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Play-Based Learning: Its Impact On The Academic Performance Of Kindergarten Students

Alleona A. Ganancias

Samar Colleges, Inc., Catbalogan City, Samar, Philippines
Department of Education, Calanyugan Elementary School, Pagsanghan, Samar, Philippines
green07mart@gmail.com

Abstract: *Play-based learning is a child-centered instructional approach that promotes holistic development through structured and purposeful play activities in early childhood education. This quantitative study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the impact of play-based learning on the academic performance and developmental outcomes of Kindergarten students in the districts of Gandara I, Gandara II, Pagsanghan, and Tarangnan, Schools Division of Samar, for School Year 2025–2026. Findings revealed that most learners demonstrated an average level of overall development based on ECCD assessment results, with a small proportion showing slightly advanced development, and none classified as highly advanced. Results further showed that teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning was significantly influenced by attitude toward the approach, age, and participation in in-service training, while parents' educational attainment showed a significant negative correlation. Moreover, significant relationships were found between teachers' conceptual understanding and learners' social skills, classroom behavior, and ECCD performance, with moderate to strong positive correlations in most variables, although the relationship with ECCD performance was very weak. Likewise, learners' social skills were strongly associated with positive classroom behaviors such as social interaction, attention span, and self-regulation. Overall, the findings underscore the important role of teachers' understanding of play-based learning in enhancing kindergarten learners' socio-emotional development and classroom behavior, with a limited but significant influence on academic performance.*

Keywords—Play-Based Learning, Kindergarten Development, Social Skills, Classroom Behavior, ECCD Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Play-based learning has been widely recognized as a developmentally appropriate pedagogical approach that integrates academic instruction with meaningful play experiences to support young children's holistic development. Beyond promoting cognitive growth, it fostered social, emotional, language, and behavioral competencies essential for school readiness and lifelong learning. Previous studies consistently demonstrated that play-based learning produced better outcomes in literacy, numeracy, mathematics, spatial reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving than conventional teacher-centered approaches. International evidence also suggested that effective play-based instruction enhanced learners' engagement, motivation, cooperation, self-regulation, and classroom behavior while cultivating critical thinking and other 21st-century skills. Although scholars differed in their perspectives regarding the degree of teacher involvement during play, they agreed that integrating various forms of play provided meaningful learning experiences that supported children's overall development (Mallick & Popy, 2024; Adams et al., 2024; Urado & Marquez, 2025).

Within the Philippine context, play-based learning had likewise been recognized as a fundamental component of early childhood education. However, previous studies revealed that teachers often possessed varied and incomplete understandings of play-based pedagogy, limiting its effective classroom implementation and potentially depriving learners of authentic developmental experiences (Rodriguez-Meehan, 2021). This educational direction was reinforced through Republic Act No. 10157, or the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012, which institutionalized Kindergarten as a mandatory stage of basic education and emphasized play-based instruction to promote children's cognitive, physical, socio-emotional, and creative development. Similarly, Department of Education Order No. 47, series of 2016, strengthened this mandate by establishing a learner-centered Kindergarten framework that positioned play as a vital instructional strategy for developing communication, collaboration, problem-solving, values formation, and overall well-being. Supporting these policy directions, recent local evidence further demonstrated that play-based strategies significantly improved learners' language and communication skills, highlighting their potential to strengthen foundational competencies necessary for early academic success (Dolores et al., 2025).

Despite these educational policies and documented benefits, developmental assessment reports continued to reveal substantial challenges in early childhood education. Globally, millions of young children failed to attain age-appropriate cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor development because of poverty, inadequate nutrition, and limited access to quality early learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2020). Similar concerns were evident in the Philippines, where national Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) assessments reported that only 58% of Kindergarten learners achieved expected developmental benchmarks, reflecting persistent gaps in language, pre-literacy, and socio-emotional

competencies (Department of Education [DepEd], 2023). Comparable findings were observed in Eastern Visayas, where approximately 45% of Kindergarten learners performed below proficiency in attention, self-regulation, and executive functioning, underscoring the need for more responsive and developmentally appropriate instructional approaches.

The situation was likewise evident in the Schools Division of Samar, where ECCD post-assessment results consistently reflected developmental gaps among Kindergarten learners across successive school years. Although gradual improvements were observed from School Years 2022–2023 to 2024–2025, a considerable proportion of learners continued to demonstrate slight or average levels of overall development, indicating persistent concerns in school readiness and holistic growth (DepEd Samar Division, 2023; DepEd Samar Division, 2024; DepEd Samar Division, 2025). These findings suggested that existing instructional practices had not fully addressed learners' developmental needs and highlighted the importance of strengthening evidence-based approaches, particularly those emphasizing active engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

Given the convergence of international and local empirical evidence, policy mandates, and developmental assessment findings, there remained a compelling need to examine the effectiveness of play-based learning in local public-school settings. While previous studies had established positive contributions to children's holistic development, limited empirical evidence had specifically examined its influence on the academic performance of Kindergarten learners within the local context. Accordingly, the present study determined the impact of play-based learning on the academic performance of Kindergarten students. The findings were expected to provide empirical evidence that would inform instructional practices, strengthen teacher professional development, and support the effective implementation of early childhood education policies aimed at improving learner outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study determined the impact of play-based learning on the academic performance of Kindergarten students in the districts of Gandara I, Gandara II, Pagsanghan, and Tarangnan, Schools Division of Samar, for School Year 2025-2026.

2.1 What is the profile of the Kindergarten student-respondents in terms of the following:

2.1.1 age and sex;

2.1.2 parents' highest educational attainment;

2.1.3 parents' occupation;

2.1.4 gross monthly family income; and

2.1.5 type of play activities commonly engaged in?

2.2 What is the profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of the following variates:

2.2.1 age and sex;

2.2.2 highest educational attainment;

2.2.3 number of years as Kindergarten teacher;

2.2.4 relevant in-service trainings; and

2.2.5 attitude toward play-based learning?

2.3 What is the level of teacher-respondents' conceptual understanding of play-based learning along the following parameters:

2.3.1 imagination and creativity;

2.3.2 cognitive growth;

2.3.3 emotional and behavioral benefits;

2.3.4 improves literacy;

2.3.5 greater independence; and

2.3.6 physical fitness?

2.4. What is the level of social skills of Kindergarten student-respondents exposed to play-based learning as perceived by the teacher-respondents in terms of:

2.4.1 cooperation;

2.4.2 sharing; and

2.4.3 empathy?

2.5 What is the level of classroom behavior of Kindergarten student-respondents exposed to play-based learning as perceived by the teacher-respondents in terms of:

2.5.1 social interaction;

2.5.2 attention span; and

2.5.3 self-regulation?

2.6. What is the level of Kindergarten student-respondents' performance as reflected in their ECCD assessment results?

2.7 Is there a significant relationship between the teacher-respondents' conceptual understanding of play-based learning and the following:

2.7.1 student-respondents' profile;

2.7.2 teacher-respondents' profile;

2.7.3 student-respondents' level of social skills;

2.7.4 student-respondents' level of classroom behavior; and

2.7.5 student-respondents' level of performance based on ECCD?

2.8 Is there a significant relationship between the student-respondents' level of social skills and their level of classroom behavior when exposed to play-based learning?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between play-based learning and the academic performance of Kindergarten learners in selected schools within the Gandara I, Gandara II, Pagsanghan, and Tarangnan Districts of the Schools Division of Samar during School Year 2025–2026. The descriptive component was utilized to determine the demographic and professional profiles of the student- and teacher-respondents, while also assessing teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based pedagogy, its perceived contributions to children's cognitive, creative, socio-emotional, literacy, personal, and physical development, as well as the development of learners' prosocial skills and classroom behaviors. The correlational component examined the relationships between play-based learning variables and learners' academic performance, which was measured using the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist results. Data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including frequency count, percentage, mean, median, mean absolute deviation, weighted mean, point-biserial correlation, eta correlation, Cramer's V, and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho).

3.2 Instrumentation

The study utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire and official school records as the primary data-gathering instruments. Using random sampling, 237 Kindergarten learners were selected as student-respondents, while total enumeration was employed to include all 40 Kindergarten teacher-respondents in the identified study sites. The questionnaire consisted of five parts: the first gathered the demographic and professional profiles of the student- and teacher-respondents; the second measured teachers' attitudes toward the impact of play-based learning on Kindergarten learners' academic performance; the third assessed teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning; the fourth evaluated teachers' perceptions of the social skills demonstrated by learners exposed to play-based learning; and the fifth examined teachers' perceptions of learners' classroom behavior. Parts II and III utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), whereas Parts IV and V employed a five-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). To determine learners' academic performance, data were obtained from official school records, specifically the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklists, following approval from the appropriate school authorities. The retrieved data were subsequently organized and subjected to appropriate statistical analyses to address the objectives of the study.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the fundamental ethical principles of research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent, the concerned Public Schools District Supervisors, and the school heads of the participating schools. All teacher-respondents voluntarily participated in the study after receiving a clear explanation of its purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was secured from the teachers, while parental consent and school authorization were obtained for the use of learners' academic records and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist results. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could decline or withdraw from study at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. No identifying information was disclosed in the presentation of the findings, and all collected data were used solely for research purposes. The completed questionnaires and academic records were securely stored and were accessible only to the researcher. Data were analyzed and reported in aggregate form to safeguard the privacy of the participants and their respective schools. Throughout the conduct of the study, the researcher upheld the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice by ensuring that participants' rights, dignity, and welfare were protected and that the research posed no foreseeable harm to any individual involved.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

Table 1*: Profile of the Student-Respondents*

Variable	Predominant Category	f	%
Age	5 years old	185	78.06
Sex	Female	170	71.73
Father's Highest Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	143	60.34
Mother's Highest Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	126	53.16

Father's Occupation	Fisherman	89	37.55
Mother's Occupation	No formal employment	89	37.55
Gross Monthly Family Income	Php 20,001.00–Php 25,000.00	84	35.44
Most Common Play Activity	Running, jumping, and climbing	27	11.39

The findings indicated that the student-respondents were predominantly five-year-old female learners, with a relatively homogeneous age distribution. Most parents had completed secondary education, while fathers were commonly engaged in fishing and mothers were primarily homemakers, reflecting a predominantly moderate socioeconomic background, with most families earning between Php 20,001.00 and Php 25,000.00 per month. Furthermore, the learners most frequently participated in physical play, particularly running, jumping, and climbing, suggesting a strong preference for movement-based activities that support early childhood development and provide a suitable context for implementing play-based learning strategies.

Table 2. *Profile of the Teacher-Respondents*

Variable	Predominant Category	Value
Age	27–31 years old	16 (40.00%)
Sex	Female	31 (77.50%)
Highest Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate Degree with Master's units	27 (67.50%)
Years as Kindergarten Teacher	1–3 years and 4–6 years	13 (32.50%) each
Most Frequent In-Service Training	School level	WM = 3.45 (Oftentimes)
Attitude Toward Play-Based Learning	Strongly Agree	GWM = 4.76

The teacher-respondents were predominantly female and in the early stages of their professional careers, with most aged 27–31 years and possessing one to six years of Kindergarten teaching experience. A majority had pursued graduate education, particularly by enrolling in master's degree programs, and most frequently participated in school- and district-level in-service training, suggesting that professional development opportunities were largely localized. Moreover, the respondents demonstrated a highly favorable attitude toward play-based learning (GWM = 4.76), indicating strong recognition of its value in promoting children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative development and reflecting a high level of readiness to implement play-based instructional practices in Kindergarten classrooms.

Table 3. *Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding of Play-Based Learning*

Dimension	Grand Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Physical Fitness	4.82	Strongly Agree
Emotional and Behavioral Benefits	4.73	Strongly Agree
Greater Independence	4.73	Strongly Agree
Cognitive Growth	4.72	Strongly Agree
Improves Literacy	4.71	Strongly Agree
Imagination and Creativity	4.67	Strongly Agree

The teacher-respondents demonstrated a very high level of conceptual understanding of play-based learning across all dimensions, as reflected by the overall grand weighted mean of 4.73, interpreted as Strongly Agree. Among the six dimensions, physical fitness obtained the highest rating (WM = 4.82), indicating that teachers most strongly recognized the role of play in enhancing children's motor development, health, and overall well-being. Likewise, emotional and behavioral benefits, greater independence, cognitive growth, literacy development, and imagination and creativity all received uniformly high ratings, suggesting a strong consensus that play-based learning supports the holistic development of Kindergarten learners. These findings indicate that the respondents possessed a comprehensive understanding of play-based learning and acknowledged its value as an effective instructional approach for promoting children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative development.

Table 4. *Level of Social Skills of Kindergarten Student-Respondents Exposed to Play-Based Learning as Perceived by the Teacher-Respondents*

Dimension	Grand Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Sharing	4.44	Often
Cooperation	4.34	Often
Empathy	4.25	Often

The teacher-respondents perceived that Kindergarten learners exposed to play-based learning frequently demonstrated positive social skills, as reflected by the overall grand weighted mean of 4.34, interpreted as Often. Among the three dimensions, sharing received the highest rating (WM = 4.44), indicating that learners regularly exhibited behaviors such as taking turns, sharing materials, and assuming responsibility for shared learning spaces. This was followed by cooperation (WM = 4.34), which reflected learners' consistent participation in group activities and collaborative tasks, while empathy obtained the lowest, yet still favorable, rating (WM = 4.25), suggesting that although learners commonly displayed caring and inclusive behaviors, emotional awareness and responsive actions toward peers could still be further strengthened. Overall, the findings indicate that play-based learning provided meaningful opportunities for developing essential social skills that foster positive peer relationships and collaborative learning among Kindergarten learners.

Table 5. *Level of Classroom Behavior of Kindergarten Student-Respondents Exposed to Play-Based Learning as Perceived by the Teacher-Respondents*

Dimension	Grand Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Social Interaction	4.44	Often
Self-Regulation	4.29	Often
Attention Span	4.19	Often

The teacher-respondents perceived that Kindergarten learners exposed to play-based learning frequently exhibited positive classroom behaviors, as reflected by the overall grand weighted mean of 4.31, interpreted as Often. Among the three behavioral dimensions, social interaction obtained the highest rating (WM = 4.44), indicating that learners consistently engaged in positive peer interactions, cooperative participation, and inclusive play activities. This was followed by self-regulation (WM = 4.29), suggesting that learners generally demonstrated appropriate self-control, patience, and responsible behavior during classroom activities, while attention span received the lowest, yet still favorable, rating (WM = 4.19), indicating that learners were generally able to sustain focus and complete play tasks despite occasional distractions. Overall, the findings suggest that play-based learning fostered desirable classroom behaviors by promoting active participation, positive peer relationships, and the development of self-management skills among Kindergarten learners.

Table 6. *Level of Kindergarten Student-Respondents' Performance as Reflected in their ECCD Assessment Results*

ECCD Assessment	f	%
Highly Advanced Development	0	0.00
Slightly Advanced Development	7	2.95
Average Overall Development	230	97.05
Slight Delay in Overall Development	0	0.00
Significant Delay in Overall Development	0	0.00
Total	**237**	**100.00**

These results imply that while the learners are generally meeting the required developmental milestones, there is still a need to strengthen instructional strategies to further enhance higher-level development among kindergarten students. The absence of highly advanced development suggests that enrichment activities, differentiated instruction, and more challenging play-based learning experiences may be necessary to support advanced learners. It also highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and targeted interventions to help more students progress beyond the average developmental level.

Table 7. *Summary of the Significant Relationships Among the Study Variables*

Variables	Significant Relationship	Decision
Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding × Student-Respondents' Profile	Parents' highest educational attainment (ρ = -0.461, p = 0.003)	Reject Ho
Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding × Teacher-	Age (ρ = 0.326, p = 0.040); Relevant in-service trainings (ρ = 0.365, p = 0.021); Attitude toward	Reject Ho

Respondents' Profile	play-based learning (ρ = 0.642, $p < 0.001$)	
Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding × Student-Respondents' Social Skills	Cooperation (ρ = 0.444, p = 0.004); Sharing (ρ = 0.412, p = 0.010); Empathy (ρ = 0.405, p = 0.025)	Reject Ho
Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding × Student-Respondents' Classroom Behavior	Social interaction (ρ = 0.417, p = 0.007)	Reject Ho
Teacher-Respondents' Conceptual Understanding × Student-Respondents' ECCD Performance	ECCD performance (ρ = 0.150, p = 0.046)	Reject Ho
Student-Respondents' Social Skills × Classroom Behavior	Social interaction (ρ = 0.664, $p < 0.001$); Attention span (ρ = 0.719, $p < 0.001$); Self-regulation (ρ = 0.747, $p < 0.001$)	Reject Ho

The findings revealed several significant relationships among the study variables. Teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning was significantly associated with parents' highest educational attainment, teachers' age, relevant in-service training, attitude toward play-based learning, learners' social skills, social interaction, and ECCD performance. Among these, attitude toward play-based learning exhibited the strongest association with teachers' conceptual understanding, while the strongest overall relationships were observed between learners' social skills and classroom behavior. These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' understanding and positive attitudes toward play-based learning, together with promoting learners' social skills, may contribute to improved behavioral and developmental outcomes in Kindergarten education.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. Most kindergarten student-respondents were five years old and predominantly female, with parents generally having completed high school and belonging to low- to moderate-income households supported mainly by fishing, farming, and informal occupations. Physical play, particularly running, jumping, and climbing, was the most common play activity among the learners. Overall, the respondents represented a relatively homogeneous group with backgrounds typical of the study setting.

2. The teacher-respondents were predominantly female, in their early to mid-career stage, and had pursued graduate studies through master's degree units. Most had one to six years of kindergarten teaching experience and primarily attended school- and district-level professional development activities. Despite limited exposure to higher-level trainings, they demonstrated a very strong positive attitude toward play-based learning.

3. The teacher-respondents demonstrated a very high level of conceptual understanding of play-based learning across imagination and creativity, cognitive growth, emotional and behavioral benefits, literacy development, greater independence, and physical fitness. They consistently recognized play-based learning as an essential approach to promoting holistic child development. Overall, the findings affirmed teachers' strong knowledge and appreciation of play-based learning in kindergarten education.

4. Kindergarten learners exposed to play-based learning demonstrated a high level of social skills in terms of cooperation, sharing, and empathy, as perceived by their teachers. Cooperation and sharing were more consistently manifested than empathy, although all dimensions were regularly observed. These findings indicate that play-based learning effectively supports children's social development.

5. The kindergarten learners generally exhibited positive classroom behavior in terms of social interaction, attention span, and self-regulation. Social interaction emerged as the strongest behavioral dimension, while attention span and self-regulation were consistently demonstrated at acceptable levels. Overall, play-based learning contributed to the development of desirable classroom behaviors among the learners.

6. Most kindergarten learners achieved an average level of development based on the ECCD assessment, indicating age-appropriate developmental progress. Only a few learners demonstrated slightly advanced development, while none reached the highly advanced level. Overall, the findings reflected a generally uniform developmental profile among the respondents.

7. Among the student profile variables, only parents' highest educational attainment showed a significant relationship with teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning. The relationship was moderate, negative, and statistically significant, while all other student profile variables showed no significant association. Thus, teachers' conceptual understanding was generally independent of most learner demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

8. Teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning was significantly related to their age, participation in relevant in-service trainings, and attitude toward play-based learning. Attitude demonstrated the strongest positive relationship, whereas age and training showed weak but significant positive associations. In contrast, sex, educational attainment, and teaching experience were not significantly related to conceptual understanding.

9. Teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning was significantly associated with the social skills of kindergarten learners. Moderate positive relationships were observed for cooperation, sharing, and empathy, indicating that greater teacher understanding corresponded with stronger learner social skills. These findings highlight the important role of teachers' knowledge in fostering children's social development.

10. Teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning was significantly related only to learners' social interaction among the classroom behavior indicators. No significant relationships were found with attention span and self-regulation. These findings suggest that teachers' conceptual understanding contributes primarily to enhancing learners' social interaction during classroom activities.

11. Teachers' conceptual understanding of play-based learning had a statistically significant but very weak relationship with learners' ECCD performance. Although the association was significant, its practical influence on developmental outcomes was limited. This suggests that other factors beyond teachers' conceptual understanding also contribute substantially to children's developmental performance

12. The learners' social skills were significantly and strongly associated with their classroom behavior in terms of social interaction, attention span, and self-regulation. Higher levels of cooperation, sharing, and empathy corresponded with more positive classroom behaviors. These findings emphasize the close relationship between social competence and behavioral development among kindergarten learners exposed to play-based learning.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should strengthen the consistent integration of play-based learning strategies in daily classroom instruction, particularly activities that promote cooperation, sharing, and empathy. Since strong relationships were found between teachers' conceptual understanding and learners' social skills and behavior, teachers should deepen their understanding of play-based pedagogy through reflective practice, peer collaboration, and continuous classroom-based application. Emphasis should be placed on structured play activities that intentionally target social interaction, attention span development, and self-regulation. In addition, schools may implement an awards and recognition system for teachers to acknowledge exemplary practice in play-based learning implementation.

2. School leaders should prioritize the regular monitoring and support of play-based learning implementation in kindergarten classrooms. This includes providing instructional coaching, classroom observation with feedback, and allocation of adequate time for teachers to design and implement play-based activities. Administrators should also encourage a school culture that values early childhood pedagogy by integrating it into school improvement plans.

3. Given the significant role of teacher training in improving conceptual understanding, DepEd should intensify in-service training programs focused on play-based learning, particularly targeting younger teachers and those with limited exposure to early childhood education strategies. Policy support should also ensure that training programs are practical, classroom-based, and sustained rather than one-time seminars. Additionally, policies should address the alignment of ECCD assessment practices with play-based instructional approaches to better capture holistic child development.

4. Training institutions should design more focused modules on play-based learning that emphasize not only theory but also actual classroom implementation. Workshops should include simulation teaching, classroom scenario analysis, and development of play-based lesson plans. Special attention should be given to improving teachers' attitudes toward play-based learning, as this was found to have the strongest correlation with conceptual understanding.

5. Parents should be encouraged to actively support play-based learning at home by providing play opportunities that promote social skills such as sharing, cooperation, and empathy. Since parental educational attainment showed a significant relationship with teacher understanding, schools should also conduct parent orientation sessions to bridge understanding gaps and align home-school learning approaches.

6. Intervention programs should be designed to further enhance learners who are performing at average developmental levels, as the majority of respondents fall under this category. Enrichment activities should be introduced for slightly advanced learners to further maximize their potential, while differentiated instruction should ensure that all learners are adequately supported within the ECCD developmental framework. In addition, a system of awards and recognition may be established to acknowledge learners' developmental progress and positive behaviors, such as cooperation, sharing, empathy, and self-regulation.

7. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of this study by including a larger sample size across multiple schools or divisions to improve the generalizability of results. Further studies may also explore additional variables such as classroom environment, teacher pedagogical content knowledge, or availability of learning resources, which may influence both teacher understanding and learner outcomes. It is also recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to determine the long-term impact of play-based learning on academic and socio-emotional development beyond the

kindergarten level. Moreover, qualitative or mixed-method approaches may be utilized to gain deeper insights into teachers' lived experiences, challenges, and best practices in implementing play-based learning in early childhood education.

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