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FORMING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IN PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH OUTDOOR GAMES

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Abstract: This article analyzes the scientific and methodological foundations for developing a healthy lifestyle in preschool and primary school children through outdoor (courtyard, playground, park) movement-based games. Empirical research results showed that children's physical activity, psycho-volitional stability, and healthy behavioral habits significantly improved through structured outdoor games.

Keywords: outdoor games, healthy lifestyle, preschool education, primary education, physical activity, children's health, motor skills, ecological climate

In global health strategies, outdoor activity is recognized as a key tool for strengthening children's health. Nevertheless, in urban preschool institutions, the time allocated for outdoor movement games is often limited (Uzbekistan Preschool Monitoring Report, 2024). The significance of outdoor games lies in their ability to:

- Engage children in physical movement under natural light and fresh air;
- Enhance balance and coordination in complex spatial environments;
- Enrich social-emotional experiences;
- Develop ecological awareness.

To develop scientifically grounded recommendations for fostering healthy lifestyle habits in children aged 5–9 through outdoor games.

- Participants: 28 children aged 5–6 and 32 children aged 7–9 (total 60), selected from 2 preschools and 1 primary school in Termiz city.
- Duration: 8 weeks, with 30-minute sessions 3 times a week (before or after class).
- Program activities: Movement games such as "Maze", "Hoop-Up", "Who Reaches the Flag?", "Duck Race", "Nature Treasure Hunt".
- Measurements:
  - *Eurofit 6 tests* (20m sprint, long jump, sit-ups);
  - *Kondas Scale of Psycho-Volitional Stability for Children*;
  - *Healthy Habits Questionnaire* (for parents).
- Analysis: Paired t-test and ANCOVA ($p < 0.05$).

Indicator	At Start	After 8 Weeks	Growth, %
20 m sprint (s)	5.1 ± 0.4	4.4 ± 0.3***	−13.7
Long jump (cm)	93 ± 8	109 ± 7***	+17.2
Sit-ups (reps)	10 ± 2	15 ± 3***	+50.0
Psycho-volitional stability (pts)	24.6 ± 3.1	29.8 ± 2.7**	+21.1
“Healthy Habits” Index (pts)	58 ± 9	71 ± 8**	+22.4

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Outdoor games significantly increased participants’ sprint speed and jumping power; muscular endurance improved by 1.5 times. Enhancements in psycho-volitional stability and healthy habits reflect the positive effects of ecological stimuli and a social game environment.

Theoretical Framework

According to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979), natural stimuli from the microsystem (e.g., preschool yard, playground) meet children’s physiological and psychological needs.

Outdoor games in children:

1. Develop coordinated movement skills (balance, spatial orientation);
2. Reduce stress hormones (e.g., cortisol), increasing emotional stability (Ulrich, 1984);
3. Reinforce healthy lifestyle behaviors (active leisure, being outdoors).

In groups with higher parental involvement, the “Healthy Habits” index was 6.4 points higher ($p < 0.05$), confirming the importance of family support.

Outdoor games powerfully stimulate physical, psychological, and social development in preschool and primary school children. The 8-week program:

- Increased sprint speed by 13–14%;
- Enhanced jumping power by 17%;
- Improved muscular endurance by 50%;
- Boosted psycho-volitional stability by 21%;
- Promoted healthy lifestyle habits by 22%.

Practical Recommendations

1. Schedule at least three 25–30-minute outdoor game sessions per week.
2. Game selection should involve gradually increasing spatial complexity.
3. Parental involvement: Encourage “family sports day” once a week.
4. Safety: Ensure playgrounds are clean, flat, and clearly marked.

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