children pass in turn. |
| Competitive play | Tug-of-war | Two out of three games should be played, and all parties should mix men and women. |
| | Stay Hoop | Put an iron ring in the middle of two parallel lines 3 meters apart. After the order, two people pull with a stick at the same time. Who grabs the ring first to the own line is the winner. |
| | Listen to the number of groups | When the teacher says the number, hug with several children including yourself, Any more or less will be eliminated. |
| | Neck and neck | Two children hand in hand, face each other, head a piece of paper, keep not drop the fastest walk to the finish line to win. |

4. Study the Process and Results

In the research process, in order to understand the influence of sports games on cooperative behavior of children

in middle and senior classes aged 4 to 6 years old, after more than one year's practice, a kindergarten with middle and senior classes as the research object was observed, recorded and analyzed. Through actual observation and communication with teachers, the following three cases were identified as typical children's peer relationship in sports games. The specific cases are as follows:

Case 1:

In September 2023, during my internship in Class 3 of a kindergarten, I found this case in a sports activity of the middle class of the kindergarten. The teacher prepared a wealth of sports equipment, balls and skipping rope, so that the children could exercise freely.

After the activity began, the children were excited to choose their favorite things. Xiao Ming soon got a basketball. The color of the basketball was brighter than other balls. It was very popular with the children. When Xiao Hong saw Xiao Ming holding the basketball, she also wanted to play. So she went to Xiao Ming and said, "Xiao Ming, can I also play this basketball?" Xiao Ming hugged the basketball tightly and said loudly: "No, it's mine!" Xiao Hong was a little disappointed, but still tried to discuss with Xiao Ming: "Then when you are finished playing for me to play?" Xiao Ming shook her head firmly: "No, I want to play for a long time."

In the next activity time, Xiao Ming has been monopolizing the basketball, even when he does not play, he is not willing to let other children play. However, because of Xiao Ming's monopolizing behavior, some of the other children felt very unhappy, and some had to choose other kinds of balls that they did not like.

In this case, Xiao Ming's behavior is clearly self-centered. He only thought about his own love and need for colored brushes, and completely ignored the feelings of other children. He lacks care and understanding for others and does not realize that his monopolistic behavior will cause trouble to others. This kind of self-centered behavior is more common in young children, mainly because at this stage, children are not able to think well from the perspective of others and focus more on their own needs. Teachers can carry out sharing activities, role playing and other ways to help guide children to gradually overcome self-centeredly and learn to care for and understand others.

Case 2:

During the internship of the sophomore class of a kindergarten in May 2024, the children played with slides, seesaws and other amusement facilities in the playground during the outdoor activity time of the large class.

Both Xiao Mei and Xiao Li wanted to play on the slide. Xiao Mei ran to the slide first and was about to slide down. At that time, Xiao Li also rushed over and pushed in front of Xiao Mei. "I was here first. You can't cut in line," Mei said unhappily. But Xiao Li ignored this and went straight up the slide. Angry, Mei reached out and pushed Xiao Li. Xiao Li almost fell down. Not to be outdone, Xiao Li turned around and pushed Xiao Mei. The two people quarreled with each other like this. The children next to see, some scared to run away, and some began to shout: "Teacher, Xiaomei and Xiaoli quarrel!"

After the teacher heard, he ran over and pulled away Xiao Mei and Xiao Li and asked what had happened. "I was here first," cried Mei. "She cut in line." Xiao Li was also aggrieved and said, "I want to play on the slide, too."

In this case, Mei and Xiao Li clashed because they both wanted to play on the slide. At this stage, children tend to be self-centered, and when their needs are not met, they tend to deal with problems in obvious ways. Piaget once believed that the process of solving arguments (not the argument itself) has a positive effect on children's cognitive development. Piaget pointed out that by arguing with others, children can better understand others' ideas, and at the same time, they can boldly express their own opinions, and encourage others to accept their own opinions.

Case 3:

In September 2024, during the internship of a freshman class in a kindergarten, I participated in the outdoor sports game designed by the main class teacher and observed the following cases. The teacher led everyone to play the game of

"listening and counting together".

I observed Xuanxuan who is introverted, Mingming who is lively and active, and Yueyue who is strong. After the activity began, Mingming listened to the teacher's command very actively and shouted for other children to come over while running. In the next game, Mingming called Xuanxuan next to Yueyue, Yueyue soon put forward opinions to Mingming, she thinks Xuanxuan should be in her side first and own group and insist on their own ideas. And Xuan Xuan has been silently standing next to, watching them argue, dare not express their own opinions.

Mingming and Yueyue argued more and more fiercely, and neither was willing to compromise. Xuan Xuan occasionally tried to get a word in edgewise, but in a quiet voice, and was soon drowned out by their bickering. Since they can't agree, the game is deadlocked.

In this case, the toddler's personality traits adversely affected peer cooperation. From the observation of the researchers, it is known that children who are lively and cheerful have more cooperative behaviors in class and extracurricular activities. Especially in the environment of sports games, they are usually able to guide other partners in interaction and participate together. They are good at using positive social strategies such as consultation and seeking help. And those who are overbearing children, often use command tactics. Quiet young children in the process of cooperation, often do not take the initiative to initiate cooperative behavior, for others' activities, they often actively cooperate, or refuse or resist children's personality traits lead to unfavorable factors for children's cooperation with partners.

5. Discuss and Suggest

(1) Optimize sports game design

Sports games are an extremely effective way for young children to develop social skills. In most sports games, children need to communicate and cooperate with their peers and complete tasks together through group division of labor, so as to experience the importance of peer communication and mutual cooperation, which will have a positive impact on their future social communication activities.

During my internship in the kindergarten, I participated in the practical application of a series of sports games in the kindergarten, and through observation and analysis, I found that these games played a significant role in promoting the development of children's peer relationship. Take Balance Ping-Pong as an example. It is a cooperative game where the rule is to put a ping-pong ball on the racket and walk along the table to the finish line, and the team that does not drop the ball wins. If the ball drops halfway through, the game starts over. This game not only cultivates children's communication skills, but also enhances their sense of peer cooperation and physical coordination.

Through an in-depth study of these cases, it is clear that sports activities in kindergartens play a key role in the multi-faceted development of children. These activities not only enhance children's physical fitness, but also bring significant positive results in social skills, emotional growth, cognitive development and creativity. Therefore, sports games should be regarded as an important part of early childhood education, and attention should be paid to cultivating children's ability of peer cooperation and communication, so as to help children's all-round development.

(2) Build a supportive education environment

In the home co-parenting mode, in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere for children to play and make the game process more colorful, some game activities can not only be carried out in the kindergarten, but also extended to the family, so as to closely link the family life with the study life of the kindergarten. Children's outdoor game activities can be carried out in the garden or in the family, which not only requires the careful design of teachers, but also the active participation of parents, which requires a high degree of cooperation between teachers and parents.

Teachers play a key role in the process of coordinating teachers and parents. They need proper guidance and active communication with parents to share their thoughts and opinions. At the same time, they strive for excellence in the form and content of games. Improving the participation of parents and developing rich game activities are important ways to promote the integration of the home. Therefore, teachers should make full use of the platform of parent school, take the skills and methods of developing family game activities as the main content of education, and innovate parents' understanding of game activities, so that they are willing to participate in family game activities and have the ability to achieve educational goals through games.

In addition, it is also crucial to strengthen the contact between parents and teachers and make good use of modern information technology. Teachers can record a video of children's outdoor play activities in the kindergarten and upload it to the home communication group to let parents know about the sports play activities recently carried out by the kindergarten. It is clear that in order to cooperate with teachers in implementing sustainable play education, relevant activities should be extended to family life, so as to deepen parents' understanding. At the same time, parents can also give feedback to teachers in a timely manner, and kindergartens and teachers can actively improve children's sports game activities according to the feedback to enhance the education effect.

6. Conclusion

Sports games provide a dynamic practice platform for the development of children's peer relationship, but its value should be realized on the basis of scientific game design, supportive teacher-child relationship and home-school-community cooperation. Future research may further explore the differential impact of different types of games on children with specific personalities, and provide basis for personalized intervention.

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