

How The Child Gender and The Parents Gender Affects the Play and Physical Activity Early and Preschool Age Children



Odgoj danas za sutra:

Premošćivanje jaza između učionice i realnosti

3. međunarodna znanstvena i umjetnička konferencija
Učiteljskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu Suvremene
teme u odgoju i obrazovanju – STOO4 u suradnji s
Hrvatskom akademijom znanosti i umjetnosti

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Sekcija - Kineziološka edukacija i sport

Broj rada: 1

Kategorija članka: Izvorni znanstveni članak

Abstract

Girls and boys differ not only physically, psychologically and sociologically, but also in the way and approach to a particular type of play.

The paper contains researches related to play and physical activity early and preschool age children. The paper states the differences between boys and girls during different types and places of play and how the gender of parents affects the play and physical activity early and preschool age children.

Research has shown that there are certain differences between boys and girls in the way they play, the choice of games, according to the choice of activities, locations, props and devices. The outdoor play of boys and girls has certain similarities and differences. Research suggests that boys and girls are equally physically active when playing outdoors. Rough play is characteristic for boys, but girls are also involved in this form of play. Girls' rough play differ from boys' rough play. Boys will be more physically active and spend more time playing when they have props.

Just as there is a difference in the way boys and girls play, research shows that there is a difference between father and mother in the way and approach to play with the child. Fathers may encourage physical play a little more and involve children in it more, while mothers will prefer quieter games and activities. Certain studies have shown that fathers participate more in physical play with children than mothers, while others have shown that both parents participate equally or even that mothers participate more than fathers. Taking into account the different results of research on the involvement of parents in children's physical play, this could lead us to perhaps a general conclusion that in fact there is no difference. However, thinking about everyday situations, it could still be stated that fathers participate more in physical play with children. Research shows that a parent's physical play with a child can encourage and improve the child's cognitive, language and motor development.

Taking into account the research mentioned in this paper, it can be said that mothers and fathers generally play almost the same games with their children nowadays, the only question is how they approach the game itself.

Various studies point to the conclusion that fathers will encourage children's gender-stereotyped play much more than mothers and that fathers are more inclined to risk and perform risky activities, but the actual application of these attitudes in everyday life situations may be questionable. Fathers believe that children should engage in risky situations and gain certain experiences in that way, but it is still too dangerous for them to actually realize it in real game situations.

Both parents should be equally involved in all aspects of the child's care and upbringing, which also applies to the field of play. Each parent has a different approach to the game and the way they will spend it with their child, which contributes to the enrichment of the child's emotional and social knowledge and the development of motor and cognitive skills and abilities.

Keywords

differences between fathers and mothers; differences between boys and girls; physical activity; play

Introduction

The world is ambivalent, it has two opposite poles, and these two opposite poles can also be seen in the interests of boys and girls (Bakhtin, 1984 according to Hyvönen & Kangas, 2007) and in the way mothers and fathers approach certain types of play. Research has shown that boys and girls show different behaviors during free time, specifically, boys spend more time playing outside in active and dynamic play, and girls spend more time playing indoors in more static types of play (Cherney & London, 2006). Goble et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of researching children's preference for gender-typical activities in order to understand how social context can shape a child's exposure to different experiences that are likely to foster skill development during the preschool period. Mediators of gender socialization, such as the institution of family, neighborhood, peers, school and media, contribute to the child's understanding of gender roles and expectations, and this actually affects the development of children's play patterns (Edward set al., 2001). Therefore, socialization mediators play an important role in shaping a child's play (Edwards et al., 2001).

Research that dealt with parents' behavior showed that boys and girls are treated differently by their parents from an early age (Fagot, 1995 according to Granie, 2010). The context - the child's

interaction with the mother or father - in which the child plays can provide different opportunities to engage in certain activities (Goble et al., 2012). Children's choice of toys and activities is in many ways influenced by parents (Edwards et al., 2001), although parents express determination to ensure for preschool children of different genders equal play experiences (Dwyer et al., 2008).

Some evidence suggests that parents participate in different types of play with their children, for example, fathers have been found to be more involved in physical play with sons than with daughters, and from early to preschool age, father-son play is more physical and active than mother's play with a child (Lindsey et al., 1997). Depending on whether the social context includes others (mother or father), preschool children can participate in different activities and can have very different experiences in play with specific activities (Goble et al., 2012). Children can recognize a parent's preference toward certain activities and for a certain type of play, and a parent's preference toward certain game can influence children's behavior (Lindsey et al., 1997). The same authors state that children can adjust their own behavior in play based on the gender of the parents they are playing with, in such a way as to express a preference toward their own gender.

Differences in The Game of Boys And Girls

Children self-identify as a girl or a boy early in life, and this basic personal categorization sets the foundation for the development of their beliefs with whom, with what, how, and where they will play (Edwards et al., 2001). A large number of different studies have shown that preschool children's play is mostly gender-based (Änggård, 2011), that is, that gender significantly affects which games and with what children will play (Chalcarz & Merkiel, 2014). As they grow up, boys and girls differ not only in their choice of friends to play with but also in their choice of toys, games and activities (Edwards et al., 2001). Boys and girls in kindergartens choose different themes for play, prefer different toys, play in different rooms, but also play in different places when they are outside in the kindergarten yard (Änggård, 2011). They choose different play styles that are not attractive to each other (Edwards et al., 2001). This shows that some activities are more suitable for girls while others are more suitable for boys, which is probably caused by cultural influence (Chalcarz & Merkiel, 2014).

Gender differences in play are visible during the second year and become more pronounced during preschool age (Tyler, 1996). Goble et al. (2012) categorized feminine and masculine activities in their research. Art activities, music, puzzles, books, writing, telephone, changing clothes, kitchen, female figurative play and pretending to be a woman are categorized as feminine activities, while activities with balls, bicycles, cubes, computer, animal toys, toy vehicles, pretending to be male, male figurative play and neutral figurative play categorized as male activities. During the second year, differences also appear in relation to the choice of toys, and they intensify until the age of 5, because children come under the social influence of peers, parents and the media (Edwards et al., 2001). Typically gender toys and active games may encourage active play more in boys than in girls (Fagot & O'Brien, 1994 according to Campbell & Eaton, 1999). When preschool boys were given superhero toys, they engaged more in media-related roles (Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Änggård (2011) states that the theme of hero play is often present in boys' play, while girls do not

participate in superhero play. When boys were given non-media-related toys (e.g. blocks, puzzles, floating objects, etc.), their play was more active and exploration-oriented, and their roles were family-based and professional-based (Parsons, 2006 according to Bokony & Patrick, 2009).

After the age of three, there is a tendency for girls and boys to play more separately than together, especially when they are in large equal age peer groups (Edwards et al., 2001). According to the same authors, pulling girls and boys into separate play groups is one of the most pronounced, well-documented and culturally universal phenomena of middle childhood.

Table 1

Differences in the choice of games and activities between boys and girls of early and preschool age (Änggård, 2011; Bokony & Patrick, 2009; Cardon et al., 2008; Chalcarz & Merkiel, 2014; Cherney & London, 2006; Edwards et al., 2001; Fausto-Stirling et al., 2015; Goble et al., 2012; Hinkley, 2011; Hyvönen & Kangas, 2007; Lindsey & sur., 1997; Thomas & French, 1985; Tyler, 1996)

BOYS	GIRLS
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- boys primarily play with "male" toys
- they typically choose a game with dice and balls
- choose a game with transport toys, weapons, building materials
- choosing games that involve the activation of large muscles and the skills of throwing and shooting a target (basketball, specula, wrestling, archery)
- choose topics that concern the fight between good and evil
- they play much further away from home, outside, away from the direct sight of an adult (they spend more time at a greater distance from their mother)
- they are less often involved in responsible work than girls
- they want to run, swim, catch, spy, drive, observe, fight, compete, dive, "wrestle" by hugging and hang on a pole
- during play on the playground, they play significantly more on harder surfaces than girls
- they play much more often on external construction materials such as crates, tires and ladders
- they use sticks much more often than girls
- more often than girls, they ride a bike or mobile to a place other than school/kindergarten
- the natural processes of building the home environment and creating the characters that live there are important to them
- physical play is characteristic
- they are more involved in competitive games
- they play more often in larger, more age-heterogeneous groups
- their games last longer than girls
- require more space indoors and outdoors

- tend towards a light fluid style of play
- tend towards interactions
- choose a game with dolls and doll clothes
- choose a game with household appliances
- they change their clothes
- they play with materials for creative expression
- they like games that involve rhythm and coordination of the whole body (e.g. jumping rope, "school", clapping games),
- they like games that involve melodies or singing
- they initiate hunting games, often through "touch and run" action and maintain the game by constantly giving instructions to the boys, considering that they often wander off (they lose attention)
- more often choose themes for the game that are closely related to everyday experiences
- more often choose to play with feminized or neutral toys
- they play more closer to home or inside
- during the game they spend more time in contact with an adult supervising (mainly mother and other family members)
- they do a responsible job or take care of a child, so they can often combine a pleasant conversation or moments of playful fun
- they want to drive, swim, dress up, pick flowers and enjoy the sun
- spend more time playing on fixed equipment such as climbing frames and swings
- they prefer rollerblading on a sunny day more than boys
- pretend play is characteristic of the interaction between girls of preschool age, and they perform it at a higher level than boys do
- the play of the bride is more represented - they play more boys' games than boys play girls' games
- they do more writing/drawing activities
- they play decorating the interior of the house

Outdoor play of boys and girls

Similarities. Preschool children of both sexes show an obvious desire for play and physical activity and nature (Hyvönen & Kangas, 2007), therefore they have the right to be physically literate (educated), i.e. they have the right to participate in physical activity, active play and sports as a natural component of their childhood (Goodway et al., 2014). The value of play, which is related to physical activity, is considered crucial for child development (Cosco, 2006).

A large part of early and preschool children's outdoor play is physical play (combination of practical and symbolic play) or is related to sensori-motor activity (Änggård, 2011). According to Hyvönen and Kangas (2007), preschool boys and girls report that they would like to climb, jump, slide, swing, play roles, respond to music, play hide and seek, and have adventures. Research shows that there is no significant difference between the total time preschool boys and girls spend outside (Hinkley, 2011).

When 3- and 4-year-old girls and boys play in the park, they mostly perform similar activities, e.g. climbing, running on a path, splashing in mud and water, and playing imaginary games (Waller, 2010 according to Änggård, 2011). In addition, when they are outside boys and girls of early and preschool age spend time equally in activities such as balancing, climbing trees, jumping over bushes, sliding, etc. (Änggård, 2011). The character of the natural environment can facilitate girls and boys to play together and free them from traditional gender frameworks in many, but not all games, because such an environment does not provide the physical environment or toys that are intended for girls or boys (Änggård, 2011). Cardon et al. (2008) state that the amount of play equipment, the number of target pieces of equipment, height differences, vegetation and access to toys do not significantly contribute to a higher level of physical activity (measured by the number of steps) in boys and girls aged 4 -5 year. The nature of the environment enables and encourages boys and girls to play in non-stereotypical ways and at the same time encourages them to be equally physically active.

Differences. Boys of preschool age visit children's playgrounds and parks significantly more often than girls, and boys have significantly more visits to spaces (e.g. bases, playrooms in shopping centers) for active play (Hinkley, 2011). It should be noted that preschool girls spend 6% more time during the weekend in physical activity for every additional weekly visit to a park or space that does not have play equipment (Hinkley, 2011). Preschool boys are much more likely to use toys/equipment such as bats and balls in their play than girls (Hinkley, 2011).

Gender significantly affects the percentage of preschool children who prefer playing with a ball and rollerblading (Chalcarz & Merkiel, 2014). A statistically significantly higher percentage of preschool boys (24.4% vs girls 3.8%) prefer playing with a ball on a sunny day, while a statistically significantly higher percentage of girls than boys (13.9% vs 1.2%) prefer rollerblading on a sunny day (Chalcarz & Merkiel, 2014). From the above, it could be stated that compared to boys, girls do not need so much that the outdoor space has certain devices, games or toys to encourage them to play and physical activity. Girls are more adaptable than boys in the sense that they will accept what their parents offer them to a greater extent than boys will. How much will children play on the outdoor space depends on the parents and their attitudes.

Preschool boys want to run, swim, catch, spy, drive, observe, fight, compete, dive, "wrestle" by hugging and hang on a pole, while preschool girls want to drive, swim, dress up, pick flowers and enjoy the sun (Hyvönen & Kangas, 2007) (the differences between boys and girls are not significant). An area of difference involves children's preference for certain modes of play (Lindsey et al., 1997).

When girls participate in outdoor play, the activities and play materials they choose differ from those chosen by boys (Tyler, 1996). Girls spend significantly more time than boys playing on fixed equipment such as climbing frames and swings, while boys play much more often with wheeled vehicles and larger outdoor construction materials such as crates, tires and ladders (Tizard, Philips, & Plewis, 1976 according to Tyler, 1996).

Olesen et al. (2012) list several studies that confirmed that hard surfaces (e.g. asphalt or synthetic material) are associated with higher activity intensity in preschool children. According to Cardon et al. (2008) during play on the playground, boys aged 4-5 years played statistically significantly more

on harder surfaces than girls and they were more active on that surface than girls. Also boys' activities may be more triggered by harder ground surfaces, which are mainly used for sports-related, competitive activities (Cardon et al. 2008; Soini et al., 2014) because such surfaces enable a more intense and vigorous game, which is more characteristic for boys.

Observing parents and children who are in the outdoor area or children's playground, it could be said that for parents it is a place for "rest", while for children it is a place for spending excess energy. The potential and opportunity for increasing children's motor literacy is not observed. Parents generally perceive their role as observing and monitoring events and intervening or redirecting only when the child's behavior is considered inappropriate or risky. Parents stand, sit and monitor the child's play, intervening only when there is a safety hazard or when the child requires some kind of assistance (Davies, 1997). Parents most likely believe that children should have the freedom to engage in activities of their choice, without unnecessary parental intervention.

Rough play

Maccoby (1990 according to Lindsey et al., 1997) identifies rough (physical) play as a key feature that differentiates boys' interactions from girls' interactions. In all studied societies, boys are more inclined to participate in rough play than girls (Carson et al., 1993 according to Paquette, 2004), which is also agreed by other authors (Hyun & Tyler, 1999; Lindsey et al., 1997). Thus, girls also participate in rough play (hitting, chasing, pushing, calling), but not as often as boys, especially in societies where boys and girls have a lot of freedom to play outside, in mixed gender groups, away from direct supervision and pressures to be neat, clean and controlled (Edwards et al., 2001).

The gender difference in rough play appears to emerge very early in child development, and judging by experiments in various animals including non-human primates, is due to changes in the central nervous system caused by prenatal testosterone (Ward & Stehm, 1991 according to Paquette, 2004).

Boys and girls enjoy but also benefit from rougher play (Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Boys who are more often involved in rougher play (social play involving physical contact, positive emotions, story sharing, vigorous activities such as jumping, swinging, catching and play fighting) are more popular than children who are less involved in such play (MacDonald 1987 according to Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Children who are very popular among their peers, their fathers show high levels of physical play and elicit high levels of positive feelings during playtime with preschool boys and girls (Paquette, 2004). During rough play, fathers encourage children to take initiative, explore, take risks, and overcome obstacles (Paquette, 2004; Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Paquette (2004) mentions several allegations according to which fathers spend more time and are more involved in rough type of physical play with sons than with daughters because, according to Thomas and French (1985), girls are considered more gentle.

Bokony and Patrick (2009) state differences between the rougher play of boys and girls:

- boys are more often involved in rougher play than girls, and it is carried out with much more energy

- rougher play among boys tends to be more hierarchical, active, intense, competitive and aggressive

than among girls

- rougher play among girls involves more talking than among boys. The script of such play in girls is typically based on care, protection and help, while the script in boys is mainly related to fighting and strength competition, and are based on current media (e.g. television, movies, video games).

Independent play of boys and girls

Children stick to stereotypical play even though adults try to create equality (Änggård, 2011). The play literature indicates recognizable patterns of children's gender preferences for children's toys and activities (Edwards et al., 2001) when playing in a gender-equal group and independently. There is a tendency for girls and boys to prefer gender-typical activities when playing alone (Goble et al., 2012). Preschool girls participate in female activities significantly more than male activities when playing alone, and boys participate in male activities significantly more than female activities when playing alone (Goble et al., 2012). When children play alone, they show a preference for gender-typical activities, but opportunities can be created to expose them to a wider range of activities, especially activities that are the opposite of stereotypes, when interacting with others (Goble et al., 2012).

Differences in father's and mother's play with child

Fathers' play is energetic (Bokony & Patrick, 2009) and at the same time they show a tendency to involve the child in interaction without objects that is physical and stimulating, as well as in unpredictable or idiosyncratic play, while mothers participate in teaching and talking with the child and primarily participate in visual play with subjects in order to attract and maintain their children's attention (Paquette, 2004). Mothers will be more involved in didactic (encouraging the child to engage in and understand the environment; providing opportunities for observing, learning and imitating behavior) and physical play when their child has greater self-control of emotions and behavior (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). Mothers participate more in pretend play with children than fathers do, and they encourage pretend play more in girls than in boys (Lindsey et al., 1997; Paquette, 2004), they primarily participate in cognitive play with objects, role playing (Paquette, 2004), are generally more cautious, use more speech than fathers (Paquette et al., 2003 according to Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Fathers tend to excite, surprise and momentarily destabilize the child during play (Bokony & Patrick, 2009), which can stimulate the development of the ability to decode other people's emotional states and clearly encode their own emotional signals (Carson et al., 1993 according to Paquette, 2004).

Table 2

Differences in the way and preferences of mothers and fathers during play with their child (Bokony & Patrick, 2009; Lindsey et al., 1997; Paquette, 2004; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013)

MOTHER	FATHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü They prefer and favor quiet activities ü They participate more in teaching and talking with the child ü They primarily participate in visual and cognitive play with objects ü They are more involved in didactic play with children (encouraging the child to get involved in the environment and to understand it; providing opportunities to observe, learn and imitate behavior) ü They encourage and participate more in pretend play with children ü They encourage role playing ü They use more speech / conversation during the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü They prefer energetic play ü They involve the child in physical interaction (physical play) without objects ü They involve the child in an unpredictable game ü They use less speech / conversation during the game

It should also be pointed out that not all studies have found differences in mother's and father's play with sons and daughters (Lindsey et al., 1997), there are certain contradictions. Most of the differences between mothers and fathers are not large: both parents encourage visual exploration, object manipulation, focus on relationships between objects, and cause and effect, with fathers doing this differently than mothers (Paquette, 2004). In general, fathers generally perform the same activities as mothers (e.g. reading, playing with toys, showing affection), but are more natural/physical, tease more, and talk less (Bokony & Patrick, 2009). While teasing, the father maintains a sense of safety and security and encourages problem solving and teaches the child to face unexpected situations (Bokony & Patrick, 2009).

The differences between fathers' and mothers' play with children are very small, which is actually reflected in the way individual parents approach a certain type of play.

Does the father or mother participate more in physical play with the child?

The literature states that the father's involvement in caring for the child is higher in the preschool period than in other periods of the child's life (Bretherton et al., 2005). One of the most interesting results of empirical research showed that fathers are proportionally more involved in physical play than in other aspects of parenting and child care, while the opposite was true for mothers (Paquette, 2004; Bokony & Patrick, 2009; Bretherton et al., 2005; Leavell et al., 2012; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). The father's physical play with the child contributes to the development of the child's connection with his father (Paquette, 2004). In addition to being involved, fathers are more likely to encourage physical play with infants, early and preschool children (Bretherton et al., 2005), which is confirmed by the mothers themselves, who mostly describe fathers as those who

involve the child in more active, physical play and/or activities and playing outdoors (Bretherton et al., 2005). Physical play is important to men because it stems from their childhood experiences (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005). Through physical play in the early years, fathers can encourage the value characteristics of masculinity and athleticism (Hill, 2005 according to Leavell et al., 2012) and therefore have more influence in shaping the child's involvement in sports (Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988 according to Brustad, 1993). Fathers have been found to have stronger gender stereotyped behaviors and attitudes and encourage more gender-typed play than mothers (Leavell et al., 2012).

Speaking about play, especially contact play in the home and play outside, fathers and mothers consider it a special aspect of the father-child bond (Bretherton et al., 2005). Therefore, it is quite possible that the father-child bond primarily develops through physical games (Paquette, 2004). As opposed to the "father-child activational relationship", which satisfies the child's need to be stimulated, to overcome limits, to learn to take chances in conditions where the child is confident that will be protected from potential danger, the mother-child attachment relationship (satisfaction of basic needs) enables the child to be calm (Paquette, 2004). The same author further states that the mother-child connection is primarily developed in the context of child care, while the activation connection can theoretically develop in different parental contexts.

There is also evidence to the contrary. Stevenson et al. (1988 according to Lindsey et al., 1997) found that there is no significant difference between the involvement of mothers and fathers in physical play with children of early and preschool age. Furthermore, Hinkley (2011) found that mothers are actually more involved in physical play with children. The research showed that one third of mothers (31.3%) and one quarter of fathers (24.8%) are physically active every day with their child. Mothers are significantly more active with their children (sons and daughters) of preschool age than fathers and at the same time provide them with significantly more emotional support because they are physically active than fathers do (Hinkley, 2011). According to Veitch, Robinson, Ball and Salmon (2006), the reason for this could be that mothers typically take primary care of the child and therefore can have a greater influence on the child's active free and physical play.

Although it was determined that there is no difference between the involvement of mothers and fathers in physical play, or that mothers participate in physical play more than fathers, there is a much larger body of research that found that fathers participate significantly more in physical play with their children than mothers. From the above, it could be stated that there are no differences in involvement, however, if we take into account the psychological and biological differences between men and women and look at everyday practice (and a larger number of studies), we can say with greater certainty that fathers still participate more in physical play with children. For fathers, this form of play is more natural and accessible. Lindsey et al. (1997) found that early and preschool children's physical play with their father and mother is positively related, which means that children who participate a lot in physical play with their fathers, comparatively, also participate a lot in physical play with their mothers. Furthermore, another study found that mothers were more engaged and involved in physical play with their child when their partners were more involved in physical play (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). The aforementioned two studies show that fathers are the ones who encourage not only children's physical play, but also encourage mothers to engage in physical play with their children.

Physical play of parents with daughters and sons

When fathers spend time with their sons, they are more involved in physical play and read less books than when they are with their daughters (Leavell et al., 2012). Fathers participate more in physical play with their preschool age sons than with daughters (Lindsey et al., 1997; Paquette, 2004), which is consistent with the dominant characteristics of fathers as teammates and boys as play partners (Leavell et al., 2012; Paquette, 2004). High levels of participation in physical play by fathers of boys may reflect early socialization processes that encourage "typically" male behaviors (Leavell et al., 2012). Research also shows that mothers are more engaged and involved in physical play with their sons (see Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013).

Children, especially boys, prefer physical play with either parent in any form, however, they seem to be more satisfied during physical play with their fathers (Ross and Taylor, 1989 according to Paquette, 2004). The above may be the reason why fathers play more physical games with their sons because there is a mutual "interest" in satisfying such a way of playing. It is expected that high-quality physical play between father and child will be indicative of more emotional/sensitive parental discipline and will facilitate the child's obedience, especially boys (Paquette, 2004). Research has established that the more fathers play with children up to 14 months of age, the child achieves higher cognitive and language results at 24 months of age (Bokony and Patrick, 2009), from which it follows that fathers' physical play with young children increases their cognitive and language development (Roggman et al., 2002 according to Bokony and Patrick, 2009). In addition, parent-child physical play is associated with the child's motor development (Paquette, 2004).

Gaining new experiences during the game (father vs mother)

Father and child jointly share pleasure in excitement and curiosity that leads their child to new experiences and acquisition of new skills (Bretherton et al., 2005). Fathers seem to prefer exciting activities for children, while mothers favor quiet activities, causing infants to respond to fathers with more excitement than to mothers because fathers develop an enhanced, exciting, and playful attachment to them (Yogman, 1994 according to Paquette, 2004). For a woman, it is important to create good relationships, while men are concentrated on what they do with the child and how the children do it (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005).

Exploring and trying new skills (e.g. climbing rocks, jumping from tall structures, using sharp tools) is not always without risk even in the presence of parents (Bretherton et al., 2005). As partners in play, fathers enjoy one-on-one interaction and encourage the child's curiosity, but serve as protectors (Bretherton et al., 2005). When a preschool child wants to try potentially risky activities, fathers combine their protective role with allowing or encouraging the child to participate in attempts to master them (Bretherton et al., 2005). They actually adjust their protective and encouraging behavior to the child's level of boldness and timidity (Bretherton et al., 2005). Fathers act as "risk" catalysts, encouraging the child to take the initiative in unfamiliar situations, to explore, take risks, overcome obstacles (Paquette, 2004) and to exceed their physical limits - run faster, climb higher, jump further (Bokony and Patrick, 2009). In this way, fathers provide children

with new experiences, companionship, knowledge and advice during these experiences (Hewlett, 1992 according to Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). With a competent father, this can lead to independence, self-reliance and self-control in the child (National Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center, 2004 according to Bokony & Patrick, 2009). Fathers' sensitivity when engaging in challenging play with their 2-year-olds may predict child self-confidence and trust in others during adolescence (Bretherton et al., 2005).

According to Iveković (2017a), compared to mothers (34% vs 23%), fathers would significantly encourage children aged 0-4 years to do risky things because they think that life is less dangerous. Bretherton et al. (2005) state that many fathers would try to be as permissive/adaptable as possible when their preschool child wanted to overcome a new challenge, beyond what they consider an unnecessary risk. The above are fathers' attitudes towards risk and risky situations in general, at the level of theory. When these attitudes are "tested" in practice, i.e. in concrete life situations, disagreements in attitudes and possible concrete actions of fathers can be observed. Therefore, if the child were to engage in a risky situation, the majority of fathers (45%; of 15 boys and 7 girls) would explain why the activity is dangerous (risky) and would forbid it (Bretherton et al., 2005). The reason for this is that few fathers have learned to trust their child's judgments ("she is aware of her abilities") (Bretherton et al., 2005: 244). If it was just a bump, bruise or slight fall, about one-third of the 22 fathers said they let their child try the activity; the remaining second third would compromise by suggesting a similar activity that would be slightly less risky (e.g. asking a child to jump from the sixth step of the stairs rather than the eighth, to wear a helmet while performing bicycle tricks, or to give instructions while standing ready to intervene) (Bretherton et al., 2005). In addition, Iveković (2017a) determined that fathers, compared to mothers of children aged 0-4 years, will be less likely to enable children to perform certain motor activities (e.g. jumping from a step or height of 50 cm, climbing on a chair, descending from beds, climbing and going down the slide) and certain situations in the game. In the same research, out of 33 particles from the survey, fathers had a more favorable attitude on 12 particles, and mothers on 21 particles, which turned out to be a statistically significant difference (Iveković, 2017b). The results of the previous research show that mothers would allow children 0-4 years of age a certain type of play and certain physical activities more than fathers.

Conclusion

Understanding the differences in the way and choice of play of children of different genders of early and preschool age, as well as understanding the patterns of engagement of mothers and fathers around children, is important for encouraging the positive involvement of parents in playing with the child and in all other aspects of raising the child. Every game with a child is a good game, if in those moments the parent dedicates himself completely - without cell phones and TV - only to his child. Games do not always have to be structured in nature, but can also be spontaneous, so that the child's initiative is followed, which the parent builds on with their own ideas. In those moments, the emotional connection of the child with the parent occurs, which opens the door for learning and teaching the child. It is important that both parents play with their child at home and outside in the open because, as can be seen from the aforementioned research, each parent brings their own way of playing that will enrich the child's experience and thus affect different aspects of

the child's development (emotional, social, motor and cognitive). If fathers spend more time participating in play and mothers in nurturing, children receive strong messages about the roles of men and women in the family community. When both parents participate in the game with the child, then the child improves and builds on his ideas in the game even more because he receives a different stimulus from each parent. Then the game stops being stereotypical and becomes playfully creative. Therefore, when both parents are engaged in playing with the child, but also in other aspects of the child's upbringing, then the child does not create stereotypical frameworks that can be a limiting factor in his involvement in his own family later in life.

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**Kako spol djeteta i spol roditelja utječe na igru i
fizičku aktivnost djece rane i predškolske dobi**

Sažetak

Djevojčice i dječaci se ne razlikuju samo fizički, psihološki i sociološki nego i u načinu i pristupu pojedinoj vrsti igre. U radu su navedena istraživanja koja su se odnosila na igru i fizičku aktivnost djece rane i predškolske dobi. U radu se navode razlike između dječaka i djevojčica tijekom različitih vrsta i mjesta za igru te kako spol roditelja utječe na igru i fizičku aktivnost djece rane i predškolske dobi.

Istraživanja su pokazala da između dječaka i djevojčica postoje određene razlike u načinu igre, izboru igra, prema odabiru aktivnosti, lokaliteta, rekvizita i sprava. Igra dječaka i djevojčica na otvorenom ima određenih sličnosti i razlika. Istraživanja upućuju na to da su dječaci i djevojčice podjednako fizički aktivni kada provode igru vani na otvorenom. Gruba igra je karakteristična za dječake, ali se u takav oblik igre uključuju i djevojčice. Gruba igra djevojčica se razlikuje od grube igre dječaka. Dječaci će biti fizički aktivniji i više će vremena provoditi u igri kada imaju rekvizite.

Kao što se razlikuje način provođenja igre dječaka i djevojčica istraživanja pokazuju da se razlikuje način i pristup igri s djetetom između oca i majke. Očevi će možda malo više poticati fizičku igru te će u nju više uključivati djecu, dok će majke preferirati mirnije igre i aktivnosti. Pojedina istraživanja su pokazala da očevi u odnosu na majke više sudjeluju u fizičkoj igri s djecom, dok su druga pokazala da oba roditelja sudjeluju podjednako ili čak da majke sudjeluju više u odnosu na očeve. Uzevši u obzir različito dobivene rezultate istraživanja o uključenosti roditelja u fizičku igru djece to bi nas moglo usmjeriti prema možda općem zaključku da zapravo razlike i ne postoji. Međutim, razmišljajući o svakodnevnim situacijama moglo bi se ipak ustvrditi da očevi više sudjeluju u fizičkoj igri s djecom. Istraživanja pokazuju da fizička igra roditelja s djetetom može potaknuti i unaprijediti djetetov kognitivni, jezični i motorički razvoj.

Uzevši u obzir istraživanja koja su navedena u ovom radu može se reći da majka i otac općenito u današnje vrijeme provode gotovo iste igre s djecom samo je pitanje na koji način pristupaju samoj igri.

Različita istraživanja upućuju na zaključak da će očevi mnogo više poticati kod djece spolno stereotipnu igru nego majke te da su očevi skloniji riziku i izvođenju rizičnih aktivnosti, ali stvarna primjena tih stavova u svakodnevnim životnim situacijama je možda upitna. Očevi smatraju da bi se djeca trebala upuštati u rizične situacija i na taj način stjecati određena iskustva, ali im je to ipak preopasno da se stvarno realizira u realnim situacijama igre.

Oba roditelja bi se trebala podjednako uključiti u sve aspekte brige i odgoja djeteta što se odnosi i na područje igre. Svaki roditelj ima drugačiji pristup igri i način kako će ju provoditi s djetetom što pridonosi obogaćivanju djetetovih emocionalnih i socijalnih spoznaja te razvoju motoričkih i kognitivnih vještina i sposobnosti.

Ključne riječi

fizička aktivnost; igra; razlike dječaka i djevojčica, razlike očeva i majki

Revizija #2

Stvoreno 6 svibnja 2025 20:19:06 od Marijana Kardum

Ažurirano 6 svibnja 2025 20:46:37 od Marijana Kardum