

The Role of Play in Children's Development

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ABSTRACT

Play is essential to childhood development, fostering physical, emotional, cognitive, and social growth. However, the role of parents in facilitating and perceiving the developmental benefits of play remains underexplored. This study explored parents' perceptions of the role of play in their children's development, focusing on physical, emotional, cognitive, and social domains. Conducted from December 2021 to March 2022, the research utilized a descriptive-quantitative design and involved 50 parents of children aged 4–7 from Cabugao and Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed through frequency and percentage. Results revealed that children engaged in various play activities, such as chasing bubbles, imaginative role-play, and building blocks, which parents observed to enhance motor skills, emotional resilience, problem-solving abilities, and social interactions. Parents emphasized providing opportunities for unstructured, child-led play to support holistic development. The study recommends that educational institutions and healthcare professionals conduct workshops for parents and caregivers on the developmental benefits of play. Additionally, future research should explore children's direct experiences to validate and complement parental observations.

Keywords: Role of Play, Children, Development, Parents, Descriptive-Quantitative, Ilocos Sur

INTRODUCTION

The concept of play has attracted societal attention or requirements. Though play is challenging to measure, it is easy to recognize. Play is any freely chosen, organically motivated, and personally focused activity. It exists outside of 'regular' life, is non-serious, and completely captivates the youngster. It has no defined objective but to exist. It is one of the most crucial ways for kids to learn and grow. It increases self-esteem by helping children recognize their abilities and feel good about themselves. Children are frequently engrossed in what they do because it is entertaining. However, not all children have the opportunity to play, which may impact their development. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscapes of daily living (Paguirigan et al., 2023), making some activities virtual.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, included in the play, focuses on children's intellect, ability to reason, and memory process. Play promotes cognitive growth in several ways. It helps children develop their creativity and memory, which are required for thinking about the past, present, and future (Klein et al., 2003).

Mendez (2020) determined that play is crucial in a child's life because it provides a primary foundation for learning, exploring, problem-solving, and understanding the world and one's role in it. Children learn through play by imitating what they see and practicing skills. Play allows them to express their creativity, experiment, and learn how to interact and communicate with others, particularly their parents.

Similarly, Theobald et al. (2015) observed that play is a fundamental requirement for children's development. Play is an identifiable activity that begins in early childhood and extends throughout adulthood across various cultures. It provides an educational space that promotes holistic growth. When young individuals engage in play, they gain communication skills, which allow them to express their needs and emotions, share their knowledge of the world around them, and gain new experiences. Play is free of expectations and highly motivating.

Playing is a naturally occurring activity that provides significant developmental benefits to children. Furthermore, according to early Theories of Child Development, as cited by Mendez (2020), play is a primary source of learning as well as a means of promoting healthy social-emotional development, and a vast body of literature demonstrates play's importance in children's cognitive, verbal, physical, and emotional development.

When children can guide their play, they use their decision-making abilities, move at their own pace, discover their areas of interest, and thoroughly engage in the activities they enjoy. Above all, while playing is easy, it is a treasured component of childhood (Ginsburg, 2007).

Piaget and Vygotsky believed cognitive development results from ongoing interactions and environmental factors (Ashari et al., 2013). According to Wathu (2016), Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural development states that play is crucial for acquiring social competence. This further indicates that children learn through play, positively impacting their social development and behavior.

Studies have shown that playing is becoming extinct in many childhood settings worldwide (Singer et al., 2009; Bento & Dias, 2017), even though playing is one of the most important ways for children to learn and develop. Despite the wealth of research highlighting the universal importance of play, there remains a paucity of data addressing its impact within specific cultural and geographical contexts, such as Ilocos Sur in the Philippines. The region's unique sociocultural dynamics and economic constraints may shape children's access to and engagement in play, influencing their developmental outcomes. While global studies (e.g., Klein et al., 2003; Mendez, 2020) have established play's role in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional growth, little is known about how these findings translate to the lived experiences of Filipino children aged 4–7—a critical developmental period characterized by rapid cognitive and socio-emotional growth.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the role of play in the holistic development of children aged 4–7 in Ilocos Sur. Guided by established theories such as Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory and Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Development

Theory, this research seeks to understand how play contributes to children's intellectual, social, and emotional competence within this region. Specifically, it explores how culturally relevant play practices, parental involvement, and environmental factors shape developmental trajectories in early childhood.

One of the advantages of this study is that it emphasizes the importance of playing around the world, particularly for children. Another benefit is that it teaches parents how to properly treat and manage their children, allowing them to guide their children to healthy learning and development, which supports Paguirigan and Paguirigan (2022) suggesting that parents should consider looking for ways in which children's misbehavior can be properly managed and that they encourage them to play with their friends without using gadgets. The present study highlights the role of play in children's development. The present study also offers practical insights for parents of young children. It provides guidance on integrating play into daily routines and suggestions to help children achieve their full potential.

Furthermore, the findings of this study may serve as a guide for parents and parent surrogates to be more engaged with their children during playtime, which promotes a safe and conducive learning environment and healthy interpersonal relationships among family members. With the presence of parents, children can have better psychosocial and emotional development (Babida, 2020). The educational sectors can utilize the present study's results as a basis for conceptualizing means to create learning modalities and modules that provide time for children and parents to interact using play, allowing for a safe and conducive learning environment and promoting healthy interpersonal relationships between learners and parents.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore the role of play in children's development as perceived by their parents. Specifically, it aimed to 1) determine the profile of the participants, (2) identify the types of play children engage in, and (3) examine their roles in the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of children.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive-quantitative research method with a constructed questionnaire to systematically examine the role of play in children's development. This approach is appropriate as it allows for the objective measurement of variables, such as types of play and their roles in development. The descriptive aspect offers a detailed overview of local play practices. At the same time, the quantitative analysis ensures reliable, generalizable findings that address the research objectives of understanding and promoting the developmental benefits of play in the regional context.

Participants of the Study

Fifty parents participated in the study. Snowball sampling under inclusion and exclusion determined the respondents. The inclusion criteria of the respondents include: a) parents having a child ages 4-7 years old; b) residing at Cabugao and Narvacan, Ilocos Sur; and c) managing children's development through play.

Research Instrument

The researcher-made questionnaire gathered the profile of the respondents, examples of play that children engage in, and the role of play in children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. The constructed questionnaire underwent content validation, obtaining a high validity rating of 4.375, translation from English to Iloco, and pilot testing, gaining high-reliability indices of 0.84228 (examples of play) and 0.84582 (role of play in children's development). The College of Arts and Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed and approved the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The survey questionnaires were personally distributed and retrieved. Before distributing the questionnaire to the respondents, the study's objectives, respondent selection, voluntary participation, procedures and protocol, duration, benefits, confidentiality, right to refuse or withdraw, and contact information for the researchers were explained, and their consent was obtained. Respondents' dignity, rights, safety, and well-being were prioritized during data collection. The participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the research data were respected. Individual anonymity was maintained, and all research-related communication was honest and transparent.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were employed to treat the gathered data statistically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data from the problems raised in the study.

1. Profile of the Participants

Table 1 presents the profile of the participants.

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents

| Profile | f | % |
|---|------------|------------|
| Sex: | | |
| Male | 11 | 22.0 |
| Female | 39 | 78.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| Religious Affiliation: | | |
| Roman Catholic | 39 | 78.0 |
| Iglesia ni Cristo | 6 | 12.0 |
| Born again | 5 | 10.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| Parent’s Educational Attainment: | | |
| <i>Father:</i> | | |
| Elementary level | 2 | 4.0 |
| Elementary graduate | 7 | 14.0 |
| High School level | 4 | 8.0 |
| High School graduate | 18 | 36.0 |
| College level | 6 | 12.0 |
| College Graduate | 12 | 24.0 |
| Vocational graduate | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| <i>Mother:</i> | | |
| Elementary level | 10 | 20.0 |
| High School level | 5 | 10.0 |
| High School graduate | 14 | 28.0 |
| College level | 9 | 18.0 |
| College Graduate | 12 | 24.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| Type of Community: | | |
| Rural | 35 | 70.0 |
| Urban | 15 | 30.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |
| Type of Family: | | |
| Nuclear family | 20 | 40.0 |
| Extended family | 30 | 60.0 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

2. Types of Play in Children

Table 2 presents the types of play in children.

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage Showing the Examples of Play for Children

| Examples of Physical Play | Yes | | No | |
|---|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Playing with balls to practice catching, hitting, bouncing, and kicking. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 2. Playing, creating or chasing bubbles, walking along chalk lines, gathering shells, and jumping. | 49 | 98.0 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 3. Playing different kinds of music or making sounds using instruments to make children respond to the rhythm of the music/sound. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 4. Riding a bike or scooter under supervision. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 5. Playing organized sports like soccer, basketball, football, table tennis, etc. | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 |

| Examples of Emotional Play | Yes | | No | |
|---|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Painting, drawing, and writing. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 2. Reading stories with actions featuring characters going through different emotions. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |
| 3. Encouraging pretend play with puppets and toys or dress-ups (e.g., firefighter, police officer, nurse, doctor, chef, farmer, bus driver, or superhero). | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 4. Going to a park or open space for outdoor play, like running, tumbling, or hitting a ball to release tension. | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 |
| 5. Encouraging imaginative play with puppets, toys, or old clothes (for example, a child could pretend to care for a baby doll or bravely rescue toys from a tree.) | 45 | 90.0 | 5 | 10.0 |

| Examples of Cognitive Play | Yes | | No | |
|--|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Playing basic puzzles. | 42 | 84.0 | 8 | 16.0 |
| 2. Give them toys with push buttons to create something. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 3. Playing with clay to make human or animal figures. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |
| 4. Playing with cooking toys. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |
| 5. Putting together building blocks to create something with aesthetic appeal. | 45 | 90.0 | 5 | 10.0 |

| Examples of Social Play | Yes | | No | |
|--|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Playing with children who have the same toys. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |

| | | | | |
|--|----|------|---|------|
| 2. Playing video or online games on gadgets (e.g., cellphones, tablets/iPads, laptops, computers, PlayStation, etc.) | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 3. Encouraging associative play with other children, such as building blocks together. | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 |
| 4. Chasing, wrestling, and rolling around together. | 49 | 98.0 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 5. Playing group games like Follow the Leader or Treasure Hunt. | 48 | 96.0 | 2 | 4.0 |

Examples of Physical Play for Children

Almost all of the respondents (98.0%) confirmed that item 2 (playing, creating or chasing bubbles, walking along chalk lines, gathering shells, and jumping) is an example of physical play that their children engage in. Likewise, most respondents (94.0%) revealed that item 1 (Playing with balls to practice catching, hitting, bouncing, and kicking) and item 5 (Playing organized sports like soccer, basketball, football, table tennis, etc.) are considered their physical play. This result means the respondents still allow their children to engage in physical activities that cultivate physical development. The finding implies that most respondents allot time for their children to be physically active.

According to David and Gbenga (2014), these physical activities are vital to a child's healthy growth and development, especially in physical aspects, which can be a fun and easy way to integrate physical activity into children. Toddlers and preschoolers have lots of time and room to run and play. That is why the respondents prefer physical play for their children; it is usually organic, and the creativity and energy levels of the children are unlimited. It is not just a tradition but also cultivates love and trust among the parents and their children.

An article published by the Michigan State University Extension (2014) discussed that activities are an excellent way to help children develop their skills because they are not born with plenty of skills and they acquire them through learning, such as the ability to fix, follow, trace, concentrate, converge, diverge, among others. In this position, children are encouraged movements needed to help with primitive reflexes, coordinated movement, and learning. Developing an awareness of how their body can move in space and understanding directional concepts develops alongside body awareness (Paris et al., n.d.), and these kinds of physical activities encourage them to understand concepts such as up, down, over, under, in front, behind, next to, above and below.

Examples of Emotional Play for Children

Most respondents (94.0%) confirmed that their children engage in painting, drawing, and writing (item 1) as an example of emotional play. In the same way, most of them (92.0%) revealed that item 4 (Going to a park or open space for outdoor play like running, tumbling, or hitting a ball to release tension) is part of their emotional play. Moreover, most of the respondents (90.0%) also exposed that item 5 (Encouraging imaginative play with puppets, toys, or old clothes - for example, a child could pretend to care for a baby doll or bravely rescue

toys from a tree) is considered part of their emotional play. Respondents expose their children to play that can elicit emotions by giving them materials or toys that allow manipulations and interactions.

According to Raising Children Network (2022), if children can understand and manage their emotions, it helps them get along with others and learn. The respondents agreed that these examples of emotional play are the ones that suit their children because it is not just simply painting, going to the park, and encouraging imaginative play. However, the outcomes of emotional play for children are essential opportunities for them to develop their emotional abilities and, in some cases, simply express their emotions. Children may have several opportunities to play with other children, but interacting with their parents retains a unique value.

According to a study by the University of West Alabama (2022), engaging and encouraging children in this type of emotional play is more effective when they feel connected and cared for by their parents. In the child's eyes, playing with a parent or loved one is a highly special and treasured experience. When parents connect through play, they give their children time to relax, end power struggles, and gain a sense of control.

Examples of Cognitive Play for Children

Most respondents (90.0%) verified that their children play in putting together building blocks to create something with aesthetic appeal (item 5) as an example of cognitive play. Likewise, most respondents (88.0%) stated that item 2 (Giving them toys with push buttons to create something) is part of their cognitive play.

Furthermore, most of the respondents (86.0 %) revealed that item 3 (Playing with clay to make humans or animal figures) and item 4 (Playing with cooking toys) are considered part of their cognitive play. In addition to physical and emotional plays, the respondents also prefer giving their children toys that allow them to think and manipulate objects that hone skills, such as cooking and creating figures important to them. The result implies that the respondents can see the importance of letting their children engage in activities that help hone their thinking skills by following simple instructions and enriching their imagination to innovate. With these plays being allowed, the respondents provide simulations of real-life situations for their children.

According to the study of Discovery Building Sets for Children (2022), during an earlier developmental stage, children's ability to learn develops fast. Intellectual abilities are the tools children use to process information, both incoming and outgoing. Specific games such as building blocks, playing with clays to make figures, and playing with cooking toys determine how children learn cognitively. During toddler age, children are very innovative and imaginative and tend to ask queries of their parents, improving their cognitive skills continuously. Cognitive play enhances children's social and emotional development and fosters collaboration skills such as teamwork, communication, negotiation, respect, and turn-taking, especially during group play. These skills may manifest differently depending on a

child's abilities, and even minor improvements in collaboration can emerge when children work together. Additionally, unstructured play without specific goals can help improve attention spans. When playing with peers, children develop initiative, autonomy, self-expression, and creativity, all of which contribute to building their confidence.

Examples of Social Play for Children

Almost all of the respondents (98.0%) revealed that item 4 (Chasing, wrestling, and rolling together) is part of their social play for their children. On the other hand, most of the respondents (96.0%) verified that their children are involved in playing group games like following the leader or treasure hunting (item 5).

Likewise, most (92.0 %) revealed that item 3 (Encouraging associative play with other children, such as building blocks together) is part of their social play. The respondents give their children an opportunity to have playmates, implying that they want their children to interact with other children and to expose them to activities where rules exist and should be followed. This further connotes that the respondents are desirous of teaching their children skills on how to socialize.

An article from *Early Social Development and Schooling* (2008) highlights that activities such as rolling together and playing group games exemplify collaborations among children during the play age. The interactions arise from productive engagement and the sharing of knowledge, providing opportunities for role-taking and social perspective development. Such play helps children and parents foster inter-individual cooperation, enabling the acquisition of essential social skills for successful interactions.

Social play, which typically begins in preschool, is vital for developing social skills and forming friendships. Children learn to share, cooperate, take turns, and express emotions through social play. It also promotes physical activity and moral reasoning. Increased peer interaction during play enhances children's engagement in social play, with age significantly influencing the duration of these social play sequences.

The succeeding tables show the role of play in children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development.

3. Role of Play in children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development.

On Physical Development

Most of the respondents (94.0%) answered Yes to item 1 (Play helps my child to keep him/her fit and contributes to a wide range of health benefits), item 4 (Play helps my child/children to hone their coordination, balance, gross-motor skills - large movements like crawling and walking, and fine-motor skills - smaller movements like picking objects up), and item 5 (Play helps him/her to use up natural stores of energy and promotes better eating and

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage Showing the Role of Play in Children’s Physical Development

| Physical Development | Yes | | No | |
|---|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Play helps my child to keep him/her fit and contributes to a wide range of health benefits. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 2. Play helps my child to understand his/her body for what he/she can do rather than what they look like. | 39 | 78.0 | 11 | 22.0 |
| 3. Play improves his/her body image, self-confidence, and a greater sense of achievement, regardless of their ability. | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 |
| 4. Play helps my child/children to hone their coordination, balance, gross-motor skills (large movements like crawling and walking), and fine-motor skills (smaller movements like picking objects up). | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 5. Play helps him/her use natural energy stores and promotes better eating and sleeping habits. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |

sleeping habits), which means that these are the roles of play on their children's physical development. This finding implies that children should engage in physical activities because their role in their physical development is well-documented. Play benefits children in developing their physical appearance, health, and fine and gross motor skills, wherein fine motor skills encourage movement and the understanding of spatial relations, promoting motor planning skills. Likewise, it supports their balance, dexterity, and gross-motor skills such as stamina, energy, flexibility, and body awareness (Zapata, 2020).

Moreover, most of them (92.0%) also answered Yes to item 3 (Play improves his/her body image, self-confidence, and a greater sense of achievement no matter their ability). This finding means that the respondents believe that through play, their children will be able to develop a positive body image that will eventually help them gain self-confidence no matter their capabilities. This result also implies that play promotes physical health and hones non-cognitive skills, which supports learning and achievement among children. According to Osterlund (2020), playing is a safe place for children to build confidence and practice decision-making skills. If children participate in playing, it allows them to test their abilities. It helps them to achieve their goals and experience their limits.

When children play, they can make their own rules (Osterlund, 2020). It gives them the independence and freedom to decide what they want to improve. Over time, they become more confident as they are given more opportunities to play and to make their own choices.

According to the Center for Research in Early Childhood (2022), children gradually acquire the physical skills necessary for adulthood, from sitting independently to throwing a ball. Early childhood is when children are more open to trying new activities, making it an ideal time for parents to encourage active and interactive play. This helps children develop

coordination, control, and movement through physical engagement. Physical activities support healthy growth and development, promote healthier body composition, enhance self-esteem, and boost confidence. Integrating such activities into children's daily routines establishes a strong foundation for lifelong movement and activity. Children who are more physically active during their early years are likely to maintain higher activity levels as they grow, promoting better health and overall well-being.

On Emotional Development

Item 2 (Play helps to enable their strengths and abilities, and as a result, they will also develop self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment) was affirmed by most respondents (96.0 %). The result means that play is vital in their children's emotional development. Research performed by Indiana University School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (2013) concluded that children engaged in play assist them in gaining self-confidence and boost their self-esteem. Using this likewise reduces symptoms of depression and stress so that they can focus on their goal and other necessary tasks. In addition, their self-esteem and self-confidence are enhanced through play when they can attain set goals. This achievement will enable them to appraise their strengths and abilities, and as a result, they will boost their confidence and a sense of accomplishment. This success is achieved through the help of play, leading them to face challenges in the future.

In the same vein, most of them (94.0 %) gave assertion to item 3 (Play allows for a healthier, more socially acceptable way of expressing one's feelings and opinions), item 4 (Play provides great pleasure, joy, and freedom), and item 5 (Through playing, they learn to embrace humor and laughter for building effective coping skills and relaxation techniques). According to Froebel's (2020) study, play is the highest manifestation of human development

Table 4
Frequency and Percentage Showing the Role of Play in Children’s Emotional Development

| Emotional Development | Yes | | No | |
|---|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. Play helps reduce and eliminate symptoms of stress and depression in my child. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 2. Play helps to enable their strengths and abilities, and as a result, they will also develop self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. | 48 | 96.0 | 2 | 4.0 |
| 3. Play allows for a healthier, more socially acceptable way of expressing feelings and opinions. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 4. Play provides great pleasure, joy, and freedom. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 5. Playing teaches them to embrace humor and laughter to build effective coping skills and relaxation techniques. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |

in childhood, for it alone is the spontaneous expression of what is in a child's nature. Play is an activity where young individuals express their remarkable skills to discover, imagine, and make decisions. Children have a natural urge to play that brings them pleasure and interest that can be maintained without external rewards. When children enjoy their playtimes, they will feel good about themselves and their actions. There are many ways through which play can produce these benefits that will stay with them throughout their lives (Indiana University School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 2013).

Playing provides children with a healthy and socially appropriate way to express their emotions and opinions. By expressing their feelings through play, children can reduce aggression and address problems constructively rather than internalizing them. This process lays the foundation for their emotional, mental, social, and physical well-being as they learn to manage emotions in a socially acceptable manner. Play also brings joy, pleasure, and a sense of freedom, allowing children to embrace humor and laughter—key elements for developing effective coping skills and relaxation techniques (Indiana University School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 2013).

Most respondents (96.0%) agreed with item 4, stating that play experiences help children internalize the skills they learn at home and, most notably, at school. Respondents believed their children could absorb the skills they learned at school and home through play. The finding implies the belief among respondents that their children's cognitive development is guaranteed by play. Raising Children Network (2006) reported that playing is crucial in children's cognitive development because it allows them to think critically on their own, comprehend, converse, recall, imagine, and work out what might happen next. Children nowadays want to learn how things work, and they learn it best through play. They solve problems, create, experiment, think, and learn. Through play, they learn about who they are and where they fit. It also gives them the confidence to keep exploring and learning about the world.

On Cognitive Development

Most respondents (94.0%) revealed that item 3 (Through playing, /she discovers that s/he can solve the problems s/he is facing, especially in academics) is true to their child's cognitive development. The problem-solving element in some plays supports the development of mental strategy, thereby enhancing creative thinking (Whitebeard et al., 2017). The result implies that play encourages, stimulates, and promotes their growth in abilities, concepts, language acquisition, concentration, and communication abilities. Participating in play encourages children to explore and discover. Additionally, it helps individuals to engage in flexible and high-level thinking processes that are thought necessary for a learner. By engaging in play, they develop a positive attitude toward learning. It enables them to internalize the knowledge and abilities acquired at home and school.

Table 5
Frequency and Percentage Showing the Role of Play in Children’s Cognitive Development

| Cognitive Development | Yes | | No | |
|--|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. By expressing preference over what activity to play or which to play with, children learn to develop decision-making skills. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 2. Play helps to recognize the need to prioritize as they cannot play with every toy at the same time, which teaches children to compromise and share. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |
| 3. Through playing, s/he discovers that s/he can solve the problems s/he faces, especially in academics. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 4. Play experiences allow them to internalize the skills they learn at home and, most notably, at school. | 48 | 96.0 | 2 | 4.0 |
| 5. Play helps to manage personal belongings and cultivates a sense of responsibility. | 46 | 92.0 | 4 | 8.0 |

Moreover, most respondents (92.0%) also believe that play helps manage personal belongings and cultivates a sense of responsibility (item 5). Blahey (2017) asserts that children spend most of their days being instructed by their parents on what to do, when, and where they must go. They can determine the rules and become one with their power through play. They can be their leaders and be the ones who listen and take directions on their own. It is just as critical to learn how to interact and play with others as it is to learn how to engage and play with others. It enables children to develop a greater sense of self-sufficiency. Comfortable children playing also feel more capable of completing other activities independently and figuring out their place in society.

On Social Development

Almost all of the respondents (98.0%) attested to item 5 (My child can learn and accept feedback from others, and equally as important, play will foster the ability to ask for and accept the help of others and to help others). The finding means that, through play, children can work together and strive to demonstrate good behavior. It is a therapy for them, particularly for children unable to express themselves through words adequately. The result implies that playing is vital for children's social development, as endorsed by the respondents. They will learn to manage their viewpoints or demands through play, according to the Indian University School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (2013). Play frequently requires cooperation, and it is through this teamwork that children learn to share. To summarize, it will instill a sense of belonging in them, boosting their self-esteem and confidence, among other benefits.

Table 6
Frequency and Percentage Showing the Role of Play in Children’s Social Development

| Social Development | Yes | | No | |
|--|-----|------|----|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| 1. My child learns to meet people, make friends, and sustain those friendships excellently. | 45 | 90.0 | 5 | 10.0 |
| 2. My child learns from the benefits and engages in fun activities together, especially within inclusive settings with or without disabilities play together. | 44 | 88.0 | 6 | 12.0 |
| 3. My child learns to initiate, sustain, and terminate social interactions through play. | 43 | 86.0 | 7 | 14.0 |
| 4. My child learns to cooperate, which in turn aids in establishing and maintaining socially acceptable behaviors. | 47 | 94.0 | 3 | 6.0 |
| 5. My child can learn and accept feedback from others, and equally as important, play will foster the ability to ask for and accept the help of others and to help others. | 49 | 98.0 | 1 | 2.0 |

In addition, most respondents (94.0%) endorsed item 4 (My child learns to cooperate, which in turn aids in establishing and maintaining socially acceptable behaviors) to be true in their children's social development. Respondents believe their child develops cooperation skills that can support establishing and maintaining socially acceptable behaviors through play. According to the theory of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, they believed that children's cognitive development is the result of ongoing interactions and environmental factors (Ashari et al., 2013). According to Wathu (2016), Vygotsky's theory of social cultures emphasizes that play is crucial for developing social competence, as children learn and grow socially through play. This highlights the positive impact of play on their social development and behavior. Play is fundamental to fostering healthy social skills, and a lack of play opportunities can be concerning. It enables children to cooperate, practice socially appropriate behaviors, and develop self-regulation. Additionally, play helps children manage stress and express emotions, enhancing their social competence. This, in turn, leads to more considerate behavior, improved conflict resolution skills, friendliness, and greater acceptance by peers. Moreover, through play, children learn to control impulsive actions and plan more adaptive responses (Daubert et al., 2018).

Moreover, item 1 (My child learns to meet people, make friends, and sustain those friendships excellently) was affirmed by most of the respondents (90.0 %). Respondents are confident that their child develops socially through play in how they establish friendships with other children. This finding implies that the respondents can help their child to socialize by

letting them engage in play that involves interacting with other playmates. The study by the Indiana University School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (2013) highlights that play is an effective way for children to meet others, build friendships, and maintain them over time. Engaging in enjoyable activities together helps children learn and grow. Through play, they develop essential social skills that are valuable in various aspects of life, such as school, work, and community interactions. The skills include waiting in line, taking turns, initiating and sustaining conversations, and accepting support from others. Additionally, play fosters and strengthens peer friendships, benefiting individuals with and without disabilities, which is essential for effective inclusion. By inviting certain peers to join them in play and responding to invitations from others, children also discover the traits they value in friendships.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the significant role of play in promoting children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development, as perceived by their parents. Parents observed that play activities such as chasing bubbles, imaginative role-play and building blocks enhanced their children's motor coordination, emotional resilience, problem-solving skills, and social interactions. The findings also underscore the importance of unstructured, child-led play in providing children with opportunities to explore, learn, and develop holistically. The study also demonstrates that parents play a critical role in facilitating and recognizing the developmental benefits of play. However, since the results are based on parental perceptions, future research should include direct observations of children's play to validate and expand these findings. Furthermore, collaborative efforts between parents, educators, and pediatricians are essential to create environments that encourage safe, enriching, and developmentally appropriate play. By integrating structured play into daily routines and fostering partnerships with educational and healthcare institutions, stakeholders can ensure that children benefit fully from the developmental potential of play. These efforts are vital in building a foundation for lifelong learning, adaptability, and well-being in children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, parents and caregivers are encouraged to maximize children's play opportunities by creating safe, enriching environments that promote physical, emotional, cognitive, and social growth. Schools and educators should incorporate play-based strategies into learning to foster holistic development. At the same time, pediatricians and childcare professionals are advised to advocate for unstructured, child-led play as a fundamental aspect of healthy childhood development. Finally, future research should explore balanced approaches to play and academic activities and investigate children's direct experiences to complement and validate parental observations. These collaborative efforts can ensure that

children fully benefit from the developmental advantages of play, contributing to their lifelong learning and well-being.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

Researchers must prioritize ethical principles and issues in any research to prevent infringing on respondents' "rights and privacy." This eliminates data fabrication or falsification and thus encourages the pursuit of knowledge and truth, which is the essential purpose of all research. The study's ethical standards included conflict of interest, privacy and secrecy, informed consent, an evaluation of vulnerable population involvement and risks, benefits, compensation incentives, and community concerns.

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