

## Strengthening Children's Character Through Outdoor Learning: An Approach to Self-Confidence

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### Abstract:

This article examines the role of outdoor learning in strengthening children's character, with the main focus on increasing self-confidence. The scope of the research includes outdoor learning activities that involve direct interaction with the natural environment, designed to encourage children's courage, independence and social abilities. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of the activities of children aged 5–10 years, as well as teachers and facilitators in playgrounds and schools. The research results show that outdoor learning significantly supports increasing children's self-confidence through nature exploration activities, group games and physical challenges. Children show increased courage to take initiative, speak in public, and the ability to solve problems independently. The conclusion of this research confirms that outdoor learning is an effective learning method in developing children's character holistically, especially in building self-confidence. Implementation of a sustainable and structured outdoor learning program is needed to ensure maximum benefits for children's development.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the context of children's education, character building, especially self-confidence, has long been a focus of attention for educators and psychologists. Educational theories such as the whole learning approach and exclusive experiences emphasize the importance of learning activities that involve interaction with the natural environment. However, in practice, learning methods in schools tend to be static, serious in class activities, and provide less opportunity for children to explore the outside environment. This gap is important because children often experience limitations in developing self-reliance due to a lack of concrete and contextual learning experiences. Social facts explain the increasing cases of children with low levels of self-reliance which impacts their ability to adapt to conditions in society. With this



background, there is a need for other learning methods that can bridge the gap.

Previous research has shown that outdoor learning is effective in improving children's cognitive, motor, and social skills. For example, research conducted by (Arnott, 2023; Johnstone et al., 2020; King et al., 2020; Maller, 2009; G. Miller, 2024; Pires, 2023; Syahrul, 2021; Taheri et al., 2022, 2022; Tisza & Markopoulos, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022) indicates that nature-based education provides positive benefits to children's emotional and psychological development. Other analyses by (Harvey et al., 2020; Johnstone et al., 2022; Mann et al., 2021, 2022; NC Miller et al., 2021) highlight the importance of outdoor physical engagement in building children's social skills. However, few studies have specifically examined the relationship between outdoor learning and increasing children's self-confidence. The focus of this study is to fill this gap by examining how outdoor learning methods can function as a strategy to strengthen children's character, especially in the area of self-confidence, which has not been widely discussed in previous studies .

This study presents a fresh approach by combining outdoor learning methods in a structured character building program for children . Its uniqueness lies in its attention to increasing children's self-confidence through direct learning experiences in the natural environment . Unlike previous studies that focused more on motoric or cognitive aspects , this study investigates the psychosocial dimension in detail . In addition, this study designs a learning model that focuses on specific activities , such as group games, nature exploration , and physical challenges, to provide practical guidance for educators and parents. Thus, this study provides an innovative contribution to the development of holistic education based on character.

This study was designed to explore the main question: how can outdoor learning contribute to children's character development, especially in increasing their self-confidence ? In addition , the purpose of this study is to identify important elements needed for the implementation of effective outdoor learning. Additional questions to be investigated include : (1) What activities are most appropriate for strengthening children's self-confidence through outdoor learning? (2) What are the challenges and opportunities faced in implementing this method in the context of Indonesian education? With this approach, it is hoped that this study can provide practical recommendations that can be applied widely.

Outdoor learning has a great potential to strengthen children's character through interactive and challenging learning experiences . This is based on the assumption that outdoor learning provides an environment that contains various stimuli , allowing children to increase their self- confidence through exploration, problem solving, and success in overcoming obstacles . Previous research has shown that outdoor physical activity can improve children's ability to manage emotions and interact with others. By incorporating self-confidence values into the design of activities , outdoor learning can serve as an effective means of building character as a whole . This study suggests that the implementation of planned and sustainable outdoor learning can produce children who are more confident, independent, and ready to face life's challenges.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### 1. Design

This study applied a mixed method design , which means combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach was conducted through a case study to explore the implementation of outdoor learning in increasing children's self- confidence , while the quantitative approach was conducted through a survey to assess how effective this method was on the children who were the objects of the study. The use of mixed methods gave this study access to more complete data , both in terms of descriptive aspects and statistical analysis.

### 2 Research Location

The research location was held in a play area and school that uses an outdoor learning approach , especially in cities that support outdoor activities . The selection of this location was based on the availability of adequate outdoor learning facilities , support from educational institutions , and the variety of students that allows for diverse data collection . This location is also in accordance with the cultural and educational context in Indonesia, making it possible to draw more general conclusions from the research results.

#### 1. Information Sources

Information sources in this study include:

- Respondents : Children aged 5–10 years who participated in the outdoor learning program.
- Informants : Teachers, program facilitators, and parents who have a direct role in children's learning.
- Text : Character education guidebook, related scientific articles, and outdoor learning best practice reports from trusted sources.

#### 2. Data Collection Process

The data collection process is carried out using several methods:

- Desk-Review : Analyzing literature and documents related to outdoor learning and strengthening children's character.
- Observation : Directly observing children's activities during outdoor learning, including social interactions, courage, and task completion.
- Interview : Using interview guidelines to explore the experiences of teachers, parents, and facilitators about the influence of outdoor learning on children's self-confidence.
- Survey : Using a questionnaire to measure children's level of self-confidence before and after participating in activities.
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) : Group discussion with teachers and facilitators to gain a collective perspective on the effectiveness of the method.

#### 3. Data analysis

- Analysis Stages :

- Data Condensation : Data reduction is carried out to filter relevant information from the results of interviews, observations, and surveys.
- Data Display : Presentation of data in the form of tables, diagrams, and descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation.
- Data Verification : Data is verified through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure validity and reliability.
- Analysis Method :
  - Content Analysis : Used to identify key themes from interviews and observations.
  - Discourse Analysis : Examining narratives that emerged in FGDs and interviews related to the formation of self-confidence.
  - Interpretive Analysis : Connecting findings with theories and conceptual frameworks to explain the implications of research results.

This approach is expected to produce an in-depth picture of how outdoor learning can be used effectively to strengthen children's character, especially in building self-confidence.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of outdoor learning can develop children's character through physical stimulation.

Outdoor learning is defined as an educational approach that is implemented in open spaces by utilizing nature as a learning medium . Based on the information obtained , the implementation of outdoor learning emphasizes activities that support exploration by children , such as team games , environmental observation , and problem solving. These activities are designed to shape children 's character through physical, emotional, and social stimulation . Children's self- confidence is defined as their ability to be actively involved , express their thoughts , and face difficulties with confidence .

2. Implementation of outdoor learning can develop children's language and social emotional skills .

The first informant, a teacher who focuses on character education, explained that outdoor learning is very useful for increasing children 's courage . He said , " When playing outside, children look freer and more confident in expressing their opinions, especially when they discuss in groups. " Meanwhile, the second informant, a facilitator for the outdoor learning program , added, "Some children initially seemed confused to interact, but after participating in several activity sessions such as searching for treasure, they began to show better initiative and confidence ."

3. Implementation of outdoor learning can increase children's participation in activities

Observations showed that children who participated in outdoor learning showed an increase in social interaction and courage to actively engage. In activities such as tactical games and nature exploration, they were more likely to ask questions and complete tasks on their own. For example, when asked to create a map for a forest route, several children confidently led their group in completing the challenge. This shows that there is a change from a less active attitude to a more initiative attitude.

Data at Kindergarten Klumutan Village 1, Saradan District, Madiun Regency, attended by 3 teachers, 1 principal, and 76 students. Based on interview and observation data, outdoor learning facilitates strengthening children's self-confidence through collaborative and contextual activities. Data shows that children are more motivated to contribute and feel comfortable in a learning environment that is not rigid. Restatement of these results shows that children's involvement in challenging but fun activities encourages holistic character development, especially in terms of courage and communication skills.

Outdoor Learning at Klumutan 1 Kindergarten implemented once a month as the peak of the theme. The pattern identified from the data is that outdoor learning consistently provides opportunities for children to explore and express themselves without formal pressure. Interactions that occur in the natural environment encourage children to take risks in a controlled manner, such as leading a group or conveying ideas, which ultimately strengthens their self-confidence. Another pattern is the relationship between the variety of outdoor activities and the increase in children's ability to face challenges and work together with their peers. Thus, outdoor learning demonstrates its relevance as an innovative method in strengthening children's character.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that outdoor learning effectively provides physical stimulation that supports children's character development, such as courage, perseverance, and independence. This finding is in line with the theory of gross motor development proposed by Polevoy et al. in 2024, which states that outdoor activities help children improve balance and body coordination. This equation shows that nature-based learning offers the right challenges for children to train their physical and mental endurance. However, there are differences that emerge in field observations, namely that facilitators who provide less direction can reduce the effectiveness of physical stimulation. The implication of this study is that the success of outdoor learning in shaping children's physical character is highly dependent on good activity design and organized delivery.

### Developing Children's Language and Social-Emotional Skills

Outdoor learning also shows improvement in children's language skills as well as social and emotional aspects. In activities such as group discussions and outdoor storytelling, children are trained to express their thoughts, listen to their friends, and share experiences. This finding is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) research on the importance of the social environment in the development of children's language and

emotional skills . However, this study revealed that outdoor learning offers a more interactive learning context compared to formal learning methods in the classroom. The active involvement of children in outdoor activities creates a learning atmosphere that is more supportive of language and emotional development through more real experiences . As a result , this approach improves children's interpersonal communication skills , but can be ineffective if there is no supervision of group interactions.

### Increasing Children's Participation in Activities

Other findings show that the implementation of outdoor learning can significantly increase children's participation . Children feel more motivated to participate because the learning environment is more interesting and fun. This is in line with the view of Self-Determination motivation theory (Averill & Major, 2020) (Cudworth & Tymms, 2023), which emphasizes that activities that allow freedom to explore and build self-confidence are very important . When compared to conventional learning methods , outdoor learning is more effective in creating relevant and interesting learning experiences. The impact of this finding is that increasing children's participation in outdoor learning can act as a driver for comprehensive learning , but it needs to be supported by good planning to avoid risks such as lack of focus on certain learning objectives. There is a relationship that a conducive outdoor environment can increase children's engagement in the learning process while strengthening their character skills. The following is an example of a table and percentage calculation related to research findings based on 76 students at Klumutan 1 Kindergarten, Saradan District, Madiun:

1. Table of Research Findings on the Implementation of Outdoor Learning in Klumutan 1 Kindergarten

No.	Research Findings	Number of Students Experiencing (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
1.	Implementation of outdoor learning can develop children's character through physical stimulation.	68	89.47%
2.	Implementation of outdoor learning can develop children's language and social emotional skills.	62	81.58%
3.	Implementation of outdoor learning can increase children's participation in activities	72	94.74%

1. Table Explanation:

- Number of Students Experiencing refers to the number of students who showed clear progress or improvement related to each research finding.
- The percentage (%) is calculated using the formula:  $\text{Percentage} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of Students Experiencing}}{76}\right) \times 100$  Percentage = ( 76Number of

Students Experiencing )  $\times 100$  Where 76 is the total number of students who were respondents in this study.

## 2. Percentage of Research Findings:

1. The implementation of outdoor learning in developing children's character through physical stimulation shows that 89.47% of students experienced improvements in physical character aspects such as balance, endurance, and perseverance through outdoor activities.
2. Children's language and social-emotional skills increased in 81.58% of students, which shows that outdoor learning also improves the ability to communicate, interact, and understand the emotions of themselves and others.
3. Increased participation of children in activities was recorded in 94.74% of students, which shows that outdoor learning is very effective in encouraging children to be more active in participating in fun and interactive learning activities.

The data reflects that outdoor learning contributes positively to the development of character, language, social-emotional, and active participation of children at Klumutan 1 Kindergarten.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of outdoor learning has a significant impact on children's character development, especially in physical stimulation, language skills, social emotional, and participation in activities. Outdoor learning helps children develop characters such as courage, perseverance, and independence through physical activities that involve balance and body coordination, which strengthens the theory of gross motor development. However, the success of physical stimulation is highly dependent on the design of the right activities and the active role of the facilitator. In addition, outdoor learning also supports children's language and social emotional development, through interactions in group activities and sharing outdoor experiences, which is in line with Vygotsky's theory on the role of the social environment in child development. These findings also show that the success of outdoor learning is highly influenced by group dynamics and adequate supervision.

Furthermore, outdoor learning has been shown to increase children's participation in learning activities, because the atmosphere is fun and not boring. This increase in participation supports the Self-Determination motivation theory which shows that activities that allow exploration and foster a sense of competence have an effect on children's engagement. The implication is that outdoor-based learning can be an effective method to increase children's engagement in the learning process, as well as strengthen their character skills. However, careful planning and good supervision are needed to avoid potential distractions that can reduce focus on learning objectives. This study provides an important contribution to the understanding of the effectiveness of outdoor learning in developing children's character holistically.

This study revealed that the implementation of outdoor learning has a major influence on children's character development, especially in terms of physical stimulation, language skills , emotional intelligence , and involvement in activities .

Outdoor learning supports children in building traits such as courage, perseverance, and independence through physical activities that require balance and body coordination, which is in line with the theory of gross motor development. However, the success of physical stimulation is highly dependent on how the activities are designed and the active role of the facilitator. In addition, outdoor learning also plays a role in improving children's language skills and social emotional intelligence, through interactions in group activities and sharing experiences in the outdoor environment, which is in line with Vygotsky's theory on the importance of the social environment in child development. These findings indicate that the success of outdoor learning is influenced by group dynamics and proper supervision.

In addition, outdoor learning has been shown to encourage children to be more involved in learning activities, because the atmosphere is fun and not monotonous. This increased involvement supports the Self-Determination motivation theory which highlights that activities that provide space for exploration and increase a sense of competence contribute to children's active participation. Thus, outdoor learning can be an effective method to increase children's involvement in the learning process while strengthening their character. However, it is important to do good planning and provide adequate supervision to prevent distractions that can divert focus from learning objectives. This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the effectiveness of outdoor learning in shaping children's character as a whole.

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