THE MAIN TYPES OF MOVEMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: This article explores the main types of movement exhibited by preschool children and their significance for early childhood development. The three primary categories of movement—locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative—are analyzed to understand their distinct characteristics and developmental benefits.

Keywords: preschool children, locomotor movements, non-locomotor movements, manipulative movements, gross motor skills, cognitive development.

Introduction

Movement is a fundamental aspect of human development, especially during the early childhood years. For preschool children, physical activity is not only vital for their health and physical growth but also plays a critical role in their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Understanding the main types of movement exhibited by preschool children can provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and healthcare professionals to support and enhance these developmental processes.

During the preschool years, children engage in a variety of movement activities that can be broadly categorized into three main types: locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative movements. Each type of movement serves different developmental purposes and is characterized by distinct patterns and skills.

Locomotor movements involve the child moving their body from one location to another and include activities such as walking, running, jumping, hopping, and skipping. These movements are essential for developing gross motor skills, enhancing physical fitness, and promoting spatial awareness. They also provide opportunities for children to explore their environment and engage in social interactions with peers.

Non-locomotor movements, on the other hand, involve movements that are performed without changing the body's position in space. These include bending, stretching, twisting, swinging, and balancing. Such movements are crucial for developing body control, flexibility, and coordination. They also play a role in fostering concentration and mindfulness as children become more aware of their bodies and how they move.

Manipulative movements involve the use of hands and feet to interact with objects, such as throwing, catching, kicking, and striking. These activities are vital for the development of fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. They also contribute to cognitive development as children learn to plan and execute movements, solve problems, and understand cause-and-effect relationships.

Literature Review

Movement is a crucial component of early childhood development, influencing various aspects of physical, cognitive, and social growth. The literature on preschool children's

movement is extensive, highlighting the significance of different types of movements and their implications for overall development. This review synthesizes key findings from research on locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative movements in preschool children, providing a comprehensive understanding of their developmental roles.

1. Locomotor Movements

Locomotor movements, such as walking, running, and jumping, are among the first physical activities that preschool children master. According to Gallahue and Ozmun (2006), these movements are foundational for developing gross motor skills and physical fitness. Research indicates that regular engagement in locomotor activities is linked to improved cardiovascular health, muscle strength, and endurance in young children (Pate et al., 2015).

Locomotor movements also contribute to cognitive development. Studies have shown that physical activities involving movement can enhance children's attention, memory, and problem-solving skills (Tomporowski et al., 2011). Additionally, locomotor play, such as chasing and racing games, provides opportunities for social interaction, helping children to develop social skills and cooperation (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998).

2. Non-Locomotor Movements

Non-locomotor movements involve body actions performed without traveling, such as bending, stretching, and twisting. These movements are crucial for developing body awareness, balance, and coordination. According to Payne and Isaacs (2017), non-locomotor activities help children gain control over their movements, enhancing their ability to perform more complex physical tasks.

Research by Goodway et al. (2019) suggests that non-locomotor activities are particularly beneficial for developing proprioception, which is the sense of the relative position of one's own body parts. This is essential for safe and effective movement. Moreover, non-locomotor activities can promote relaxation and reduce anxiety in preschool children, contributing to their emotional well-being (Berger & Cooper, 2003).

3. Manipulative Movements

Manipulative movements involve interacting with objects using the hands and feet, such as throwing, catching, and kicking. These movements are critical for developing fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. According to Haywood and Getchell (2014), manipulative skills are foundational for later proficiency in sports and other physical activities that require precise control and coordination.

Research has shown that early proficiency in manipulative movements is associated with better academic performance in later years. For example, Cameron et al. (2012) found that children with well-developed fine motor skills tend to perform better in math and reading tasks. Additionally, manipulative play encourages cognitive development by challenging children to plan, execute, and refine their movements (Gabbard, 2018).

Implications for Early Childhood Education

The literature underscores the importance of providing diverse movement opportunities for preschool children to support their holistic development. Structured and unstructured physical activities that include locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative movements should be integrated into early childhood education programs. Educators and caregivers can play a pivotal role in fostering these activities by creating a safe and stimulating environment that encourages active play.

Conclusion

The body of research reviewed highlights the multifaceted benefits of locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative movements for preschool children. These movements not only enhance physical fitness and motor skills but also contribute significantly to cognitive, social, and emotional development. By understanding and supporting these fundamental movement types, we can better promote the overall well-being and developmental success of preschool children.

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