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FACILITATING PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT
This research explored the lived experiences of teachers in facilitating play – based learning in the kindergarten classrooms, concentrating on the difficulties experienced, coping mechanisms utilized and insights gained. Employing qualitative research design, data gathered from ten public school teachers in Talaingod District who were selected utilizing purposive sampling: five participants for the in – depth interview, while another five for the focus group discussion. The data gathered were thematically analyzed. Findings found that teachers experienced challenges on parental pressure, difficulty on communicating instructions due to language barrier, struggling managing an active classroom and insufficient training in facilitation of play. In spite of these challenges, teachers illustrated resilience through utilizing coping mechanism, such as, sustaining positive and adaptive teaching strategy, translating and modeling instructions, utilizing play to enhance children's focus and engagement and seeking guidance from the colleagues and utilizing online resources. Teachers gained valuable insights in facilitating play - based learning such as, recognizing holistic development through facilitated play, shifting a student – centered teaching philosophy, redefining the value of play as a learning medium and developing facilitative competence through play - based learning. The result of this research is relevant to the public-school teachers, kindergarten learners, school administrators, DepEd officials and other researchers, as they provide thorough understanding of the experiences of the teachers in facilitating play – based learning in the kindergarten classrooms. The findings conclude that despite the challenges, adaptive practices of the teachers, ensure the successful facilitation of play – based learning promotes engaging and appropriate learning context.
KEYWORDS: *Play-Based Learning, Kindergarten Education, Teacher's Experiences, Qualitative Research.*

RESULTS

Lived Experiences of Teachers in Facilitating Play – Based Learning in the Kindergarten Classrooms

After analyzing the responses of the teachers in facilitating play – based learning in the kindergarten classrooms, the following themes emerged: (a) parental pressure on the facilitation of play – based Learning, (b) difficulty in communicating instructions due to language barrier, (c) struggling in managing an active classroom environment, and (d) insufficient training in facilitating play – based learning.

Table 1 presents the essential themes and corresponding core ideas that further expound each theme.

Table 1
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Teachers in Facilitating Play-Based Learning in the kindergarten Classrooms

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Parental Pressure on Facilitation of Play – Based Learning	• parents lack of awareness regarding play – based learning strategy • teachers hesitant to provide instruction due to parent's academic expectations • parents' expectation for achieving instant academic result in short period of time
Difficulty in Communicating Instructions due to Language Barrier	• struggling to provide clear instructions due to language barrier • experiencing in misunderstanding instruction • experiencing difficulties in communicating non – native learner

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	• difficulty in interacting indigenous learners (Ata – Manobo) due to lack of knowledge in their native language.
Struggling in Managing an Active Classroom Environment	• facing difficulties in organizing children and preventing distraction • dealing with children have short attention span and violent behavior • encountering obstacle in managing children's behavior, (hyperactive, tantrums and lack of focus) • troubling in classroom management children having irrelevant conversation
Insufficient Training in Facilitating Play – Based Learning	• not having any training on play – based learning • not having any training, but valuing to undergone training in play – based learning • undergone seminar but did not focus on the play – based learning pedagogy

Parental Pressure on Facilitation of Play – Based Learning

The participants revealed that parents exert pressure on teachers due to a lack of awareness and understanding of play-based learning. Many parents prefer traditional teaching approaches and sometimes question or criticize instructional strategies that they perceive as unfamiliar or less academic. This situation creates hesitation among teachers as they navigate between developmentally appropriate practices and academically driven parental expectations, which in turn influences their instructional decisions and classroom management. Moreover, some parents may not fully recognize that the development of learners' skills requires continuous, play-oriented learning experiences.

These concepts are reflected in the response of FGD4, who experienced parental pressure due to parents' limited understanding of play-based learning pedagogy:

"Kung sa environment ang mama no kuyaw baya na sila, nganong nagdula ra man na sila, sumbong dayun ta sa atong admin, wala sila kabalo nga strategy diay to, gusto sa mama nga mosulod ilang anak diha magsulat, mag – ihap, naay uban parents dili sila gusto anang dula – dula."

(When it comes to the environment, the parents can be a challenge. They say, why are they just playing? Let's report to the admin. They don't know that it is actually strategy. Parents want their children to come to school and immediately write, read and count. There are really parents who don't want any sort of play activities.)

Another teacher shared that she feels hesitant in teaching children due to parents' academic expectations, as expressed by FGD3:

"Lahi baya uban parent karun, kunsintidor, kita nga mga teacher magduha – duha na hinuon tag tudlo sa mga bata, naa man gud uban parent nga gusto nila pirmente academic bah."

(Parents nowadays can be very permissive, and as teachers, we become hesitant in how we teach. Some parents only want academic activities all the time.)

Other participants narrated that parents' expectations are to see their children achieved immediately in academics, specifically in reading. As shared by FGD2:

"Lahi ra jud bitaw mga mama karun, gusto ilang anak mag – basa daun, expected sa mama, dapat pag – uli makabasa na dayun ilang anak, dili jud sila gusto anang magdula ra."
(There are other parents who have different expectations; they want their child to know how to read immediately and they expect that when the child gets home, they are able to read. They do not like children only playing).

Parents demand immediate learning outcomes, specifically in reading, placing teacher under pressure to established quick academic success regardless of the gradual process of development skill of the children. This expectation frequently results teachers to prioritize academic activities rather than play – based learning. This may hinder children's holistic development.

Difficulty in Communicating Instructions due to Language Barrier

Teachers also describe the difficulties in communicating instructions due to differences of language among teachers and children. Language barrier make hindrance in effectively delivering instructions, that results limited understanding and decrease engagement in play – based learning activities.

As mentioned by IDI03, children are struggling in understanding the instructions. This may affect their engagement in play activities:

"Language, kay kung magtudlo ka mo hatag man ka ug instructions so, sa paghatag palang instruction mag lisod nako magpasabot sa ilaha."

(Language, is a challenge because when you teach and give instructions, it's difficult to get the children respond or answer.)

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Other participants expressed problems in providing instructions. Children misunderstand the given instruction and comprehend it differently. As shared by IDI05:

"Language barrier, lisod kung mag hatag ug instruction tapos lain ilang pagsabot."
(there's a language barrier, which make giving instructions difficult because they understand differently.)

Another teacher shared the struggles in communicating especially to those non – native learners. This resulted to confusion with the role of the teacher. As mentioned by FGD3:

"Language pod, kay naa koy taga Malaysia nga bata, di siya kasabot, usahay tawag niya sa akoa kay nanay."
(Language barrier too, I have a Malaysian student who sometimes can't understand, she calls me mother.)

A teacher also supports this view of experiencing difficulties in interacting Indigenous learners due to lack of knowledge of their native language. As FGD1 conveyed that:

"Isa pod diay siya no, language barrier, pareha sa mga Ata – Manobo, dili pata kabalo mag Manobo.)
(Yes, that's also it, language barrier, like the Ata – Manobo children, we don't know how to speak

Language barrier results to misunderstanding of instructions, creating a gap in communication among teachers and children which had influenced their ability to engage effectively in play – based learning activities.

Struggling in Managing an Active Classroom Environment

Teachers narrated their struggles in managing an active classroom environment. They demonstrated difficulties in sustaining children engagement and in keeping an organized and orderly classrooms. They described how challenging it is to appropriately manage their classrooms because of children's different behaviors, level of energy and focus.

Teachers had difficulty in managing children; they easily got distracted and couldn't maintain an organized classrooms and couldn't stay focused, as mentioned by IDI02:

"Sa ana nga mga challenge nako is unsaon nako pag – organize sa bata, unsaon nako pagkuan sa ilaha kanangng mpuyo sila nga dili sila ma distract sa laing mga butang."
(For me, the challenges I face are how to organize the children and how to manage them so they stay in place and are not easily distracted by other things.)

Another teacher shared her experiences in dealing children with short attention span and with violent behavior. As mentioned by IDI05:

"Ilahang attention span, afer 10 minutes and uban nag yagaw na, destructed sila, sinumbagay pa."
(Their attention span is short, after 10 minutes, some start running around. They also get easily distracted and sometimes even hit each other.)

One of the participants also noted of her challenging experiences. These are dealing with hyperactive kids, those who are easily distracted and dealing tantrums of the children. As stated by FGD3:

"Sa akoa jud no sa pagka karun kay gusto ko mo engage ing-ana nga activity, sa akoang morning session karun grabi ka mga hyper sa mga bata, gikumot ang testpaper sa bata, naay uban bata gapaminaw pero ang uban rooming around, maka distract jud sila, isa pod ang factor sa cellphone/gadget, magsugod og tantrum ang bata tungod sa cellphone."
(For me, right now, I really want to engage them in those kinds of activities, but my morning session students are extremely hyper. One child even crumpled another kid's test paper. Some listen, but others roam around, and they really distract the class. Another factor is cellphones/gadgets children start having tantrums because of gadget use.)

Lastly, teachers also had a hard time in dealing with children who have irrelevant conversations to other children and can't force them to follow. As mentioned by FGD4:

"Dili pod mawala ang challenges sa classroom management, ky ang mga bata daghan ilang istuyra kaysa sa ilang gitrabaho, malalaki man o babae, di pod mapugos mosunod."
(And classroom management challenges will always be there. Children talk more than they work, boys or girls, and you can't force them to follow.)

The participants shared the challenges they experienced in managing behavior of the children in the classrooms during facilitating play – based learning activities. It was indeed difficult to manage those hyperactive kids, those with undesirable behaviors. There is a struggle in maintaining balance in imposing discipline and in providing them freedom.

Insufficient Training in Facilitating Play – Based Learning

Teachers have found that lack of training is quite alarming. This problem may lead to insufficient skills of teachers in facilitating play – based learning. Teachers expressed those limited opportunities in professional development and limited specialized training and understanding as a struggle in application of play.

A teacher stated that she does not have any training in play – based learning strategy. As mentioned by FGD1:

"So far sa akoa, wala koy training, wala koy na apilan about play – based learning"

(So far for me, I have not attended any training about play – based learning.)

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One of the participants also supported this response. She said that she has never attended any training, but she values and looks forward to attend training or workshop for play – based learning. As expressed by FGD3:

"Wala jud ko ka training, pero, mas nindot unta kung naa jud training, workshop."
(I've never had any training, but it would be much better if there will be actual training or workshop.)

Another teacher shared that she attended training but the focus was on kindergarten curriculum and not on play – based learning pedagogy. As mentioned by FGD5:

"Wala. Naay training sa kinder sa MATATAG pero wala siya naka focus sa play – based, naka focus siya sa curriculum."
(None. There was a training for kinder teachers under MATATAG, but it did not focus on play – based learning, it's on curriculum.)

The limited knowledge of teachers in facilitating play – based learning affects its application and could influence their capability to designed and planned learning activities. Further, this may also affect their ability to evaluate effectively the learning outcomes. Insufficient training of the teachers can create difficulties in engaging children and established play -based learning activities, as a result this pedagogy may not be realized the full potential.

Coping Strategies Employed by Teachers to Address the Challenges in Facilitating Play based Learning in the Kindergarten Classrooms

After analyzing the responses of the teachers on the coping strategies they employed to address the challenges encountered in facilitating play – based learning in the kindergarten classrooms, the following essential themes emerged: (a) enjoying and adaptation of teaching practices as a coping mechanism, (b) adapting instruction through translating and modeling for clearer understanding, (c) utilizing play – based leaning to improve children's focus and engagement, and (d) seeking colleagues guidance and online research for effective facilitation of play.

Table 2 presents the essential themes and their corresponding core ideas that expounds these themes. This covers the coping strategies that teachers employed to address the challenges encountered in facilitating play – based learning.

Table 2
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Strategies of Teachers to Address the Challenges in Facilitating Play-based Learning in the Kindergarten Classrooms

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Enjoying and Adaptation of Teaching Practices as a Coping Mechanism	• finding joy that children understand and remain safe • experiencing relaxed and less pressure in teaching kindergarten • utilizing play – based learning to maintain engagement and enjoy while teaching • overcoming initial struggles during early years of teaching
Adapting Instruction Through Translating and Modeling for Clearer Understanding	• translating instructions for better understanding • integrating children's own language for efficient instructions • utilizing modeling as strategy when children unable to understand immediately • overcoming challenges in instructions through modeling
Utilizing Play – Based Leaning to Improve Children's Focus and Engagement	• employing play -based learning activities to capture children's attention • using play – based activities to enhance children's focus • utilizing of play – based learning to create learning enjoyable and engaging
Seeking Colleagues Guidance and Online Research for Effective Facilitation of Play	• asking colleagues to handle strategy effectively • exploring resources online to enhanced play - based learning strategy • utilizing online research for understanding in suggested play activities • relying on research online for effective application of play

Enjoying and Adaptation of Teaching Practices as a Coping Mechanism

This theme illustrates how teachers cope with the challenges encountered in facilitating play – based learning. This was done through enjoying and sustaining relaxed perspective and improving by experience and their positive outlook improve children's engagement.

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Teacher expressed her enjoyment when children understand and remain safe. As stated by FGD4:

"Malingaw pod ko, ma happy lang ko basta nakasabot og walay nadisgrasya kana lang jud, pag ang teacher malingaw malingaw pod ang mga bata."

(I also enjoy myself, I'm just happy as long as they understand and no one gets hurt, that the main thing. When the teacher having fun, the children also have fun.)

Additional response that supports this view from FGD3, as she feels relaxed and enjoy with less pressure in teaching kindergarten compare to higher grades:

"sa akoa compare sa higher grades relax jud ang kinder, dili kaau siya pressure, kay ma enjoy man pod ka kung mag enjoy pod mga bata, so relax jud siya."

(For me compared to the higher grades, kindergarten is really more relaxing. There's not too much pressure because you also get to enjoy yourself when the children are enjoying themselves, so it's really relaxing.)

Another teacher shared her coping strategy. He utilized play to avoid boredom and enjoying while teaching. As mentioned by IDI02:

"Facilitating play – based learning nakatabang pod sa akoa kay malingaw pod ko then dili ko ma bored."

(Facilitating play – based learning has also helped me, because I enjoy it, and I don't get bored either.)

Finally, a participant also stated that she copes the challenges in the initial year of teaching kindergarten. Eventually, she was able to improve her teaching abilities. As stated by IDI01:

"Sa akoang style kay four years man ko sa kindergarten naglisod nalang ko kay first og second year nako sa kinder."
(In my style, I've been teaching kindergarten for four years but I struggled during my first and second year.)

Utilizing play – based learning decreases boredom and sustains interest of the teacher in teaching. Although, the initial year in teaching kindergarten was full of challenges, eventually, teachers boost their confidence. They make teaching enjoyable with this coping mechanism and practice continuously.

Adapting Instruction Through Translating and Modeling for Clearer Understanding

This theme illustrates how teachers cope with language barrier in facilitating play – based learning. This was done through translating children's own language and modeling the task first. By doing this, teachers strengthen children's understanding and guarantee active engagement regardless of communication difficulties.

A teacher narrated her coping strategy through translating instruction into different languages for better interaction with the learners. As expressed by IDI01:

"Diba ang akong challenge is kung unsaon pag ralate sa instruction, so akong ginabuhat is gina translate nako into English, Tagalog, and Bisaya para mas masabtan nila. Aside sa pag translate literal gud sa instruction kay kuan pud akong jud gina check if nasabatan gud nila."
(My challenge is how to relate the instructions, so what I do is translate them into English, Tagalog, and Bisaya so they can understand better. Aside from literally translating the instructions. I also make sure to check if they really understand them.)

Few participants reveal their the coping strategy by integrating children's own language in providing instruction for better understanding. As stated by IDI03:

"Play – based learning naa mi materials, gina integrate nako ang sa language nila yun lang ka simple kanang playing, kanang corporate pud nako, kung unsa makaapg deal sa ilahang classmates."
(In play – based learning, we have materials I mostly integrate their own language in simple play activities. I also incorporate it so they can learn how to interact and cooperate with their classmates.)

One of the teachers narrated how she coped with those instruction related challenges. She utilized modeling strategy for clearer understanding. As shared by IDI04:

"Mag instruct ko dili jud nila makuha expected pod nimo nga interactive nga dili jud sila makakuha dayun, naa jud ko time nga mag model – model rako dira."
(When I give instructions, the children don't understand right away. You expect them to be interactive, but don't grasp the instructions. There are times I model the activity myself.)

Another teacher also noted that she was able to overcome those challenges through modeling. And also, by providing instruction for better interaction. As expressed by FGD1:

"akoa kay instruction dili dayun ka gets, lisod kaayo mag instruct sa ilaha, kinahanglan jud imoha I - model, pero naa jud uban bata dili ka kuha, dili pod sila dayun modula."
(For me, it's the instructions. They don't immediately understand. It's very hard to give instruction because you really have to model everything. But their children who still can't follow, and don't join the play right away.)

Teachers' coping strategies are utilized to promote clarity in learning objectives, reduce misunderstandings, and motivate children to actively engage in play-based activities. By using both verbal and nonverbal communication, teachers enhance

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children's understanding of tasks and expectations. Adapting instruction in this way ensures that communication is delivered effectively and supports meaningful learning experiences.

Utilizing Play – Based Leaning to Improve Children 's Focus and Engagement

This theme demonstrates how teachers utilize play-based learning strategies to address challenges related to children's short attention spans and tendency to become easily distracted. By incorporating engaging and enjoyable play activities, teachers are able to sustain learners' interest and direct their focus toward meaningful learning experiences.

Through the facilitation of play-based learning, teachers effectively capture children's attention, minimizing distractions and enhancing their engagement in classroom tasks. This is supported by the statement of IDI02:

"Through play – based learning, through games ma capture nako ilang attention. Kay ganahan ka nag mag dula – dula mo focus nana didto dili na sa lain nga mga butang."

(Through play – based learning and games, I am capable to capture their attention. Because when they enjoy playing, they start to focus on the activity and not on the other things.)

Through the facilitation of play-based learning, children are able to enhance their focus while enjoying the learning process, as expressed by IDI05:

"Dako siya og gamit pud, ang ilahang attention kay dili jud stable. So naga dula jud ko kay maka focus sa ilahang enjoyment ba, kay nindot man jud mo learn while ga enjoy pud."

(It's very useful, because their attention span isn't stable. I used play – based learning so they can enjoy themselves while learning, since it's better when they learn while having fun.)

Utilizing play-based learning activities helps create an enjoyable and engaging learning environment, as shared by IDI03:

"Maka ingon ka nga lahi ra gyud kanang fun para sa ilaha through play malingaw sila, so learning is fun for them because there is play – based approach nga imohang ginahatag, dili lang kay makatindog ka sa ilang atubangan, makatuon na sila, malingaw pa sila."

(You can say, that really different when it's fun for them through play. They enjoy themselves, so learning becomes fun because of play – based approach you provide. It's not just standing in front of them but they actually learn while enjoying themselves.

Facilitating play-based learning promotes children's focus by creating fun and engaging experiences. When children are engaged in enjoyable and meaningful learning activities, they are more likely to remain attentive and will actively participate in any activity.

Seeking Colleagues' Guidance and Online Research for Effective Facilitation of Play

This theme demonstrates how teachers cope with the difficulties of facilitating play-based learning by seeking guidance from colleagues and utilizing online resources. In their efforts to improve teaching practices, teachers engage in collaborative conversations with more knowledgeable peers, allowing them to gain practical insights and strategies. At the same time, they rely on online materials to acquire new ideas and approaches that support the effective implementation of play-based learning. These initiatives highlight teachers' proactive coping strategies as they strive to enhance their instructional practices despite limited training opportunities.

Teacher collaboration serves as an important avenue for professional learning, as it enables educators to share knowledge, reflect on their practices, and develop more effective teaching strategies. One participant shared her experience of seeking guidance from colleagues to learn how to handle the strategy more effectively, as expressed by IDI03:

"... kanang mangutana lang ko sa uban, kay gusto ko siya, makuha jud nako unsaon namo pag buhat, kini kay lisud daw siya nga kumkumon."

(It's just that I ask others for guidance, because I want to learn from her how to handle certain things, since it's said to be difficult to manage.)

One of the teachers shared that he was able to acquire new insights on implementing play-based learning activities through research, as stated by IDI02:

"Reading rapud atong online naa ko'y bag-ong learning ato nga ma - apply nako sa play-based learning."

(Through reading online, I gained new learning that I can apply to play – based learning.)

Another teacher supported this point, as mentioned by FGD5:

"Through research pod, ky ginahatag sa lesson exemplar kay ang name ra sa dula wala mi kabalo unsaon, so research ko, para kabalo ko unsaon pagdula."

(Through research as well, because the lesson exemplar only gives us the name of the game, but we don't know how to play it. So, I research, so, I know how to play.)

Lastly, another teacher also relied on online research to support the effective application of play-based learning, as emphasized by FGD4:

"Ang ginabuhat namo kay naga research lang unsaon pag dula, kay ang internet karun makatabang sa atong pagtudlo."

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(What we usually do is research a way to conduct play – based learning activities. The internet really helps us in our teaching.)

Collectively, seeking guidance with the colleagues and engaging in online learning professional development, teachers continuously update their knowledge and skills to adapt the strategies, and also enable teachers to be more resourceful, confident and effectively facilitate play – based learning.

Insights of the Teachers Gained from Their Experiences in Facilitating Play – Based Learning in the Kindergarten Classrooms

After analyzing the insights gained by teachers from their experiences in facilitating play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms, the following themes emerged: (a) recognizing holistic development through facilitated play, (b) shifting toward a student-centered teaching philosophy, (c) redefining the value of play as a medium for learning, and (d) developing facilitative competence through play-based learning.

Table 3 presents the essential themes and the corresponding core ideas that further elaborate each theme.

Table 3
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights Gained by the Teachers from their Experiences in Facilitating Play – based Learning

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Recognizing Holistic Development Through Facilitated Play	• enhancing learning, improving social and emotions skills through play • allowing children to develop social skills gradually • enhancing thinking skills through hands – on experience • promoting collaboration, socialization multiple factors through play • recognizing play – based learning effectiveness across three domains
Shifting to a Student – Centered Teaching Philosophy	• facilitating play – based learning to address the interest of the children • utilizing play to meet the children interest and encourage participation • creating activities that tailored to learning needs of the children
Redefining the Value of Play as a Learning Medium	• recognizing play as a powerful medium for learning of the children • valuing play – based learning for children to engage and prevent boredom • appreciating play – based learning provides essential learning
Developing Facilitative Competence Through Play – Based Learning	• learning to be gentle in facilitate play • enhancing delivery of instruction through play • improving creativity and instructions by adapting children's language • developing teaching strategy and creativity through modeling

Recognizing Holistic Development Through Facilitated Play

Teachers highlighted the insights gained with regard to the influence of play – based learning to the holistic growth of the children. From teachers' experiences, they noticed that facilitated play not just support educational success, and also improve children's cognitive development, social interaction as well as emotional expressions.

One of the teachers shared her insights in facilitating play – based learning, that enhanced learning among children and also improved social and emotional skills, as expressed by IDI01:

"Makita na nako ba na naa nakoy makumpara na nako ang mga higher kaingon jud ko nga ganahan ka jud sa kinder kay dali kayo sila maka learn, sa social mo gawas man pud ang ilahang ability nga kanang makipag - socialize during jud sa play-based, and sa emotional development naman is kana during play-based may mag-away, pero basta naa kalang jud para ma process gud sa sitwasyon nga makasabot sila."

(I can already compare now, and I really like teaching kindergarten because they learn very quickly. In terms of social skills, their ability to socialize comes out during play-based activities. For emotional development, conflicts may arise during play, but as long as there is guidance to help them process the situation, they can understand and manage it.)

Another teacher emphasized that social development enhanced gradually during the facilitation of play – based learning activities, as expressed by FGD5:

"Kining sa social, dili tanan bata mo cooperate o modula jud socialize mas labi na gyud ng bata nga dili kaila, dili siya moapil, so among ginabuhat is hulaton lang jud ang bata ky sunod adlaw mag-hinay- hinay na na siya."

(In social development, not all children will cooperate or socialize. This is especially true for children who don't know the other; they won't join in. So, what we do is we just wait for the child, because the next day, they will slowly start to participate.)

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Facilitating play – based learning enhanced cognitive skills of the children. They can easily remember things as they engage in hand – on experiences, as expressed by FGD1:

"Mas dali nila matiman-an, kumbaga ilaha man ginabuhat ba, mas ma develop pod sa mga bata ilang strategy ilang thinking skills."

(…It's easier for them to remember, because they are the ones actually doing it. It also develops their strategy and their thinking skills.)

Further, one of the participants expressed her insights that facilitating play – based learning promotes collaboration, socialization and multiple factors, as stated by FGD3:

"Facilitating play – based learning naa pud siya collaboration, socialization, makuha tanan factors development sa bata."

(Facilitating play – based learning it involve collaboration, socialization and all those factors in development of the child.)

Finally, one of the participants recognize that play – based learning effectiveness across three domains of learning, as expressed by IDI02:

"I realized I get insights about unsa ang kinahanglan jud sang bata nga makatuon jud sila tulad ng three domains of learning. As I experience play – based learning is effective."

(I realized that I gain insights into what children truly need in order to learn, such as addressing the three domains of learning. From my experience, play-based learning is effective.)

Overall, facilitating play – based learning support children's growth across multiple domains of development while establishing engaging and meaningful learning environment. And also, this allows teachers to guide and observe children's development more efficiently.

Shifting to a Student – Centered Teaching Philosophy

Teachers narrated as they shift from traditional to students – centered through play – based learning. Teachers realized the significance of allowing children to make their own choice and to meet their interest and learning needs. This shift highlights the role of the teachers as facilitator who support and scaffold children rather than just mere delivering the lesson.

One of the teachers integrates play – based learning as part of the lesson that is aligned with the interest of the children and acknowledging at their young age, they are naturally active during play, as mentioned by IDI04:

"Sa play – based learning sa mga bata mao jud ilang ganahan nga strategy nga part sa klase nga dula – dula tungod sa ilang edad active pud."

(With play – based learning is that, I really focused on the children and their interest, because of their age they are naturally active and enjoy games as part of the class.)

Another participant shared her insights on utilizing play to meet the children's interest in play and encourage participation, as expressed IDI05:

"Naga play ko kay naay learning, depende pod sa ilang interest kay naga - learn pud ang bata, sometimes man gud naay bata dili man mag participate unsay imung buhaton."

(I facilitated play because it has learning, it's depend on their interest, but the children also learn through play. Sometimes, some children don't participate in what you're doing.)

Another teacher shared that, in designing activities, she ensures they are appropriate and responsive to the children's learning needs, as expressed by FGD5:

"Akoa no sa akong knowledge kailangan pod ka nga maghatag og activity sir nga base sa ilang gihatag sa (Deped) kay dili siya mo swak tanan, akong knowledge ana kita nga teacher mohimo jud tag activity nga mo swak sa bata."

(For me, based on my knowledge, you also need to give activities that are based on what DepEd provided, it really does not suit exactly. My understanding is that we, as teachers, really need to create an activity that is suitable for the children.)

Through play-based learning, children become more active and motivated, resulting in deeper understanding and improved skills. This shift also enables teachers to establish an engaging learning environment that is responsive to the needs and interests of the children.

Redefining the Value of Play as a Learning Medium

Teachers recognized the value of play – based learning as an effective and meaningful strategy. They discovered that play is a powerful tool for imparting knowledge, fostering skill development for children to actively participate.

One of the teachers stated that play promotes significant learning despite being underestimated by others as merely the common play, as shared by IDI01:

"Para sa pag lantaw sa mga hamtong para sa dula- dula lang pero sa level sa mga bata kay grabe na ang learnings."

(From my perspective, what adults might see as just playing actually involves a lot of learning at the children's level.)

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Another teacher emphasized the value of play – based learning in sustaining engagement of the children and preventing boredom during class discussion, as mentioned by IDI04:

"Mas ganahan ko sa play -based learning kay kanang ganahan man gud sila magdula – dula unya unlike kanang magklase ka maboring sila ba, so ganahan ko sa ila magpadula – dula."

(I prefer play – based learning because the children enjoy playing, unlike regular lessons, where they can get bored, I like letting them play and engage in activities more.

One of the participants also appreciates play – based learning since it provides essential learning for children as they learn quickly through play, as expressed by IDI03:

"Ang kultura sa tribo, we learn best, we learn by doing, so ang play – based dako kaayu siya nga tabang nganong maka learn ug dali ang mga bata sa kinder."

(Considering the tribe's culture, we learn best by doing, play – based learning is very helpful because it allows kindergarten children to learn quickly and effectively.)

Together, redefining play as a learning medium enables teachers to facilitate more engaging and effective teaching practices that support both the academic success and well-being of children.

Developing Facilitative Competence Through Play – Based Learning

Through their experiences, teachers developed skills in facilitating play-based learning. They realized that facilitating play involves more than simply allowing children to play; it requires meaningful interaction, guidance, support, and the creation of purposeful learning activities. Through continuous facilitation of play and provision of appropriate instructions, teachers enhanced their confidence and competence in managing learning experiences effectively.

One teacher developed facilitative competence by becoming more gentle and patient in guiding children during play-based learning activities, as stated by IDI01:

"Isa mga na gained nako nga mahinomg gentle gud sa pag facilitate sa play-based."

(One thing I gained is learning to be gentle when facilitating play – based.)

Another participant shared, as she improved her delivery of instruction during play, as stated by IDI05:

"...sa kanang sa pagrelease sa instructions na improve gud ko ana during play-based nila nga activity kay na improve gud akong way of deliver the instruction."

(Regarding providing instructions, I noticed an improvement during their play-based activities, I am able to deliver instructions more effectively.)

One of the teachers reflected, as she develops creativity through play – based. She was able to adapt the language of the children and enable to foster learner centered instructions, as stated by IDI04:

"Na-improve akoang kanang idea ba pag abot diri sa bukid is ma- improve imong pagka-creative. When it comes sa instructional naman naa ko'y ma-improve kanang maka adopt ko sa ilahang inisturyahan sa mga language nila."

(My ideas were improved when I arrived here in the far - flung areas; it helped me become more creative. In terms of instruction, I was able to improve through adapting to their way of speaking and understanding their language.)

Finally, one of the participants developed her skills in creativity through creating self - made activities in play – based learning through modeling, as mentioned by FGD5:

"Skills namo mahimo ming creative, creative teacher's kay magbuhat – buhat naman mi dira, kita dapat mag model sa ilaha, madevelop atong skills."

(Our skills really develop; we become more creative as teachers because we have to create things ourselves. We have to model everything for the children, so our skills improved.)

Together, teachers strengthen their competence in facilitating play through adapting strategy and addressing the learners needs. This competence development enables teachers create flexible learning context where play is fun and meaningful. Moreover, facilitating play – based learning fosters growth on facilitative competence of the teachers.

The results of this study revealed that teachers encountered various difficulties in facilitating play – based learning in kindergarten classrooms, including parental pressure, language barriers, classroom management problems, and insufficient training. These challenges affected teachers' ability, confidence, and decision-making in effectively implementing play-based instruction. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated coping mechanisms such as maintaining a positive outlook and finding enjoyment in teaching, translating and modeling instructions to ensure clearer understanding, utilizing play-based activities to capture children's attention, seeking guidance from colleagues, and relying on online resources.

Finally, the study highlighted the essential insights gained by teachers in facilitating play-based learning. Teachers recognized the significance of play as a powerful learning tool for children's holistic development. The findings further indicate that, despite the challenges encountered, teachers demonstrated adaptability and a dynamic perspective, enabling them to effectively facilitate

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play-based learning and create meaningful learning environments.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The analysis of this study provides several important implications for teaching practices in facilitating play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms. First, teachers are encouraged to adopt adaptive and flexible instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, particularly in linguistically varied classroom settings. The use of translation and modeling is essential in ensuring clearer understanding of instructions and in sustaining children's engagement in play-based learning activities.

Second, in the context of play-based learning, effective classroom management requires a balance between structure and children's independence. Teachers should design well-structured play activities with clear guidelines and expected outcomes in order to manage children's active behavior while still promoting exploration and participation. This highlights the need for teachers to strengthen their facilitative competence rather than relying primarily on traditional teaching approaches.

Third, continuous professional development is essential in enhancing teachers' ability to facilitate play-based learning. Teachers should be provided with learning opportunities such as training, seminars, and peer collaboration to support the development of their competence in designing, assessing, and implementing play- based learning activities. Exposure to group discussions and independent learning also contributes to the further improvement of teaching practices.

Fourth, teachers should actively engage parents and other stakeholders to increase their understanding of the importance of play in early childhood education**.** Programs that promote effective communication and awareness can help reduce parental pressure on teachers and encourage support for appropriate, developmentally suitable teaching strategies.

Ultimately, teachers must recognize the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and engaging in reflective practice. Embracing challenges, finding enjoyment in teaching, and continuously developing through experience are essential in sustaining effective play-based learning. These practices not only enhance teachers' professional competence but also contribute to the creation of a nurturing, engaging, and meaningful learning environment for children.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of teachers in facilitating play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms, several avenues for future research have been identified.

First, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how teachers' perceptions and instructional practices evolve over time. Such studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how sustained engagement with play-based learning pedagogy influences classroom effectiveness and professional development.

Second, future research may consider expanding the number of participants across different educational contexts. Comparative studies involving various socioeconomic settings, school types, or educational systems may help illustrate how contextual factors influence the implementation of play-based learning. In addition, investigating how educational culture and curriculum frameworks shape teachers' experiences would provide a more comprehensive systemic viewpoint.

Third, future research may consider employing a mixed-methods research design to complement qualitative findings with quantitative evaluations of student learning outcomes. While qualitative approaches provide rich insights into how meaning is constructed through teachers' lived experiences, studies on play-based learning may be strengthened by incorporating developmental assessments or structured observational measures. This approach would enable researchers to further explore the relationship between measurable developmental gains and specific facilitation strategies used in play-based learning.

Fourth, future researchers may investigate how children perceive play-based learning strategies. Since this study focused on the lived experiences of teachers in facilitating play-based learning, incorporating the perspectives of children would provide a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics. Examining how children conceptualize agency, interaction, and play-based learning may also yield broader theoretical and practical implications.

Finally, future research may explore intervention strategies that support teachers in addressing the challenges identified in this study. Action research and experimental studies focusing on mentoring systems, professional development programs, or policy refinement could provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the implementation of play-based learning. Further studies may also examine teachers' coping strategies in relation to job satisfaction, retention, and stress within early childhood education settings. In addition, future research may investigate context-specific approaches that support the long-term implementation of play-based learning while addressing diverse classroom environments.

Concluding Remarks

This study was conducted to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers in facilitating play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms. Based on the findings, the lived experiences of the teachers were identified as: (1) parental

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pressure on the facilitation of play-based learning, (2) difficulty in communicating instructions due to language barriers, (3) struggles in managing active classroom environments, and (4) insufficient training in facilitating play-based learning.

Furthermore, the coping strategies employed by the teachers in addressing these challenges were identified as: (1) enjoying and adapting teaching practices as a coping mechanism, (2) adapting instruction through translation and modeling for clearer understanding, (3) utilizing play-based learning to improve children's focus and engagement, and (4) seeking colleagues' guidance and conducting online research for effective facilitation of play-based learning.

Derived from the participants' experiences, the following insights also emerged: (1) recognizing holistic development through facilitated play, (2) shifting to a student-centered teaching philosophy, (3) redefining the value of play as a learning medium, and (4) developing facilitative competence through play-based learning.

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers in facilitating play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms. Through a comprehensive analysis of their responses, the study illustrated how teachers conceptualize play, implement instructional strategies, overcome contextual challenges, and develop professionally over time. The findings confirm that play-based learning is not merely a teaching method; rather, it is a pedagogical approach grounded in responsiveness, reflection, and intentional practice.

The emerging theme reveals that teachers have a comprehensive understanding of children's holistic development, which strongly informs their facilitation practices. Teachers recognize play-based learning as an effective tool for supporting cognitive, emotional, and social development. Their experiences illustrate that successful facilitation of play requires reflective insight and strong pedagogical skills. As participants embraced child-centered approaches, they also reported professional growth and a deeper appreciation of the transformative nature of the learning process.

Despite its positive influence, teachers encountered significant challenges, including parental pressure, difficulties in communicating instructions, managing active classroom environments, and insufficient training. These challenges highlight the complexities of facilitating play-based learning within the academic framework. Nevertheless, teachers employed various coping mechanisms such as finding enjoyment in teaching and adapting instructional practices, translating and modeling instructions for clearer understanding, seeking guidance from colleagues, and utilizing online resources to enhance facilitation. These strategies demonstrate teachers' professional dedication and resilience in addressing classroom challenges.

Additionally, the findings highlight that effective facilitation of play-based learning does not depend solely on individual effort but is strengthened through collaboration, continuous learning, and support systems.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the dynamic relationship between classroom practices and professional growth. As teachers gain knowledge and experience in facilitating play-based learning, their skills and self-confidence gradually improve. This development suggests that mastery of play-based learning pedagogy requires continuous engagement, reflection, and collaborative.

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