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Enhancement Of Skills In Children Through Experiential And Creative Activities For Their Holistic Development

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Abstract

Children are influenced by their experiences. The present study explores the role of hands-on experiences and creative activities in the holistic development and overall well-being of children. Activities like storytelling, role play, art and craft, group games, and practical life tasks provide opportunities to children to express themselves, collaborate with peers, and develop holistically. Such practices help in nurturing Emotional Intelligence and build confidence. These learning experiences encourage imagination, discipline, teamwork, and respect for others. Implementing such experiential methods in educational environments contribute significantly to inclusive and participatory learning. The present study emphasizes the need of integrating creative and skill-based learning opportunities in the Education system so that children are prepared to face the challenges of life.

Key Words: Experiential Learning, Creativity, Holistic development

Introduction

Children are influenced by their experiences. Different types of hands-on experiences and creative activities like storytelling, role play, art and craft, group games, and practical life tasks provide children with opportunities to express themselves, collaborate with peers, and develop holistically. It helps in nurturing Emotional Intelligence and overall well-being of children. These activities develop life skills. Children are curious and want to explore the world around them. Their learning should go beyond textbooks and must include experiential and creative learning. Children from underprivileged groups lack opportunities to engage in enriching activities. The present study was conducted with the purpose of improving critical thinking, emotional expression, teamwork, and creativity in children through activity-based and experiential learning. An interactive and happy learning environment was created. Children were engaged in storytelling, role play, art and craft, group activities, and participation in real-life scenarios.

Background of Study

Children from underprivileged and backward groups face financial and resources constraints. The researcher observed that children from the slum area of Khadda, Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh face many challenges. Lack of educational resources, and very limited access to stimulating learning experiences negatively impacts the development of children. There is a growing need for creative and experiential learning approaches that actively engage children and support their holistic growth. These activities will promote self-expression, problem solving, emotional regulation, communication, and teamwork skills. These skills are essential for lifelong success. The researcher identified that children in Khadda often have limited exposure to experiential and creative learning opportunities due to socio-economic constraints. Therefore, this study was planned to provide experiential and creative learning experiences to children from Khadda to promote emotional and social well-being and to enhance the confidence, self-worth, and purpose in children.

Objectives of The Study

The objectives for the present study are as follows:

- To promote holistic development in children through experiential learning.
- To develop creativity and imagination through hands-on activities.
- To improve cognitive, emotional, and social skills in children.
- To build self-confidence and communication skills.
- To identify and nurture individual talents and interests.
- To encourage teamwork, cooperation, and leadership.
- To create an inclusive and supportive environment for learning.
- To integrate fun with learning for overall mental and physical well-being.

Significance of Study

The present study addresses the needs of children from marginalized community of Khadda, Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. These children have limited access to formal education, healthcare, nutritious food, and creative learning opportunities. This inhibits their progress in life. The researcher recognized this need and started the initiative to empower children through experiential and creative learning. The study focuses on holistic development of children through hands-on creative and experiential activities.

Review of Literature

The review of literature highlights the work done by other researchers and provides a strong foundation for the current study. Through review of related literature, the researcher gained knowledge about child development, importance of creativity, and the role of experiential learning in development of children. Some of the studies are mentioned below:

In 2019, Thomsen did research on "The Role and Impact of Play-Based Learning in NGOs" to study the effects of play-based learning on development of children in the age group of 3 to 8 years in Billund, Denmark. It included NGOs that worked with children in urban and rural areas and used creative methods to improve educational outcomes. Data collected through a structured questionnaire and an observational checklist was analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to determine the efficacy of various teaching methods. The study showed that play based learning had a positive and significant impact on physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children. It enhanced their early literacy and numeracy skills. When educators used creative and playful teaching strategies, the children were motivated to engage in the learning activities. The researcher concluded that child centred and active learning methods like Experiential learning, Problem-based and project-based learning, Guided discovery, Inquiry-based approaches should be used. The study advised that NGOs and educational institutions should use these methods to build core skills in children and enhance their overall well-being.

In 2024, Alghufali did a study titled "The Role of Artistic Activities in Developing Creative Thinking Skills in Early Childhood." The study aimed to find out how participation in art-based activities affect a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. The study was based on Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory and Howard Gardner's idea of multiple intelligences. This study was conducted in early childhood educational settings with an emphasis on pedagogical approaches, parental involvement, cultural background, children's ages, and duration of artistic engagement. 300 participants were the sample. It included teachers and caregivers, who shared ideas regarding how artistic activities influence children's creative talents. Analysis of collected data showed that artistic activities like drawing, painting and storytelling significantly boosted creative thinking skills of children and also helped in their overall development. Balanced and innovative instructional practices are very important in early childhood education. The study highlighted the importance of support of parents and cultural context in determining creative output of children. The researcher emphasized that a comprehensive approach to education should be adopted in which creative experiences are essential components in preparing children for success in the future. Creative activities should be incorporated into early childhood education. Schools and families should be motivated to collaborate to help in artistic development of children as a means of improving their intelligence, emotional well-being, and social skills.

In 2024, Brovchak conducted a study titled "Creative Bridges" to evaluate the integration of music, drama, and visual arts into extracurricular programs and its impact on the psychological development of early school-aged children. The focus was on the need for holistic education that promotes academic learning as well as emotional and social development. 64 children in the age group of 11 to 12 years were included in the study. The sample was divided into experimental and control groups. A mixed-methods research design was adopted. Assessments were conducted at four stages: pre-program, mid-program, post program, and follow-up. The researcher used Raven's Progressive Matrices (for non-verbal reasoning), Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS), Peer Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of collected data was done. The results showed enhanced non-verbal abstract reasoning, improved academic performance in mathematics and reading and greater emotional well-being. The integration of arts into educational curricula is a powerful tool for enhancing cognitive abilities, emotional resilience, and social competencies. Such integration leads to psychological development, especially during the formative school years. It advocated for the inclusion of music, drama, and visual arts in schools for comprehensive development of children.

In 2024, Iffah did a study on "The Effect of Plasticine Play Activities on Improving Fine Motor and Creative Thinking Skills in Kindergarten Children". The study used a quantitative, quasi experimental design with a pretest-post-test model that only included the experimental group. 60 kindergarten children in the age group of 5-6 years were included in the study. They were chosen by using a selective selection strategy from a single educational setting. There were significant gains in fine motor abilities as well as in creative thinking in the children who participated in plasticine exercises. The findings show that plasticine-based play is an enjoyable pastime as well as an effective educational tool for improving coordination, control, creativity, and problem-solving abilities in children. Kindergarten teachers and parents should incorporate creative play into the curriculums and home routines. Teachers should be trained in maximizing the educational value of plasticine exercises.

Research on the topic "The Significance of Art Education in the Holistic Development of Preschool Children" in "Dečja radost" Ćuprija, Serbia was done by Nikolić in 2024 in preschool settings, with a focus on the effects of art education on children aged 3 to 6 years. The purpose of the study was to explore how creative expression through art contributes to children' overall development including physical, intellectual, moral, and emotional growth. The study was done on preschool children who were enrolled in early childhood education programs. Data was collected through classroom observations, children's artwork, and creative portfolio analysis. The statistical analysis was primarily qualitative and descriptive, focusing on developmental indicators, behaviour changes, and creative improvement. The results showed

that drawing, painting, and building activities significantly improved creativity as well as their intellectual, emotional, and social understanding. The study found that children expressed their inner ideas and feelings through artistic medium and this helped teachers to understand the mental and emotional states of these children. The study also emphasized creative portfolios of children should be kept as a recording tool for monitoring progress of children. The study emphasized that art is a transforming factor that fosters creativity, self-awareness, and aesthetic sensibility in preschool children.

Methodology

The methodology for any study provides a plan and structure for carrying out the study effectively. It helps the researcher to stay focused and organized. The researcher engaged the children in experiential and creative activities. Posters, flashcards, storytelling, art and craft, and interactive activities were conducted that were both educational and engaging. Through different sessions, children learned about the importance of maintaining personal hygiene, eating a balanced diet, and understanding the factors that affect their physical and mental health. The researcher guided children to adopt healthy practices and also motivate others to adopt these practices. Children were engaged in folk dances, group games, storytelling, art and craft activities, personal hygiene education, health and nutrition awareness, and life skills education. Educational materials like posters, charts, and flashcards were utilized for explanation of concepts and to ensure that children understand.

Sample

The present study was conducted on 20 children in the age group of 10 to 13 years from slum areas of Khadda, Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. They attended formal schools or were enrolled in non-formal education centers. Consent was taken from the parents of children for including them in the study.

The children came from vulnerable group and were facing socio-economic challenges. Most of them belonged to families who are labors doing construction work, street vending, or are domestic help. They have low income and limited resources. The family sizes were usually large. Living conditions in the slum areas of Khadda are harsh and there is lack of basic facilities.

Education for slum children in Khadda is fraught with challenges. Although Right to Education Act mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14, attendance of many participants in school is irregular due to various factors. These include the need to contribute to household income, lack of parental awareness or encouragement, and inadequate school infrastructure. Many children attend government schools, which often suffer from overcrowding, lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient teaching materials. The quality of education is poor, and dropout rates are high. Some children are enrolled in non-formal education centers run by NGOs, which attempt to bridge the educational gaps but face their own set of challenges and limitations.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, the researcher collected data by using observation, informal interviews, and activity-based assessment tools.

Observation - The researcher closely observed the children on different things such as their body language, energy levels, cooperation with others, and willingness to engage in the tasks. Daily observation notes were written to track their progress. The researcher also observed how children expressed themselves and how their skills slowly improved. Creativity, discipline, and social interaction were also closely observed.

Informal Interviews - Short and friendly conversations were held with the children individually. The children were free to express themselves about how they felt during the activities.

Activity-Based Assessment - The researcher conducted different types of activities related to experiential learning and development of creative skills. The children were asked to do small tasks that reflected their learning. For example, after learning a dance, they were asked to perform the steps again in a group. After a storytelling activity, children were encouraged to retell the story or perform it as a role play. These assessments were not only effective but also enjoyable for the children, as they did not feel like they were being tested. This method allowed learning and assessment to happen together, in a natural and stress-free manner. This method was child centered and stress-free, making assessment part of learning.

Feedback and Group Sharing At the end of selected sessions, children were invited to sit together and share their experiences. This group sharing helped them reflect on what they had learned and also gave them a chance to listen to their peers. It helped in developing speaking skills and confidence in the children.

Data Collection Process

In the beginning rapport was established with children. Their background, language ability, behavior and exposure to creative and educational activities were identified. This helped in planning activities for the group. Daily records were maintained to capture participation, enthusiasm, creativity, confidence, development and social interaction. Informal talks during and after sessions helped the researcher to understand children's feelings and thoughts.

The researcher collected information through daily observations, informal interviews, and group discussions.

Results and Analysis

The present study analyzes the importance and impact of incorporating experiential and creative activities into early childhood education. The results showed that when children get opportunities to learn by doing things, their life skills are enhanced. Initially the children were anxious and nervous about speaking before others. But with continuous motivation and support it was observed that children became more confident and began to take initiative to participate in activities. Folk dancing classes were conducted in which children were taught traditional dances like Garba and Bihu. Gradually they learnt to work in collaboration with others and perform before others. They learnt to synchronize with others in the group as well as developed team spirit. The folk-dance sessions brought joy and energy to the group. Children eagerly practiced steps of traditional dances like Garba and Bihu. These sessions helped them to learn about Indian culture and also improved their body coordination, rhythm and confidence.

Engagement in group games helped children to learn and inculcate values like patience, teamwork, and respect for others. Children began interacting more openly with their peers, resulting in improved interpersonal interactions. Storytelling and role-playing sessions helped in enhancing the children's listening, speaking, and creative skills. These sessions boosted imagination and communication skills while establishing moral ideals. They enjoyed performing simple plays and were encouraged to communicate their ideas, emotions, and thoughts in front of others. This significantly improved their language skills and self-expression.

The art and craft classes helped the children develop their creativity and fine motor abilities. The children experimented with new ways of expressing themselves by painting with toothbrushes, constructing products out of waste materials, and drawing. Many of them showed improved focus and hand control when performing such tasks. Art and craft sessions were one of the most loved activities among the children. Activities like toothbrush painting, thread printing, and using waste materials to create new things allowed children to express themselves freely. These activities helped develop their fine motor skills, concentration, and ability to think creatively.

As a part of Personal hygiene education children were taught important activities such as handwashing, tooth brushing, and keeping surroundings clean. Many children shared that they had adopted these

practices in daily life. The hygiene and health awareness sessions were very useful and impactful. Some children shared that they were guiding their family members also to adopt healthy habits for maintaining personal hygiene. The interviews of the children provided valuable insights that could not be perceived through observation.

The present study shows that creative and experiential methods and activities make learning interesting. These activities develop self-confidence, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. These experiences foster comprehensive development of children. Use of Educational materials like posters, charts, and flashcards helps in understanding complex content. Cultural events like folk dancing, role play, and traditional games encourage social interaction, teamwork and enhance life skills. Activities on use of polite words like “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry,” helped in developing good manners.

Storytelling sessions using puppets and props enhanced vocabulary, public speaking skills and moral values. Stories focused on themes like kindness, honesty, friendship, and courage were narrated. Role plays like “Being a Nurse” or “Being a mother” encouraged children to step into others' roles, promoting empathy, imagination, and understanding of everyday responsibilities.

As the sessions progressed, children became more active, enthusiastic, and confident. They began to eagerly participate freely in dances, games, and storytelling activities. They showed significant improvement in communication skills and could confidently share their views before others.

Key Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are as follows:

- ✓ Experiential and Creative activities help children to build essential life skills and become more confident, expressive, and self-reliant.
- ✓ Interactive sessions on awareness about personal hygiene, balanced diet, and health-related habits, help children in maintaining good health and hygiene.
- ✓ Educating children about nutrition helps combat malnutrition, and other health issues
- ✓ Activities like storytelling and role-play enhance memory, creativity, and thinking skills, leading to better concentration and learning abilities.
- ✓ Group activities improve teamwork, emotional expression, and social interaction, which are often underdeveloped in children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- ✓ Use of posters, charts, art & craft, role plays, and other interactive tools makes learning engaging and long-lasting.

Educational Implications

- ✓ Efforts should be made at all levels to educate children about life skills. This should be an important part of curriculum, and the government should take strict steps towards implementing such initiatives at the grassroots level.
- ✓ Special awareness efforts about cleanliness, personal hygiene, and nutrition should be held on a regular basis in rural and underserved communities to promote healthy behaviours among children and their families.
- ✓ To enhance engagement and joyful learning, teachers should incorporate more creative and activity-based learning approaches such as dancing, storytelling, and group activities, particularly in remote areas.
- ✓ NGOs and governments should work more closely together to provide appropriate instructional materials and support to interns and field workers involved in children's development.

Conclusion

Engaging children in activities like folk dance, life skills education, storytelling, personal hygiene awareness, group games, and art and craft help to nurture skills and holistic development of children. Experiential and creative activities provide joyful learning for the children. They become more engaged, disciplined, expressive, and socially responsible. They maintain personal cleanliness and collaborate with

others.

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