

THE ROLE OF PLAY IN CHILDREN'S SOCIOEMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: INSIGHTS FROM PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

By

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A thesis submitted to BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Early Childhood Development

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Brac University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: “The role of play in children’s socioemotional development: insights from parents’ perspectives.”

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1. Source of population: Parents (Fathers and Mothers) having children 3-5 years in Dhaka city

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

- a) Physical risk to the subjects (no)
- b) Social risk (no)
- c) Psychological risk to subjects (no)
- d) discomfort to subjects (no)
- e) Invasion of privacy (no)

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

- a) Nature and purpose of the study (yes)
- b) Procedures to be followed (yes)
- c) Physical risk (N/A)
- d) Sensitive questions (yes)
- e) Benefits to be derived (yes)
- f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study (yes)
- g) Confidential handling of data (yes)
- h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved (N/A)

4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)

- a) from study participants (yes)
- b) from parents or guardian (N/A)
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? (yes)

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

- a) Proposal (yes)
- b) Consent Form (yes)
- c) Questionnaire or interview schedule (yes)

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the role of play in promoting socioemotional well-being among children aged three to five, based on the perspectives of parents in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Drawing on interviews with eight parents (four mothers and four fathers), the research investigates how parents understand, facilitate, and face challenges in implementing play pedagogy. Thematic analysis revealed that while parents widely recognize play as beneficial for emotional expression, confidence-building, and social skills, many are unfamiliar with formal concepts such as "play pedagogy." Participants emphasized the emotional bond formed through play, the development of empathy and cooperation, and the importance of peer interaction. However, time constraints, work pressures, and lack of resources were commonly cited barriers to active engagement in play. The study is grounded in theories by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson, highlighting play's centrality in cognitive, social, and emotional development. Findings suggest that enhancing parental awareness and structural support for play could improve children's socioemotional outcomes and overall well-being.

Keywords: play pedagogy; socioemotional development; early childhood; parental involvement; qualitative research; Bangladesh

Dedication:

This research study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my grandmother. Also, my parents for whom I had a wonderful childhood.

Acknowledgement:

This Research study is a combine result of unweaving support, encouragement and guidance of many people who have helped me complete this paper.

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Chapter I

Introduction & Background

Introduction

“Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play, children learn how to learn,” remarked O. Fred Donaldson, emphasizing the transformative power of play in a child’s life. Play is not just a leisure activity but a vital component of childhood that significantly contributes to socioemotional development. Play is a key part of how young children grow and learn. It helps them develop their thinking, physical abilities, and social and emotional skills (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010). Every child’s physical, emotional, and social development depends on play. Youngsters consider play unrestricted and perceive to play with everyone and practically anywhere (Glenn, Knight, Holt & Spence, 2013). Through play, children learn to express emotions, build social skills, and develop resilience, which are essential for their overall well-being (Ginsburg, 2007). For children aged three to five, play is especially crucial as it lays the groundwork for emotional regulation, empathy, and the ability to form meaningful relationships (Yogman et al., 2018). According to Garvey (1990, p. 5), play is typically defined in psychology and child development literature as a variety of voluntary, intrinsically driven behaviors that are typically connected to recreational pleasure and satisfaction. It is generally acknowledged that play benefits children’s development, especially in the early years, and that play is most frequently connected to children (Howard, Bellin & Reese, 2002, p. 3). Preschoolers greatly benefit from play as it provides them with opportunities to explore and understand their environment, express a wide range of emotions, develop problem-solving abilities, and learn how to collaborate and cooperate with others (Babuc, 2015).

Child development begins at home, where parents engage with their children through everyday interactions like talking, playing, maintaining eye contact, and physical touch. These activities foster a strong and nurturing connection between parents and children (Schafer, S. K. et al., 2020). Parents significantly influence children's physical and psychological development, highlighting the importance of understanding their views on the role of play in socioemotional growth. Examining parents' perspectives provides valuable insights into how play can be effectively utilized to enhance children's overall well-being and development.

Statement of the Problem

While play is generally recognized as an essential part of early childhood development, very little research exists that examines parents as having an understanding of and endeavor to use play to advance children's social and emotional development (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010). Parents play a pivotal role in this type of play opportunity provision, yet the role of parents' understanding and implementation of play-based approaches is under research. This misunderstanding prevents the development of viable policies and practices to support parents to create enriching play areas (Burriss & Tsao, 2002). Although structured learning and free play are both key aspects of developing socioemotional skills, with many parents it is hard to attain a balance between the two. Parents are usually in a disadvantage to balance this kind of activity since they are time and resource limited and highly focused on academic success. The emphasis on academia (Faas et al., 2017) is mostly left to parents who find it hard to strike a balance between structured learning and free play (Emslie & Mesle, 2009). Emslie & Mesle, 2009).

There is a lack of comprehension regarding parent's perception of play-based learning, which raises serious issues. Results related to the psychological and socioemotional development of the children may be affected. Many parents found it challenging to organize thoughtful play sessions that help

children's emotional growth. adequate assistance, direction, or rather responsibility when it comes to their children's emotional regulation, social skills, and coping". (Johnson et al., 2019). In addition, lack of relevant focus on play can intensify socioemotional developmental problems, which affect children's school performance and relationship with others (Lester & Russell, 2010). To resolve these problems the need of enhanced parents' views on play understanding for the creation of relevant interventions, and educational programs for building children's holistic development is evident.

The importance of play is supported by international and national agreements. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stresses every child obtains the right to play and recreational activities. Likewise, Bangladesh's Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy 2013 emphasizes the significance of play and early learning activities for the development of children in the basis of socioeconomic level. Play teaches children necessary critical skills including executive functioning, empathy, emotional resilience, and self-control which are integral to socioemotional growth (Aquino et al. 2019). Unlike play, Vygotsky (1966) believed play is not only an activity but also an important phase of the early childhood development process, making possible for children to socialize with their environment and social surroundings. Research also finds that play-based learning in preschool programs makes a huge difference in children's emotional and social development (White & Walker, 2018). Parents help to set the ground for children's physical, mental and emotional development with love and care (Cobham et al., 2016; Bolghan-Abadi et al., 2011). However, most parents do not know how crucial play is in promoting language, social, emotional, and physical development (San et al., 2021). Although there are some studies that suggest parents have positive perceptions about play-based engagement (Sultana, 2023), there is little information to show parents' perception(s) regarding play in the socioemotional growth

of children between the ages 3 and 5 years. This gap is sought to be filled by this study where we plan to find out how parents perceive and believe about play, and how it affects the socioemotional development of children.

Purpose of the study

The introduction discusses the significant role of play and play-based engagement in holistic development of children with especial focus upon the socioemotional development and the importance of parents' involvement in play. From the problem statement, it is evident that, although the importance of play has been understood in both international and national spheres of influence, many parents still lack adequate knowledge of the benefits of play. There is also a need to find out how the parents perceive play and its relation in the socioemotional development of children. Thus, the goal of this research was to explore parents' understanding of play and determine how play enhances the socioemotional development of children.

Significance of the study

Such justification for this study is attributed to the centrality in socioemotional development played by play by children, particularly of three to five years. Play is commonly thought to be one of the pillars of early childhood development but the literature examining how parents understand and utilize play to help their children grow is sparse (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010). Parents are important facilitators of play, however the understanding and adoption of play-based approaches to learning are largely unexplored. This gap of knowledge constrains formulation of appropriate policies and practices that could help parents design an enriched play setting (Burriss & Tsao, 2002). This study is of great importance since it may portray significant insights regarding parents' views of play and its effects on children's socioemotional development. Using the knowledge of how parents

perceive play, the problems that they encounter and the ways they address those challenges, the present research could help the development of targeted interventional programming and educational initiatives. These initiatives can help parents shape the children's emotional regulation, social skills, and general well being.

In addition, the study is consistent with global and national frameworks that focus on the importance of play. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 takes play as a basic right. Bangladesh's Comprehensive Early Childhood Care, on the other hand, comprehends play as a basic right. and Development (ECCD) Policy 2013 identifies play as the thing that shapes children's development. By in consideration with no awareness and resources among parents, this research can add to environs in which any children irrespective of the socioeconomic status they come from can access meaningful play opportunities.

Research Questions

In order to guide this study, the following questions have been developed:

- Followed by parents' description and implications of the concept of play-based learning, children's social and emotional growth?
- How do parents assist and encourage their children's play?
- What challenges do parents face in supporting play pedagogy?

Operational Definition

Play Pedagogy: What the parents use as strategies, methods, and practice in supporting and enabling play in the lives of children, intended to promote learning, emotional regulation, social interaction and all others. development. (Nicholson & Hendry, 2022).

Socioemotional Wellbeing: Capability of children to grasp and regulate their emotions, develop a commodity for healthy relationships and good at coping with social and emotional issues. (Moreira et al., 2014).

Parental Support: Parents support their children's play by providing time, space, and resources, creating an environment for exploration and interaction. They also offer emotional and cognitive guidance, helping with problem-solving and encouraging creativity. This involvement helps children develop emotionally and mentally (Kernan, 2)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical framework:

To appreciate the contribution of play to children's socioemotional development, there has to be a strong theoretical framework. According to the Cognitive Development Theory by Piaget, play is a crucial aspect of cognitive advancement in that children can adapt old conceptual frameworks or acquire new knowledge based on their interactions in the child's milieu (Jansen, 2011). Play is dynamic for Piaget and progresses in various stages, as the child grows and develops higher-order thinking and cognitive skills, play sharpens reasoning, problem-solving and even logical reasoning

(Babakr, Mohamedamin and Kakamad, 2019). This theory into limelight play's role in enhancing cognitive operations that lead to socioemotional wellness through critical thinking to adapt.

On the other hand, according to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, play is a social activity and pointed out that cognitive development depends on social context and social mediational means (Scott and Palincsar, 2013). Vygotsky establishes that parents and teachers have to help children during their play, thus moderating play and providing them with social and emotional development benefits (Edwards, 2014). This perspective fits well with the notion that through play children develop language competence and learn and understand how to share and interact with others, important for socioemotional development.

Another theory that adds to the theoretical framework is Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory which emphasises the combination of growth, in the form of the individual and interaction with society (Maree, 2022). According to Erikson, play is especially relevant at several developmental stages where it helps the child overcome different psychosocial crises and develop positive qualities like assertiveness, skilfulness, or self-identity (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). In the play, children can explore social hierarchies, build self-esteem, and learn coping strategies which have a great impact on personal and social well-being. Combined, these three theories give an understanding of how play affects different dimensions of socio-emotional development, and the key focus is the cognitive, social, and affective domains.

2.2 Parents' Perspective on Play

Notably, parents are influential in their children's play experiences due to the basic roles they have within families, and, therefore, their perceptions of play pedagogy are central to deciphering the aspect of play about children's socioemotional health. Parents' conceptions of play as pedagogy are diverse and depend on cultural, social, and individual backgrounds. According to Moon-Seo and Munsell

(2022), parents view play pedagogy as a conscious approach to learning and development where educational objectives are incorporated into play. Kernan (2010) also mentioned that parents regard play as a critical segment of childhood that enables friends-making and social relatedness which speaks volumes about Parenting with a holistic perspective.

Huang (2013) conducted a study on Chinese parents' perception, and it was found that for Chinese parents, play is a mode of fun as a tool for learning with skills and competencies to facilitate academic success and or social skills. This duality evident in the understanding of play shows how it is both fun to engage in as well as have positive outcomes for children in the future according to the parents. Warash, Root and Doris (2020) share a comparative analysis of spousal views where, although some parents organise play in order to acquire knowledge others insist on free play to develop imagination and to release feelings. Such differences suggest that parents' conceptions of play pedagogy are influenced by their desired outcomes for their children's socioemotional and cognitive development. Parents also play a significant role in providing time, resources, and emotional support for play. According to Nicholson and Hendry (2022), parents play a significant role in managing and modelling their kids through exploration and cooperation play. Dockett (2010) stresses the importance of the parents' engagement to play for development as it is construed when they join in games or supply tools. Wood (2009, 2014) writes further that parents' attitudes about play, including expectations and support for play across domains, shape children's possible experiences for socio-emotional development. Through encouraging a positive and stimulating play context, parents contribute to the child's socioemotional development, including aspects of sociability, self-regulation, and coping.

2.3 Socioemotional Wellbeing of Children through Play Pedagogy

Socioemotional benefits of play are described by many researchers as well as its effect on children's ability to regulate emotions and engage with peers. In a doctoral dissertation by Win and Nwe (2020),

it was determined that structured and unstructured play positively contribute towards the social skills of young children specifically in peer relations, emotional regulation, and perspective taking skills. Similarly, Szumski, Smogorzewska and Karwowski (2016) evaluated the "Play Time/Social Time" programme, which demonstrated that structured play interventions lead to measurable improvements in children's social competencies and emotional stability.

A study by Chinekesh et al. (2013) found that group play therapy helps preschool children develop social and emotional skills such as cooperation, resolving conflicts, and expressing their feelings.

Building on this, Moreira et al. (2014) looked at how play helps develop social and emotional skills, and they found that it has long-lasting benefits for children, helping them build healthy relationships and manage their emotions better as they grow. Collectively, these studies emphasize the significance of play in helping children build essential social and emotional skills, which are crucial for their mental well-being and overall development.

Moreover, Keller (2020) adds another theoretical perspective to children's socioemotional development across cultures as play is named the key means used by children for facing various social and emotional problems. Brownell and Kopp (2007) describe transformations in transitions relating to toddler socioemotional development and they note that in play activities, children can learn and transfer from one developmental level to another. Such evidence supports the idea that play is crucial in the socioemotional development domain, for enhancing the enhanced personal and social skills of learners.

2.4 Challenges in Supporting Play

While play is known to have positive effects, parents face many challenges in using play to support their children's social and emotional development. Factors like limited time due to busy schedules and long working hours make it hard for parents to engage in play with their children (Hedges & Cooper,

2018). Additionally, a lack of play resources, suitable spaces, and appropriate play equipment makes it difficult for parents to create good play environments (Burriss & Tsao, 2002). Societal pressures that emphasize academics over play also add to the difficulty, causing parents to focus more on schoolwork than on allowing their children to play (Emslie & Mesle, 2009).

A significant challenge is the growing use of digital media, which often replaces traditional forms of play and reduces opportunities for children to engage in face-to-face interactions with others (Edwards, 2014). As technology becomes more integrated into children's daily routines, it tends to limit physical and imaginative play, which are essential for developing key social and emotional skills that support their overall growth (Wood & Chesworth, 2003). In addition, cultural norms and varying parenting styles can lead to confusion or conflict about the importance of play in children's development. This makes it challenging for parents to effectively encourage play-based learning and ensure their children gain all the benefits of play (Johnson, 2014).

To mitigate these challenges, parents use different approaches and techniques to manage the situation. According to Faas, Wu and Geiger (2017), another way through which parents can balance the issue of time is by incorporating play into everyday activities and ensuring that children engage in structured play at the local playground or from programmes that are offered by parent associations. Wood and Chesworth (2003) support the concept of home and affordance for children to access a variety of play materials and safe places to engage. Moreover, parent education sessions such as workshops and support groups can help parents gain knowledge and skills in providing an optimal mixture of both planned and free play for their children to promote early childhood development (Haley et al., 2002). Furthermore, it is important to inform a cultural change where play can be viewed as a vital part of the child's learning process in a bid to do away with the existing social pressures that go against play activity pedagogy as pointed out by Wood (2009). Through a systematic spread of the importance of socio-emotional well-being through play, and offering practical science-backed tips, parents can be

encouraged to play without elaborate guilt or obligation to adhere to academized standards (Moon-Seo and Munsell, 2022). Using technology in an integrated manner that encompasses the use of technologies while not negating appliance-based play can also help overcome the problems brought about by digital media (Edwards, 2014).

Since there are so many barriers that parents encounter in their efforts to support play pedagogy, it is possible to increase their ability to support play through carefully planned and sensitive measures. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the benefits of play in supporting children's social and emotional development, ultimately leading to healthier and more resilient children.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design:

To explore the diverse perspectives, beliefs, understandings, and ideologies of parents regarding play as a tool for promoting the socioemotional development of children aged three to five, this study adopted a qualitative research design. As Creswell (2012) highlights, qualitative research is particularly effective for delving into complex issues and gaining an in-depth understanding of a central phenomenon. Therefore, employing this approach was essential for investigating the core aspects of the topic.

3.2 Research Site:

The study was conducted in different areas of Dhaka city, naming Uttara, Bashundhara, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur and Gulshan for the convenience of collecting data for the study.

3.3 Research Participants:

Eight parents were selected from different areas in Dhaka city who have children aged 3-5 years old for this study. Eight IDI were conducted individually with each of the participant.

3.4 Sampling/Participants Selection Procedure:

For this study, parents were selected purposefully from different areas of Dhaka city. Eight parents

from both genders (4 mothers and 4 fathers) who have children aged 3-5 years old were selected through researcher's convenience.

3.5 Data Collection Tools:

This Research focuses on three key areas: how parents engage with their children aged 3-5 years through play, their perspectives on how play promotes socio-emotional development, and the challenges they face while playing with their children. Semi-structured in-depth interview guidelines served as the primary data collection tool. These guidelines were prepared and reviewed by an academic expert to ensure their relevance and accuracy. To enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument, a pilot interview was conducted, and the guidelines were subsequently reviewed and revised based on the feedback.

3.6 Data Collection Method and Procedure

Data were collected through in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted in Bengali, the participants' native language, to ensure clarity and comfort. Each interview took approximately 45 to 60 minutes. and was recorded audibly with the consent of the participants. Calm interviews were carried out. private setting in order to give open & honest responses. During each interview the recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.7 Data Management and Analysis

In this study, the data was organized and analyzed through the content analysis method. The process started with transcribing and marshaling the recorded Bengali interviews into written format, which were then translated in English to suit thesis requirements. The transcripts were after extensive review, < annotated, combined, and stored electronically. Subsequently, the data was made familiar

through repeated reading in order to understand the participants' responses to the fullest extent.

Coding came after where parts of the text were coded in order to systematically identify key themes and patterns. Finally, the coded data was analyzed in order to be able to develop overarching themes, summarizing the primary idea and the insights from the participants' experiences. This organized approach guaranteed a clear and effective, step by step analysis of the data.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations were important in this study. Prior to the research, ethical authorization) must be obtained. was obtained for the purpose of insisting on adherence of the study with set guidelines. All participants provided and what they were doing, they were informed consent, which means fully educated on the purpose of the study as well as the procedures involved. their rights prior agreeing to participate. Respondents were assured that their answers would staying confidential and they could drop out of the study at any time without any consequences. Additionally, real names were not used on the bestowal of pseudonyms for greater protection. data analysis and reporting. Furthermore, all gathered data (interview recordings and transcripts, were kept safe so that there is no access by unauthorized persons and confidentiality is maintained. These measures were held for maintaining ethical standards and the trust of participants all through the research process.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

The objective of this research is to explore parents' perspectives on play and play pedagogy and its role in fostering children's socioemotional development. Data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews with eight participants. Based on the primary research questions, six key themes were identified from the data. The demographic details of the participants are presented below:

Participant No	Gender	Age	Qualification	Occupation	Location
1	Male	38	MBA	Businessman	Gulshan
2	Female	35	MBA	Teacher	Bashundhara
3	Male	32	Post Graduation	Engineer	Uttara
4	Female	30	BDS	Housewife	<u>Uttara</u>
5	Female	33	MBBS	Govt. Officer	Shantinagar
6	Male	45	PHD	Professor	Bashundhara
7	Male	38	MBA	Service Holder at MNC	Mohammadpur
8	Male	36	Masters	Unemployed (Break)	Mohammadpur

Table 1: Details of the participants

In this table, it is shown that there are 4 mothers and 4 fathers, altogether 8 parents or participants in this study. The participants were from various areas like Uttara, Bashundhara, Gulshan.

Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi. The participants have at least one child whose age is between three to five. The findings, derived from in-depth interviews, revealed five major themes that highlight the significance of play in fostering children's socioemotional development. These themes are discussed below:

Findings:

Theme 1: Parents Understanding of Play and Play Pedagogy

The Interview data showed that all the parents have a basic understanding of play but the term “play pedagogy’ they are not familiar with. They shared that they understand the importance of play and how play can be a medium of learning for their children. The participants expressed their efforts to engage in various types of play with their children, varying in frequency and duration. They also described the ways in which they interacted with their children during playtime. This theme can be categorized into three sub-themes, as outlined below:

Sub Theme-1: Parents’ Understanding of Play

The in-depth interviews with parents showed that almost all the parents had some kind of knowledge about playing. One Participant shared that “*Play is the most basic thing for children in their childhood. It is the most natural way for them to learn something also for their overall development it is the most essential thing in their childhood era.*” (IDI#3, 20.02.25).

Many participants regarded play as an essential tool for learning. One participant explained, “*Learning happens significantly through play, often unconsciously. So far, all my child’s learning has occurred through various forms of interaction. For example, recognizing alphabets, pictures, and animal names has been achieved through activities like playing, solving puzzles, or assembling Lego. Additionally, while listening to stories, he can visualize and imagine how events unfold*” (IDI#4, 23.02.25)

On the other hand, one of the participants was very stressed about playing about his children. She said, *“I played a lot when I was a child. Even I played a lot when I was a teenage also, I was engaged with sports in my university. Still, I feel depressed in my life in many times, in every other day I do not feel good about work and life. Here my children having no playful time in his childhood at outside with the nature. He gets to play only at home with his toys. And I don’t think it’s enough for them.so I am very worried about their mental health in the future.”* (IDI#5, 28.02.25)

Sub-theme 2: The Significance of Play in Parents’ Eyes

This subtheme highlights how parents view play as a crucial element in their children’s socio-emotional development. Parents emphasized that play helps children learn essential skills such as socialization, communication, and emotional expression. For example, one participant shared, *“Play is incredibly important for my child’s development. Through play, he learns how to interact with others, express his feelings, and solve problems. It’s not just fun—it’s a way for him to grow and understand the world”*. (IDI#2 15.02.25)

Another parent highlighted the importance of peer interaction, stating, *“Playing with other children is essential. My son becomes more confident and social when he interacts with his peers. These experiences teach him how to share, cooperate, and navigate different social situations, which I can’t teach him at home”* (IDI#04, 23.02.25).

One parent shared, *“Play is how my child learns best. For example, when we play with building blocks, he’s not just stacking them—he’s learning about balance, shapes, and problem-solving. It’s amazing to see how much he absorbs through play”* (IDI#02,15.02.25). One parent shared, *“Playing with my child is our special time together. Whether we’re drawing or playing a board game, it’s a chance for us to connect and have fun. She’s always so happy and excited during playtime, and it strengthens our bond”*. (IDI#07, 08.03.2025).

Participants also shared that playing with other children is beneficial for expressing their needs and language development. A parent shared, *“Playing with other children has helped my daughter improve her language skills. For example, during pretend play, she picks up new words and phrases from her friends. It’s amazing how much her vocabulary has grown through play”* (IDI#05, 28.02.25)

Sub-Theme:3 Parental Involvement in Playtime

Nearly all participants reported engaging in a variety of play activities with their children. These included playing with small toys, drawing, coloring, hide-and-seek, printing from computers and coloring the object, making pop up books and other similar games. One participant shared that *“We play mostly at home with toys. Sometimes we color animals. My child loves to color animals. Also, we play solved puzzles, with blocks, ball-ball and hide and seek. (IDI#5, 28.02.2025)”*

One of the participants shared that he and his child are into imaginary play or role-playing play. He said, *“When I get some free time in the weekend I take my son to the grocery with me, there we collected things together, I let him pick some of his favorite things too. He enjoys it a lot. And after we get home love to play a super shop activity game with me where he plays as a cashier, and I would take things from him, and he will give me a receipt. In the game he normally gives a blank paper pretending it is the receipt. Also, sometimes we play restaurant game where he is a chef and I had to make an order from him then he pretends to make the food and serve me”* (IDI#6, 04.03.2025)

One parent shared that She hardly could play with her children as she works outside so she had to stay outside for 8-10 hours a day, but she tries to interact with her child every other day. She shared, *“As I cannot give them time to play with them, but I always talk with them like “what did he do all day? Did he play with the car? What did he eat? And many other things. I try to tell them story in the bedtime but in many days, I got tired, but I try to tell at least one story at night”* (IDI#7 08.03.2025)

All participants acknowledged that they were unable to dedicate much time to playing with their children due to work commitments, household responsibilities, or other obligations. However, they emphasized that they tried to spend some quality time with their children whenever possible. Many mentioned dedicating more time to play on weekends. One participant shared, *“I play with him every day. On weekdays, I play at night. We play before bedtime, and even during brushing time. For example, he loves to play with water, so he puts his brush in a bowl of water and plays with it, though I usually don’t allow him to play with water”* (IDI#04, 23-02-2025)

Another participant shared that, *“I cannot play with them at home as I have office and had to spend a lot of time there but in the weekend or holiday, I try to take my kids out and play with them outside. Most we play running, bat-ball etc.”* (IDI#7 08.03.2025)

Theme 2: Parents’ Understanding of Socioemotional Development

Sub-theme 1: Parents’ Understanding of Social Development

This theme highlights parents’ awareness of the importance of social skills in their children’s overall development. During the in-depth interviews, it became evident that nearly all parents had a strong understanding of their children’s social and socioemotional development. They emphasized that key aspects of social and emotional development include learning how to interact with others, behave appropriately, share, regulating emotions, and building friendships. For instance, one parent shared, *“Social development, to me, is about teaching my child how to communicate with others, share their toys, and form meaningful connections with peers. But it’s also about helping them understand their feelings and manage emotions—like frustration or excitement—in a healthy way. These skills are essential for their growth and ability to navigate social situations.”* (IDI#2, 15.02.2025).

Another participant added, *“I believe socioemotional development is about helping my child understand how to be kind, cooperative, and respectful when interacting with others, whether they are*

adults or children their age. It also means teaching them to recognize and express their emotions appropriately.” (IDI#05, 28.02.25). This theme highlights parents’ awareness of the importance of both social and emotional skills in their children’s overall development.

One participant emphasized that a child’s development is significantly influenced by family, family environment, and genetics. They shared, *“I believe a child’s social and emotional growth depends a lot on the family and the environment they grow up in. Genetics also plays a major role. For example, some children are naturally more outgoing, while others are shy, and this often comes from their genetic makeup. However, the family environment shapes how these traits are expressed. If a child grows up in a supportive and nurturing environment, they are more likely to develop confidence, emotional resilience, and social skills, regardless of their natural tendencies.” (IDI#1, 02.02.25).* This perspective highlights the interplay between nature and nurture in a child’s development, underscoring the importance of both genetic factors and the family’s role in fostering emotional and social competencies.

One participant believed that for children aged 3–5 years, the ability to communicate, interact with other kids, and manage emotions is enough for their socioemotional development. They said, *“At this age, social and emotional development means being able to interact with other children and handle basic feelings like sharing, taking turns, or dealing with frustration. That’s all we should expect. We can’t expect kids to act like adults. If a child can interact well with others, share, express their emotions in a healthy way, and learn to be social instead of aggressive, that’s what’s most important. I try to teach my son these skills—how to interact with other kids, be kind, and understand his own emotions.” (IDI#07, 08.03.2025).*

Sub-theme 2: Parents’ Understanding of Emotional Development

This subtheme explores how parents perceive emotional development in their children. Participants shared their views on what emotional development means and how it manifests in young children.

Many A lot of parents described emotional development as one's being able to express and understand and manage. emotions appropriately. For instance, one participant outlined it as "Emotional development is understanding and the expression of emotions of the child according to the age. It also includes controlling emotions and the proper way to them". (IDI#07 ,08.03.2025) Another parent underscored on the need for a family environment with support, "Family environment is very important. Emotional development is about the liberation with which a child can express or write the feelings. emotions—whether at home or outside. The family will have to give room for the expression of the child by their feelings without fear" (IDI#2, 15.02.25). One participant reported that, "I teach my child how others are feeling. For example, if his I ask my friend, 'How do you think your friend feels? What are you able do to support it?' This helps to help him learn emotional sensitivity and empathy" (IDI#7, 08.03.2025), reported one of the participants, "I use stories to instruct my child about emotions. For example, when we read a book about a character who feels sad or scared, I inquire of my child how they feel the character will do. feels and what they might do in order to feel better. This is useful in her ability to understand and empathize with others'. emotions" (IDI#2, 15.02.2025)

Some parent associated emotional development with certain behaviours including regulating anger or showing empathy. A participant said "Emotional development is a process of controlling your anger. *If my child can hold back his emotions when he doesn't get what he wants, that's progress. For example, if he cries or screams less when he's upset, it shows he's learning to manage his feelings*" (IDI#1, 02.02.25). Another parent highlighted the importance of teaching empathy through play, stating, "*When my daughter plays with others and learns to share or wait for her turn, she's developing emotional skills like empathy and patience. These are important for her growth*" (IDI#7, 08.03.25).

Additionally, most of the parents recognized that emotional development is a gradual process influenced by both genetics and environment. One participant shared, *“I think emotional development is partly genetic. For example, my two sons have different temperaments—one is calm, and the other is more emotional. But how we guide them at home also plays a big role in how they learn to handle their feelings”* (IDI#1, 02.02.25)

Overall, parents viewed emotional development as a critical aspect of their children’s growth, emphasizing the importance of a supportive environment, parental guidance, and opportunities to express and manage emotions through play and daily interactions.

Theme 3: Parents’ Understanding of Importance of Play for Socioemotional Development

All parents unanimously shared that their children experience immense joy and excitement when they engage in play or spend quality time together. One participant vividly described her child’s reaction, stating, *“My daughter becomes incredibly excited when I play with her. We often play games like Ludo, which might seem simple, but she absolutely loves it. The images on the board, like the snake, spark her curiosity and lead to fun conversations about animals. She’s always eager to keep playing, moving from one game to another, and it’s clear how much she enjoys these moments”* (IDI#07,08.03.25)

Parents emphasized that play strengthens their emotional connection with their children. One participant shared, *“Playing with my son before bedtime is our special time. We build blocks together, and he’s always so happy and excited. It’s not just about the game—it’s about the connection we build during those moments”* (IDI#5, 28.03.25).

Another participant who is a working mother shared *“As I can not give him time the whole day, so bedtime storytelling is his favourite time of the day with me. Its not just about story but also our time*

of our sharing, communication and a mother-son bond time. If any other time I feel tired and not spend time with him before bed he gets very angry in the next day”. (IDI#06 04.03.25)

Another parent shared a similar experience, describing how their child reacts when they are unable to give immediate attention. They explained, “When I’m busy with household chores or work, my daughter becomes very restless and tries different ways to get my attention. For example, if I’m on a phone call, she’ll start talking loudly or bring her toys to me, insisting that I play with her right way. If I ask her to wait, she might start jumping on the couch or pulling things off the shelves to make noise. Once, when I was folding laundry, she grabbed a pile of clothes and threw them around the room, saying, ‘Look, I’m helping you!’ It’s her way of saying, ‘I need your attention now’” (IDI#2, 15.02.25).

Theme 4: Play as a Pathway to Socioemotional Development

This theme discusses the role in which play plays as a vital channel of children’s socio-emotional development. Developing various necessary skills; peer interaction; confidence-building; patience; cooperation; boundary-setting, and social adaptability. This section is also brought out through parents’ observations. a varied number of ways in which play influence emotional resilience, social competence, and interpersonal. understanding in children.

Sub-theme 1: Building Confidence Through Play

Parents noticed that playfulness helps children develop self-confidence and self-achievement. One of the participant shared; when my daughter completes a challenging puzzle or builds a tall tower with It is blocks, she feels so proud that she is. That satisfaction in progress increases her confidence and motivates her to try new things” (IDI#05, 28.02.25). Another parent added, “*Playing sports with his friends has made my son more confident. When he gets first in the run with his friend it gives him a*

fact of confidence by which he feels happy. He seems to be in a very good mood if something happens in school. He eats well at home, doesn't make any trouble.” (IDI#04, 23.02.25)

Sub-theme 2: Developing Patience and Perseverance

Parents highlighted how play teaches children to be patient and persistent. One participant said, *“When my child plays with building blocks, he sometimes gets frustrated if the tower falls. But over time, he's learned to stay calm and try again. This has helped him develop patience and perseverance”* (IDI#1, 02.02.25). Another parent added, *“Playing board games has taught my daughter to wait for her turn and handle delays without getting upset. These are important life skills”* (IDI#5, 28.02.25).

Sub-theme 3: Learning to Share and Cooperate

Parents observed that play teaches children the importance of sharing and working together. One participant explained, *“When my child plays with his friends, he learns to share his toys and take turns. For example, if they're playing with a ball, they decide who gets to kick it first. This helps him understand fairness and cooperation”* (IDI#5, 28.02.25). Another parent shared, *“Playing group games like 'Simon Says' or 'Duck, Duck, Goose' has taught my daughter how to cooperate with others and follow rules”* (IDI#3, 20.02.25).

Sub-theme 4: Learning to Respect Boundaries

Parents highlighted how play serves as a valuable tool for teaching children to understand and respect boundaries, both their own and those of others. Through play, children learn to navigate social rules, respect personal space, and adapt to different situations. Below are broader insights and examples from parents: Parents observed that group play helps children learn to respect the preferences and boundaries of their peers. One participant shared, *“When my son plays with his friends, he learns to respect their choices. For example, if his friend doesn't want to play soccer and prefers hide-and-seek instead, he understands that they need to agree on a game everyone enjoys. This teaches him to be considerate and flexible”* (IDI#1, 02.02.25).

Parents also noted that play helps children learn to respect boundaries within the family. One participant explained, *“When I’m busy with work or household chores, my son knows he has to wait until I’m free to play with him. At first, he would interrupt me constantly, but over time, he’s learned to be patient and respect my time. It’s a sign that he’s understanding boundaries”* (IDI#02, 15.02.25).

Sub-theme 5: Social Interaction Through Play

All parents agreed that play is a crucial way for children to learn and practice social interaction. Through play, children develop essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and building relationships. For example, one participant shared, *“When my son plays with others, he learns how to interact and communicate. I’ve noticed that he and his friends often form small teams of two or three children and work together during games. This is how he learns teamwork, and it’s where his social development begins”* (IDI#03, 20.02.25).

Another parent shared a similar experience, emphasizing how limited play opportunities affected their child’s social development. They explained, *“My daughter struggled to adapt socially because she didn’t have many chances to play with other children during her early years. We lived in a remote area where there weren’t many kids her age, and she spent most of her time playing alone or with adults. Entering preschool, she struggled very much to relate with her peers. She would infrequently play alone during play time and were unsure of how to become a part of group activities. The teachers noticed that she was reluctant to share toys, or take turns, and which therefore made it difficult for her to make friends as well. As time went by, we realized that her ignorance of group play had put her socially behind. To help with her, we began organizing playdates, and more often, taking her to the park. Gradually, she began to open up and interact with other children, but it took a lot of effort and time. This experience taught me the importance of the play in assisting the children socialize and develop relationships* (IDI#07, 08.03.25).

This example, like the previous one, highlights the significant impact of play on children's social development. It shows how limited opportunities for peer interaction can lead to challenges in adapting to social environments, while also underscoring the importance of creating opportunities for children to engage in play with others.

Theme 5: Challenges in Parental Engagement

This theme explores the difficulties parents face in engaging in their children's play due to various constraints. Despite recognizing the importance of play, many parents struggle to balance their responsibilities with the need to spend quality playtime with their children. Below are the subthemes and examples that emerged from the data:

Sub-theme 1: Time Constraints

One of the most common challenges parents face is finding time to engage in play due to busy schedules. One participant shared, *"I want to play with my son every day, but it's hard to find the time. Between work, household chores, and other responsibilities, I often feel like I don't have enough hours in the day. On weekdays, I can only manage to play with him for a short while before bedtime"* (IDI#7, 08.03.25). Another parent added, *"Even on weekends, when I have more free time, there's always something that needs to be done. It's a constant struggle to balance everything and still make time for play"* (IDI#4, 23.02.25).

Sub-theme 2: Managing Siblings or Multiple Children

Parents who have more than one child tend not to divide their time evenly. One participant explained, *"I have two children and it's hard for me to play with them simultaneously. The older one wants to play more complicated games whereas the younger one needs easier activities. It's a challenge to keep both of them happy and engaged"* (IDI#2, 15.02.25). Another parent said, *"When I play with one*

results in the other feeling left out and frustrated. It is hard to manage their needs, ensure that everyone feels included” (IDI#8, 10.03.25).

Sub-theme 3: Balancing Work and Play

Parents who work long hours or hold demanding jobs are normally unable to play. One participant said, I work full time; by the time I get home, I’m exhausted. My child wants to play, but I do not usually have the energy. I’m guilty of it, but it’s a reality that I must cope with” (IDI#8, 08.03.25). Another parent told: “Even if I work from home it’s extremely difficult for me to give my child the attention they need. They want me to play but I need to concentrate on my job. It’s a constant juggling act” (IDI#05, 28.02.25)

4.2 Discussion

The research provides valuable reflections of parents’ views about the role of play in their children’s social and emotional development, and the challenges in living an active life of engagement in their children’s play. The themes and subthemes of the data indicate the various ways in which the process of play is of great importance in the development of children’s emotional, social and cognitive development. The following discussion considers the major findings and their position in a broader context.

Parents’ Understanding of Play:

Most parents in the case exhibited an understanding of what play is and why it is important. Many parents especially described what play involves and emphasized its importance. They shared various benefits of play, with all participants agreeing that play is an excellent way for children to learn alphabets, numbers, animal names, and more. Additionally, they noted that storytelling or reading

books helps children develop their imagination and language skills. According to a phenomenological study by Abdolmaleki et al. (2023), most parents viewed play as a means to achieve developmental and academic goals, recognizing its potential to foster growth and learning.

All parents acknowledged the importance of engaging in play with their children. They emphasized that their involvement in play helps children develop essential skills, such as communication, and that a lack of parental engagement could hinder a child's development. Some parents pointed out that through play, children build strong emotional bonds with their parents, gain confidence, and learn good behavior, manners, and values. A study by Rahman et al. (2019) supported this, finding that playing with parents not only supports children's learning and growth but also allows them to have fun. The study also highlighted that during their early years, children learn more from their parents than from anyone else in society.

To better understand parental engagement through play, all parents made efforts to spend time with their children almost every day. They engaged in various activities, such as playing hide-and-seek, ball games, Ludo, Uno, football, and more. Some parents also read storybooks, drew, or colored with their children. These activities not only provided opportunities for learning but also strengthened the parent-child relationship.

Parents' Perception of Play in Socioemotional Development

Play was unequivocally identified as a powerful instrument for developing socio-emotional by parents across the board. development in children. They discovered that the play is a natural and effective means in which children get to express emotions, acquire sociological skills, learn empathy, and handle challenges. For example, playing pretend enables children to rehearse situations which manifest their own feelings and experiences, in aiding them to deal with complex feelings like fear or anger or sadness. Such type of play offers a safe place for kids to discover and vent their emotions that is

important for emotional regulation and self-awareness. Group play, however, instructs children essential skills in socializing like sharing, cooperating, etc. and conflict resolution. Children when playing with one another learn how to manage social dynamics and take One must be a part of turns and work as a team. Such interactions provide children with development of social competence and construction of meaningful relationships with their peers. Such findings agree with prior research that emphasizes. roles that play plays in improving emotional regulation, social competencies and resilience in children. According to Ginsburg (2007), play provides children with an opportunity to train their skills to control their emotions and<|AI>Ginsburg (2007) notes that play gives children an opportunity of practicing the management of their emotions and. Responding to social cues in a low stress situation. In the same way, Yogman et al. (2018) determined that. play developing creativity and problem-solving; moving adaptability; all are important for the socio-emotional. development. Besides, playing helps children learn empathy and compassion. Through activities like role-playing or playing dolls and stuffed animals, children should learn to perceive others and practice kindness which are integral parts of emotion intelligence. The study also showed the importance of play in enabling children cope with challenges and build. resilience. Through play children are presented with chances to experience failure, including loss in a game or trying to solve a puzzle and learn how to handle these situations. This ability to bounce back socioemotional development involves aspects of overcoming from challenges.

Parental Involvement in Play

The study pointed out that active parental involvement in play has a major role to play in facilitating. children's emotional and social development. Parents who frequently play with their children reported that there was greater emotional bonding, with effective communication resulting. This finding aligns with research that magnifies the impact of parent-child play to create stable attachments Creating

positive relations (Fletcher et al., 2013). But many parents had problems in harmonizing their duties with the necessity for giving quality time to play. Common barriers had time constraints, high work schedules, and the trappings of tending to other children. Such barriers point to the need for flexible work policies and supporting system. that enables the parents to focus on play and strengthen relation with the children.

The Impact of Limited Play Opportunities

The experiences of parents with children with scarce opportunities for play mainly during such times as the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emphasis is on how important play is to children's social and emotional development. Children that were isolated from society or lacked contact with fellow peers in most times encountered difficulties at mastering social skills, their emotions, controlling and gaining confidence. These problems were however obvious in cases where children were not involved in a group. an outdoor play or a type of activities, which are vital for the development of social relationships and emotional toughness. These results are congruent with studies which emphasize the risks that are associated as a result of social isolation. in the areas of children's mental health and general development. As an example, Loades et al. (2020) realized that long durations of isolation around pandemic brought the rise of anxiety, loneliness, and difficulties. in social interaction among children. During such times, lack of play opportunities can hinder children's prospects of developing valuable life skills such as cooperation, empathy and problem-solving, which normally develop through peer activities and group play.

The study stresses the urgent necessity to ensure that all children, whatever their circumstances, ... enjoy options to play which promote their growth and development. This includes creating places of play that are safe and easily accessible and inclusive play activities and advising parents and Their caregivers, to come first in terms of providing play in children's daily activities. By removing barrier

to play, such as shortage of materials or time or dangerous conditions, we can help children develop the social imprimatur. and emotional competencies required to our best interest & success in future.

In addition the findings underscore the need for community and policy level interventions for this purpose. support play. For instance schools, community centres, and local government could work together to offer a structured play program, outdoor play spaces and resources for families to play at home. Furthermore, awareness about the benefit of play and what it does to children's formation. can help to persuade parents and caregivers to make play one of their priorities, even during difficult times.

Challenges in Parental Engagement

There are a number of barriers that the researchers found that make it hard for parents to play with their children. These include time, resource, monetary constraints respectively. and an absence of confidence in facilitating play activities. Parents living in urban environments especially were faced with. other problems caused by hectic work schedules and shortage of safe and convenient play spaces. For example, parents raised issues such as lack of parks or playgrounds in, for instance. children's access to physical activity and social life in their neighbourhoods, which narrowed their children's opportunities for physical activity and social life thereof interaction.

In order to resolve these challenges collaborative efforts are required on part of the policymakers, communities and employers. Sustaining play and well-being opportunities for children within supportive spheres is essential. It can be in creating safe and cheap play spaces as well as giving flexible work arrangements for parents, and develop resources, or programs that mentor, teach, and guide parents in interacting with their children from play. We can only ensure that all the children can avail themselves of the developmental benefits of play.

Conclusion:

From the findings and discussion of the study, it may be extrapolated that parents, in general, registered strong awareness over play's role in their children's socioemotional development. They considered play to be necessary for growth, linking it with joy, amusement, and pleasure, and were aware that children learn best when activities are interesting. Since parents play a pivotal role in a child's life, understanding their perceptions of play and its impact on socioemotional development are key to empowering them to support their children's growth.

While all parents acknowledged play's significance in fostering emotional skills, there was a minor gap in their detailed understanding of emotional development itself. This is not uncommon, as it is unrealistic to expect all parents to have an in-depth knowledge of the subject.

The study also revealed that parents were relatively well-informed about social development—its meaning, process, and importance. They could identify the necessary factors to nurture socio-emotional growth. However, despite their efforts to dedicate time to their children amid busy work and household schedules, many struggled to apply this knowledge in daily life. Most parents mentioned relying on school environments for their children's social play opportunities. In brief, this study is really important for the socioemotional development of the children who are 3-5 years old, and more studies and researches like this need to be conducted in future to ensure the best positive outcomes from the little champions .

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research and insights from existing literature, addressing the socio-emotional development of children is essential. To create a nurturing environment that supports children's growth, collaboration among key stakeholders—such as parents, Early Childhood

Development (ECD) professionals, and policymakers—is critical. Each group plays a vital role in fostering a supportive atmosphere that prioritizes children’s well-being. The following recommendations outline practical and actionable steps that can help create an environment where children can explore, learn, and thrive.

For Early Childhood Development (ECD) Professionals and Researchers

- ECD professionals and researchers should promote play-based learning in early childhood education to help children grow emotionally, socially, and mentally. They can hold workshops and training to teach parents and caregivers because play is important and give them practical tips for playing with their kids. Creating simple, affordable, and culturally appropriate play materials and guides can also help parents support their children’s development at home. More research is needed to understand how play affects children’s long-term growth in different cultures, income levels, and regions. Working with community groups to create inclusive play programs will ensure that all children, including those in underserved areas, can benefit from these opportunities.

For Policymakers and Urban Planners

- The findings also showed that there was dissatisfaction among the parents for their lack of providing enough time to their children. To encourage the parents, high quality day care or childcare centres might be introduced in a cost-effective way. Strong administration might be developed for quality assurance. Additionally, parents might be able to avail flexible hours both inside and outside of home with these facilities.

- Develop and maintain safe, accessible, and inclusive parks, playgrounds, and community play areas, especially in urban and underserved neighbourhoods.

- Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of play and its role in children's development, targeting parents, educators, and the broader community.

For parents:

- Spend time each day playing with your children, even if it's just for a short while. Simple activities like storytelling, drawing, or using household items for play can be meaningful and fun.
- Help your child interact with others by organizing playdates or visiting parks and community centres. Use everyday objects like boxes or pots to create fun play activities at home and teach values like sharing and empathy through play. Advocate for more play opportunities for children through school, community, and leader partnership development.

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ANNEX -1(A)

In-depth Interview Guideline for Parents

Research Title: The role of play in children's socioemotional development: insights from parents' perspectives.

Section A: Demographic Information

- Name:

- Age:
- Gender:
- Educational Qualification:
- Profession:
- Child's Age:
- Child's Gender:

Section B: Parents' Perception of Play Pedagogy in Socio-emotional Development.

1. Can you please describe your child's daily routine, focusing on play activities?
2. How does your child feel about their play activities? Do they share their experiences with you?
3. What is your understanding of the role of play in your child's life?
4. Do you think they get benefits from playing?
5. Do you think play can be a medium of learning for your child? If yes then how?
6. What can children learn from play?
7. How do you perceive the role of play pedagogy in enhancing children's social skills, such as making friends and effective communication?
8. What are your views on how play-based learning contributes to children's emotional skills, such as self-regulation and coping with emotions?
9. In what ways do parents believe play pedagogy influences children's overall mental well-being and emotional resilience?

Section C: Parents' Role in Supporting Play

10. How do you support your child's play? (E.g., providing materials, allocating time, joining activities, etc.)

11. What do you think are the benefits of your involvement in your child's play?

Section D: Challenges and Barriers in Play Pedagogy

12. What challenges do you face in supporting your child's play? (E.g., time constraints, societal pressures, lack of resources, etc.)

13. Are there any barriers that prevent you from providing adequate play opportunities for your child? If yes, what are they?

14. How do you overcome these barriers? Can you share examples or strategies?

15. Do cultural, societal, or family values influence how you support your child's play? How?

16. How can parents, schools, and organizations work together to enhance children's play experiences and opportunities, and what advice would you give to other parents about the importance of play in a child's development?

ii. Observation Guideline

Name of Child Observed:

Date:

Age:

Settings:

Place:

Gender:

Observation time:

Sample Observation Checklist:

1. Play Type and Interaction:

Is the child engaging in **free play** (unstructured, self-directed), **structured play** (games with rules), or **guided play** (parent-directed activities)?

Is the child engaging in **solitary play** or **social play** (with peers, siblings, or adults)?

How does the child engage with others during social play? (e.g., cooperative, competitive, parallel play)

Is the child engaged in **creative or imaginative play** (e.g., pretending, role-playing)?

- **Emotional Expression:**

What emotions does the child exhibit during play (e.g., joy, frustration, excitement, calmness, or anger)?

Does the child appear happy, frustrated, or upset?

How does the child manage emotional outbursts or disappointments during play?

- ☐ **Parental Interaction with Emotions:**

How does the parent respond when the child experiences emotions such as frustration, sadness, or excitement during play?

Parental Involvement:

Is the parent actively involved in the child's play (e.g., guiding, instructing, playing together)?

Does the parent provide support in navigating social situations during play? (e.g., helping resolve conflicts, encouraging sharing)

Emotional Support:

How does the parent provide emotional support during the play (e.g., comforting, acknowledging feelings)?

Directing Play:

Does the parent structure or guide the play in specific ways (e.g., setting up the environment, providing toys, initiating activities)?

☐ **Play Duration and Quality:**

- How long does the child engage in play without interruption or loss of interest?
- Does the child take breaks or transition from one play activity to another? Are these transitions supported by the parent (e.g., prompting the child, offering alternatives)?