

Exploring The Benefits Of Outdoor Education In Physical Education Programs In Zambezi Region, Namibia.

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Abstract

Outdoor education is associated with helping students enhance their deeper understanding of their environmental and natural communities which results to a sense of place. Through association to place, students foster stronger environmentally friendly attitudes and community manners. The initial aim of this study was to exploring the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs in Zambezi Region, Namibia. This study used qualitative research methods. A total of twenty (20) physical education teachers and students were selected purposively to participate in this study, and data was analysed thematically using the step by step approach suggested by Clarke and Braun. The study results revealed outdoor education in physical education benefits student by enhancing their physical and mental wellbeing, improves academic and cognitive stance, boost social and personal development. Therefore, it can be concluded from this study that outdoor education in physical education curriculum need to be seriously integrated in the school curricula, as it enhance physical and mental health of students, promote student academic and cognitive skills and also promote student's social and personal growth.

Keywords: Exploring, benefits, outdoor, education, physical education, programs, Zambezi Region, Namibia.

Introduction

In societies where conventional classroom settings frequently govern the learning environment, outdoor education gives fresh air by taking students elsewhere four wall up and occupying them in the natural atmosphere. This learning approach supports the significant outdoors as a energetic and cooperative classroom, suggesting a wide display of advantages and learning prospects for pupils of all ages (Europass Teacher Academy, 2023).

Outdoor or outside education goes past only teaching subjects in an outside place. It is a complete method that intends to foster individual, social, and environmental expansion through experimental learning. Thus, by participating in variability of outside activities, students foster an intense bond with nature, gain realistic skills, boost their problem-solving skills, and build strength in the face of life challenges (Mckenna, 2025).

Furthermore, over 10 years ago Gray and Martin (2012) encouraged for the absorption of Outdoor Education into the Australian Education Curriculum, defining its probable advantages and credit within the learning framework. They printed their attempts in the article, "The role and place of Outdoor Education in the Australian National Curriculum" and integrated their rationalization for Outside Education's place among other curriculum school subjects. Eventually, their encouragement did not stem in a separate subject. Research have shown that there are benefits of outdoor education in physical education. These physical health benefits includes; better motor skills, stronger bones and muscles, and increased cardiovascular health. It similarly improves mental well-being by decreasing stress, increasing mood, and increasing confidence and self-self-image. Also, outdoor surroundings foster social and mental development, promoting teamwork, resilience, problem-solving skills, and a deeper bond to the environmental world (Vitalentini and Donatiello 2021).

Moreover, numerous studies have reported that outdoor education in physical education increased school performance. Research has further documented that, it increased standardized test scores, improved feelings

about school, enhanced in-school manners, enhanced school attendance and generally it also improved student academic achievement whenever students learn in nature. Additionally, outside education essentially apply a larger range of children's intellects. Countless researchers contribute the growth in performance to multiplied significance and hands-on familiarity of learning outside (Dobay et al, 2018). Learning outside the classroom is regarded as active and fuels students' mental, physical, and social well-being. Several studies have proved follow-up (e.g., non-academic school) physical movement enhances with outside learning. Access to natural world has also been proved to reduce the signs of ADHD. Thus outside learning and access to natural world also reduce stress and anxiety among teachers and students (Booth et al, 2018).

The world of research further suggest that students significantly benefit developmentally from being outside their classroom. Outdoor education and play improve student's behavioural, emotional and intellectual competency. Studies also have revealed that students who learn outside their normal mainstream classrooms grow: a good sense of character, freedom, self-confidence, ingenuity, virtuous informed decision-making and problem-solving skills, understanding towards others, motor skills, self-driven discipline and creativity (Zamzow and Ernst, 2020). Frequently, the outdoors gives a alteration of pace from the normal classroom, which teachers and students find fun. Findings by numerous research have shown that outdoor education in physical education indeed increased student passion for learning outside (Mckenna, 2025).

Problem statement

Outdoor education plays a vital role on physical education students as it increasing dynamic activity, promoting the growth of both fine and gross motor techniques through natural fundamental skill challenges such as manipulating objects, climbing and improving general physical well-being and coordination by offering wide-ranging and dynamic atmospheres. This vigorous engagement also decreases anxiety and stress, increases good mood, and improves physical health. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to explore the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs in Zambezi Region, Namibia.

Research questions

- What are the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs?
- What are the physical and mental benefits of outdoor education in physical education program?
- What are the Academic and Cognitive Benefits of outdoor education in physical education program?
- What are the Social and Personal Development benefits of outdoor education in physical education program?

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology which allowed the researchers to select, collect and analyze and discuss in depth information related to the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs, Zambezi Region Namibia.

Population and sample

The population of this study comprised of twenty (20) physical education teachers and students, who were selected on purpose based on expertise and experience they have in relation with the study phenomenon.

Data collection methods

Data was collected using qualitative questionnaires. Data gathering technique is an organized plan for collecting and assessing information to response to research inquiries or make updated decisions. The procedure encompasses defining the research aim, preparing the method, choosing suitable techniques and tools, and lastly gathering, evaluating, and reporting on the information (Jain, 2025).

Data analysis

Data was analyzed thematically using the six-step procedure suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) approach, which emphase on familiarization of data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally writing up.

Research results

This section of this study gives results derived from respondents to the research main question “What are the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs?”

Physical and mental health benefits of outdoor education:

S1 and S20 respondents said that:

Outdoor education in Physical Education improves student's fitness levels, by this I mean to say that, outdoor education boosts more movement and activity, stops sedentary behaviors and reducing childhood obesity.

While S2 and S15 concurred by saying that:

Despite physical activity been a physical stressor to the body, yes indeed outdoor education enhance mental wellbeing of students. It expose them to nature which in turn reduces their stress and anxiety levels, moreover, whilst they are in nature, the environment exposes them to light which helps normalize their sleeping patterns and improve their mood.

Moreover S3 and S11 corresponded by saying that:

Outdoor education in physical education contributes to student's better vision, this imply that, spending a lot of time outside encourage better visualization and increase healthy tendencies for visual observation.

Academic and cognitive benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education:

S4 and S12 stated that:

There are academic and cognitive benefits of outdoor education in physical education, for instance it increase classroom engagement, this means that students hands-on involvements make learning more concrete, cumulative student drive and participation in the subject's curriculum.

While S5 and S14 suggested that:

Outdoor education in physical education program improves student's cognitive function by enhancing focus, boost mental ability and school performance in all subjects like physical education, science, arts and social studies.

Moreover S6 and S13 suggested that:

Outdoor education is very important and need to be incorporated in school curriculum either as a stand alone subject or merged in other school subjects as a cross curriculum component. Outdoor education creates an in depth understanding which link classroom education to real-world circumstances, promoting a more reflective understanding of ideas.

Social and personal development benefits of outdoor learning in physical education:

S7 and S16 mentioned that:

Outside education helps to develops student life skills and gives them equal opportunities for to learn to be more flexible, innovative and robust through confronting experiences in nature.

S8 and S19 concurrently stated that:

Outside education in physical education enhance student's strong friendship skills, which means that physical activities that are done in outdoor places encourage empathy, leadership, team-work and a better social environment.

S9 and S18 harmonized that:

Outdoor education increase student' independence and confidence, as they navigate outside challenges their strong deep sense of self-worth is cultivated.

Lastly, S10 and S17 alluded that:

*Outside education in Physical Education raise student's environmental understanding, as it sanctions them to use natural world as a learning atmosphere adopting a deep association and admiration for the environment. *

Discussions

This section of this research discusses results derived from the study main question; “Exploring the benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education programs in Zambezi Region, Namibia. These discussions will be presented chronologically from the initial aspect covered firstly up to the last component. These results of this study shows that there is undoubtedly physical and mental health benefits of outdoor education in physical education program, and these benefits includes; improves student's fitness levels, boosting of more movement and activity, stopping sedentary behaviors and reducing childhood obesity. These study outcomes align with the research results done by Samsudin et al (2019) which found that outdoor education in physical education has

numerous advantages these includes; high fitness levels for students who gets involved, decreased sedentary lifestyle, and enhanced movement activities.

Likewise, the study carried by Booth and Neill (2018) still support this study outcomes as it found that outdoor education in physical education plays a significant role in for students as their level of fitness increases and boost their moral. This further shows that outdoor education exposes students to nature which in turn reduces their stress and anxiety levels, moreover, whilst they are in nature, this study finds that the environment exposes them to light which helps normalize their sleeping patterns and improve their mood. These results are associated with a study done by Shellman and Hill (2017) discovered that outdoor truly expose student to nature which has numerous benefits such as absorption of needed sunlight which helps to regulate sleeping habits and improve mood swings.

Moreover, this study further shows research outcomes emphasizing that, outside education in physical education contributes to student's better visualization, this suggest that, devoting a lot of time outdoor boost better views and upsurge healthy propensities for visual reflection. These study outcomes are supported by Mackenzie et al (2017) which emphasized that outdoor education motivates students intrinsically, which also helps them to have a better health view and reflection.

Also, this study examined the academic and cognitive benefits of outdoor education in Physical Education, to which the study outcomes shows that; outdoor education increase student classroom engagement, this means that students hands-on involvements make learning more concrete, cumulative student drive and participation in the subject's curriculum. These study outcomes relates to the research findings of Vitalentini and Donatiello (2021) which discovered that outdoor education in physical education has vital benefits for students such as full participation in subject curriculum. This study further outlined that outdoor education in physical education program improves student's cognitive function by enhancing focus, boost mental ability and school performance in all subjects like physical education, science, arts and social studies. These outcomes are also revealed by (Zamzow and Ernst (2020) which reported that outside education in physical education improves mental functioning by enhancing student concentration, improve intellectual abilities and drives performance in some school subject such natural and social sciences.

Furthermore, this study outcomes additionally revealed that outdoor education creates an in depth understanding which connect classroom education to real-world situations, promoting a more thoughtful understanding of viewpoint. These result correspond to Sabet (2018) which suggests that understanding nature can only happens once student are exposed to the environment through outdoor education and this can promote or enhance student's way of non-prejudice thinking. This study also examined the social and personal development benefits of outdoor learning in physical education to which the results shows that, outside education helps to develops student life skills and gives them equal opportunities for to learn to be more flexible, innovative and robust through confronting experiences in nature. These study outcomes are in agreement with Hunter (2019) which alluded that outside education equip students with life skills education which at the end of learning they become flexible, innovative and strong minded in dealing with life challenges associated with nature.

This study revealed that outside education in physical education enhance student's strong interrelationship skills, which means that physical activities that are done while outdoor encourage empathy, leadership, team-work and a better social environment. These results concur to Lead et al (2019) who alluded that outdoor education in physical education promote student teamwork, enhance peer relationships, care for one another, motivate leadership skills, and better understanding of the environment we live in. This study also find that outdoor education increase student' independence and confidence, as they navigate outside challenges their strong deep sense of self-worth is cultivated. And lastly the study correspondingly found that outside education in Physical Education raise student's environmental understanding, as it sanctions them to use natural world as a learning atmosphere adopting a deep association and admiration for the environment. These result are supported and are also outlined in a study by Dobay et al (2018) which stated that outdoor education improve student independence and confidence, and it helps student to appreciate the involvement they reside in.

Conclusion

Outdoor education in physical education plays a vital role for students, as it enlightens them with environmental awareness that acquaint them with the nature they reside in. Therefore, it can be concluded from this study that outdoor education in physical education curriculum need to be seriously integrated in the school curricula, as it enhance physical and mental health of students, promote student academic and cognitive skills and also promote student's social and personal growth.

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