Educia Journal

ISSN: (2988-019X)
Vol. 3 No. 1, 2025
Page: 1-14

The Role of Play Based Learning in Early Childhood Development

Riska Wulandari Sitorus[1], Khairi Permana Siregar[1], Ratih Irma Sari[1]

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

*Corresponding Author: Riska Wulandari Sitorus

Email: wulandaripanhe@gmail.com

Article Info

Article History:

Received December 27, 2024
Revised January 30, 2025
Accepted: April 9, 2025

Keywords:

Play-Based Learning, Early Childhood Development, Cognitive Growth, Social-Emotional Skills, Implementation Challenges.

Abstract

This study investigates how play-based learning activities improve the cognitive and social along with emotional and physical development of early childhood students. The research design uses both interviews with teachers and parents as well as direct observation to explore how play-based learning activities help develop every aspect of development. The research indicates that through play children become better at learning new information while also developing creativity skills and critical thinking abilities as well as social and emotional competencies through empathy and emotional control and they are able to learn physically through better motor skills. The research study delivers practical solutions for implementing play in scheduled curriculum alongside key implementation strategies for resolving related problems. The existing research gap enables this study to provide complete knowledge about effective methods to implement play-based learning within early childhood education for children's comprehensive development. Finding in this investigation demonstrate the necessity to combine developmental progress with academic achievements while following present learning system measurements of achievement.

Introduction

Childhood development refers to the early child development period which is a very sensitive since it undergoes a lot of development in cognitive, emotional, social as well as physical development. This is the age when most children build up knowledge and skills which are the basis for their future learning and behaviours. Hence, play based learning has been identified as a substantial approach towards learning which is being appreciated enormously for its social and personal effect in the early years. Unlike what people perceive play as, especially for children, it is more than just fun, but a very important tool, which fosters learning. In play, children are able to get acquainted with their surroundings, solve problems, learn to interact to other children, and even express their feelings, which is equally beneficial for their growth and wellbeing (López & Jaen, 2020).

Play based learning stems from the fact that several theorists suggest that learning through play facilitates young children's cognitive, social and emotional development. And that is true for the views of such educational theoreticians as Jean Soules (2021), who focused on play as a key method. The theorist, Goldman (2020) proposed that play is one of the ways children develop knowledge and or gaining an understanding of reality. Play helps the children to perform activities that involves their neurons like remembering, paying attention, and solving problems (Soules, 2021). Another critic of 'play' was Bruya & Tang (2021) who said that the

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

main way through which children learn is through play as this provides the child an opportunity to learn through interaction and therefore developed the social and emotional aspects of the child.

According to the research that has been conducted, play-based learning can improve students'' cognitive development in early childhood. pointed out that children who engage in play-based activities have enhanced creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities than other children who do not take part in play-related activities Heang et al. (2021). Play learning fosters children in exploring various situations, activities, and approaches, and thus enhances the children's thinking abilities and flexibility (Vidal et al., 2021). In addition, play helps children in development of language as they use words to explain or recount events to peers or adults engaged in play activities so as to improve their understanding and expression as found by Moedt & Holmes (2020).

Besides, cognitive aspect play is an important means of learning social-emotional development as well. Play encompasses teaching a child on how to relate with other kids, how to share, bargain and also move to the next level of solving conflict which are major components of the social reciprocity (Arnott, 2020). It enables children to give out their feeling, pretend, as well as understand the emotions of other people (Chatzipanteli & Adamakis, 2022). in make-believe and dramatic play in which young children create a storyline, they learn to value upper voice perspective, count to 10 and manage their anger (Welsh et al., 2022). Worksop learning has also been highlighted to have a positive impact on the social development and mental health of the child as compared to traditional rigid learning style where learning is focused mainly on Scholastic achievements (Killaspy et al., 2022).

Another important aspect where play-based learning has a lot of influence is the physical development. Socio-play activities and play activities and any form of play especially the vigorous play helps in the development of fine motor skills and gross motor skills (Stephen et al., 2020). in the course of playing and during learning their fundamental motor skills, children engage in exercise activities such as running, jumping, and climbing which builds their strength, coordination, and balance espoused by Parthiban et al. (2021). Gross motor skills, as well as more precise graphics and manipulations of objects by hands during the process of drawing, playing with blocks and other form of manipulating small objects (Zeng et al., 2021). Besides, play-based learning enhances the physical health because it motivates children to move and engage in the physical way of living which is critical in counteracting obesity and other health complications among young children (Marks, 2020).

Hence, play-based learning is not only appreciated in the academia but also in policies and practices in educational systems across the globe. Play based learning is accepted in many countries as an essential component of early childhood education curriculum since it enhances overall development of the children (Saracho, 2020). The curriculum implementation process in early year's foundation stage (EYFS) in United Kingdom, play is highlighted as a means through which children can learn and develop in different domains. Likewise, in Canada the play- based learning is one of the core elements of early learning and knowledge curriculums where education programs aim at giving children purposeful and meaningful play opportunities.

However, despite there being lots of emphasis put on the use of play based learning, there are challenges arising from its use. The major emerging concern is the rising tendency that obscures the purposes of early learning to cater for the test score and school readiness standards (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). As such, pre-school children are forced to play less and engage

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

in more structured, teacher directed activities which are contrary to effective learning through play (Mohan et al., 2022). Also, it is said that there should be more focused efforts on professional development, and related training programs for early childhood educators so as to help them mainstream play learning into classroom practice. Therefore, it is important that educators are empowered with the knowledge and skills regarding design and implementation of play environments and identification of learning possibilities in the play (Luckin et al., 2022; Boyadjieva & Ilieva, 2021).

However, culture can come up as a mediator to the type of PBL given and how it is embraced. There are some cultures where play in not valued and considered as relevant for learning and in some children may feel that formal learning and academic modes of study are preferable to play (Fleer, 2020). Knowledge of these cultural ideas may be useful in supporting play-based learning in different educational settings and to ensure that this is done in a culturally sensitive manner.

Method

This study used a qualitative method of research and adopted phenomenology and focused on play-bases learning in early childhood development. The reason for selecting the phenomenological approach is connected with the purpose of exploring the educators' as well as parents' and children's experiences and perceptions concerning play-based learning. Hence, this approach facilitated investigation of the particular experience of participants and enriched the understanding of how play-based learning was viewed and practiced.

To this effect, the study adopted purposive sampling technique whereby potential participants considered most likely to offer reliable and meaningful information were identified for the study. The participants comprised of early childhood educators who were 15 of them and the parents were 10 of them, selected from different early childhood education centers within the region and with children aged between 3 to 6 years. Participants were purposefully chosen as educators already involved in the process of incorporating play-based learning in their classes. Five parents were selected purposely to provide insights into their children's experiences on play-based learning at home and at school. The real participation of the researcher involved observing 25 children but they were not asked questions, so as to give an insight of play-based learning in practice.

Data was gathered for a duration of three months and all assessment procedures were commenced by open ended questions aimed at establishing finalized perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon under study. The main approach of getting primary data was through conducting first face-to-face and secondly, telephone interviews with open-ended questionnaires, non-participant observations, and analysis of documents.

Semi structured interviews were done to the 15 educators and 10 parents. The interviews were structured with the aim of identifying participant's opinion, practice and attitude towards play based learning. All the interviews were conducted in a private setting and lasted for about 45 to 60 minutes and could be either face to face or through online means depending on what the participants preferred. The interviews were conducted with the participant's permission and recorded in an audio format with participants' permission and later transcribed word for word.

Information on how the educators were implementing play-based learning was collected through observations conducted in the participating teachers' classrooms. The researcher sat in 10 classroom sessions that included 60 min of play, noting the types of play activities and children's and educators' interactions and the class climate. The observations were done to

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

record Field notes since the study focused on identifying descriptions of the play-based activities and children's involvement in the activities. Textual analyses of existing lesson plans, curricular frameworks, and policy documents governing Early Childhood Education were conducted to capture formal curriculum requirements associated with play-based learning. This proved to be useful in providing another source of information other than interviews and observations thus increasing validity of information collected.

In the process of data analysis, thematic analysis was followed since it enables assessment of patterns or themes as present in the data. The reason for employing thematic analysis was because it fits the complexity of working with qualitative data and allows to gain understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

The researcher first of all assigned, reviewed and reread all the interview transcripts, the notes that the researcher took during observation and the documents. During this process general impressions and possible topics were designed. Therefore, the data were systematically analyzed by following the procedures of inductive as well as deductive analysis. Inductive coding made it easier for themes to uncover themselves out of data and deductive coding on the other hand was done based on the research objectives and prior literature. Analysing of codes entailed placing codes against certain portions of the data which were of interest in play-based learning. Once data was coded, the researcher then proceed to work on creating broader themes out of related codes. This entailed purifying and sorting the codes into themes that encompass core facets of the participants' experience with play-based learning. Through recoding all the identified themes were reflected in reference to the coded data and the whole frame of the data to confirm their comprehensiveness regarding the participants' experiences. It also consisted in achieving the differences, internal consistency, and sense of the themes suggested by the analysis of the results. Once the themes were identified, the themes were better described and given specific names that reflected the concept of the themes. During this stage, the researcher wrote comprehensive descriptions of every theme identified in the interview and used supporting quotations and observed examples from documents as well as the teaching contexts.

Result and Discussion

Social and emotional development in early childhood, particularly in years of play age, is significantly down through play activities since, through these, the children are given an opportunity to practice social relations, modulate their emotions, and learn the virtue of empathy. This research also aims at revealing how play activities contribute to the development of the aforementioned regions; teachers' and parents' interviews indicate that children's social skills, emotions, and the capacity to form close relationships are developed both during organised and free play. The results of the study highlight the importance of play in the overall development of the child particularly in the area of social and emotional development.

Cognitive Development

It was a comprehensive investigation of the part that play performs in the learning process of young children especially in terms of their cognitive development. The survey, conducted through interviewing the educators and parents and observing the learning in classroom through play approaches established that play learning contributes to different facets on cognitive development including language comprehension, mathematical ability, critical thinking and flexibility. The following aspects explain these features using detailed results from the interviews.

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

Free flowing activities are also found to contribute highly to the learning of language by affording children the chance to use received languages meaningfully. Interviews with educators showed that play activities are known to encompass a lot of talk in which children use and build language.

> *"Pretend play and storytelling that are participated into to by children will enforce understanding of new words and grammatical structures – for instance, when children are miming doctors or teachers, they will use certain phrases that may not ordinarily be used in their conversations."*

This type of play not only involves new word learning but also play the role of using the New learned words appropriately. The use of play based approaches was also beneficial to parents as they noted that their children developed good language skills.

> *"During our daily play time at home I have also observed that my child uses more elaborate words and even come up with intelligent questions for instance when playing with animal toys, instead of just naming the toy she forms a whole story out of it."*

The following quote reaffirms the fact that play promotes children's language learning in terms of communication skills since they are made to use language functionally and in numerous ways. Some of the ways that play based learning helps to enhance mathematical reasoning is that young children are given games and objects that they have to sort, count, or measure. Some of the things that teachers noticed is that children incorporate math in their activities in one way or another.

> *"For example, when children are playing with building blocks, they tend to count the number of blocks they have used, use blocks and make triangle, rectangle and other shapes, and use big or big and small blocks or same color blocks, etc., That is how they learn mathematical concepts with fun."*

This finding emphasise the idea on how through meaningful activity of play, children are able to learn and apply mathematical concepts. This finding is also supported by a parent's perception of the role of a parent during such times. Another parent noted:

> *"When playing, my child discusses such things as the shape and size of his toys, and he likes counting and tries to solve some problems like how many blocks he needs to build a specific construction."*

This quote shows how children use play activities in order to learn mathematical skills in a real-life scenario. Through play activities, children develop their problem-solving skills since they are placed in a context where they have to make decisions on what to do business-stop. Teachers and other care givers also noted that play may reveal problem solving skills in the children.

> *"When children are role-playing to perform a pretend play as a restaurant, they have to negotiate their individual roles and roles in conflicts, as well as determine decisions regarding the dishes and services to offer to customers, decisions that involved them solving problems critically."*

This insight shows how play-based learning ensures that the child is able to be given a platform on which he or she can be able to work out his or her thinking skills. Other areas identified by parents include development in problem solving skills in children.

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

> *"When my child play with the blocks, he tends to create something, test it and then modify it to suit his intentions for the next creation if it collapses, he tries to find out why and how to correct it."*

This quote is quite relevant because part of problem-solving involves the children making mistakes and experimenting through play-based learning. Another area of learning that is positively affected by play based learning is cognitive flexibility, that concerns one's ability to change ones thinking process depending on the newly obtained information. Parents and teachers also pointed out that play activities are most frequently solution-focused and that children have to switch views. One educator stated:

> *"For example, in a group play, the children might be, given an activity to perform, but as they work in groups and experience different conditions, they have to modify their way of thinking in order to fit the new conditions, hence flexibility."*

This observation demonstrates vygtos's theory that play-based learning allows children to think more flexibly since the context around them is constantly changing. Parents were also able to confirm their children's cognitive flexibility based on the play scenarios that they performed.

> *"I can recall my child leaving one form of play such as from block to game to board game where she easily changes from one play pattern to another and this is an indication of cognitive flexibility."*

This quote goes ahead to show how play-based learning promotes the working memory that is involved with switching between different activities and modes of thinking.

Social and Emotional Development

The study was helpful in the ways it helped to explain the potential of play based learning in the promotion of social emotional development in early childhood. All the above-mentioned activities are gotten from play, so children get the chances to learn and so they develop good social relation, control their emotions, and have good relation with others. Interviews with educators and parents as well as observation give an insight into how play-based learning improves those areas of learning (a).

Basically, the child is able to get many opportunities to interact with other children during the play which is so vital in enhancing interpersonal communication. Teachers observe several aspects of learner interactivity during play and some of them included; sharing, cooperation, compromise.

> *"According to the types of play, the group plays involve children using or playing in a similar way for the accomplishment of a planned purpose whether dramatic or otherwise depending on the intent such as a drama sale business where the kids are supposed to act as sellers and buyers."*

Such observation depicts how the structured as well as the unstructured play activities assist a number of social competencies through actual play with mates. Parent also recognized other social benefits that accrue to the child from play based learning.

> *"Through play time my child has been able to socialize with friends and has become more confident and cooperative taking turns and even handling anger issues constructively this I have seen from how he handles situations at home including school."*

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

This quote underscores how play-based activities enable children to practice and refine their social skills, leading to improved interactions both within and outside the play context. Play-based learning also plays a crucial role in emotional development by helping children learn to manage and express their emotions. During play, children often encounter situations that evoke various emotions, such as frustration, excitement, or disappointment. Educators reported that play provides a safe space for children to experience and process these emotions.

> *"When children face challenges during play, such as a toy not working as expected, they have the opportunity to practice emotional regulation. They learn to cope with frustration and find alternative solutions, which helps them manage their emotions more effectively."*

This observation highlights how play-based learning allows children to navigate and regulate their emotions in a supportive environment. Parents also observed improvements in their children's emotional regulation as a result of play-based learning.

> *"Playtime has been a great way for my child to learn about and express his emotions. For instance, when he gets upset during a game, he's been learning to calm down and talk about his feelings instead of just reacting."*

This quote reflects how play-based activities provide children with opportunities to practice emotional expression and regulation, contributing to their overall emotional development. Play-based learning enhances children's ability to form and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. Through collaborative play, children learn to understand and empathize with others, which strengthens their ability to build meaningful relationships. Educators observed that play activities often require children to work together and support one another, fostering empathy and cooperation.

> *"In the cooperative play, children understand the emotional state of the other members and respect their need They may console a mate when the mate misses the game or cheer when the group gets a goal among other aspects leading to the establishment of positive social relationship."*

These findings support play-based learning which is used to foster empathy, and pro-social skills in peer interactions. Play-based learning was also seen by parents to help their children in terms of interpersonal skills with other children.

> *"At one time, my child has parted with play with other children more sensitive to the feeling and needs of others, supportive and friendly with friends and family members."*

This quote exemplifies that playful activities on the part of the child enhance the empathy, or understanding and experiencing of and concern for others which is typical of positive social relationships thus confirming the role of play in enhancement of positive relationship.

Physical Development

Physical development is one of the major domains of development that is experienced in the early childhood and play allows children to develop their physical skills and physical wellbeing. In playing both outside and inside, ones using role play, or manipulation tasks Children use movements and actions that are capable to develop their F & G motor and their wellbeing physically. This section explicates the effects of play based learning in physical development by referring to interviews from educators and parents and observation of children at play. Gross motor skills that are evident in running, jumping or even climbing are some of

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

the many areas where play-based learning is beneficial. Teachers commented, graduating from regular active play pre-school children exhibited splendid physical development.

> *"If children are encouraged to run and play a tag or do some obstacle courses, then it produces a child with better posture, balance, coordination, and strength not only enhancing their physical strength but also boosting their morale."*

Hence this insight is an eye opener showing how active play not only sharpens physical abilities, but also the child's egos as they gain mastery over new action plans. The parents also saw value in play-based learning especially in the physical development of their children.

> *"If I compare my child with what he used to be before, especially in the aspects of physical challenges like climbing a jungle gym or riding bicycles, I have noticed a lot of improvement as a result of increased outdoor playtime."*

This observation confirms the need for children to engage in outdoor activities with an aim of airing, exercising and developing their gross motor skills. Besides bipolar gross motor skills, play implements contribute toward the development of fine motor competencies, which are the skills that entail delicate movements of the muscles, especially of hands/ fingers. Fine motor skills are important in tasks such as grasping a pencil with which one writes, fastening buttons that are on a piece of clothing and holding utensils such as a spoon. The officials found out that manipulative play in particular use of blocks, drawing and use of small objects improves fine motor control most.

> *"Performing such tasks as threading beads or using playdough may force the kid to make very delicate movements with hands, and constant practice will develop fine motor skills that the kid will need to write.*

This quote explains how learning through play forms a basis wherein a child would get to hone his or her fine motor skill while elevating the fun aspect. Some of the positive outcomes as perceived by the parents included; gains in fine motor skills that were attributed to play based learning activities.

> *"With such decisive development of hands-invested performance, such as puzzle solving and drawing, at home, the child and I appreciate that my child is getting better in holding a pencil and doing things like fastening buttons on her clothes, which are indicative of growth in totality."*

This rejoinder underscores the functional values which play activities have when it comes to teaching young kids about everyday practices given that the exercises enhance the kids' dexterity of their hands. Another benefit of play-based learning is about the improvement of children's physical well-being because they learn to perform tasks that help them build strength and stamina as well as get flexible. Teachers stressed that children should play every day, and sedentiveness should not be encouraged during the day.

> *"The important thing to note is that it is important for kids to engage in physical activities and this does not just help reduce energy but also make good habits that can be followed for a lifetime We have noted that children who engage in active play have better endurance and fitter bodies."*

This insight is particularly important for appreciating the value of play learning for Long Term Physical Health and Wellbeing. Parents were also in agreement on this remark stating that their children have benefited from physical play in terms of fitness. A parent shared:

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

> *"I have noticed my child becoming more energetic and fonder of exercise, sports or just merely playing with friends, it has been very good and helpful in making him fit and healthy because he has developed enthusiasm on these types of activities."*

quote also reinforce play based learning as a vehicle which can make a child to develop love for exercises in future since it is vital in health.

Perceptions and Implementation

It is important to note that for play-based learning to provide fruitful results in the development of learners, the education providers, being the teachers, and the learners' care givers, being the parents, must embrace and practice it in the right manner. This section analyses the attitude of both groups to play based learning as well as how it is incorporated in learning institutions. Knowledge retrieved from interview correlates to the faith in purpose and wisdom of play-baced learning that is coupled with the difficulties and solutions. The educators' attitudes towards play are mostly positive since they acknowledge play as crucial in the learning process of the young children. Some of them argue that play is fun and extremely essential in the development of the child, and thus they must engage in it.

Based on the main ideas of the play activities, play-based learning facilitates children's explorations and interpretations of the actual world in purposeful ways to help children learn C SSEP and P it incorporates all categories by making learning fun and enjoyable. This sentiment sums up what many educators already know that is play is multi-dimensional when it comes to learning.

> *"It is very common to hear about play-based learning however there is always a tendency to meet the set academic achievement standards and this at times reduces the amount of time engaged in play-based learning."*

This particular quote showcases an ongoing struggle of educators of balancing Somali children's play and academic needs and concerns. Both the teachers and parents likewise opined agreement in favor of the importance of play as a part of the child development process while reinforcing the value of play based education. Some of the parents explained how play was important in developing creativity, solving problems and even social skills. A parent shared:

I strongly agree with play-based learning: It helps my child learn at her own pace and experiment things on her own through play and imagination which in my opinion is very important as well as academics. This perspective puts into focus, appreciation that parents have for the other benefits of play based learning apart from the achievement. However, a few parents conveyed drawbacks about play- based learning particularly on the policies of education and learning.

> *"I understand that learning through playing is beneficial, but I sometimes get apprehensive about my child not being equipped enough when it comes to the next academic levels of learning; where the concern is perhaps on the basics like reading and math".*

This comment may be familiar to most parents who are worried that play-based learning may be a hinderance to readiness rather than helpful. How play is incorporated in learning may differ with the type of learning environment a child finds themselves in and the types of equipment that are available. Teachers explained the different approaches they take to explain how they are able to integrate play into the curriculum.

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

> *"It adds that play is introduced into everyday schedule in form of learning centres such as mathematics centre that includes puzzles or a literacy centre that contains books that children can read interactively in the process of which they are learning while at the same time developing other skills."*

This approach ensures that the educators are in a joint genetic acquisition which plays between the children at the same time making sure the children reap the benefits of play and educational goals. The second of these is to engage in physical and motor activities including outdoor play in enhancing the development of the child.

> *"Outdoor activities are also part of the children's daily routine because they have a positive impact on the children's physical and mental development as well as their creativity since they learn how to solve problems on their own.*

This strategy stresses the need to offer play activities that will be of assistance in different-sector development. Parents are also involved in the enactment of play based learning at home. Numerous parents said they helped establish play-embedded settings in homes that foster children learning.

> *"In our home environment, we have the specially equipped playground and play area with toys and stimulating and hoping material Basically, we give children some time playing outdoors and also spending time with the family doing various activities which can also be educative."*

This example shows how parent bring up their children by providing opportunity for the child to play and learn. In this study, play based learning was found to have powerful impact in the development cognitive skills, a fact that has been supported earlier studies. The qualitative findings of this study, therefore, offer the researcher a valid understanding of how play-based endeavours make valuable contributions to cognitive gains. For instance, the changes noted in children's problem solving, creativity and critical thinking often elicited by educators and parents. This finding supports prior research noting that play-based learning supports cognitive elasticity and the executive effectiveness (Foscan et al., 2024).

Parker et al. (2022) undertaking have also pointed that play fosters cognitive development in children through promotion of exploration and manipulation. The current study extends from this by showing the exact means via which different educators and parents associate play with enhancement of cognition. For example, while observing children during pretend play it was observed that they scored highly on number task, attention and problem-solving skills, which supports the studies done by Byrne et al. (2023), which show the benefits of imaginative play. However, taking into consideration what was said above, this research provides a broader perspective more accurately reflecting the results of quantitative research that, most of the time, assesses cognitive outcomes separately from other domains, unlike the present investigation that is based on both the quantity and quality of observed play-based learning practices and how they shape cognitive outcomes in daily practice.

On social and emotional development, the study shows that play learning enhances the child's control of emotions and cooperation and empathy. These findings support Jungeet al. (2020) which presents play as having effect on regulation of emotions and social competence. Nevertheless, this study expands the previous research comparing the deficits of play-based learning in real-life contexts as well as the practical difficulties educators face in incorporating this strategy in learning environments experiencing high pressure in terms of academics. Another key issue and limitation are the conflict between the foundation Phase trend of mostly

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

child-centered learning through play while ensuring that results do not deviate too much from the national curriculum: The following concern voiced by an educator in the study sums up this matter: This is in line with the study by Amerstorfer (2021) done among the students where they also raised concerns over the relationship between, Academic demands and play.

The present study contributes to existing research by providing respondents' information about how play contributes to learners' emotional and social development. Children skills of tempering and articulation during play activities was noted to foster their skills of self-regulation and interaction with others in line with Whedon et al. (2021) and other authors who argue that play fosters Social and emotional development (Blewitt et al., 2021). Compared to previous studies that maybe more inclined on the theoretical aspect, this qualitative approach presents a deeper insight in understanding how on play-based learning brought a positive impact to the emotional and social development of children.

The study was able to support the findings of earlier authors about the effectiveness of play based learning in improving the gross and fine motor skills of children which tallied with the findings of Bolger et al. (2021). These examples show how climbing, running and handling develop the child respectively, supporting the conclusions drawn with regard to physical play and motor skill. Some of the teachers in this study reported increased strength and coordination of children's movements through active play to the extent supported by Angulo et al. (2020) call for the use of physical activities to foster motor control.

The qualitative methodology that embraces point of view of both educators and parents shed the new light in understanding how physical play is appreciated and enforced in the educational context. Whereas other papers have reported lifetime consequences of physical development, this work focuses on how teachers and parents build physical activities into the day. This approach will collectively fill literature gap by presenting extensive examination of how physical play is incorporated into early childhood education practices and its effect on the children health and physical development.

This study's discussion of perceptions and implmentation strategies in play-based learning fills important gaps in the literature. While earlier literature like the one documented by Guan et al. (2024) has theorized on the advantages of play based learning, this paper gives a road-map of its application, complimenting on its difficulty and how to overcome it. Concerns voiced by educators of troubling total elimination of play in favor of emphasizing academic learning and concerns expressed by the parents about their children's readiness for scholastic learning provide more actual approach to play-based learning implementation (Carolan et al., 2021).

The study discovers that establishes the fact that both educators and parents find play bases important, but they experience barriers in playing. This is in concordance with the findings by Taylor & Boyer (2020) where there were similar difficulties in incorporating play into learners' lessons. To that end, this study has filled the gap in the literature by describing these challenges and underscoring ways of addressing them so that play-based learning may be implemented and sustained as a practice in early childhood education. This also underlines the importance of the support structures that may help educators to sustain the balance between play and academic related chores in a given day, showcasing a gap that has not been discussed well in the current literature.

Conclusion

The study reconfirms the essential role of play in developing appropriate developmental skills for young children. Abstract data from parents and educators help identify unique diversity in

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

how children develop cognitively and socially and emotionally together with physically when teachers utilize play-based learning approaches that theoretical frameworks cannot capture fully. The study demonstrates that play fulfills its educational potential during development yet struggles with implementation based on educational standards that target academic competence. This investigation combines essential information with different case studies and multiple views and functions as a summons for implementing a method that efficiently connects child development and academic expectations. The investigation provides essential recommendations about play-based learning to educators and parents as well as policymakers who want to enhance early childhood education training.

Refrences

Almulla, M. A. (2020). The effectiveness of the project-based learning (PBL) approach as a way to engage students in learning. *Sage Open*, *10*(3), 2158244020938702. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020938702

Amerstorfer, C. M., & Freiin von Münster-Kistner, C. (2021). Student perceptions of academic engagement and student-teacher relationships in problem-based learning. *Frontiers in psychology*, *12*, 713057. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057

Angulo, J., El Assar, M., Álvarez-Bustos, A., & Rodríguez-Mañas, L. (2020). Physical activity and exercise: Strategies to manage frailty. *Redox biology*, *35*, 101513. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.redox.2020.101513

Arnott, L. (2020). Children's negotiation tactics and socio-emotional self-regulation in child-led play experiences: the influence of the preschool pedagogic culture. In *Young Children's Emotional Experiences* (pp. 77-91). Routledge.

Bendini, M., & Devercelli, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Quality early learning: nurturing children's potential*. World Bank Publications.

Blewitt, C., O'connor, A., Morris, H., Nolan, A., Mousa, A., Green, R., ... & Skouteris, H. (2021). "It's embedded in what we do for every child": a qualitative exploration of early childhood educators' perspectives on supporting Children's social and emotional learning. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(4), 1530. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041530

Bolger, L. E., Bolger, L. A., O'Neill, C., Coughlan, E., O'Brien, W., Lacey, S., ... & Bardid, F. (2021). Global levels of fundamental motor skills in children: A systematic review. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *39*(7), 717-753. https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2020.1841405

Boyadjieva, P., & Ilieva-Trichkova, P. (2021). *Adult education as empowerment*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67136-5_4

Bruya, B., & Tang, Y. Y. (2021). Fluid attention in education: conceptual and neurobiological framework. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 704443. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.704443

Byrne, E. M., Jensen, H., Thomsen, B. S., & Ramchandani, P. G. (2023). Educational interventions involving physical manipulatives for improving children's learning and development: A scoping review. *Review of Education*, *11*(2), e3400. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3400

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

Carolan, P. L., McIsaac, J. L. D., Richard, B., Turner, J., & McLean, C. (2021). Families' experiences of a universal play-based early childhood program in Nova Scotia: Implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *35*(4), 550-566. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2020.1773588

Chatzipanteli, A., & Adamakis, M. (2022). Social interaction through structured play activities and games in early childhood. In *Handbook of research on using motor games in teaching and learning strategy* (pp. 80-99). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-9621-0.ch005

Fleer, M. (2020). The cultural construction of child development: Creating institutional and cultural intersubjectivity. In *The Routledge reader in early childhood education* (pp. 37-52). Routledge.

Foscan, M., Luparia, A., Molteni, F., Bianchi, E., Gandelli, S., Pagliano, E., & Fedrizzi, E. (2024). Development of a Play-Based Motor Learning Approach (A. MO. GIOCO) in Children with Bilateral Cerebral Palsy: Theoretical Framework and Intervention Methodology. *Children*, *11*(1), 127. https://doi.org/10.3390/children11010127

Goldman, L. R. (2020). *Child's play: Myth, mimesis and make-believe*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003084914

Guan, X., Sun, C., Hwang, G. J., Xue, K., & Wang, Z. (2024). Applying game-based learning in primary education: A systematic review of journal publications from 2010 to 2020. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *32*(2), 534-556. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2091611

Heang, T. M., Shah, N. M., Hashim, N. W., & Aliah, N. (2021). Play-based learning: A qualitative report on how teachers integrate play in the classroom. *City University EJournal of Academic Research*, *3*(2), 62-74.

Junge, C., Valkenburg, P. M., Deković, M., & Branje, S. (2020). The building blocks of social competence: Contributions of the Consortium of Individual Development. *Developmental cognitive neuroscience*, *45*, 100861. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2020.100861

Killaspy, H., Harvey, C., Brasier, C., Brophy, L., Ennals, P., Fletcher, J., & Hamilton, B. (2022). Community-based social interventions for people with severe mental illness: a systematic review and narrative synthesis of recent evidence. *World Psychiatry*, *21*(1), 96-123. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20940

López-Faican, L., & Jaen, J. (2020). EmoFindAR: Evaluation of a mobile multiplayer augmented reality game for primary school children. *Computers & Education*, *149*, 103814. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103814

Luckin, R., Cukurova, M., Kent, C., & Du Boulay, B. (2022). Empowering educators to be AI-ready. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, *3*, 100076. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100076

Marks, L. E. (2020). *Playing to Learn–An Examination of Two Play-Based Approaches and their Impact on the Learning and Development of Children with and without Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)*. Liverpool John Moores University (United Kingdom).

Moedt, K., & Holmes, R. M. (2020). The effects of purposeful play after shared storybook readings on kindergarten children's reading comprehension, creativity, and language

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424

skills and abilities. *Early Child Development and Care*, *190*(6), 839-854. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2018.1496914

Mohan, M., Celshiya, R., Karuppali, S., Bhat, J. S., & Anil, M. A. (2022). Pretend play in pre-schoolers: Need for structured and free play in pre-schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *12*(1), 1092.

Parker, R., Thomsen, B. S., & Berry, A. (2022, February). Learning through play at school–A framework for policy and practice. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 7, p. 751801). Frontiers Media SA. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.751801

Parthiban, I. J., Jesintha, A. R., Prabha, K. A. V. L., Meenakshi, S., & Thenmozhi, S. (2021). *The nuts & bolts of physical fitness*. Lulu Publication.

Saracho, O. N. (2020). *An integrated play-based curriculum for young children*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429440991

Soules, M. (2021). Play Attention. *New Explorations: Studies in Culture and Communication*, *2*(1).

Stephen, C., Brooker, L., Oberhuemer, P., & Parker-Rees, R. (Eds.). (2020). *Digital play and technologies in the early years*. Routledge.

Taylor, M. E., & Boyer, W. (2020). Play-based learning: Evidence-based research to improve children's learning experiences in the kindergarten classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *48*(2), 127-133. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00989-7

Vidal Carulla, C., Christodoulakis, N., & Adbo, K. (2021). Development of preschool children's executive functions throughout a play-based learning approach that embeds science concepts. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *18*(2), 588. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020588

Welsh, D. T., Outlaw, R., Newton, D. W., & Baer, M. D. (2022). The social aftershocks of voice: An investigation of employees' affective and interpersonal reactions after speaking up. *Academy of Management Journal*, *65*(6), 2034-2057. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2019.1187

Whedon, M., Perry, N. B., Curtis, E. B., & Bell, M. A. (2021). Private speech and the development of self-regulation: The importance of temperamental anger. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *56*, 213-224. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2019.1187

Zeng, A., Florence, P., Tompson, J., Welker, S., Chien, J., Attarian, M., ... & Lee, J. (2021, October). Transporter networks: Rearranging the visual world for robotic manipulation. In *Conference on Robot Learning* (pp. 726-747). PMLR.

Copyright © 2025, Educia Journal, Under the license CC BY-SA 4.0
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71435/610424