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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF CHILDREN'S PLAY IN PRESCHOOL IN INSEIN TOWNSHIP, YANGON, MYANMAR

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Abstract

This study has been carried out to determine the Parents' Perceptions of Children's Play in Preschool in Insein Township, Yangon City, Myanmar. The subjects of this study were preschool parents who lived in the area. This research was done through a descriptive quantitative method with 40 populations. The sample of this study was 40 parents chosen by using the total sampling method. The research instruments were questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of 20 statements with three different parts; General Perceptions of parents on Children's Play, Parents' Perceptions of children's play at home, and Parents' Perceptions of children's play in Preschool. Data was collected using an online survey. The questionnaires are made in Google Forms and the link was sent to the participants. Data analysis was done in a quantitative approach by giving scores to each answer. Based on the research analysis, it was found that generally, parents have positive perceptions of children's play with a percentage of 90.7%. Yet, Mothers outweigh to value the importance of play contrasted to Fathers with scores of 91% and 83% respectively.

Keywords : Parents; Children; Play; Preschool; Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

The early years are vulnerable to children ages 0-6. This is the time known as the Golden Age. Early childhood has a unique growth and development process. Physically, early childhood growth is very rapid. The height and weight of the child grow quite rapidly,

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compared to growth at the age above it. Similarly, the growth of the child's brain, a center various human abilities coordination, grow very rapidly in early childhood. At the age of 4 years, the child's brain growth is near 80% perfect. Providing educational stimulation during a child's rapid physical growth and developing brain or maturity will get maximum results compared to the age before and after.

Children play and develop their six areas of development. Physically, children develop basic motor skills because they learn to move, balance and lift objects during play (Essa, E. L., & Burnham, M. M, 2019). Morally, children learn about the rules and values promoted by the social environment. This is learned through social interaction and experimentation while playing (Berk, L. E., 2022 and Edwards, S., & Nuttal, J., 2019). Various cognitive skills are promoted by play as well. When children have the opportunity to take part in play and be fully engaged in what they are doing, they develop more advanced and complex ways of thinking (Buehler, C., & Hetzer, H., 2022). Moreover, play fosters children's social-emotional development.

During play, children share ideas and express emotions while negotiating and compromising. Especially in social and guided play, children learn self-regulation by following norms and paying attention while experiencing feelings of expectation and frustration (Swanson, M. R., 2020). Furthermore, Language development is supported through play. When children play, they learn to interact and express themselves, allowing children to practice their language skills and build their ever-growing vocabulary while interacting with others (Devine, R. T., 2021). Lastly, Art development is promoted by playing. In open-ended play, children's active imagination can be shaped through art. Children create their own unique creations when they interact with art supplies such as paper, glue, markers and paints (Taylor, M. E., & Boyer, W., 2020).

Play is entertainment or a pastime. This is compared with teachers, who also value play for cognitive and social development. Many recent studies have shown the benefits of physical activity for early childhood development and support the need to see outdoor play spaces as important to learning. As a result, cultures and recent developments influence parents' opinions and teachers' preferences for classroom activities. In an interview conducted by Moon-Seo, S. K. & Munsell, S. E. (2022), Noel, mother of two children, said that play is social and interactive, allowing parents and children to get to know each other better and build trust (Moon-Seo, S. K. & Munsell, S. E., 2022). Parents who bond with their children

through play are more likely to come to them when they have serious problems. Many parents were very positive about their children's play and found it difficult to think about the negative effects of play.

In Myanmar context, the term " “ရှေးဦးအရွယ်ကလေးသူငယ် ပြုစုပျိုးထောင်ရေးနှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး (Early Childhood Care and Development)" is used to describe the overall continuum of parenting, education and development in the surrounding family, social and community factors. (Ang, Lynn & Wong, Lily, (2015). Myanmar preschools fall under the pre-primary category, which aims to encourage children's preparedness for kindergarten and other forms of education. The ages for preschool in Myanmar is 3-5 years old. Many parents in Myanmar do not understand the importance of children’s play in preschool (Im H, Huh YJ & Lim BY, 2021). In a survey conducted in Myanmar by Haesung Im, Youn Jung Huh & Boo Young Lim (2021) showed that there are fewer opportunities for children to play with toys such as blocks at home. They do not even have crayons or colored paper at home in Myanmar.

Furthermore, many parents do not agree that children are learning through play (Win SY & New KH, 2020). In Myanmar, most parents of preschoolers generally believe that academic achievement is more critical than a child's all-round development, including physical, social, and emotional and language development. Parents often fail to take into account the importance of play in the education of their children. They are less familiar with the concept of learning by playing (Win SY & New KH, 2020). Therefore, it is important to gain insights about the parents’ perception on the concept of children’s play in preschool. Only then, we can help these parents gain insights of the importance of children’s play in preschool.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Assistance Program for children around the world, extend this goal by claiming that it is through play that children learn to be creative and explore, express themselves, develop social skills and development, in confidence and competence. Although the word 'play' has many meanings, it is in common sense is a fun activity that is most widely understood. Playing is often linked to frivolous, but it's a fundamental part of a child's life development process, developing skills such as cognitive skills, language and physical, personal and social understanding skill, "Play is the primary mean of development imagination and intelligence,

language, social skills and perceptual-motor skills in infants and young children" (Frost, 1992, p. 48). Although it is generally accepted that children develop through play, there have been debate whether they actually "learn" through play.

This research will find out the parents of preschoolers in Insein Township, Yangon, Myanmar's views on the concept of children's play in preschool and describe the different views of preschoolers' fathers and mothers on the concept of children's play in preschool, in Insein Township, Yangon, Myanmar by comparing the results with previous studies.

METHODS

This research is descriptive research with a quantitative approach. Questionnaires were used as the instrument in this study. The instrument was prepared based on this research's objectives. The questionnaires were validated by an ECCD & ECE Trainer and Consultant in Myanmar. This research was conducted in Insein Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Data was collected using online survey. The questionnaire was made in the Google form and the link was sent to the parents who live in the researcher's township (Insein Township) through Facebook messenger. The questions were in the statement form and the parents gave the response by choosing the best option (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). Parents needed to fill in their names, age, occupation and children's ages before they rated the statements according to their perspectives.

Data Analysis was done in a quantitative approach. The researcher used the weighing method in order to analyze the data. There were four scales for each question and each were given scores. The parents answered the questions according to their perspective about the statement. The formula "X=total score/number of participants" was used to determine the mean per item. When the researcher got all means per each item, the mean was described based on the table adapted by ***(Dwipayana, 2013:64).*** The mean score indicated the parents' perception towards the criteria focused on this study. It can be said that the mean scores were used to answer each research question.

RESULTS

The data obtained from questionnaires is presented in a form of a table in this part. The parents were asked to respond to 20 questionnaires about their views on children's play in

preschool. The questionnaires were divided into 3 parts and the parents answered each item on a 4-1 scale, with answer choices ranging from "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree." The answer to the research question is from the result of the questionnaire.

The data obtained from parents' responses are analyzed in three different parts. They are **General Perceptions on Children's Play, Play At Home , and Play in Preschool.** There are four statements in the first part, General Perceptions of Children's Play. Six statements are listed in the second section, Play At Home and ten statements are presented in the third section, Play in Preschool.

Table 1. Parents View on Children's Play in compilation

No.	Indicators	Mean Score	Percentage	Category
1	**General Perceptions on Children's Play**	**3.65**	**91,2%**	**Very high**
2	**Parents' Perceptions on children's play At Home**	**3.27**	**81.7%**	**Very high**
3	**Parents' Perceptions on children's play in Preschool**	**3.45**	**89%**	**Very high**
Mean Score		**3.63**	**90.7%**	**Very high**

Based on the table above, the highest mean score got is 3.65 from the first part of the questionnaires, **General Perceptions on Children's Play.** The mean score shows that parents strongly agree with the statements shown in this part of the questions. From the data, it can be concluded that parents understand about children's play and that playing has benefits for their children. Moreover, the third part of the questionnaires, **Play in Preschool** has second highest mean score which is 3.45 with 89% although a few parents have negative views on play in preschool the result still shows the category very good. Last but not least, the lowest mean score, 3.27 can be seen in the second part of the questionnaires with 81.7%. It can be assumed that some parents do not want to agree with the statements described in this part of the questionnaires.

The data in the following chart showed the different perceptions of fathers and mothers on the concept of children's play in preschool.

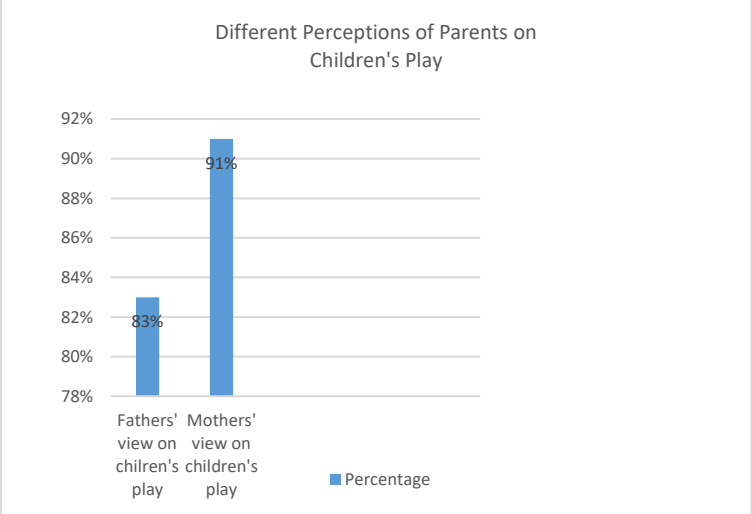


Figure 1 - Percentage of Different perceptions of fathers

According to the chart above, we can see that parental attitudes toward the concept of play seem to fall on a spectrum. It is obvious from the chart that fathers do not have that much positive views on children's play compared to the mothers with the scores 83% and 91% respectively. It can be concluded from the chart that the data obtained from the mothers and fathers' views of children's' play in preschool show that changing trend of the concept " Many parents in Myanmar do not understand the importance of children's play in preschool (Im H, Huh YJ & Lim BY, 2021). It is interesting to find that many parents do become to understand the importance of children's play in preschool and they turn out to accept that children's playing is valuable.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the researcher analyses two-research problems. The data in this section showed the finds of the two research problems; the parents' views of children's play in preschool and different perceptions of fathers and mothers in children's play. The data showed findings from 40 total parents' responses towards children's play in preschool. Participated parents are 20 mothers and 20 fathers who are not the same parents of the same child.

The result of this research had different finding compared to the previous studies conducted by Win SY & New KH (2020) and Im H, Huh YJ & Lim BY (2021). The

former study showed that many parents do not agree that children are learning through play (Win SY & New KH, 2020). On the other hand, this research showed that parents had positive attitude towards children's play in preschool. From my perspective, parents who participated in this study, revealed to have a strong belief that a child's all-round development is as equally important as his academic achievement. The participants also accepted that a child's all-round development is gained by playing whereas the research conducted by Win SY & New KH, (2020) stated that in Myanmar, most parents of preschoolers generally believe that academic achievement is more critical than a child's all-round development, including physical, social, and emotional and language development. And thus, they often fail to take into account the importance of play in the education of their children.

The later study conducted by Im H, Huh YJ & Lim BY (2021), showed that many parents in Myanmar do not understand the importance of children's play in preschool; they do not realize that children's playing is valuable and thus they do not want to provide play materials (Im H, Huh YJ & Lim BY, 2021). However, the findings of this research showed that most of the parents understood the importance of children's play in preschool and they turned out to accept that children's playing is valuable. In my opinion, this happens because most of the parents who participated in this study are literate and knowledgeable about the benefits of play.

Compared with the research conducted by Tandon, PS ; Zhou, C ; Christakis, DA (2012) and Albatataineh (2018), this research revealed the same findings that mothers are more likely to value play than fathers do, with 91% positive attitudes towards children's play in preschool contrary to 83% of fathers. Accordingly, the study conducted by Tandon, PS ; Zhou, C ; Christakis, DA (2012) showed that mothers took their children outside to play more often than fathers with forty-four percent of mothers reported taking their child outside daily compared with twenty four percent of fathers. While, the later study, Albatataineh (2018), affirms that mothers are more engaged in play with preschool children than fathers (Albatataineh, 2018: 26). To conclude, It can be assumed from the findings that parents in the researched area had acknowledged well about children's play in preschool with 90.7% positive responses, yet Mothers outweigh to value the importance of play contrasted to Fathers with the scores 91% and 83% respectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research which was conducted in Insein Township, Yangon, Myanmar, it can be concluded that most of the parents have positive responses towards children's play in preschool. Their perception toward the three aspects related to children' play; General Perceptions on Children's Play, Parents' Perceptions of Children's Play At Home, and Parents' perceptions of Children's Play in Preschool; are very good. Mothers are more positive towards children's play in preschool compared to fathers with 83% and 91% respectively.

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