



Effects Of Local Games/Play To The Developmental Milestone Of Children 0 – 5 Years In Some Selected States Of North Western Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The research finds out the effects of effects of local games/plays to the developmental milestone of children 0 – 5 years in some selected states of north western Nigeria. The study also finds out that, child needs parental and early years learning foundation for his future life. Care and education carefully planned and taking care will enhance his potentials. The family home, immediate environment and school are basic for his growth and development. This study investigated the knowledge of the Teachers/Care-givers on the issue of play for play based activities that will help the child acquire skills and appropriate understanding of concept easily. Also for him to attend that, the study explored the child, his family and environment, items and materials available for him to engage in his activities. Thus, various locations in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States were visited and photographs taken of children aged 0 – 5 years at play were documented to find out the domains that are developed from his play and learning experiences. The states visited are inhabited by Hausa, Fulani and Lelna language speakers. The research concludes that the opportunity given to the Nigerian child should be by Teachers and Parents. It is from such play at home and play based activities in school that child will develop and grow his potentials fully for his future profession and endeavors.

Keywords: local games/play, development, milestone of children 0 – 5 years

INTRODUCTION

The current National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria includes one (1) year compulsory Pre-Primary level of Education as a requirement for entry into Public Primary School (NPE 2013:4). It's fundamental and important for Care-givers in Pre-Service and In-Service to have good knowledge and understanding of the importance of play in our natural settings and its relevance to child development milestone in preparing them for school readiness.

Play to the child though sometimes consciously and unconsciously carried out, provide opportunities for learning, this includes Numeracy, Language, Fine and Gross-motor development, life skills, cognitive and socio-emotional developments that are essential for child's growth and development.

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As contained in the Guidelines for implementation of National Early Childhood Policy in Nigeria page 16, made emphasis on Psycho-Social Stimulation and Early Learning for the child through range of Activities, actions and materials employed to engage, activate and enhance the child's interest, brain development, increase and encourage developmental abilities in exploration, inquiry, creativity, problem solving and social skills in his environment.

The Revised Nigerian Certificate in Education Minimum Standards for Early Child Care and Education/Primary Education 2020, contains some courses on the issues of play and the child's learning courses such as:- ECE: 125 – Play and the child's learning; as part of professional practice for pre-service teachers and ECE : 215 – Early Childhood Curriculum and Methods; professional knowledge as well.

The study therefore will develop content that will help Teaching and provision of learning experiences for ECCE, NCE teachers in training for pre-primary schools. Also, the study is in line with the policy of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for lecturers to carryout researches on content areas of the curriculum.

Play way method is one of the methods used in teaching children in the early years. Thus, these current studies on children and play will help to establish the place of play, domains and developmental milestones of child development.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:-

- i. To find out common play/games children engage in.
- ii. To find which domains are affected in line with developmental milestones of the child.

Research questions

- i. What are the common play/games children engage in?
- ii. What domain does each play develop?

Educational Thoughts on Early Childhood Play by Some Great Educators

Fredrich Froebel (1822 – 1890)

- He believed that children need to learn from doing and playing rather than being taught
- Learning should be child-centered
- Started the Kindergarten (Children garden)
- The kindergarten is for children aged 3 – 7 years.
- He encouraged indoor and outdoor pretend play.
- Children learn through exploration and experimenting with materials.
- Encouraged the use of numbers and rhymes.

Maria Montessori

- Worked with poor children in Rome 1900s
- Her approach is structured learning and developed materials that would allow children experience concepts such as shape, size and order.
- Children are more receptive at tender age
- Learning should not work quietly but guided some times by adult
- Structured play can be applied some times.
- Her ideas, materials, equipment, and methodology designed are still popular in Nursery schools in Nigeria.

Piaget's Stages of Play

Age	Type of Play	Common Features of the Stage
0 – 2	Practice or Mastery Play	Children are concentrating on controlling their bodies. Play allow them to explore their bodies, e.g. babies put their feet in their mouth, children are exploring their environment and are keen to see how they can affect it. A child might drop a toy over the edge of the cot or bang a toy against another. Play tends to be repetitive.
3 – 7	Symbolic Play	Children are using language as a means of communication and this is reflected in their play. Children are learning to use symbols in their play. This means that, the child might use a stick to stand for a vehicle or an empty plate might be a car steering or pretend meal on it.
8 – 11	Play with Rules	Children are developing an understanding of rules. They play with board games and devise their own games. They are becoming logical in their thoughts.

In this study, children 0-5 years are captured in his stages of play which adds meaning to piaget thoughts.

Types of Play

Pamela Minetton on Importance of Play (2008)

She believes that children play to derive pleasure an enjoy themselves. Play is also an essential part of child education because as they engage in play; they also learn new experiences. Child should be encouraged to play with other children so as to learn pre-social behaviors. Though, they still need adult attention.

She outlined the benefits of play to the child as follows:

1. Play enables children to find out about themselves and the world. It allows them to:
 - i. Discover
 - ii. Experiment
 - iii. Create
 - iv. Concentrate
 - v. Express ideas
 - vi. Role play
 - vii. Use their imagination
 - viii. Show (like let others know what they can do)
 - ix. Act protectively towards some one less powerful than themselves.
 - x. Develop speech
 - xi. Develop muscles
 - xii. Invent
 - xiii. Learn new skills
 - xiv. Learn how others behave
 - xv. Share possessions
2. Play helps towards happiness:
A child that is absorbed in play is likely to be a happy child, as play provides feelings of satisfaction and achievement.
3. Play helps towards boredom:
Preventing a child from being bored is very important, as boredom can quickly lead to bad temper, irritability and destructiveness.
4. Play can help reduce stress:
The acting out of stressful situations can help them to seem more familiar and therefore less frightening, e.g. playing “schools” a child becomes familiar with the idea of going to school. This

helps him to reduce any nervousness about school which the child might have. In the same way playing 'doctors', 'nurse' or any other profession will help the child in the future.

5. Play can help divert aggressive instincts:

Using a stick to ride as a "horse" is preferable to using it to hurt someone.

Children and Play

Play allows a child to learn the skills of negotiations, problem solving, sharing and working within groups. Children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace and discover their own interests during play. Closely observed, the parent or teacher will discover the Child's aptitude of what he can become in the future. Equally, they engage in unstructured play which leads to physical movements and healthier physical development of the child fine large muscle development (www.tolsaeducare 2012/01)

The rights of the child and play

From the listed rights of the child, two important ones linked to this study are:-

- a. Right to leisure and recreation
- b. Right to education

Right to leisure and recreation

As stated on page 11, Article 31, every child is entitled to adequate rest, recreation (leisure and Play) appropriate to his or their age and culture.

Message to Government: that it should:-

- i. Recognize the right of every child to engage in recreational activities appropriate to the age and culture of the child.
- ii. Promote policies and programmes that encourage the free and full participation of children in recreational activities.

Message to Parents:

That parent should:

- i. Encourage children to participate in recreation and cultural activities
- ii. Support recreational, artistic and leisure activities for children
- iii. Provide facilities for children to enjoy those rights

From the statements on child rights on play e.g. leisure and recreation, parents and teachers have positive roles to play. These includes in educating the child from the communities cultural values and formal education level in providing them with opportunities and learning experiences that will shape them for the future.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the following methodology to carry out the research; Identification of Local Government Areas in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States were identified (Hausa, Fulani and Lelna people). Design of Research Instruments, administration of instrument, snapped pictures of children at play and data analysis report of result findings and suggestions were documented in the study report. 90 questionnaires were administered, 30 for each state. 78 questionnaires were retrieved which represents 86.6% which is an adequate percentage to obtain results.

Research Design

The study is a survey (purposive) therefore; questionnaires have to be developed for Care-Givers to solicit their responses. Focus group discussions will be conducted. Mobile and Still Picture's will be developed with the used of Digital Camera for quality picture production.

In carrying out the research, trips will be undertaken to remote settings (Villages) on motor-cycles and at times travelling to explore and search for locations where children could be found engaging in their play activities.

Trips will be taken in the morning and evening hours which are periods when children normally engage in their play activities. Also it is expected that specific plays/games are performed as seasonal activities.

Population

Hausa, Fulani and Lelna speaking people will be identified Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States focuses will be in Urban and Rural settlements target for the study. The target population will be children age 3 -5 at play and Care-givers in Pre-Primary Schools will be the respondents.

Data Analysis

At the end of data collection, all the completed questionnaires were thoroughly edited, organized, and processed by the researchers. All research questions required descriptive statistical tools (frequency and percentage) for analyzing the data.

The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to help in analyzing the data. The questionnaire items were turned into frequencies and analyzed using Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage).

RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1.01: Children develop five and gross motor muscles.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	70	89.7	89.7
	No	8	10.3	10.3
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.01 on children developing their muscles, 70 respondents representing 89.7% believes that children developed their muscles when they are allowed to play while 8 respondents representing 10.3% responded negatively. The results show that when children engage in different plays/games activities they acquire skills in their physical developmental milestone of fine and gross-motor muscles

Table 1.02: Children develop their language Skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	75	96.2	96.2
	No	3	3.8	3.8
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

On children developing their language skills, result from the table 1.02 shows that 75 respondents representing 96.2% believes that play activities develop children’s language skills as against 3 respondents representing 3.8%. This indicates that, majority of caregivers/teachers agreed that allowing children to participate in different play/games allow children to express themselves as they communicate during play which develops their language skills.

Table 1.03: Children develop their thinking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	74	94.9	94.9
	No	4	5.1	5.1
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.03 on whether games/play activities develop their thinking, 74 respondents representing 94.9% agreed that when children play games it develops their thinking capacity as against 4 respondents representing 5.1% said no. The table reveals that when children play games it develops their thinking as it provides children with opportunities to collaborate, share ideas and do critical thinking.

Table 1.04: They develop their leadership qualities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	74	94.9	94.9
	No	4	5.1	5.1
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.04 on when children play they develop their leadership qualities, 74 respondents representing 94.9% believed that when children are allow to play they develop leadership qualities, while 4 respondents representing 5.1% did not agreed. The table indicates that play is one of the important activity in modeling children’s behavior and attitude that leads to acquire leadership qualities.

Table 1.05: They develop their social values

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	66	84.6	84.6
	No	12	15.4	15.4
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.05 on developing social values, 66 respondents representing 84.6% believed that when children play they develop social values, while 12 respondents representing 15.4% did not believe. This shows that allowing children interact with one another during play learn and acquire their social values and gender roles of the society.

Table 1.06: They engage in different experiments

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	70	89.7	89.7
	No	8	10.3	10.3
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

On when children engage in different experiments during play table 1.06, 70 respondents representing 89.7% agree that when children play explore and innovate with materials while 8 respondents representing 10.3% did not agree. This revealed that allowing children to play freely provides them opportunities to acquire skills and develop their STEM capabilities.

Table 1.07: They share ideas through exploration

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	70	89.7	89.7
	No	8	10.3	10.3
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.07 on sharing ideas through exploration, 70 respondents representing 89.7% believes that when children play they experiment amongst themselves in different ways, while 8 respondents representing 10.3% did not agree. This shows that when children play they acquire the habit of experimentation and exploration which develops their cognitive abilities and sensibilities.

Table 1.08: They learn cultural values

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	65	83.3	83.3
	No	13	16.7	16.7
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.08 on learning cultural values, 65 respondents representing 83.3% agreed that children learn cultural values through play, while 13 respondents representing 16.7% indicated negatively. This shows that interacting with one another through play makes children respect their elders, learn gender role and societal values, which inputs their social development.

Table 1.09: They engage in numeracy practices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	64	82.1	82.1
	No	11	14.1	14.1
	3	3	3.8	3.8
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

On engaging children carrying numeracy activities table 1.19, 64 respondents representing 82.1% indicated that when children play they engage in numeracy activities against 11 respondents representing 14.1%. The result revealed that some games and play involved counting. This helps cognitive domain development and ready for primary education.

Table 1.10: They develop their emotional feelings

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	66	84.6	84.6
	No	12	15.4	15.4
	Total	78	100.0	100.0

Source: Result of Analysis (2022)

Table 1.20 on children developing their emotional feelings, 66 respondents representing 84.6% indicate that children develop their emotional feelings while 12 respondents representing 15.4% indicated negatively. This point out that, children compete in some games and also derive satisfaction and belief from emotional traumatic tensions.

Analysis of Documented Pictures of Children Playing Games

Documented photographs to gather information of children at play in different settings in Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States was used. The pictures taken were purposive and not pre-arranged so as to capture the mood the children were at the time of play. Interestingly, most of the children engaged in plays and games were observed using items and materials from the immediate environment and family homes.

Items 1 – 10 on the questionnaire were used to analyze the photographs. However, in some of the urban settings, manufactured learning and play materials were used by the children such as broken tiles, Rubber Motorbike, building blocks, logo and sesame story tree. The children engaged in their plays on there on not directed. Amazing discoveries were observed as they communicated amongst themselves as they engaged in different activities freely. But some shy among at the first instance though they talked about the activity are engaged in, not all mention their names in the rural settings.

Results, of observations and discussions

- i. Most of the children at play were located at their family compounds with some parents and bigger siblings around. The documented pictures of children at play affirms the statements on what children benefits on their development milestone and experiences acquired on leaning domains in the review of literature.
- ii. Frobel in Nzenebe, Santrock, and Shallal in their educational findings posited that, the child learns to playing, encourage indoor and outdoor activities and carry out exploration and experiments with materials source from their immediate environments. Also, children understand concepts better when they work with the materials.
- iii. Piaget in Santrock, presented child’s stages of play, he talked of practice or mastery play when children use their bodies when exploring the environment. Furthermore, he presented symbolic play when children use language as means of communication is reflected in their play. The talk to symbols as sticks, empty box, shoe, broom sticks, grass as babies, motor car or anything at all as real. This happens between the ages of 0 – 5 years of age.

- iv. Pamela in Santrock, 2007 stated that, children derive pleasure and joy in play. They learn new experiences and thus should be encouraged to play. Most of the analysis on the pictures on the learning experiences and domain development was stressed by her. Most important, children enjoy playing as a group.

From participant observations of the children engaging in their play activities, the following Scenes were recorded:

- i. The children were engaging in their play freely.
- ii. The items and materials used were obtained from the homes and environment around them.
- iii. The parents and siblings do not interfere nor stop them from playing.
- iv. Some children played on concrete floors;
- v. The ground was used for the play activity and sand was the favored resource materials.
- vi. Broken calabashes, empty tins, bottle tops, sticks, stones, broken tiles, leaf, used polythene bags; grass, water and life grasshoppers were used.
- vii. Hands and legs were used as tools for building/constructions.
- viii. Rules and regulations were applied on certain games/plays.
- ix. Most games and play were not gender biased.
- x. Group play was common in the activities they engaged in.
- xi. A few children played solo and as on-lookers.
- xii. The environments were free and safe

CONCLUSION

The research revealed that pictures and implications on local plays/games engage in by Hausa, Fulani and Lelna children in North Western Zone of Nigeria use play based child centered methods of introducing concepts at the early years of learning for children age 0 – 5 years of age This was confirm from the picture documented that the environment is key for providing the play materials which revealed one common thing to children at different locations in the states. Furthermore, the study as revealed from the responses of sampled Teachers/Care-givers and documented pictures, are stimulated and developed the domains of the children (Social, Emotional/Affective, Psychomotor, cognitive and Physical). Children have the freedom to choose their play materials and activities they engage in without parent's interference at home. The opportunity given to the Nigerian child should be by Teachers and Parents. It is from such play at home and play based activities in school that the child will develop and grow his potentials fully for his future profession and endeavors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Parents, Care-givers and Siblings should ensure they provide materials for group work and role-play in order to assess their aptitudes and critical thinking.
- ii. Teachers/Care-givers and Parents should all the time use polite language not abusive in addressing matters during and after play based activities to enable them express and derive satisfaction in their play activities.
- iii. For a child to fully develop his developmental milestone and domains there is need for freedom of exploration of the environment but should be safe for effective learning.
- iv. The Federal Ministry of Social Development and Culture, Federal Ministry of Education and Researchers should be commission to document traditional games and play of children aged 0 – 5years to produce common and uncommon games/plays by children as a manual to be at Pre-schools.

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Appendix 1

