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Play-Based Pedagogy in Preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa City

Administration: Practice and Challenges

BY:

Mengistu Amare

Advisor:

Abraha Asfaw (PhD)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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PLAY BASED PEDAGOGY IN PRESCHOOLS OF KIRKOS SUB-CITY, ADDIS ABABA:
PRACTICE AND CHALLENGES

A Thesis

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Mengistu Amare

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By
Mengistu Amare

Approved by Board of Examiners

Fantahun Admas (PhD)

Chairman, Department Graduate Committee

Signature

Abraha Asfaw (PhD)

Adviser (Name)

Signature

Yekoyealem Desie (PhD)

External Examiner

Signature

Professor Belay Tefera

Internal Examiner

Signature

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Abbreviation and Acronym

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoH: Ministry of Health

MoWA: Ministry of Women Affairs

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine the practice and challenges of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa. A concurrent embedded mixed research design (predominantly qualitative) was used in the study. A total of 60 research participants were selected (48 teachers, 6 school principals, and 6 students) using purposive, and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaire, interview and observation were used to collect data from respondents. To analyze the data, both quantitative (frequency, percentage) and qualitative data analysis method (thematic analysis) were used as appropriate. The descriptive statistics results indicated that teachers often used circle time to teach academic skills and social/ emotional skills. On the other hand, it was found that teachers used structured activities to teach physical skills. The descriptive statistics results further indicated that the mean value for hands on activities as the best type of learning for preschoolers was found high though it is not applicable practically. The observation results witnessed that the implementation of play based pedagogy was found unsatisfactory. Moreover, this study discovered that teachers have different implementations concerning play as pedagogy. Teachers most of the time applied lecture method to teach children than engaging them in participatory activities. Most of the time, the play in the classroom was teacher-led not children-led. Moreover, results indicate that children were engaged in both cooperative and solitary play activities. In addition, it was found that teachers did not use transition from subject to subject (course to course). The results also identified challenges that hinder play based pedagogy include teachers inadequate training in ECCE; shortage of inputs; unconducive outdoor environment; inadequate space for play, inadequate play materials and equipment, teachers' lack of pedagogical skill, lack of understanding of the play based pedagogy and increased number of students. From this one can conclude that play based pedagogy is not properly implemented in sampled preschools of Kirkos Sub-city. Therefore, continuous training for teachers on ECCE in general and play based pedagogy in particular, increase the handwork time; increasing supply of play materials and equipment in type and quantity, allocating separate budget for government preschools and increase supplementary books in type and quantity were suggested as remedial strategies to enhance the implementation of play-based pedagogy in preschools.

Key Terms: Play Based Pedagogy, Preschools, Teachers, principals, students, Sub-city

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one presents background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, definitions of operational terms and organization of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Play has become the center of curriculum in early childhood education and care in many countries around the globe (OECD, 2006). In Ethiopia, it has also given due emphasis since 2010 as a vital component of children development (MoE, 2010). It is indispensable for the holistic development and health of children particularly for preschoolers. It is a source of fun and enjoyment for children (Majumdar, 2020). It is one of the most important methods in which young children obtain essential knowledge and skills(OECD, 2006).

Due to its great importance to children, the different conventions and the national Early Child and Care Education (ECCE) policy (MoE, 2010) also give due emphasis to the importance of play based approach for children holistic development. For instance, the child's right to play is outlined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child focusing on the child's right to play, and the child's right to participate in various leisure, recreational and cultural activities as well as children's equal opportunity to participate in meaningful play (Hughes, 2012).

The Government of Ethiopia has also shown a growing interest in introducing play-based pedagogy in preschools. This is reflected in the government's ECCE National Policy Framework (2010), a strategic, operational plan and guideline for ECCE which the Ethiopian Ministry of Education developed in collaboration with the MoH and the MoWA (MoE et al., 2010). Nowadays, several countries introduce and incorporate play based pedagogy in their curriculum as a pedagogical tool to teach preschool children.

Play-based pedagogy is, essentially, to learn while at play. While the exact definition of play continues to be an area of debate in research, including what activities can be counted as play, play-based pedagogy is separate from the wider concept of play Learning is not essential for an activity to be perceived as play but remains important to the definition of play-based learning. Within studies that have examined the benefits of play-based learning, two different

types of play have been the primary focus: free play, which is directed by the children themselves, and guided play, which is play that has some level of teacher guidance or involvement (Danniels & Pyle, 2018).

Learning through play based pedagogy is essential to be applied in the process of teaching and learning at a pre-school level in an inclusive way (Ashari & Binti Hushairi, 2018). It offers opportunities for children to learn through restructuring process, new discovery, enrichment process, construction of experience and knowledge as well as the discovery of new concepts (Brock et al., 2009).

When children learn through play, learning becomes more meaningful for them and they develop positive attitudes toward academic learning in early childhood (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). This has been mentioned in several studies (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Trawick-Smith, 2006) and books.

Research also shows that play is a mediator in improving children's efficiency in social, communication and cognitive development. However, past research has not shown children experiences of play based approach adequately (Martin, 2016). Although every early year's practitioner knows play is essential for young children's development and yet, in many early years' settings and schools, play is squeezed and compressed by less important activities (Donaldson, & Scheffler, 2003). This process is not good for children's engagement and motivation and leads children and adults to become less thoughtful, joyful and creative learners.

Preschool/ Kindergarten in Ethiopia is an educational institution which is designed to teach children aged 4- to 6-years-old. It is normally a 3-year programme including nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten. Kindergartens/ preschools are primarily operated by private and faith-based institutions due to gaps, lack of staff and few schools in the public schooling system (Fantahun, 2016; Mulugeta, 2015). The government is also providing preschools for children.

Evidence tells us that young children learn best when they are actively engaged, interacting and co-constructing learning. Play provides an opportunity for children to explore ideas, concepts and develop relationships. This session will support teachers in knowing how to assess learning

for young learners in everyday play situations, and ongoing planning and to identify acquisition of skills and knowledge across the Early Stage.

Past studies have also disclosed that the positive outcomes of a play-based program for social skills acquisition and found that the children made progress in terms of listening, sharing, helping, understanding and expressing emotions (Durualp & Aral, 2010) investigated. The findings of Aras and Merdin (2020) further indicated that there are differences among teachers' play-based teaching strategies and most of the teachers observed as implementing play-based teaching practices. Varol (2013) found that 23% of the time spent in the classroom was free play and 5% was structured play under the direction of the teacher.

However, in Ethiopia, studies on play-based pedagogy have not been adequately researched and documented. Some studies were done by Admasu (2014); Belay (2018); Fantahun (2020); Yekoyealm (2016). The studies conducted so far have not been related to play-based pedagogy. They focused on development, research, and quality of ECCE. This research therefore, aims to examine play based pedagogy practice and its challenges in preschools of 'Kirkos' sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Preschools in Ethiopia are playing essential roles in enhancing children development. In the background section, it has been mentioned that play is important for children holistic development and health. In addition, it has been described in the National ECCE policy framework that play based pedagogy is an important pedagogical tool for teaching children in preschool though several challenges hinder the implementation of play based pedagogy.

Research finding shows that children experiences of play based approach have not been adequately documented and researched (Martin, 2016) particularly in Ethiopian context. Besides, the past research has been framed in line with the European cultural practice rather than seeing play as culturally specific (Cooney, 2004). An empirical study by Miller and Almon (2009) also indicated that most preschool teachers are still ignoring the play-based pedagogy. Sharifah Norhaidah et al. (2009) disclosed that teachers knew about the importance of learning through play approach, but they found it difficult to implement play in the classroom due to time constraints, lack of play materials and difficulty in controlling the children's behavior in class.

Past studies on play-based pedagogy in Ethiopian context were not researched and documented well. Some scholars have tried to conduct studies on Early Childhood and care education in Ethiopia: Developments, Research and Implications (Belay, 2018); Early Childhood Education in Ethiopia: Present Practices and Future Directions (Fantahun, 2020); Quality Early Childhood Care and Education (Yekoyealem et al., 2016). However, empirical studies on play-based pedagogy have not gotten the attention of researchers in Ethiopian preschools. Admasu (2014) for instance, in his empirical study found that majority of preschool teachers in public setting had no specialized training in early childhood education; majority of public preschool settings have no appropriate playground and material provision. These problems are observed in several preschools of Addis Ababa.

The studies conducted so far both in the international and Ethiopian context were done in various places and have shown some similarities and differences. Almost all of the studies mentioned (Aras & Merdin, 2020; Lungu & Matafwali, 2020; O'Connor et al., 2017; Pyle & Bigelow, 2015) underlined the importance of play based pedagogy to children development and health. The present study differs from the previous studies conducted so far. First and for most, studies on play-based pedagogy were not researched and documented adequately in Ethiopian context. In terms of methodology, several studies conducted so far used quantitative method or qualitative to examine the problem. However, the present study used a mixed research method to address the research problems quantitatively and qualitatively. The above reasons motivated the researcher to undertake this research in the preschools of ‘Kirkos’ sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration. Based on this, the following basic research questions guided the study.

1. How is play based pedagogy implemented in classroom and outside classroom of preschools in Kirkos Sub-city?
2. What type of play based pedagogy do teachers use in the preschools of Kirkos Sub-city?
3. What are the differences in practice of play-based pedagogy in private and government preschools of Kirkos sub-city?
4. What are the challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine play based pedagogy practice and its challenges in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration. More specifically, the study has the following specific objectives:

- To examine the implementation of play based pedagogy in the preschools of Kirkos Sub-city
- To assess the type of play based pedagogy that teachers use in preschools of Kirkos Sub-city?
- To distinguish the differences between private and government preschools practice on play-based pedagogy.
- To identify the challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy in the preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study has both theoretical and practical contribution in the field of early childhood education and care. In addition, it is significant for stakeholders including teachers, parents, principals, policy makers and other researchers. Its theoretical input will be addressing relevant methods for preschool teachers and parents on how to adapt developmentally appropriate, culturally and contextually relevant practices for enhancing play based pedagogy to the limited literature in the field from the Ethiopian perspective. Its proposed practical values are:

For teachers: First of all, it may help teachers to improve their teaching practice toward play based pedagogy and to have better understanding about the benefits of play based pedagogy to children holistic learning and development. It will also help teachers to make the preschool environment conducive, culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate, use of friendly play materials, adapt socially and locally meaningful play based practices in the classroom, scaffold children individually with respect to their age, experience, and welcome children's differences in their instructional pursuits.

For preschool principals: it may also help principals to enhance their insight and support their teachers through supervision. Again, it may assist principals to properly follow-up the proper implementation of play based approach in their respective school. It may also help principals to create conducive learning environment which is suitable for the application of play

based approach. Besides, it may assist principals to understand the challenges that affect the implementation of play based pedagogy and look for possible solution. This study will also assist principals to think how to fulfill play materials for implementing play based pedagogy

For parents: it may assist parents to improve their attitude towards play based approach and increase their awareness about the benefits of play based approach for their children and their irreplaceable roles in assisting children achieve early learning skills through play based approach. It will also help them adapt contextually relevant scaffolding practice, make the home environment rich in early learning resources including play materials, and take appropriate interventions early to solve the later educational difficulties of their children.

For policy makers: It may assist policy makers in revising the ECCE policy framework and in providing guidelines that help to follow-up the effective and efficient implementation of play based pedagogy. Besides, it may help policy makers to reflect on ECCE curriculum and other educational resources, and strategies concerning the holistic development of children through play based pedagogy as well as to provide the required play materials for preschool teachers for the successful implementation of play based pedagogy in preschools.

For Future Researchers: it may help as a stepping stone for future researchers who want to undertake similar studies in the context of the Ethiopian preschools both public and private as a guide and may use it as secondary sources of data at this particular regional and sub-city level.

For Students: it may help children learn about themselves, their environment, the other people in that environment, and the interrelationship among all of these. By doing so, they develop their cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language skills.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the variables of play (solitary, parallel, cooperative, role, associative, educational, physical and dramatic plays). Besides, it was delimited to circle time, structured activities and free play. Geographically, the study was delimited only to two government and four private sampled preschools in Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration. Information concerning play based pedagogy is not readily available in the scholarly literatures from Ethiopian preschool.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

The study had few limitations. One apparent limitation was some of the respondents were not cooperative to fill the questionnaire and return back. Another limitation was lack of contemporary and recent literature and studies on play-based pedagogy.

1.7. Definitions of Operational Terms

Play: is any pleasurable activity done by children voluntarily without external force that can stimulate children and help children holistic development.

Pedagogy: refers to the interactive processes between teacher and learner and to the learning environment (which includes the concrete learning environment, the family and community)

Play Based Pedagogy: is a pedagogical tool that uses play as an approach to teach children both in the classroom and outside the classroom using child-centered approach.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

In this section, the review of related literature is presented. This section basically focuses on play based pedagogy practice and challenges in preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration. It begins with a concept and definitions of play and its characteristics and goes to the historical overview of play. It also reviews the benefits of play, the various types of play and stages of play development. Moreover, this section tries to review the various play theories, parents' perception towards play, the concept of pedagogy, play as a pedagogical tool in preschools of Ethiopia and challenges in implementing play based approach in preschools of Ethiopia. Lastly, several empirical researches conducted so far on play at international, national and local level are reviewed. The theoretical and conceptual framework of research also presents at the end of the literature section

2.1. The concept of Play

Play is the best vehicle to help children learn and develop holistically. Children learn best when they can actively manipulate and explore the material and when all their senses are involved with that particular experience. They learn least from just seeing something and when they can also talk about it (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). During the process of play, young children learn about themselves and others, and develop a better understanding of their world. When they can actually see, smell, manipulate and actively experiment with objects, everything becomes more understandable. Studies have shown that children who have more free play experiences when they are young actually do better at school. They tend to be more confident, creative and have better social and language skills than children with fewer of these kinds of experiences. Children can stimulate many areas of their development when they are playing. Through the process of play children develop a better understanding of their world (Dube, 2013).

According to Squibb (2005), Play is chosen freely, personally directed, naturally inspired behavior that aggressively engages the child. There are some parents and teachers especially in our country who believe that play are fun and are waste of time and energy (Squibb, 2005). But truly speaking, play involves greater social interaction in the child. It develops physical, motor skills, language, emotional, social and intellectual abilities in children during pre-school years. So, as an essentially developmentally process, play leads to physical co-ordination as well as social facility. In this respect, it serves two main functions: As a means of exploring physical, emotional and intellectual experience; and as a means of assimilation of these experiences into

behavioral pattern, social conventions and frames of reference against which future exploration of experience could be tested.

Through play children discover social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Through play, children learn many of the basic skills and concepts that they'll need in adulthood stage. Play is vital in cognitive development (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Children who play freely with designated materials exhibit more thinking skills and problem-solving abilities than those not given opportunities to play. They are also more goal-directed and persistent (Squibb, 2005).

Play also fosters imaginative thinking. As children mature, their thinking and actions grow in flexibility. Materials and objects are used in many ways. The symbolic play of children lays the foundation for their understanding of the written symbols of language and mathematics. Play lays a foundation for reading success and children use visual perception, eye-hand coordination and symbolic representation (Squibb, 2005).

Play also has an important role in learning physical and perceptual skills. Complex learning tasks depend upon well-integrated neurological development, which is supported by playful activity. Sensory motor skills must be developed before the activities of reading; writing and arithmetic can be mastered. Play is the principal activity through which social interaction is facilitated in the early childhood classroom (Dube, 2013).

Through play, children gain confidence and learn to trust others, to give, receive, share, express ideas and feelings, make choices, express friendship, see the perspectives of others, and include others. Through play, children plan cooperatively with others, use language to shape their interactions, solve problems and identify with a variety of societal themselves and make a positive contribution (Squibb, 2005).

2.2. Historical overview of play

The history of play has passed several stages since from inception up to now. United States of America took the first initiative in introducing childcare centers in the 1920's and 1930's. Before that, mothers were forced to stay home until their children were able to go to primary school. The newly established centers were located in selected universities, including Bank Street College in New York, the University of California at Berkley, Iowa, Columbia University's Teachers College, and Yale University. In these universities, several studies have

been done by researchers on the development of the child. One of the early researchers of child development was Susan Issacs. She saw play as a developmental tool for all aspects of a child's growth (Monighan-Nourot et al, 1987). She required individuals to see the aspects of childhood, such as children being full of energy with dirty hands and playful smiles, as positive signs of development that lead to the acquisition of knowledge and skills through adventure and wisdom.

During the depression time, the federal government took part in opening childcare centers in the late 1930s to assist families impacted by the depression by introducing programs including the Work Projects Administration School and the Lanham Act Child Care Center. School teachers who were out of work were also being sent to teach in childcare centers. In relation to this, Monighan-Nourot et al., (1987) underlined that the involvement of the federal government was considered as the beginning of the "democratization" of early childhood education.

In the 1940s and 1950s, a study on children playing with dolls in an attempt to learn how personality traits, sibling relationships, aggression, and family roles form from a behaviorist's point of view has been done by Robert Sears (1947) and his students. They found that there were many factors that affect children doll play such as types of materials, degree of organization of these materials, length of research session and the experimenter-child relationship though the research did not bring any convincing results in relation to the specifics of how personality traits, sibling relationships, aggression, or family roles are formed. As an alternative, it resulted in a base line of factors for other researchers to take into consideration when studying doll play.

In the 1950s and 1960s, several childcare centers initiated and coming across the globe (Monighan-Nourot et al., 1987) as a result of parents and teachers needs to make early childhood education available to a wider community than was being owned by university childcare centers only. Play was included into the curriculum, nonetheless largely without teacher intervention. Teachers had a difficult time clarifying the aim why play was incorporated in the curriculum, since they were deprived of close nearness to the university investigators. In the past, university researchers had explained the reasons for play being essential.

In 1965, Head Start program was opened for parents from low socio-economic status by the federal government (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006). In this program, children get health and nutrition skills, social skills, academic skills, and to encourage parental involvement. Head Start

proved to be a durable program because it aimed at the entire child, assisting children progress beyond their low SES status. This program is still available today, whereas the governmental programs of the 1930s did not last.

In the 1970s, prominent researchers like Piaget, Sutton-Smith, and Singer have showed interest in play theories (Fein, 1981). For example, Piaget (2000) investigated pretend play and the related developmental levels. Sutton-Smith on the other hand, stressed theories related to play. Singer alternatively, conducted play as a dimension of personality. With the research beginning to surface on the aspects of play, this initiated the formation of curriculum models who aided parents who desired to know how their child's day was being structured and what they were learning.

In the 1980s, primary schools took a role in early childhood education. Pre-K was announced to the primary setting. Curriculum models were now adding worksheets, rote counting, and skill drills though it gave little time for creativity or problem solving often found in play. Parents needed their children to obtain all the information and learn all that was likely. Electronic learning games commenced to gain acceptance with parents as another way to assist their children learn (Almon, 2003).

In the 1990s and today, early childhood education has become an essential emphasis for parents. Parents, who initially required their children to learn how to socialize and self-discover in preschool, now need their children to be capable in all of the skills required to go in kindergarten (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). These skills range from the academic knowledge of colors, shapes, alphabet letters, and numbers to an awareness of social skills. The No Child Left Behind project developed to help prepare children to meet the challenges of rising educational standards.

In summary, it was discussed that the history of play has gone through many ups and down since 1920 till now. Child centers were first introduced in the US by universities to assist parents to go to their work rather than staying home. Gradually, the federal government involved in establishing child care centers to assist parents with depression. During 1950s and 1960s, several child care centers were created to satisfy the wider community needs. In 1965, Head Start program was opened for parents from low socio-economic status by the federal government. In

the 1970s, prominent researchers like Piaget, Sutton-Smith, and Singer have showed interest in play theories. In the 1980s, primary schools took a role in early childhood education. In the 1990s and today, early childhood education has become an essential emphasis for parents.

In Ethiopia, child care centers were established during the Derg Regim though ample evidence was not obtained about the exact number of child care centers. Most of the centers were opened by missionaries or private owned organizations. Today a lot of child centers are available in Ethiopia though most of the centers are found in the urban areas. These centers play a significant role in supporting children care and education.

2.3. Characteristics of children's play

Play during the childhood years, has certain characteristics that differentiate it from the play of adolescents and adults. Although these characteristics may vary somewhat from child to child, they are so similar in their major aspects that they may be regarded as practically universal today. These characteristics are described below and their variations, when marked, are noted (Squibb, 2005). Some of the characteristics of play include: play follows a predictable pattern of development; play is influenced by tradition; play follows a predictable pattern of development; the number of play activities decreases with age; play becomes increasingly social with age; the number of playmates decreases with age; play becomes increasingly sex appropriate; childhood play changes from informal to formal; play is less physically active as children grow older; play is predictive of children's adjustments and there are marked variations in children's play

With reference to play follows a predictable pattern of development, from early babyhood to maturity, certain play activities are popular at one age and not at another, regardless of the environment, nationality, socioeconomic status, and sex of the child. These play activities are so universally widespread and anticipated that it is usual to divide the childhood years in to specific play stages, each with its own name (Squibb, 2005).

Play is also influenced by tradition; young children copy the play of older children, who have imitated the play of the generation of children preceding them. Thus, in every culture, one generation passes down to the next the forms of play it finds most satisfactory (Macintyre, 2010).

Another characteristic of play is the number of play activities decreases with age. The number of several play activities engaged in slowly decreases as children grow older. The decrease is due to a number of reasons. Older children have less time available for play, and they want to spend it in ways that give them greatest enjoyment (Squibb, 2005). As their attention span increases, they can concentrate on a play activity longer instead of flying from one to another as they did when they were younger. Children abandon some activities because they have become uninteresting or are regarded as immature. For example, kindergarten children display a decreasing interest in blocks as other materials-paints, clay, crayons, and chalk-offer a greater variety of interesting activities. The narrowing of the number of play activities may be the result of lack of playmates. Children who are not accepted in the peer group find themselves limited to activities they can enjoy alone. This is especially true for older children because most of the play at this age centers in gang activities (Macintyre, 2010).

Play also becomes increasingly social with age. Because children are self-centered, their play would be more solitary than social. When young children first begin to play with age-mates, there is little interaction or cooperation in their play. In its place, they involve in onlooker play or in parallel play. When there is any interaction, there is little give and take (Squibb, 2005). Instead, the interaction consists mostly of grasping toys from another child and fighting when the child refuses to give up a toy. As the number of social contacts increases, the quality of their play becomes more social. By the time children reach the school age, most of their play is social and cooperative.

The number of playmates decreases with age. Young children will play with anyone who is available and willing to play with them. When they find children who are playing in a more interesting way; the shift from the children they are playing with to new ones. In a neighborhood or preschool group, children regard all group members as potential playmates. After children become members of a mass, all this changes. They want to play with a small, select group whose members have common interests and whose play gives them particular satisfaction. Older children limit the number of their playmates and spend most of their playtime with them (Dube, 2013).

Moreover, play becomes increasingly sex appropriate. Children and very young children make little distinction between boys' toys and girls' toys, and children of both sexes play in much the

same way. By the time they enter school, however, boys are clearly aware that boys do not play with certain toys unless they want to gain the standing of being sissies (Dube, 2013).

Even when girls prefer play activities which the social group regards as "masculine," they, like boys, are influenced by social pressures to play in a sex- appropriate manner. As a result, the sex appropriateness of all children's play increases each year.

Furthermore, childhood play changes from informal to formal. The play of young children is natural and informal. They play when, and with what toys, they wish, regardless of time and place. They do not need special play equipment or special play clothes. Slowly, play becomes more and more formal. During the gang age (years between 7 -11); for example, children feel that special equipment and a special place for play are essential (Squibb, 2005).

Play is less physically active as children grow older. Throughout the first three grades in school, children care little about inactive play until late in the day, when they are exhausted. Then they like to watch television or be read to. Children at this time not only withdraw from active play but also most of their playtime is dedicated to fantasizing- a form of play that requires a minimum spending of energy (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Play is predictive of children's adjustments. The type of play children involve in, the range of their play activities, and the amount of time they spend in play are all indications of their personal and social adjustments. Children, for example, who participate mainly in solitary play at ages when their peers are playing with other children, are usually poorly adjusted, as shown by their lack of acceptance by members of the peer group (Macintyre, 2010).

There are marked variations in children's play. Although all children pass through similar and predictable stages of play, not all children play the same way at the same age (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Variations in children's play may be traced to a number of factors. The most important of which are given below:

1. Health: The healthier children are the more extra energy they have for active play.
2. Environment: Children from rural environments play less than those from urban areas, owing to fewer playmates, less equipment, and less free time.

3. Sex:-Boys play more actively than girls and prefer games and Sports to all other kinds of play.
4. Intelligence: At every age bright children are more active than the less bright, and their play shows greater cleverness. As they grow older, they show more interest in intellectual games.
5. Play equipment: the play equipment children have influences their play, for example a prevalence of dolls and stuffed animals, encourages make-believe play, a predominance of blocks, paints, and clay predominance of encourages constructive play.
6. Motor Development: As children play at every age involves motor coordination, what children do with their play mate will depend on their motor development. Good motor control enables children to engage in active play.
7. Socio-Economic Status: Children of higher socioeconomic groups would have plenty of time to play and they prefer activities that cost money. Those from the lower groups would have a little time to play and they engage in activities costing little money (Squibb, 2005).

There are certain features of play that are essential. These include time, space for play, play materials, playmates, extra-energy and knowledge of how to play (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Regarding time, after the everyday activities are over, young children should be free to play in a quiet way, as they wish (Squibb, 2005). Besides, children need space to play. Very few play activities young children enjoy can be carried out in tight space, the space must be large enough for the equipment they need and for the way they want to play. Another feature of play is the availability of play materials. Children need some simple play equipment. More important than how much or how new is how suitable the equipment is to the children. The children should not be too old or too young for it, it should be simple enough so that adult help is not needed to use it, and there should be enough variety to stimulate different kinds of play. Play mates are also required to play. Even though, the young children really play with others very little, they like to know that there is some-one to watch or play with if they want to do so. Moreover, children get extra energy to play. Children must have more energy than they need for daily living if they are to use it for play. Children who suffer from any physical state that saps energy have little desire to play. Furthermore, knowledge of how to play is important for children. Young children can learn how to use toys and play equipment trial and error, by imitating other children or by being shown. The last method gives the best results.

In summary, all of these features are needed. Some, though, are needed more than others. Young Children, for example, must have space for play. However, it is not the amount of space that is not important. It is where the space is and how children are allowed to use it. There may be a large yard behind the house. If most of this yard is given over to flower or vegetable gardens, there will be little space for children to play games. In the same way, parents may have a large play room for their children where they are sent to play with toys much of their waking hours. But the children also need playmates with them or parents who will show them how to play with the equipment that is there. Otherwise the children will be limited in how they can play. The benefits they get from the play will also be limited (Squibb, 2005).

2.4. Classification of Types of play

Play is the major source of development in the early years. Several classifications of types of play have been introduced by scholars. For instance, Piaget (1945) classified play as practice play, symbolic play and play with rules. Smilansky (1968) also classified play as functional play, constructive play, symbolic play and games with rules. Similarly, Takata (1974) categorized play as sensorimotor play, symbolic and simple constructive play, dramatic and complex constructive play; Games with rules; Recreational and competitive play. Rubin et al. (1983) further classified play as sensorimotor play, simulation, simulation with objects, and simulation with substitution, sociodramatic, role-playing and Games with rules. Garvey (1990) also tried to classify play as play with motion and interaction; Play with objects; Play with language; and Play with social materials. Stagnitti and Unsworth (2000) have also classified play symbolic play, sociodramatic play, role play and fantastic play. Garon et al. (2002) also classified play as exercise play, symbolic play, assembly (=construction) and games with rules. Parten and Mildred (1932) classified play solitary play; parallel play; associative play and cooperative play. Kudrowitz and Wallace (2009) on the other hand, classified play as construction, fantasy, sensory and challenge. To mention some of the classification of play:

Role play is derived from experience, cumulative knowledge acquired in life. In role play, the child expresses what s/he feels freely in action or words representing someone or something. Pretend play is a stage where children practically display social interaction and interrelation of the community they are nurtured in (Squibb, 2005).

Role play usually begins around the second year of life when children play with their toys as if they were real people or animals. They react to them in ways they have observed adults or

older children react to the people or animals they represent. Gradually, as their intellectual abilities increase, their dramatizations become more elaborate and complex. Instead, for example, of merely rocking a doll as if it were a baby, children duplicate the routine of caring for a baby-feeding or bathing it, or wheeling it in a carriage (Squibb, 2005).

At first, pretend play is solitary play. Later, as children become interested in playing with their age-mates, it becomes social with cooperation between children as they play different roles in the dramatizations. Whether solitary or social, pretend play requires equipment. Children, for example, do not enjoy playing house unless they can transform the place where they are playing into the scene of the event they are playing. Therefore In preschool Different corners must be prepared by preschool teachers to be used for pretend play these corners are; family corner, marketing, clinic, construction (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Pretend play is, thus, typically early childhood play, just as free, spontaneous play is typically "baby play." In spite of its relatively short duration as a play interest, pretend play contributes much to children's personal and social adjustments. From practice in role-taking, children learn what the group considers appropriate for a role-whether as a parent, a pupil, or a soldier. They learn to view a situation from the frame of reference of the person they impersonate in their play. This helps them to develop social as well as self-insight (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Educational play is a type of play intended to teach children. It is systematic, planned and follows rules and usually needs teacher's guidance ; because it is used to exemplify , to make a point very clear and understandable. This play focuses on intellect, and manifests a play coined out for teaching (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Children through education play; Construct knowledge by combining their ideas; Establish a culture and a social world with their peers; Discover the intimacy and joy of friendship as they explore their own emerging identity; Develop feelings of competence and self-confidence; Develop their knowledge through rehearsing; Enable participate in various activities and develop his reasoning capacity; Learn how to collect and compile information in his environment and enable to identify things which develops their recall capacity

Children begin to play formal games in social groups. These games have fixed predetermined rules; e.g., card games, board games, lotto, domino and puzzle. Children begin to create their own games and/or adjust the rules of old-style playground games in their self-

organized playgroups; e.g., ‘Enkoklesh’, ‘Enkia selantya’, ‘hide-and seek’ (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Constructive play is also a play in which children use materials to make things not for functional purposes but rather for the enjoyment they derive from making them. At first, most constructive play is reproductive. Children reproduce in their constructions objects they see in everyday life, such as mud pies to represent the pies they see baked at home. Up to the age of 4 or 5 years, children put together objects without a preconceived plan or pattern. If, by chance, they resemble a familiar object, such as a house or a bridge, they are delighted. By the time they are 5 or 6 years old, children use materials specifically and appropriately for making things according to a preconceived plan (Squibb, 2005).

If, on the other hand, children develop unrealistically high aspirations for their constructions, as often happens when they follow a model made by an adult or shown in a book of instructions, they are disappointed when their constructions fall below the standards they had hoped to achieve (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Also, if their constructions are ridiculed by peers or criticized by adults, it dampens their enthusiasm for this type of play because it kills the enjoyment they otherwise would derive from it. As a result, one of the important play activities of childhood and one that might be carried over to the adult years as a hobby are likely to be abandoned in favor of other play activities that contribute less to their personal and social adjustments than as well as in adult life (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

In case of construction play, blocks are one of the most useful creative toys. They give children hours of imaginative and constructive fun as they find their own ways to play with them. For this purpose children need a selection of blocks of different sizes and shapes. They can be made from a variety of boxes such as cigarette, match and shoe boxes. Also tins, pill containers or cut up old broom sticks of various sizes can be made into blocks. It may be possible to get off cuts from a timer yard that you could cut up. Let the children play with the toy in any way they can think of. Encourage both boys and girls to play with blocks (Squibb, 2005).

Dramatic play, common from around 4 years of age, is pretend play with others, continued role taking, and a narrative line. It can involve understanding others’ intent, sophisticated language constructions, and development of (sometimes) novel and intricate story lines. Many learning functions have been advanced for pretend and especially dramatic play. One hypothesis is that it is useful for developing pre literacy skills, such as awareness of letters

and print, and the purpose of books. The narrative structure of dramatic play sequences mirrors the narratives of story books. For these benefits, some structuring by adults is helpful (Squibb, 2005).

Dramatic Play helps to shape the children's personality in the following ways: They are working through real life situations in a make-believe world so they can understand the world around them; They use their creativity to turn simple props into imaginary objectives; They improve their visual skills by matching and grouping objects as they play such as sharing out the blankets or mugs while they play house; They learn social, emotional, language and listening skills as they share and co-operate with each other; They develop good oral skills which are important for learning to read; They exchange materials and props, express their feelings, and plan their role play and they learn important life skills like dressing and undressing themselves. All these skills are vital to learning how to learn (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

The role of preschool teachers should be to: Guide and support the children as they play; Asking questions which may expand the play and extend their learning through discovery and exploration; Give them enough time for play to develop; You can join in their fantasy game using their thoughts and ideas but be careful not to force your ideas on the children and put their play into words (Squibb, 2005).

Several studies have shown that playing is good for developing motor functioning and several infants and toddlers obtain essential movement skills through unstructured physical activity and play. A recent study found that children's primary motive for engaging in physically active play was for social and enjoyment reasons, to prevent boredom. They also valued the freedom from adult control and the unstructured nature of physically active play (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

2.5. Values or Benefits of play in child development

Play is a truly universal phenomenon. It exists in some form in every human society and dates back to prehistoric times. It provides tremendous benefits for children with regards to all round growth and developments. The most significant values of play are physical, cognitive, social, moral, therapeutic, recreational and educational values.

Regarding physical value, at the time of play different parts of the body of the child are activated. Due to these activity muscles, glands and body cells are properly developed. Play also serves as an outlet for surplus energy. If the energy is not properly it could have made the child

irritable and nervous. Specially, outdoor play gives scope for exercises in the fresh air and thereby improves health and strength. Moreover, the development of the large and small muscles of the body is not a wholly natural occurrence and through specific play activities proportionate muscular development can be attained (Squibb, 2005).

With regard to social value, play aids children to co-operate with others and develop friendly relationship. He learns social manners, behaviors and how to solve problems from his friends while playing. Moreover, he learns competitions, tolerance, and reciprocity with of his peers. He gets maximum social contact in play, which he may not get either at home or in the school. He also learns sex-role identification and how to behave in the society with the same sex group as well as opposite sex group (Squibb, 2005).

Concerning to cognitive value, cognitive process is a dynamic and continuous process beginning with sensory reception, and then passing through perceptual organization on (in visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory sensory modalities), short-term and long-term memory, language reception, comprehension, expression, and vocabulary development, problem solving, imagination and creativity. All these can be greatly enhanced by play as it help children to observe, concentrate, experiment and gives them ample opportunities for exploration and sense of achievement. Play helps children to observe, concentrate and experiment (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Pertaining to moral value, the child learns what is right and what is wrong, how to respect elders, and how to behave with younger from his playmates. He gets moral training while playing from his friends. It helps him to learn to honest, to close with equality and with team spirit (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

With reference to therapeutic value, through play the preserved tension or emotions are released. The shy child can learn to enjoy himself with others; the aggressive child can learn to take his turn; the child who seems to take a sense of security can gain self-respect and the respect of his classmates through the skill he may show in a game. The eager child has an opportunity to learn to be patient, and the over competitive child can learn to accept his losses with good grace. Play therapy is a set of techniques used to help children with emotional problems (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Regarding recreational value, play and games have recreational value once the necessary play skills have been learned and have become a part of one's experience. Great enjoyment and

relaxation can be had from play activities. Play gives children emotional satisfaction and keeps them occupied and prevents boredom. Toys help to keep a child happy and reduce his anxieties (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

Concerning to educational value, through the use of toys in pre-school the child learns about the color, size, shape, and texture of the objects. The child who has problem of writing, can learn it through drawing, painting, pasting and collage work during play activity session in the pre-school (Squibb, 2005).

2.6. Developmental Stages of play

Development continues through different phases which show usual patterns. Across childhood, children develop in stages. These stages are broad patterns of development characterized by some dominant features. In each stage of development, a child shows distinctive capabilities and characteristics of play (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). There are several developmental stages of play including manipulative play, solitary play, parallel play, and social play.

Manipulative play assists children to “manipulate” materials or, in other words, handle them creatively. It develops finger and hand control and eye-hand coordination. The toys help children to develop cognitive skills such as solving problems and reasoning. This type of play helps children plan their play and concentrate on the game or toy and they learn about different colors, sizes and shapes as they match parts to get them to fit together in the correct way. Children develop social and emotional skills as they cooperate, share, and negotiate with each other. They develop all their senses as they feel, listen to, look at, smell, and taste their toys. For the reason teachers need to regularly check the toys are clean. When children grown up they start to lose interest in playing with toys and, as they reach school age, they want to play more adult games (Squibb, 2005). It is often solitary but when sufficient resources are provided it can also be a cooperative activity.

Solitary play, also known as self-governing play, is one of the most primitive stages of play where children play on your own since they have not advanced communally to be able to play with others yet or because they choose alone time. When children begin to play as infants their play is usually solitary. They love to have their parent nearby but they do not yet have the ability to play in an interactive manner. However, the parent or caregiver does have the opportunity, even at this early age, to model good social skills and verbalize the actions and

activities the child is engaging in (Squibb, 2005). Solitary play teaches babies how to entertain themselves and is frequently first seen in children ages 0–2, earlier they commence work together and playing with other children. Self-governing play is also a phase that elder toddlers and children choose to participate after they understand how to play with others, showing just how valuable this skill is.

In parallel play, children play in their own way, side by side with other children. Children play side by side but with no interaction. As their cognitive, communication and social skills develop children become able to play interactively with other children. This is a huge developmental step but initially, children will still need an adult nearby to help them to negotiate the inevitable difficulties that will arise (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Parallel play is a form of play in which children play head-to-head to each other, but do not try to influence one another's behavior and is very essential for the 2½- 3 year old age range as it supports children to learn peer rule, observation skills, functioning with and getting along with others as well as working independently.

In social play or cooperative play, children are actively involved as a group in playing together. This Social play often results from the organization of the teacher, but is the least frequently witnessed play in preschool (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018). Social play is important because it allows children to interact with others, enabling them to talk to other children and learn about other point of view. Second, it provides a vehicle for communication. Children have others with whom to practice language and learn from. Third, it helps children learn impulse control; they realize they can't always do whatever they want. And fourth, in giving a child other children with whom to interact, social play negates isolation and helps children learn the interactions so vital to society. Children's social skills develop through exposure to play experience with parents /caregivers and other children. The skills are built and refined over time and increased play interaction (Squibb, 2005). In social play children learn sharing, turn taking, ability to wait for turn, ability to follow simple rules, develop some problem solving skills, good language skills and some empathy development

In summary, the various developmental stages of play are reviewed and they are found very essential for the holistic development of children though it differs in age, level of interaction and play mates. For instance, infants most of the time play alone. Manipulative, solitary and

parallel plays are often used by infants. They play with their own toys and games. Preschoolers most often interact with children and use social play. The level of interaction also differs from stage to stage. For example, in manipulative, solitary and parallel play, there is no interaction among children, more of an independent play. While in social play, there is high interaction among children. This might help children develop language and communication skills. Therefore, teachers in preschool ought to understand the various stages of development and use them depending of the children interest and age.

2.7. Adults and teachers role in children's play

Adults have significant roles in children's play in particular and in the holistic development of their children in general. They are primary teachers of their children. They interact with their children, play with them and support by providing the required play materials (Wood & Bennett, 1997). They demonstrate various roles including a facilitator, play partner, planner, co-learner and listener (Dunkin & Hanna, 2001). Dunkin and Hanna's resource goes on to illustrate a range of roles that adults can adopt and that can shape the interaction and set the tone. They identify the following roles:

1. The facilitator — when the adult helps children to sustain their play by providing strategies and ideas, extends their thinking, gives children time to think and to speak, supports recall and creates opportunities for children to make the next steps;

2. The co-learner/co-explorer — in this role the adult models the role he or she would wish to see the child taking, thus enabling the child to make their own discoveries and develop problem-solving skills. The role to be modeled might include looking for resources or information, asking a more knowledgeable person for help and struggling with a problem. An important part of this role is modeling language.

3. The play partner — this entails the adult just being involved in the child's activity, joining in, enjoying it and following the actions developed by the child.

4. The listener/decoder — in this role the adult listens very carefully gives full attention to a child and gives the child time to fully explain or to show what they have been doing. But it can also mean acting as a sounding board for the child's ideas, reflecting their thinking back to them and sometimes paraphrasing the child's utterances to check if they have been accurately understood by the adult.

5. The planner — adults can plan to interact with particular children and to build up an interest or strength they have shown, or as part of their observation and assessment. There are overlaps between these roles and other frameworks that have been referred to in earlier sections of this review. For example, the ‘facilitator’ role is probably most similar to the concept of scaffolding and the ‘planner’ role is an example of distal guided interaction in the Plowman and Stephen framework.

Adults physical presence, interaction and intervention is very important because without the presence of adults, children’s’ play sometimes not working, they get frustrated and demotivated. Therefore, adults’ interaction, availability and intervention is more important because at early years, children’s lacked the cognitive and social skills to engage effectively in play, resolve conflicts, paly cooperatively, to follow their plans and negotiate (Wood & Bennett, 1997). Hence, high quality adult-child interactions (thinking together) are vital in playful settings. The main point is that high-quality interactions are motivated by the ‘genuine interest’ of the adult in what the child is doing and are characterized by the adult listening and extending the child’s thinking and knowledge (Dunkin & Hanna, 2001).

2.8. Preschool learning environment

Learning environment is the use and organization of the space in your classroom, the daily schedule and routines, and the social and emotional atmosphere (Loebach, 2005). Preschool period is essential for the holistic development of children (Katz, 1999). Developed countries have long acknowledged this by stressing preschool education as a transition to confirm world class societies (Loebach, 2005).

Regarding social learning environment, children’s behavior and development in the early years are linked with the social support they obtain in preschool (Cabell et al., 2015; Majzub, 2009). It is important for a preschool to implement curriculums that provide children with play chances as it is well-known that it plays an essential role in children learning (Loebach, 2005).

The presence of disabled children in normal academic programs is also common (Lieber et al, 1998). It is supposed that comprehensive preschool programs help both disabled and normal children. It assists in providing opportunities for disabled children to be friend with and to learn social, linguistic and cognitive skills from their normal peers.

Moreover, well-trained teachers who use the right methods to conduct the preschool program or curriculum, providing motivating and attractive atmosphere, creating social and educational inclusion in class and maintaining regular communication with parents are also crucial. It helps prevent separation and social anxiety (Joseph, Ambika & Williams, 2015).

Concerning to physical learning environment and play materials, study into the design process of preschools found that design elements are usually ignored in discussions as regards the preschool physical learning environment (Joshi, 2008). Preschool education should not only focus on lesson planning, but also on spatial arrangements, which is similarly significant (Morrow, 2007).

Children are influenced by their physical as much as their social settings as it also affect children behavior, academic performance, and development (Maxwell & Chmielewski, 2008). Because preschool children are quickly developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally, their experience with the physical environment can have long-lasting effects on their development (Martin, 2004). Poor facilities and spatial quality also affect teachers' motivation and ultimately affect children education (Salleh, Kamaruzzaman & Mahyuddin, 2013). Teachers will feel valued and motivated for working when they have access to good infrastructure, significantly improving their working performance (Uline & Moran, 2008), affecting children academic outcome.

In reference to children's play behavior or learning through play, a child's learning and developmental processes involve a lot of play activities. Children have a natural inclination to play, and it serves as a crucial mechanism for learning and development (Loebach, 2005). Play significantly enhances children's interest in class (Nair, Yusof & Arumugam, 2012) through active use and examination of their immediate environment (Fogg, 2001). According to Acar (2014), play enhances a child's capacities and creative potential. It raises linguistic, mental, social, emotional, and motor skills; provides learning opportunities through trials and experiences that will be essential all over their lifetime.

More critically, the endless obstacles that constrain play activities in their environments could damage their physiology and psychology (Bratton et al, 2005). This shows that preschools should be planned with right physical environments that motivate and support play activities - learning should be fun and accidental, not forced upon (Badzis, 2006). A well-established

preschool should not be built merely to satisfy adult users but also tailored to children's needs, to enhance their developmental opportunities (Badzis, 2006).

Regarding physical outdoor play environment, indoor play environment requires higher-level cognitive play that comprises engaging tasks and independent activities and is usually more stressed. Outdoor spaces, on the other hand, are often ignored in educational settings (Acar, 2014). Access to outdoor play environments is important in starting physical play activities (Davison & Lawson, 2006), stimulate physical motor development and support healthy behavior in children (Boldemann et al., 2006). Direct play interactions through touching, seeing and experiencing nature is also a key source to cognitive, motor, social and emotional development. Yielding in the sun during outdoor play will improve children health and decrease the risk of sick building syndrome -commonly related to low access to natural day light and fresh air in indoor settings (Joshi, 2008).

With regard to conducive physical environment, healthy spatial and artistic qualities, safety features, and suitable use of material, finishes, and furniture contribute to conducive environments for teaching and learning. The appropriateness of indoor environments is measured by its Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) –thermal, visual and acoustic comforts. Human comfort as a result of the physical environment is displayed to affect child's play behavior, thus influencing learning (Abbas, Othman & Rahman, 2012).

Spatial arrangements and definition also influence children development; distinct areas encourage better learning and positive behaviors (Abbas & Othman, 2011). Design and quality of material relate with positive development among preschool children (Abbas & Ghazali, 2010).

Studies indicate that physically planned environments affect a widespread development positive behavior development was seen in better- designed physical environments (Martin, 2004). Physical shortcomings hinder children development because it creates undesired behavioral obstacles, causing withdrawal and lack of integration with their surroundings (Gurkaynak, 1996). Physical dimensions and different aspects of the physical environment influence students' behavior and attitudes differently (Fein et al., 2004).

Preschool physical environments affect children competency and development in many ways (Abbas, 2012; Abbas & Ghazali, 2010; Abbas, Othman & Rahman, 2010). The physical environment and children's development of cognitive and social competency are directly related (Maxwell, 2008).

Regarding play materials in ECCE, the types of experiences children may have in a pre-school are made possible in which the teacher/caregiver provide ample, relevant and child size equipment, materials, and facilities to the young children. Thus, materials and equipment in the play space should be age appropriate for the children who use it, to ensure safety and maximum skill development (Spencer & Wright, 2014). Available materials and equipment in a pre-school needs to be invites children to undertakings such as building, experimenting, observing, or engaging in different activities. Since young children in ECCE learn through their experiences, the materials and equipment need to be selected for the children who will use them. However, while choosing play materials for children's the following criteria should be considered. Thus a Martials have to be safe, durable, encourage physical activities, foster imaginative and creative activities, stimulate thinking, problem solving, experimenting, and facilitate communication (Jackman, 2001)

With regard to interaction between social environment and physical environment, preschool aims are attainable when there is a fruitful interaction between social and physical environments (Abbas, Othman & Rahman, 2010). To produce a good preschool social environment, teaching programs must be designed to work with the built infrastructure and vice-versa. Teaching and learning activities should not hinder access but exploit the designed facility. Well-made preschools, prepared with good spatial and esthetic qualities, good safety features, and appropriate use of materials, finishes and furniture, contributes to favorable environments for teaching and learning. Emphasis on both aspects of the learning environment will, therefore, maximize a child's development and learning.

2.9. **Play based Pedagogy**

Play-based pedagogy, active learning, is the way young children best develop. It is in this environment that their developmental levels can best be seen. Assessment, such as observation and portfolios, interwoven with what children do as they actively play, allows teachers to see this (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

It is vital to recognize that development and learning are not static, but continuously changing. Moreover, children develop at different rates in different domains (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional). These are influenced by and dependent upon the opportunities children

have. This is why children need different types of experiences. Administering an assessment that presumes every child will be at the same place at the same time undermines a teacher's ability to provide these varying experiences and opportunities (Bulgarelli, et al., 2018).

When children engage in play-based, active learning they are gaining important skills in many areas in addition to just literacy and mathematics. Just as crucial are other cognitive skills such as language and problem solving; social-emotional skills such as negotiation, self-regulation, curiosity, and empathy; and of course motor skills (Squibb, 2005).

Play-based pedagogy is, essentially, to learn while at play. While the exact definition of play continues to be an area of debate in research, including what activities can be counted as play, play-based pedagogy is separate from the wider concept of play. Learning is not essential for an activity to be perceived as play but remains important to the definition of play-based learning. Within studies that have examined the benefits of play-based learning, two different types of play have been the primary focus: free play, which is directed by the children themselves, and guided play, which is play that has some level of teacher guidance or involvement (Danniels & Pyle, 2018).

Learning through play based pedagogy is essential to be applied in the process of teaching and learning at a pre-school level in an inclusive way (Ashari & Binti Hushairi, 2018). It offers opportunities for children to learn through restructuring process, new discovery, enrichment process, construction of experience and knowledge as well as the discovery of new concepts (Brock et al., 2009). When children learn through play, learning becomes more meaningful for them and they develop positive attitudes toward academic learning in early childhood (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). This has been mentioned in several studies (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Trawick-Smith, 2006) and books. Research also shows that play is a mediator in improving children's efficiency in social, communication and cognitive development. However, past research has not shown children experiences of play based approach adequately (Martin, 2016). Although every early year's practitioner knows play is essential for young children's development and yet, in many early years' settings and schools, play is squeezed and compressed by less important activities (Donaldson, & Scheffler, 2003). This process is not good for children's engagement and motivation and leads children and adults to become less thoughtful, joyful and creative learners.

Play-based pedagogy in the early childhood curriculum has historically been associated with the notion of childcentred pedagogy. While the idea of child-centredness might seem self-explanatory, a comprehensive investigation into how the term is used in the field by Chung and Walsh (2000) discovered that up to 40 different interpretations of the concept were found in texts associated with early learning. These interpretations included reference to learning based on children's interests; children's participation in the decisions related to their learning; and an emphasis on the individual development of children in relation to particular developmental stages (Chung & Walsh, 2000). Chung and Walsh articulated these interpretations to the philosophical works of Froebel and Dewey and to the discourse of developmentalism. Historically, these theoretical and philosophical informants have suggested an emphasis on play-based learning that has seen curriculum informed by the idea that the child and the child's experiences should be central to all learning.

In recent years, the suggestion that the early childhood curriculum should be informed primarily by child-centred notions of play has been under increased discussion from a range of theoretical perspectives, including the cultural-historical, feminist, post-structuralist and postmodern movements (Wood, 2010; Yelland & Kilderry, 2005). Collectively, these discussions are increasingly referenced by the term 'post-developmental' (Blaise, 2009), and have raised questions regarding the social, cultural, gendered and economic assumptions associated with the role of child-centred play in early childhood curriculum (Langford, 2010). An important aspect of the post-development conversation has been consideration of the extent to which children are supported in the acquisition of content knowledge through child-centred play (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Tzuo, 2007), particularly where play-based learning involves a predominance of open-ended and freely chosen play activities.

2.10. Challenges in implementing play-based pedagogy in preschools

Several challenges hamper play based pedagogy implementation in preschools. The 'environment' in which we find ourselves can impact on us differently. Environment means any space-room, corridor, field outside the classroom. Likewise, being in the outdoor area can impact on children differently, they can behave differently and do different things and sometimes an environment can have a greater impact on some children more than others.

Research also indicates that it is difficult to deny an environment to children is challenging (Blakemore & Frith, 2005). Blakemore and Frith (2005) argue that children need a full range of experiences and out of doors is a part of being human and should be a part of their experience; if we deny children experience outside then we are offering a 'deprived' environment. They added that the environment for learning then has to be a stimulating space not a 'deprived' environment. According to Stephenson (2002), outside environment could be described as 'open'; open in the sense of accepting and less controlled, of incorporating change and unpredictability, but open also in the sense of lacking the security of enclosure and surrounding walls. They combined to form an environment that could be experienced both as dynamic and open-ended, and yet simultaneously as unpredictable and even threatening. In general, lack of ample space to develop their physical skills, shortages of equipment and resources, lack of trees and hiding places for children, inconvenient topography of the schools are some of challenges that affect the learning environment in outdoor space.

Another challenges related to play include lack of adequate space, the physical environment and lack of play materials. In relation to this, a study by Tesfay (2018) assured 60% the preschools are running their business in the rented houses which are not intentionally built for this purpose. As the result the observed outdoor spaces do not fulfilled the minimum requirements, 500m². He further added that the space of some of the preschool are found so congested and is difficult for children to practice different activities based on their needs. Some of the preschools are not easily accessible as they are located in a densely and closed-up areas.

With reference to unfavorable physical environment, Tesfay's (2018) recent study consolidates the above idea. The researcher observed that the preschools compounds are not favorable for children to play. The play grounds are dusty and are not conducive for children. Three of the preschools buildings are found constructed by sheet metals that can create uncomfortable environment for children as the sheet metals are getting hotter during the sunny seasons.

Shortage of play materials also found another challenge that hamper the implementation of play-based approach. Tesfays'(2018), study supported this claim. He found that among the six preschools he investigated, two (2) preschools lack Seesaw; swing is not available in five (5) preschools; slide is not available in six (6) preschool, and merry-go-round is not available in four

(4) preschools. He further depicts that equipment is not uniformly available in preschools. Besides, a researcher from Great Zimbabwe University, named by Dube (2013) investigated a study. He discovered that preschools were insufficiently equipped in terms of play resources because stakeholders had a limited understanding of the benefits of free play to children's development and learning. Moreover, the study found that the lack of play resources, inadequate time allocation to free play and emphasis on an academic curriculum stifled effective holistic development of children in the preschools studied.

Another serious challenge is lack of qualified teachers in ECCE. In relation to this issue, Admasu (2014) study found that majority of preschool teachers in public setting had no specialized training in early childhood education, majority of public preschool settings have no appropriate playground and material provision.

In summary, several researchers and scholars disclosed that lack of qualified teachers, absence of adequate space for play; shortages of play materials and equipment, weak teacher-child interaction, lack of strong leadership support, large class size, unfavourable physical environment are found challenges that impede the implementation of play-based approach in preschools of Ethiopia.

2.11. Empirical reviews on play-based Pedagogy

Studies have showed that poor children that involved in play-based activities regularly are able to use elevated level of language very well (Johnson, Christies & Wardle, 2005). Ginsburg (2007) also suggested that the use of play activities may improve numeracy skills of children in the preliminary stages of life, particularly to the poor children that have trouble in understanding the teaching and learning activities. Thus, according to Ludlow (2010), curriculum based on play is effective in fostering the development skills for children in the twenty-first century. This statement is in line with the National Pre-School Curriculum Standard that has been introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2010. The new curriculum suggested the use of play in every pre-school to improve literacy and numeracy in children. Past research showed that play is an important mediator in improving the efficiency of social, communication and cognitive development in children (Badrova & Leong, 2010). The opportunity in play-based activities with the help of adults can help in the process of learning and development (Broadhead, 2004; Brock,

Sylvia, Jarvis, & Olusoga, 2009). In fact, Nor and Abdullah (2009) also supports that activities based on play contributes a significant role in assisting the development of children, not only in reading, writing and arithmetic, but also in developing their personality and behavior. Children that are given opportunities to play will be able to blend experience, knowledge, and understanding of prior knowledge to create a new concept in learning.

A meta-analysis research on play-based pedagogy in preschool conducted by Zakiah and Kamis (2017), specified that there were four components of play-based pedagogy in preschool that are; i) the suitability of resources and learning materials, ii) implementation of enthusiasm, creativity and motivation, iii) planning and implementation of educational activities and iv) behavior stimulation. According to the researchers, these components could be used by teachers especially in pre-school to apply play-based pedagogy activities.

Another study was done by Ashari and Binti Hushairi (2018) on teacher's perception towards play-based pedagogy to promote cognitive and social skills amongst preschoolers with learning disabilities. The finding revealed that there was a moderate positive correlation between play and cognitive skills and there was a weak positive relationship between play and social among preschoolers with learning disabilities. The findings proved that play activities are essential for children's development. Nevertheless, improvisation is needed for a better understanding in this context of the study.

Another empirical research was done by Powell (2010) on preschool parents' and teachers' perspective of learning through play. The purpose of this study was to examine preschool parents' and teachers' perspectives of learning through play. Forty four participants were identified; thirty were parents and eleven were teachers. Parents' and teachers' agreed that preschool children can learn through play. However, there were no significant differences between parents' and teachers' perspectives of learning through play. This could be due in part to the sample sizes being similar in nature. Twenty percent of the parent population held the occupation of teacher.

Another peer reviewed article was done by Ashari, Kosnin, and Jiar (2013) on the effectiveness of learning through play module on the understanding of number concept among preschool children. This study shows that learning through play is very important in children's

learning process. The findings proved that the practice of learning through play module could meaningfully raise children's understanding on the concept of number.

A researcher from Great Zimbabwe University, named by Dube (2013) investigated a study entitled "The Use of Free Play in Preschools: An Analysis of the Impact of Stakeholder Perceptions". As indicated in the paper, from as early as the 19th century, philosophers such as Froebel and Montessori used play in early childhood settings as a pedagogical tool. In addition, the use of free play as a teaching approach draws extensively on the theoretical perspective of constructivism. Constructivists like Piaget and Vygotsky view children as active agents in their development and advocating play as the center of the preschool curriculum. A large body of research also supported the idea of play based approach in preschools rather than academic-oriented approach. The objective of the study was therefore, to assess stakeholder perceptions on the use of free play in preschools. The author examined the impact of the stakeholder perceptions on the use of free play in 10 preschools attached to primary schools in Masvingo district of Zimbabwe. The schools were selected using purposive sampling technique. The author used mainly qualitative in this study, using the observation, interview and document analysis as data collection methods. A total of 51 participants took part in this study. From a detailed analysis and discussion of results, numerous findings were found. It was discovered that there were irregularities and insufficiencies in the manner in which free play was conceptualized by the several stakeholders. However, among the participants, only preschool teachers showed a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of free play to children's development. Besides, it was found that teaching in preschools was mainly formal and free play opportunities were limited in the preschool daily schedule. Preschools were insufficiently equipped in terms of play resources because stakeholders had a limited understanding of the benefits of free play to children's development and learning. Moreover, the study found that the lack of play resources, inadequate time allocation to free play and emphasis on an academic curriculum stifled effective holistic development of children in the preschools studied.

Admasu (2014) also investigated a study to explore and describe the situation of early childhood education in both settings such as Public and Private Preschools. The findings of this study were majority of preschool teachers in public setting had no specialized training in early childhood education, majority of public preschool settings have no appropriate playground and

material provision and etc. The outcome of this study was to raise awareness of the community, parents, teachers and educational administrators in Bonga Town particularly and Kafa Zone generally.

Furthermore, Aweke (2016) also conducted a study on Early Childhood Education: Parental Perceptions of Government, Private and Faith- Based Preschools in Addis Ababa. The purpose of this research was to investigate about preschool education: parental perceptions of government, private and faith- based preschools in Addis Ababa. Based on the purpose of the study, perceived reasons of parents for sending their children to preschools, the perceived benefit of preschool, how parents evaluate the curriculum their children learn and parents of preschooler involved in the preschool setting assessed. To this end, qualitative method was used for the study. Data were gathered from 9 preschool parents. The instrument used was semi-structured interview. The data gathered through in depth interview transcribed and analysed. The findings of the study showed that parents perceived to send their children to preschools develop children cognitive ability and prepare them for formal schooling, secondly, parent perceived the benefit of preschool in order to get social development, develop language skill and health and safe environment; thirdly, parent perceived the lesson their children attend in preschools, language and math activities included in the curriculum more preferable; finally parent perceived the involvement of them to preschool education to follow up their children daily activities and involved preschool committee member.

Teka Zewdie and others (2016) conducted a study on quality Early Childhood Care and Education in Ethiopia. The general objective of this study was to assess the quality of ECCE provisions in Ethiopia with emphasis on staff profile, physical facilities and furnishings, parental involvement, curriculum, and caregiver-child interactions in center-based setting. Mixed research design was used to capture quantitative and qualitative data, followed by concurrent triangulation strategy of integrating the quantitative and qualitative data. The design was so conducive to make use of different data collection instruments, including structured questionnaire, interviews, and observation checklist. Center types representing public, private, and faith-based establishments were sampled from five regions, and two city governments. Care givers, center

heads, and preschool program desk officers were selected as participants, employing proportionate and purposive sampling techniques. The sampling procedure allowed computation of aggregate scores and enabled comparison of center types and estimation of regional variations on dimensions of quality parameters, using statistical techniques and themes identified from the qualitative data. Results showed that many of the preschool centers included in this survey lacked materials that enhance children's fine motor developments. For reasons of space limitation and other constraints, children were deprived of the opportunity to have access to interest corners built in the classrooms and other learning and stimulating materials posted on the walls. Regional comparisons with respect to physical facilities, furnishings, and caregiver-child interaction showed statistically significant differences in many of the items that measured the structural and process components of quality indicators. Data obtained through questionnaires and interviews showed that the O - grade preschool centers functioning through attachment to the primary schools were constrained by a host of logistics and administrative problems that threatened the delivery of quality services. Shortage of trained personnel, lack of supporting environment for children with various forms of disability, and a one-directional flow of communication between centers and parents were problems related to quality at the preschool centers.

Belay (2016) also conducted a study on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Ethiopia: Developments, Research, and Implications. Early childhood care and education has been for many years in Ethiopia. However, these experiences were not systematized, reflected upon and, hence, efforts were not made to extract lessons and delineate future directions. This study has made a modest attempt to bring to light developments registered, gaps noted and future areas of focus both in intervention and research. It examined the past and present of ECCE developments focusing on policies, programmes and curricula as well as implementation (modalities, government and parent involvement, coordination, monitoring) practices. Almost all available and accessible government documents, secondary data, and research reports in the field up until 2016 were consulted. Findings seem to suggest that although early years' education had longer presence and was, in due course, able to make significant strides in terms of design,

implementation, as well as outcomes, it had, however, been noted to making little progress in terms of, for example, access, equity, quality, and relevance. ECCE in Ethiopia has still been noted to attracting tremendous research but critical, relevant, novel, and comprehensive investigations are yet to come. The study outlined future directions of programmatic design, intervention and research to enhancing a more professional ECCE delivery in Ethiopia.

In general, the above studies were done so far indicate that play based pedagogy is not implemented effectively in preschools of Ethiopia due to various reasons. Besides, studies in play based pedagogy were not the attention of the previous researchers. Therefore, the present study is needed to examine play based pedagogy practice and its challenges in preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration.

From the reviewed literature, the researcher understood that play is the center of preschools curriculum; adequate time should be given for play in preschools; free play contributes to physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children; ECCE policy should focus on free play; the teachers, school principals and supervisors should have ECCE qualification. The school should provide adequate play materials and equipment for preschool children; the preschools should be furnished in various play resources and parents should participate in preschool curriculum preparation and implementation as well as supporting the school by providing play resources. Besides, considerable emphasis should be given for free play than academic curriculum for the benefit of the holistic development of children. Furthermore, this study is highly related to the Ethiopian ECCE policy. Children learn best using free play. Therefore, it is related to the ECCE objective which says play should be integrated with the physical, cognitive, language and social development through ECCE curriculum and research outputs. Besides, it is associated with the objective of developmental milestones of children. Besides, it is linked with the objective of supportive and responsive environments of child development. However, much focus is not offered for free play in preschools though it has some attempts by teachers.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This section presents research design and methodology. It begins with research design followed by sources of data, samples and sampling techniques, data gathering instruments, procedures of data analysis, data analysis method and ethical issues.

3.1. Research Method

The researcher used a mixed research method to examine the practice and challenges of play based pedagogy in the preschools of Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration. Although the mixed research design has many “strands,” in the present study a concurrent embedded design of the mixed method research was used. This study is predominantly qualitative in nature. Quantitative data were played a supportive role. The reason for collecting the quantitative data was to augment or support the qualitative data and to triangulate the data. As Creswell (2012) described, a mixed methods research design is a process for gathering, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand a research problem. The basic assumption is that the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, offers a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself (Cara, 2013).

3.2. Sources of Data

The research used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data were teachers and principals. The above participants were selected because they have more or less direct link with the topic under investigation. On top of this, the researcher used secondary sources of data including teachers’ lesson plan, and students’ assessment report.

3.3. Samples and Sampling Techniques

The sample respondents for this study were drawn from a total target population. All the teachers, students, school principals in the sampled preschools were the target population. Sample respondents required for this study were selected using both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

Addis Ababa City Administration is selected as a research site among other administrative regional states and cities administration in Ethiopia purposively. The rationale for choosing Addis Ababa City Administration was that the researcher from his personal observation has noted that in preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration, challenges related to adherence to formal academic learning, teacher dominated teaching, inadequate play space and materials, poor leadership, teachers’ capacity problem, students’ limited engagement in the learning process have been observed. Besides, the researcher is familiar with the educational setting of the region due to his engagements in various professional activities like teaching, supervision and researching in the area. Thus, the researcher has an understanding of the region so that he can easily access relevant information from the respondents. Last but not least is well-documented and researched studies have not been conducted in play based pedagogy in Addis Ababa.

According to Addis Ababa Education Bureau (2020/2021) report, there are 39 preschools (17 government and 22 private preschools) in ‘Kirkos Sub-city’. The target population of this study was 39 preschools, and 460 teachers (203 governments and 257 private preschools). From 39 preschools, 6 preschools (2 governments and 4 private) were selected using simple random sampling technique. After selection of sample preschools, the selections of the sample respondents of the study were conducted. In these six preschools, a sum of 48 teachers, 838 students, and 6 principals are available. Accordingly, 48 teachers, and 6 principals were selected. A total of 54 participants were selected for this study. Teachers and principals were selected using census sampling technique.

Table 1: Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

No	Respondents	Type of School	Population		Sample		Sampling Technique
			F	%	F	%	
1	Teachers	Government	18	100	18	100	Census
		Private	30	100	30	100	
2	Principals	Government	2	100	2	100	Census
		Private	4	100	4	100	

3.4. Data Collection Tools

The researcher used observation, interview and questionnaire, as data gathering instruments.

3.4.1. Observation

The main data collection tool for this study was observation. The purpose of the observation was to collect adequate and relevant data on the implementation of play-based pedagogy and its challenges. Observation was done both in the classroom and outside the classroom for two weeks in one preschool. The observation stayed for two hours per day. The questions for observation were put thematically. In the observation session, the researcher collected information in the natural settings as to how teachers apply play based pedagogy both in the classroom and outside the classrooms, teachers' classroom instruction, their interaction with students and play activities in both indoor and outdoor spaces, the role of teachers in play, attitudes of teachers towards play, teachers training and challenges related to play based pedagogy. Photographs and Videos were taken while students are playing in both the classroom and outside the classroom. Permission was obtained from parents, school principal and teachers to take students' pictures. Besides, the researcher critically observed the activities of children in the classroom and outside the classroom in daily basis for ten days.

3.4.2. Interview

The second phase of data collection was individual semi-structured interview with preschool principals and teachers. The aim of using individual semi-structured interview is to further expand, elicit and clarify views from the teachers and school principal. The interview guide was consisted of semi- structured questions and was prepared in Amharic. The interview took roughly 40-60 minutes as per informant. 6 preschool teachers and 6 principals were interviewed about play-based pedagogy implementation, types of play used by teachers, differences between private and government preschools on the implementation of play-based pedagogy and challenges that faced teachers to implement play-based pedagogy.

3.4.3. Questionnaire

To further triangulate the data, the standardized questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers. The instrument was developed by Powell (2010). The questionnaire was

composed of both open ended and closed-ended questions. It was prepared in English and translated in to Amharic for use. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of the demographic data. Section two presented open-ended questions about play based pedagogy. Section three dealt with perception of teachers on play based pedagogy. This section had Likert scale ranging from 1 strongly disagrees to 5 strongly agree. Part four of the questionnaire comprised of items describing the type of activity (Circle Time, Structured Activities, or Free Play) that teachers believe to be the best way to teach academic, social/ emotional and physical skills. Before distributing the questionnaire, brief orientation was given for teachers as to how they fill it. 48 teachers participated in filling the questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared in Amharic. The contents of the questionnaire were play based implementation; types of activities and their best way to teach these activities using play based pedagogy (Circle time, structured activities and free play) are among others.

3.5. Procedure of Data Collection

Questionnaire was designed first. Professionals in the area of education gave comments on the questionnaire contents, languages and formats. Accordingly, two questions were removed; four questions were modified based on the professional comments. Based on the comments, some improvements were made in the questionnaires, pilot test was made. After pilot testing, the instruments were checked for reliability test (internal consistency) whether the items measure the same constructs. The overall, Cronbach reliability test was found .798 indicating that the questionnaire was found reliable. After that, the first step to collect relevant data for the research was making an official contact with the sample preschools to get permission and support for the study. Following this, the researcher got informed consent from sample preschools to find the required participants. This was done by providing official letter to them. Subsequently, discussion was held with the preschool principals on how to get appropriate respondents and documents to collect relevant information to the study. After getting permission from concerned research participants, the researcher arranged suitable time and places in collaboration with the respondents. In the subsequent contact with research participants, orientation was given about the aim of the study. The questionnaire was distributed in person after the data collector had given orientation as to how to fill and return it. Finally, the questionnaire was filled and returned. Moreover, the face-to-face interview was conducted concurrently. Observation was also

conducted in the classroom and outside the classroom. At last, the respondents' views were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using different statistical tools.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

3.6.1. Reliability

After pilot testing, the instruments were checked for reliability test (internal consistency) whether the items measure the same constructs. The overall, Cronbach reliability test was found .798 indicating that the questionnaire was found reliable.

Table2: Reliability Test Results with Cronbach's Alpha

Items	No.	Cronbach's Alpha	Item
Play-based Pedagogy Implementation	48	.755	10
Academic skill	48	.825	9
Social skill	48	.842	5
Physical skill	48	.769	3

Based on the pilot test, the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.755 for play based pedagogy implementation; .825 for academic skills; .842 for social skill and .769 for physical skill. Supporting this, George and Mallery (2003) also suggest that, the Cronbach's Alpha result >0.9 excellent, >0.8 good, >0.7 acceptable, < 0.6 questionable, and < 0.5 poor. In general, the questionnaires developed for teachers were found to be reliable as statistical literature recommended.

3.6.2. Validity of Instruments

To ensure content validity, the researcher was issued copies of the research instruments to three professionals in the area of education in general and ECCE in particular to see the contents, languages and formats. Accordingly, two questions were removed; four questions were modified based on the professional comments. Based on the comments, some improvements were made in the questionnaires. The comments from the different people, colleagues and senior experts help the researcher to adjust the instruments appropriately. The researcher uses the comments given to refine the instruments by removing the ambiguous items, spelling mistakes and other typographical errors in the items.

Based on their comments, the instruments were improved before they were administered to the major participants of the study to reduce errors. The instruments have been improved and made ready for final data collection.

3.7. Data Analysis Method

The data collected from classroom and outside classroom instruction through observation, interview and questionnaire, were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative method. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to compute and analyze the quantitative data. The demographic variables were computed using percentage and frequency.

The qualitative section of the study was examined using thematic analysis techniques. This enables the investigator to recognize the current/ actual experiences of the respondents. Once the relevant qualitative information is generated from observation and interviews, the description, classifications, and associations of the information were done corresponding to the major themes of the study. Such analysis technique is adapted from Bazeley’s work (2009), where he notes the ideas of thematic analysis (*three key strategies*), including description of data, classification of data, and seeing how concepts interconnect. The researcher transcribed the audio data into word. Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts pages were numbered for easy retrieval. After that ‘coding’ was given for teachers (T01, T02, T03,...) and principals (P01, P02....P06). In addition, the researcher gave the code for the schools (i.e., S01, S02....S06). The researcher categorized the interview guide questions and observation check-list based on the major themes so as to analyze the data easily. The last stage of data analysis was summarizing and interpreting.

Table 3: Instruments for Data Collection and Data Analysis Methods Associated with Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Type	Method of Data Collection	Data Analysis
Research Question 1: How is play based pedagogy implemented in the preschools of Kirkos Sub-city?	Qualitative + quan.	1.Survey 2. Interviews 3. Observation	Descriptive statistics Thematic Analysis
Research Question 2: What type of play based pedagogy do teachers use in teaching students in the preschools of Kirkos Sub-city?	Qualitative	1.Observation 2. Interview	Thematic Analysis
Research Question 3: What are the differences between private and government preschools on implementation of Play-based pedagogy	Qualitative	1 Observation 2. Interview	Thematic Analysis
Research Question 4: What are the challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration?	Qualitative	1 Observation 2. Interview	Thematic Analysis

3.7. Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues are important for any research that deals with real people in real world situations (Bassey, 1999). In the study, the information collected was kept confidential and the researcher was abiding to all the terms agreed before proceeding with the data collection process. In addition, the researcher got the informed consent from research participants. All participating teachers and school principals were selected on voluntary basis and had the rights to withdraw at any time. During the face to face interview, the researcher got permission from participants to record their speech. At the start of the interview, the researcher re-stated the purpose of study and the names of the participating teachers, school principals and students were kept confidential and pseudonyms names were used for individual teachers, students and school principals in order to protect respondents' identities.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

This chapter deals with findings of the study. The main objective of this study was to explore play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration: Practices and Challenges. Specifically, the study examined the extent of play based pedagogy practice in the preschools(implementation of play, conceptualization of play, conduciveness of the environment, play interaction, play materials, indoor and outdoor space for play, teachers’ training, and attitudes of teachers towards play based pedagogy); the type of play based pedagogy do teachers use in the classrooms and the challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration.

Several themes concerning play based pedagogy emerged from the collected data. Accordingly, teachers' conceptualization of Play i.e., the meaning of play, views on overall play based pedagogy implementation, teachers' attitude towards’ play based pedagogy; types of play teachers apply; the role of teachers in children play, play interaction, indoor and outdoor space for play, play environment, and challenges that impede teachers in implementing play based pedagogy were identified as common themes from the data analysis. In general, this section consisted of two parts: characteristics of the respondents and analysis of data on play based pedagogy practices and its challenges in preschools of ‘Kirkos’ sub-city, Addis Ababa.

4.1. Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4: Characteristics of Respondents

Description	Teachers		principals	
	F	%	F	%
1. Gender:				
Female	38	79.2	5	83.3
Male	10	20.8	1	16.7
Total	48	100	6	100
2. Work Experience(Years)				
1-5	44	91.7	4	66.7
6-10	4	8.3	2	33.3
11-15	-	-	-	-
> 15	-	-	-	-
Total	48	100	6	100
3. Educational Level				
Certificate	46	95.8	-	-
Diploma	2	4.2	4	66.7
First Degree	-	-	2	33.3
Second Degree	-	-	-	-
Total	48	100	6	100

As indicated in table 4, 79.2 percent of the teachers and 83.3 percent of the principals were found females. This implies that majority of the teachers and principals are females. Teaching experience for this study was divided into four categories within the study, below five years of teaching, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and above 15 years. 44 (91.7%) teachers and 4 (66.7%) principals had taught less than five 5 years in the profession. This implies that almost all of the teachers and majority of the principals in sampled preschools are below five years' experience and young. Regarding educational level, 46 (95.8%) teachers were certificate holders followed by 2(4.2%) were diploma holders. This indicates that almost all the teachers did not have the required training in ECCE. Similarly, 4 (66.7%) principals were found diploma holders and two (33.3%) were degree holders. The principals' qualification was found somehow good and fulfilled the criteria.

4.2. Analysis of Data on Practice and Challenges of Play Based Pedagogy obtained from Interview and Observation

Under this topic, three major topics are treated namely, practice of play based pedagogy, types of play teachers applied in preschools and challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy.

4.2.1. The Practice of Play Based Pedagogy

This section treats the practice of play based pedagogy. It also deals with school environment, teachers' conceptualization of play, the implementation of play based pedagogy, teachers' attitudes about play based pedagogy, types of play used by teachers, interaction between teachers and students, teachers' role in play, teachers' training, availability of adequate space for children play, playing materials and conducive play environment. The information obtained through interview, observation and questionnaire are discussed below.

4.2.1.1. School Environment

School One (S01): It is a government preschool. The compound is medium and the outside environment is not suitable for children to play on the ground. There are 171 children in the school. Most of the children came from low socio economic background. The school gives meal service for those who are from very low socio economic background in the school. They have

average academic ability; sometimes they exhibit troublemaking behavior and they participate in class and they love to play outside. The teachers were positive and happy to help children. There are 10 teachers. They have a good interaction with children. They use different strategy and methods as well as materials to teach children. The principal was very positive and good person.

School Two (S02): It is a private preschool. The compound is very narrow and insecure and is not suitable for children's play. The school doesn't have much playing materials. There are different paints in the wall. There are 42 children in the school. The children have interest for learning and they display some difficult behavior. Most children start to distinguish alphabet and numeric. There are six teachers. The teachers are helpful and positive. They offer love for the children and care them. The teachers are very ethical and professionals. The management applies much effort to assist children. The location of the school is not comfortable for children to play due to the high noise of the place. Many business activities are carried out around the school.

School Three (S03): It is a private preschool located in 'Cherkos' area. The compound is a bit large as compared to school two (S02) and the outdoor space is enough but the ground is made of cement and concrete which is very dangerous for children to play on it. The toilet is not sufficient but it's neat. There are 210 children in the school. The children are from low socio economic background. The learning ability of the children is different. There are eight teachers. The teachers have interest to support and motivate the children. They offer love for children and work in very difficult situation. The teachers are good understanding about the conduct of the children. The principal is positive and a cooperative person.

School Four (S04): It is a private preschool. The outdoor space of the compound is somehow enough to children to move though it is dusty and uncomfortable to play on it. The number of children is 165. Most of the children come from low socioeconomic background. The learning ability of the children is good. There were 9 teachers in the preschool. Some of the teachers have taken short-term training on ECCE. They provide the content using learning aids. The management has budget deficiency and office equipment is not fulfilled.

School Five (S05): It is a private preschool located in 'Temenja Yazie'. The compound of the KG is very small and there were no enough playing materials. There are shortages of classrooms. The number of students is 77 and most of the students are from low socio economic background

and the learning ability of the children was good. There are seven teachers in the preschool. The teachers are very positive and supportive. The principal is helpful and cooperative.

School Six (S06): It is a government preschool. The compound is relatively large and most of the playing materials are made by teachers from locally made materials. Some of the outside play equipment is out of services. There are also inadequate play space and shortages of play equipment. The number of student in the school is very high (172 students) and because of that the ability and interest of children for learning is different. Most students are from low socio economic background. There are eight teachers in the preschool. Because of the large number of the students in a classroom, the teachers got it difficulty to help the children. The less teaching aids also make it the teaching process very challenging. The principal is so supportive.

4.2.1.2. Paly Based Pedagogy Implementation

Pertaining to the application of play based pedagogy in sampled government and private preschools; teachers have reacted in different ways. The first group of respondent, almost a large number of teachers in the interview assured that play based pedagogy is properly implemented in sampled preschools in Kirkos Sub-city (T01 and T03). On the other hand, the second group of respondents disclosed that play based pedagogy is implemented to some extent in sampled preschools (T02 and T05). The third group assured that play based pedagogy is not implemented effectively and efficiently in the sampled preschools (T04 and T06).

In relation to this, the principal from government school had to say,

All teachers in my preschool teach their students using play-based approach. Students' learn using songs, games, videos and dances in my preschool. This will make students to easily understand and remember their education. Children love play in the field with their classmates. However, the time given for play is not enough. Teachers' lectures still dominate the students' learning (P01: Feb.04, 2021).

Another preschool principal said that,

In the classroom, teachers teach children focusing on five themes of the lesson obtained from the syllabus. The themes include take proper care for proper physical development,

communicating with others in an acceptable way, proper use of language, introduce the concept of mathematics into daily activities and assess the environment. For example, when teachers want to teach the senses, they teach by singing and touching. The course depends on the nature of subject that the teacher wants to teach in the class. Sometimes, teachers apply play as a pedagogical tool in the class (P02: Feb. 17, 2021).

A principal from private preschool assured that play based pedagogy is being implemented in her school. Teachers are teaching using play (P03). With regard to students' with disability, the school principal said the following:

There are two students available in my school. One of the children has a speech disorder problem and the second one is a mentally retarded child. They are mixed with other children to play. These children are getting help from their teachers as to how to write, eat their food, and clean their cloth. One of the children now is doing all the activities himself without teachers' support (P04: Mar.16, 2021).

During the observation in the classroom, the researcher witnessed that the implementation of play based approach and teaching strategies is somehow good. Teachers often apply various teaching strategies in classroom to teach students. Play is one of the pedagogical tools that teachers use in the classroom. Pertaining to the applicability of play based approach in government preschools, the teachers tried to use play somehow as a teaching approach to teach children. For instance, in their daily schedule, teachers sometimes use corner play. Children go to the different corners based on their preference and play there. Some children build blocks, others go to doctor's corners and use the medical tools and act as a doctor. But this is not usually implemented. It is applied sometimes in the class. Teachers use lecture, handwork, individual and group work to teach children. Most of the time, teachers use lecture method to teach students in the class. Little time is given for children to participate in class. Group work is also applied in the classroom rarely. Hand work is also another important strategy to teach children. But teachers sometimes use hand work in the class. But only few teachers prepare hand work for children for each lesson due to lack of enough materials to prepare. The time given for hand work is not sufficient not more than 10 minutes. However, students at least spend 20 minutes for hand work and teachers' lecture should not exceed 5 minutes. But the reverse is true in my

observation. Teachers have given much time for lecture and less time is given for play based pedagogy.

During my observation in the classroom, I have also observed that there is no transition from subject to subject (course to course). Teachers' often jump to the next course/ subject without transition. Several teachers do not apply transition. But there should be a five minutes transition from subject to subject. Another important thing that I observed in the class is teachers use TV and video teaching once per week to teach some science subjects. In the class, there are different corners (science, language, mathematics, house etc) and various pictures, charts, models, flash cards, blocks, toys, and books. But teachers use the corners and teaching materials rarely.

Furthermore, the researcher got a chance to see the teachers' approach in classroom. There was an attempt by some teachers in using student-centered approach in the class though teachers took much of the lecture time in the classrooms. The teachers still use traditional method of teaching (teachers-centered approach/ more of lecture or chalk and talk approach) in the classrooms. Teachers sometimes use play to teach children language skill, literacy skills, math, environmental science and numeracy. The time offered for applying play based pedagogy is limited as compared to lecture time.

Besides, during the observation, I noticed that teachers were using songs, role play and various instructional aides to teach students. A daily schedule that includes active indoor and outdoor play is implemented to some extent. However, the integration of music, movement and creative expression are not observed in both private and government preschools. Another point is some teachers did not understand the interests and learning styles of their students to some extent. Most of the time, the play in the classroom is teacher-led not children-led.

During my outside observation, outdoor play was applied to some extent in the preschools due to limited space of the preschool and the inconvenience of the time and place for playing. Most of the time, the schedule for outdoor play is in the afternoon. This time is not convenient for children to play due to hot weather. So, the students are not allowed to move and play in the playground. They simply sit under shade and play together. In the flag ceremony, there are some songs for children to motivate them before class and students do physical exercise to develop their muscle. Besides, in break time, children got opportunities to run, to play together, to do

different activities using play equipment (slid, merry go round, balance, ladder etc). However, only few children got this opportunity due to the limited number of play equipment.

Furthermore, the quantitative result also stated the type of activity (Circle Time, Structured Activities, or Free Play) that a teacher believes to be the best way to teach each of the skills (academic skills, social/emotional skills and physical skills) in preschools (See Annex I).

In Table 5 (See Annex I), regarding the academic skills, more than half of the teachers used circle time to teach numbers (54.2%), followed by shapes (52.1%), patterns and sequencing (50%), emergent reading (ABCS, letters make sounds) (50%), language (speaking, listening, conversation) (41.8%), and physical health (basic health and safety rules) (37.5%). This implies that teachers most often used circle time to teach numbers, shapes, patterns and sequencing, emergent reading, language and physical health. However, teachers used structured activities to teach measurement (45.8%) and social studies (past and present, address community) (38.3%). On the other hand, teachers also used free play to teach physical health (33.3%). Overall, teachers most often used circle time to teach academic skills (43.2%).

Pertaining to social/ emotional skills, circle time (lesson taught by teachers) was used by several teachers to teach following directions (54.2%), problem solving (43.7%) and self-control (38.3%). On the other hand, majority of the teachers used free play to teach creativity (37.5%) and express emotions (42.5%). Overall, teachers often used circle time to teach social/ emotional skills (39.3%).

With regard to physical skills, it was found that teachers used structured activities to teach fine motor (cutting, holding a pencil) (45.8%) and coordination (40.4%). On the other hand, 45.9% of the teachers used free play to teach gross motor (running, jumping, and hopping). Overall, teachers used structured activities to teach physical skills (42.6%).

4.2.1.4. Teachers' Participation on Play Based Pedagogy

The teachers' participation on play based pedagogy was presented to the respondents to rate the level of accomplishment of play based pedagogy in sampled preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa on the basis of a five point likert scale. These five point likert scales range from strongly agree = 5 to strongly disagree = 1. Mean scores were calculated from the responses.

With the five point ranges, two trisecting scores were taken to make the analysis clear. These scores were 2.49 and 3.49. Thus, extent of teachers participation towards play based pedagogy with a mean value from 1.00 to 2.49 were less practiced by teachers, from 2.5 to 3.49 were moderately practiced, and from 3.50 to 5.00 were highly practiced by teachers.

Table 6: Teachers' Responses on the Play Based Pedagogy Implementation

No	Items	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	At school, children should only play during break.	48	1	5	2.1	0.93
2	Play is a child's work	48	1	5	1.1	1.40
3	Music and song are activities used for play.	48	1	5	2.8	0.9
4	Watching children play is a way to tell how smart they are	48	1	5	2.7	0.82
5	The best way to teach preschoolers are learning through worksheets	48	1	5	2.0	0.78
6	Play is how children learn about the world around them.	48	1	5	3.3	1.10
7	Preschoolers learn many things while playing on the playground (cooperation, sharing, working together)	48	1	5	3.6	1.17
8	The main purpose of play is to acquire knowledge and skills	48	1	5	3.4	1.15
9	Hands on activities are the best type of learning for preschoolers.	48	1	5	3.7	1.06
10	Learning should be teacher directed.	48	1	5	2.3	1.28

As shown in Table 6, teachers were asked about play based pedagogy implementation. Accordingly, the mean value for hands on activities as the best type of learning for preschoolers was found 3.7 and the SD was 1.06 followed by playing on the playground ($X=3.6$, $SD=1.17$). This implies that hands on activities and playing on the playground are highly practiced in sampled preschools. On the other hand, the mean score for play to acquire knowledge and skills was found 3.4 and the SD was 1.15 followed by play as a means of exploring the world by children ($X=3.3$, $SD=1.10$). This implies that play as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills and play as a means of exploring the world were practiced moderately by teachers. On the other hand, children's play during break, learning through worksheets and play as a child's work was found less practiced in sampled preschools with the mean values of 2.1, 2.0 and 1.1 respectively. This indicates that children's play during break only, learning through worksheets and play as a child's work were less practiced in sampled preschools.

4.2.1.5. Teachers' Role in Play

Teachers have remarkable roles in children play. They supervise the behavior of children, guide the play, sometimes, initiate children's play, facilitate discussions about contexts of play, prolong children's learning, model and support social problem solving strategies, play with children, introduce academic concepts to play, and withdrawing students for teacher-directed instruction and assessment.

In relation to this, teachers were asked about the role of teachers in children's play. Accordingly, T04 during the interview assured that:

My role in children play is significant including observing children carefully when they play, provide clear instruction for children about how to play and guide children play correctly and let them play together or alone depending on the nature of the content and I sometime play with them (Feb. 18,2021).

An interviewee from private preschool assured that:

During children's play, my role is to watch the children play carefully, to let the children play, to instruct the children to play, to protect children from any danger, to stop children fight during the play and to play with them (T02: Mar.10,2021).

Another teacher said that she follow-ups children while they play (T05). Moreover, T06 noted that she explains the play rule and keeping a close eye on children. T0 on the other hand, described that they often play together with children and carefully watch them while playing. Besides, T03 consolidate the above idea that they show children how to play, monitor students while playing and protect children from injury. T05 further indicates that she protects children while playing, keeping them at a distance and playing with them. T01 and T02 also indicate that they follow-up and provide support when children play. T06 further elaborates that she tells students about the play rules, watching children carefully while playing. T03 indicates that during play time, she moves around children and looks what children are doing. T04 and T06 pronounced that they often support and follow-up children while playing. T01 and T02 have mentioned their role in children play. They play together and they carry-out what the children do.

One of the principals during the interview had to say:

During my classroom observation and supervision, I noticed that teachers give time to children to play in the class and outside. Teachers show how students play; follow-up while playing; they also guide the play and they play with the children together (P01: Feb. 04, 2021).

Another principal assured that:

The role of the teachers in play based approach is remarkable. First, teachers show children how to play, and then play together and practice. Children in my school play each other, with their teachers and with the principal. Sometimes, they play a lone. But most of the time they play together (P02: Feb. 17, 2021).

As the school principals indicated, the role of the teacher in play based pedagogy is to supervise, direct, and tell the rules of the play to the students (P06).

From school observation, I observed that teachers in both private and government preschools have tried to support children play to some extent. They sometimes support, encourage students; initiate play and follow-up students. However, through my observation, I noticed that in outdoor play, several teachers failed to critically observe children while playing. They left the children in the field and sat under the shade and talked with the assistant teachers. I did not see teachers play with children outside the classroom except two teachers. Very few teachers did that. Several times, teachers apply free play outside the class. Teachers rarely tell children to follow the rules while playing. Students sometimes fight and snatch playing materials one another. Teachers' follow-up is not as expected. Some children play together; some sit idle and others play alone. No one can observe children's play in close. Teachers' motivation and encouragement are found to be low. Few teachers gave motivation to their students. Others do not give much attention. Overall, only few teachers are alert, critical observer, supporter and player.

4.2.1.6. Types of Play Teachers Use

Teachers apply various play types in teaching children in preschools. In the interview session, the teachers were asked the type of play they use in teaching students and majority of the

teachers in both private and government preschools disclosed that cooperative play is applied most of the time in their preschools particularly before COVID (T01, T03 and T06). But now solitary play was found the most appropriated play types implemented by teachers. One of the respondents has consolidated the above idea:

I often use cooperative play to teach my students both in the class and outside the classroom. I rarely use solitary play. I believe that cooperative play helps children to develop their social skill, language skill, and emotional skills. It is also helpful for children to develop their friendship through formal communication (T03: Feb. 02, 2021)

Another respondent also confirmed that she used cooperative play in her class (T05). A respondent from private school also assured that cooperative play is one of her commonly used play types in her class (T02). A respondent from government preschool also confirmed that,

I usually use cooperative play for my children. This type of play is simple to implement for me and also valuable for children to develop their various social and language skills. But now, I stopped using cooperative play due to COVID pandemic. I started using solitary play just to protect children from Corona Virus (T01: Mar. 13, 2021)

T06 from private preschool further assured that,

I use different play techniques to teach my children. I often use cooperative play; sometimes I use solitary play in outdoor space to teach children. I rarely apply parallel play. Besides, I give chance for students to sing songs in the class (Feb. 17, 2021).

T04 further stated that she uses racing, chasing, role play (thief and police) outside the classroom. T02 also helps children to sing the songs, and orders children to search the lost. T05 also uses 'Akukulu' and 'enkiya-selaminta' in her class and asking various questions to students to answer. T02 tells story, tales for children, applies songs and pretending play. T01 and T03 implement games guided by rules. T02 makes children's play, trace the lost. T04 and T05 apply suitable play technique for children. For example, she asks children to call out various color types and speak quickly. T06 tells story to her children and let them sing a song.

In the interview with preschool principals, one of the principals said that:

Teachers often teach their students using a variety of play games, such as puzzles, role play/ pretending play, racing, and more. Teachers also help their students to play together outside and in private. Children run, climb, play together, dance, sing and play with toys (P02: Feb. 17, 2021).

P05 from private preschool during the interview confirmed that:

Out-of-class teachers make children play in circles. Other types of play, such as jumping, running, and sliding are also used by teachers particularly in outdoor play. Outside the classroom, the most common type of play is cooperative play. Occasionally, children play solely on their own (P05: Mar. 28, 2021).

From the observation in the preschool, the researcher noticed that the teachers use predominantly cooperative play. During my stay in the preschool, I did not see any parallel play. I saw cooperative play and solitary play. In cooperative play, all the children are not equally interested. This is because some students may want to play a lone or they need parallel play. The different types of play were not applied in the sampled preschools. The needs of all the students are not respected. After COVID pandemic, there was a tendency of using solitary play more often. Overall, teachers did not apply the various types of play to teach their children. They predominantly used cooperative and solitary play.

4.2.1.7. Teachers' Attitudes about Play Based Pedagogy

Teachers apply different pedagogical tools while teaching students in preschool. Pedagogical tool is one of the most important aspects of the teaching learning process. It has direct impact on students' achievement. One of the pedagogical tools teachers expect to use is play. In this regard, teachers are expected to use appropriate pedagogical tools based on the content and nature of the subject. Accordingly, teachers were asked about their attitude about play based pedagogy they apply in teaching children in classroom and outside the classroom.

Majority of the respondents indicated that they use play as a pedagogical tool to teach their students. For example, one of the respondents said that she used songs, tales, a riddle, charts, teachers' guide and teaching aids to teach students (T01 and T04). T02 on the other hand, usually

use songs. T05 often uses play, tales, pictures and songs to teach students (Educational play, dramatic play). Likewise, T03 teaches students using play, story-telling and team work. But, T06 used a little bit different pedagogical tool like stimulating students first and playing with them. Another respondent had to say the following:

I often use play as a pedagogical tool to teach children in my school. First, I make children ready by using songs and doing physical exercise before I start my class and then I form a circle, and then allow them to play in group. I often play with children. My role is just to guide, to watch them carefully and motivate students to play with their mates (T05: Mar. 21/ 2021).

T02 further elaborate that she teaches students using songs after reviewing the past lessons and before introducing the lesson of the day. T05 also uses songs and play to teach students. T04 strengthened the above idea by saying that she uses songs, telling stories, and pretending play to teach students in preschool.

Furthermore, majority of the principals assured that teachers have positive attitude towards play based pedagogy (P01, P02, P04, P05 and P06). One of the principals has mixed feeling on the attitudes of teachers towards play based pedagogy. She said that some teachers have positive attitudes towards play based pedagogy but others do not (P03).

During the observation, the researcher observed that majority of the teachers have positive and strong feelings towards play based pedagogy. But they do not have similar understandings about play based pedagogy. Few teachers have better understanding about play based pedagogy. However, majority of teachers do not have clear understanding about play based pedagogy. This difference is appeared among teachers due to the limited training they have about play.

4.2.1.8. Teachers' Play Interaction with Students

The interaction between teachers and students are important to effective teaching-learning process. In the interview, teachers were asked about their interaction with students. Majority of the teachers assured that they had good interaction with their students (T01 and T02). Students have good interaction with other students and the environment too. However, very few teachers

confirmed that they have not good interaction with children outside the classroom (T03 and T04). In relation to this, one of the respondents asserted that,

I have positive and strong interaction with my children. I often give chance to all my students to participate and to discuss in the classroom. I am very close to my students. I often solve their problem. I sometimes play with them. I assist them to interact with play materials (T02: Feb, 02, 2021).

Another teacher also strengthened the above idea that,

I have strong connection with my students. I often help them while they need help. I see my students just like my children. I often involve them in daily activities in the classroom. Outside the classroom, I play with them rarely but they interact with the surrounding environment (T01: Feb, 03, 2021).

The principals also shared the teachers' idea and they assured that teachers have strong interaction with their students. They are sociable and cooperative with their students (P01, P02, P03, P05 and P06). However, one of the principal in private school had to say,

Few teachers in my preschool are not cooperative and supportive. They do not treat children properly. They do not have good relationship with children. They interact with only outstanding children. They sometimes hit children and punish them. They sometimes make students to nil-down. They do not participate low achiever and silent students in the class and most of the time the teachers dominate the lesson (P04: Mar.16,2021).

From school observation, the researcher noticed that the teachers were positive and happy to help students to do their job. They had good interaction with children. They used different strategy and methods as well as materials to teach children. They gave love for the children and support them. The teachers were very ethical and professionals. The teachers had also interest to help and support children. They had good understanding of the behavior of the children. Most of the teachers didn't have diploma on ECCE. But they took some training in different areas of ECCE. They delivered the content using instructional aids. Because of the number of the students in a classroom, the teachers got it difficult to help their children. The shortages of instructional aides also make it the teaching-learning process very challenging. During the observation, very few

teachers were found negligent and excluded the children. Generally, from the observation, the researcher noticed that the interaction between the teachers and students were strong and positive. Particularly in one of the government preschools, the interaction was found very strong. Students' interactions with other students were found strong. They play together; they talk while they play; they do things together.

On the other hand, students' interaction with playing materials was found low due to limited play materials and number of students particularly the problem is severe in government preschools. Furthermore, students' interaction with their environment is found to be good. Students often want to interact with the surrounding environment. They water flowers, protect the plants and some students talk with plants and flowers. But in terms of participation, only few children were participated in the class. Teachers' domination is still high.



Figure1: Play Interaction

4.2.1.9. Conducive Play Environment

Conducive play environment is essential both in the classroom and outside the classroom to apply play based pedagogy in preschools of Addis Ababa. Accordingly, respondents were asked the question “Is there any conducive learning environment in your school to implement play based pedagogy?” and some of the respondents said that their preschools have conducive play

environment both in the classroom and outside the classroom. The respondents confirmed this reality that there is suitable play environment and adequate play space in their preschools (T01 and T02). T05 also further consolidates the above idea that there are plenty of places for play and playroom (T06 and T05). One of the respondents during the interview said that:

There is a suitable indoor and outdoor environment for children to teach using play. The learning environment is favorable in the preschool where I teach. The outside environment is also somehow good for children to learn and to do different activities (T03: Mar.16, 2021).

However, several respondents disclosed that the environment is not conducive for play and the space is not adequate enough for play (T01 and T02) particularly the outdoor space. T02 further disclosed that the environment is less comfortable for play due to space constraints. One of the respondents had to say the following:

It seems hard to apply play based pedagogy because the school environment both in the classroom and outside the classroom is not conducive for play. There is no adequate space for play. The outdoor area is not good for children. They are exposed to noises and sunlight. I rarely apply outdoor play due to space shortage. In the classroom, I usually implement songs and telling stories (T03: February 17, 2021).

Another respondent also confirmed that:

My preschool compound is very narrow and the playground is made up of stone and concrete which is very dangerous for children to play on it. The external environment is not comfortable for children. The preschool is located near to small drinking houses. The preschool fence is not strong. The toilet is not enough but it is neat (T05: Feb.01, 2021).

However, T04 replied that, there is a comfortable situation for play in my school. The school is suitable to teach students using play based pedagogy and the space is also adequate for children play (T05 and T06). However, T03 and T04 also revealed that the environment is not fully comfortable for children to play.

Pertaining to the conduciveness of the school for children play, a principal from private school during the interview confirmed that:

The area of the preschool is very small in terms of the number of students. Outdoor space is not enough for student play. It does not have enough playing materials. Classrooms are not enough for student activities. They are narrow. The compound is not convenient for children. There are no trees and flowers in the preschool (P05: Mar. 28, 2021)

During the observation, the researcher observed that the learning environment in the classroom was found somehow good and better than the external environment. The instructional materials, the classroom space, the chairs and desks are comfortable for children to learn. However, the external environment was found not attractive and uncondusive for children to learn particularly in the private preschools. There are business centers and drinking houses near the school.

4.2.1.10. Availability of Adequate Space for Children Play

Availability of adequate space for children play is remarkable for effective teaching and learning process. The researcher has observed both the indoor and outdoor space for children play. In addition, teachers in the sampled schools were also asked about the adequacy of play space for children. Majority of the respondents disclosed that there is enough indoor and outdoor play space in their preschools (T02 and T03). T06 on the other hand, said that, the space in the classroom (indoor space) is adequate enough for children play but the outdoor space is not sufficient for children play. Regarding the outdoor space, some of the respondents said that the outdoor space is not adequate enough for children to play (T01, and T05). In relation to this, one of the interviewees said that:

My school did not have enough outdoor space for play. As a result, it seems difficult to me to implement play based approach in outdoor space because of limited playing space and limited play equipment though teachers use the limited outdoor space in shift (T01: Feb. 18, 2021).

T02 from private preschool consolidate the above idea:

The preschool compound is very narrow and does not have enough outdoor space for conducting play with children. Most of the outside space is occupied by buildings (dining room, toilet, sleeping room, video room etc.). The playground is small and congested by children. As a result, it is difficult to me to teach children outside the classroom (T02: Mar. 17, 2021).

T04 on the other hand, disagreed that her school has adequate playground for children. T02 also indicated that in her preschool, there is small playground and the space for children play in the classroom is enough. In relation to this, one of the respondents in government preschool, during the interview, noted that:

My preschool has adequate space both indoor and outdoor to carry-out play both in the classroom and outside the classroom. I often apply play in the classroom to teach numbers and letters in the classroom. I also use play based approach in outdoor space to develop children language and communication skills (T05: Feb.04, 2021).

Another interviewee from government preschool also assured that,

The classroom is wide and sufficient for children to learn and play but due to the dust the play materials in the classroom seem unclean. However, the classroom is very attractive and full of charts, flash cards and different equipment (T06: Feb. 02, 2021).

T03, during the interview, assured that:

There is a playing room for children in my preschool. The play room has carpet and comfortable for children for play and to sleep on it. A lot of playing materials are available in this playing room for children. Children can use any playing material that attracts them and play with it (Feb. 01, 2021).

In contrary, an interviewee from the private preschool had to say,

The classrooms in my preschool are smalls in size and not suitable for children play and due to class shortages, children learn even in dining room too. There is no adequate light

and air in the classroom. In some case, three children sit in one chair because of the shortage of chairs (T02: Apr.08, 2021).

During the observation, the researcher observed that the classrooms are not suitable for children and shortages of classes are observed. As a result, children learn on temporary classes. There is no enough light and air. In one preschool, 4 children sit in one chair because of the shortages of desk.

Moreover, the preschool principals were asked about play space and one of the principals, during the interview confirmed that:

I think, there is enough space to teach children using play in the classroom. The size of the class fulfilled the standard. But the tables are larger, so are not convenient to play a game in the classroom though the class has adequate space (P01: Feb.04, 2021).

Another principal, during the interview, confirmed that:

Children play in and out of classroom. In the classroom, puzzle assembly, singing, and educational material are provided on television. Out-of-class students are sliding, spinning wheels, running, and rolling and swinging. However, the outdoor space is not sufficient to children to play (P02: Feb. 17, 2021).

A principal from private preschool assured that:

The preschool has ample play space commensurate with the number of students in the classroom. There is enough space in the classroom for students to play well. It conforms to the set standard. However, the outside space is not enough to play (P05: Mar. 28, 2021).

The observation result also confirmed that the outdoor space for play in government preschools is not convenient for children's play. There is not enough space for children play. Play materials and equipment is not enough in relation to the children's number. Play-based pedagogy is not implemented properly in outdoor space due to the limited space and large numbers of students the preschools have. Cooperative play is usually implemented outside the classroom. However, now due to COVID pandemic teachers have stopped using cooperative play. Solitary play is

implemented after Corona Virus though teachers do not give more opportunities for children who want to play alone. Besides, the play does not take into account the needs of children. It is determined by the teacher without considering children's need and interest.



Figure 2: Outdoor Space for Children Play



Figure 3: Indoor Space for Children Play

From the observation, the researcher observed that play based pedagogy is implemented to some extent. Teachers sometimes use play as a pedagogical tool. The classroom in sampled government preschools is convenient for students' play as compared to private schools. Playing materials are somewhat available in the school though private schools have better play materials. But still the role of the teachers is high. They control the instruction most of the time. The teachers still talk a lot of hours in the classroom. Children are not given a lot of opportunity to participate except few children. Occasionally, students got the chance to discuss among

themselves and to speak in front of their classmate. Teachers often use songs as pedagogical tools. The education approach is predominantly teacher-centered rather than student centered.

To sum up, the outdoor and indoor space for children play is better in sampled government preschools than private preschools. Almost all of the sampled private schools have small indoor and outdoor space. The preschools compound is not large in private preschools; mostly it is a rent house. Therefore, the space of the school is below the standard in private preschools. The government preschools have relatively adequate space to run children play. Particularly, the indoor space is enough for children and teachers to implement play based pedagogy. Relatively, the outdoor spaces in government preschools are a bit larger than the private preschools.

4.2.1.11. Play Materials and Equipment

Play materials are indispensable for teachers to teach students using play. In relation to this, the teachers were asked in the interview about the materials they use to teach children in play (eg, tools, books, posters, flash cards, etc.). Accordingly, almost all of the teachers assured that they use flash cards to teach children (T01 and T03). One of the teachers from sampled private preschool assured that she teaches students using flash cards, songs, numbers, real objects, and books (T05). On the other hand, T04 used flash cards, charts, corners, pictures, different colors as play materials. T06 conversely, used fictional books, converting nearby materials into resources to teach students. T02 used books and posters as play materials. T05 on the other hand, assured that she often uses puzzles and flash cards to teach children. T04 teaches her students using numbers and letters.

In the interview, the teachers were asked about the availability of adequate play materials and equipment in their preschools, teachers from private schools confirmed that they have adequate play materials and equipment in their schools (T04 and T02). Similarly, teachers from sampled government preschools also described that they have adequate play materials in their preschools (T01 and T06). On the other hand, one of the respondents, during the interview, noted that:

My school doesn't have adequate play materials and the children play merely in their free time. Sometimes they play in the classroom and in another time outside the classroom. However, in the afternoon, the weather is not suitable for children to play. Some of the play equipment is not working (e.g. balance and ladder) (T02:Feb.18, 2021).

Another respondent from government preschool also confirmed that:

In my school, the playing materials are not sufficient comparing with the number of children. The inclination of teaching children through play is less in my school. I teach my children formal education in the classroom. I rarely apply corner and role play as pedagogical tools for my children (T04: Feb.02, 2021).

Similarly, a teacher from private preschool noted that:

In my preschool, there are shortages of both indoor and outdoor playing materials. As a result, students are unable to play freely in the classroom due to the small size of the school. The outdoor space is also small for students to play. My students play with slid and ladder (T01: Mar.15, 2021).

Conversely, one of the teachers from private preschool during the interview assured that:

My preschool has adequate play materials though there are playing materials in the school compound, because of the space constraint, the play equipment didn't give service for children. I use the outdoor space rarely because the space is always busy by several students (T02: Mar. 20, 2021).

T05 from government sampled preschool also noted that:

In my school, the play materials are not sufficient enough to students. Shortages of playing materials including merry-go-round and balance are not sufficient for students in the compound specially the outdoor play materials. Most of the playing materials in outdoor space are not functioning (Feb. 04, 2021).

A principal from private preschool, during the interview, assured that:

The teachers in my preschool often use puzzle, toys, flash cards, charts and abacus in the classroom to teach children. Outside the classroom, the teachers sometimes use slides, swings, ladder, balance, mills, and tires because there are shortages of play materials (P06: Apr.03, 2021).

Another principal from government preschool assured that, children do not have enough playing materials. There are no comfortable play areas or facilities outside the classroom (P03).

Similarly, the observation results revealed that although sampled preschools have not adequate play materials, as compared to the government preschools, sampled private schools have relatively better play materials in the classroom as compared to their sampled government preschools.

During my stay in the government preschools, I observed that the preschools are suffering from shortages of play materials. Only few play materials are available in the school. In the classroom, there is play materials produced by teachers though they are not adequate. There is no sandbox in the three sampled government preschools. But, I observed that puzzles, charts, pictures, books, blocks, flashcards, musical instruments, models, abacus, lotto, dies and medical tools in the sampled preschools. However, children sometimes use these play materials.



Figure 4: Play Equipment

In addition, the quantitative results also supported the above qualitative result to some extent.

Table 7. Materials/ Activities Used by Teachers for Learning through Play

No	Activities/ Materials Used for Learning through Play	Yes		Maybe		No		Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Books	25	52.1	13	27.1	10	20.8	6 th
2	Pictures	31	64.5	9	18.8	8	16.7	2 nd
3	Flash Cards	32	66.6	3	6.3	13	27.1	1 st
4	Play the dough	19	39.5	14	29.2	15	31.3	15 th
5	Toy cars	20	41.6	15	31.3	13	27.1	13 th
6	Work Sheet	20	41.6	14	29.2	14	29.2	13 th
7	Stringing beads	19	39.5	15	31.3	14	29.2	15 th
8	Blocks	21	43.7	14	29.2	13	27.1	11 th
9	Singing	26	54.2	6	12.5	16	33.3	5 th
10	Playing with a doll	21	43.7	14	29.2	13	27.1	11 th
11	Painting	23	47.9	18	37.5	7	14.6	9 th
12	Running	27	56.3	17	35.4	4	8.3	4 th
13	Hanging	25	52.1	7	14.6	16	33.3	6 th
14	Climbing a ladder	24	50	7	14.6	17	35.4	8 th
15	Sliding	30	62.5	13	27.1	5	10.4	3 rd
16	Sand Box	23	47.9	8	16.7	17	35.4	9 th

In table 7 above, majority of the teachers 66.6 % (32) stated that they used flash cards for teaching their students followed by pictures 64.5 % (31); sliding 62.5% (30); running 56.3 % (27) and singing 54.2%(26). This implies that majority of the teachers used flash cards, pictures, sliding, running and singing for teaching their students in preschools of Kirkos sub-city. Besides, the teachers were asked to rank the activities or materials used by preschool teachers and they ranked flash cards first followed by pictures (2nd rank), sliding (3rd rank), running (4th rank) and singing ranked 5th.

In addition, in the open-ended question, the teachers were asked to write the activities or materials used to teach students other than the above listed ones. Accordingly, they described that they used swing, balance, group play, musical instrument, and spinning as teaching activities or materials to teach their students.

4.2.1.12. Teachers' Training

Teachers in preschool should have specialized training in early child education and care (ECCE) and must be qualified before they teach children. Therefore, teachers' pre-service and short term training is important to students' achievement. In relation to this, teachers were asked about the training they obtained. They indicated that almost all of them did not have diploma in ECCE. Majority of the respondents took three month training on ECCE. Others also confirmed that they

graduated in diploma of other fields not in ECCE. They did not take any training in ECCE. T04 explained that she has taken training for five months. T06 further indicated that she has taken four trainings on play based pedagogy, data management, action research and teachers' professional development. T02 has trained three times in play based approach, continuous assessment and students' recording. T01 further said that she did not get enough training. However, T02 assured that he did not get many training. He got training opportunity on continuous assessment only. T05 on the other hand, disclosed that she received a one year teacher training of preschool. Similarly, T06 assured that she received training on the art of play teaching for a year and instructional aids. Conversely, T05 did not receive any training so far. T06 on the other hand, took a five days training on continuous assessment and students recording management. Overall, majority of the teachers did not have Diploma in ECCE. Some of them received three month training on ECCE. The rest have Diploma in other field and got only a few days training on ECCE. The problem is serious in private sampled schools. Most of the teachers who are teaching now in sampled preschools are not qualified on ECCE. Some of the teachers are below the standard even, they do not have certificate.

Overall, the teachers in the government preschools have a little bit better qualification than the private one. Most of the teachers in the private schools are below the standard though the problem is also prevalent in the government school. Currently, most of the teachers in sampled government and private schools are not qualified; particularly the problem is worse in private school due to high turnover of teachers from private preschools and joined the government preschool. The Kirkos sub-city department hired a lot of teachers from private schools with better salary. As a result, shortages of teachers are observed in sampled private preschools. Currently, the assistant teachers and the guardians are forced to teach children in one sampled private school. Hence, there is serious issue of quality teaching because the teachers are not qualified for the level.

Similarly, pertaining to short-term training, majority of the respondents both in private and government preschools did not get adequate continuous training on ECCE. Relatively, government preschool teachers got the chance of training as compared to private preschool teachers.

From school observation, the researcher understood that, teachers' qualification is not up to the standard. Most teachers' in preschools are not qualified in ECCE. As a result of COVID, several teachers left the private schools. The teaching-learning processes are done by assistant teachers and baby keepers in one sampled private preschool. This severely affects the quality of education

4.2.1.13. Differences in Practice of Play-based Pedagogy in private and government preschools

The key informants in interview were asked about the differences in practice of play-based pedagogy in sampled private and government preschools. The practice of play-based pedagogy focused on the implementation of play-based pedagogy, types of play, space for play, teachers' qualification and availability of adequate play materials and equipment. Data were obtained from key informants through interview and observation.

With regard to the implementation of play-based pedagogy, the respondents reported that play-based pedagogy was not properly implemented in both private and government preschools. Relatively speaking, teachers in government schools had better understandings of play-based pedagogy and tried to implement it in their lesson to some extent. One of the teachers in government preschool said that,

I often implement play-based pedagogy to teach my children. I often give chance for students too actively engage in their learning. I offer adequate opportunity to my students to express their ideas and feelings both in classroom and outside the classroom. I use play as one method of teaching.

Another key informant from private preschool on the other hand assured that,

I rarely implement play-based pedagogy in my school to teach children. I often use lecture method to teach children in the class. Outside the classroom, I give children chance to run, play together, sing songs, and dance.

During the observation, the researcher observed that teachers have used play rarely in private preschool. Teachers in government preschools on the other hand have implemented play-based pedagogy to some extent. Overall, government schools had better implementation of play-based pedagogy than private preschools in Kirkos Sub-city.

With respect of adequate space for play, the observation results disclosed that government preschools had better and adequate space for play as compared to private preschools. The outdoor and indoor space for children play is better in sampled government preschools than private preschools. Almost all of the sampled private schools have small indoor and outdoor space. The preschools compound is not large in private preschools; mostly it is a rent house. Therefore, the space of the school is below the standard in private preschools. The government preschools have relatively adequate space to run children play. Particularly, the indoor space is enough for children and teachers to implement play based pedagogy. Relatively, the outdoor spaces in government preschools are a bit larger than the private preschools.

With regard to teachers' qualification in ECCE, majority of the government preschools teachers had certificate in ECCE. However, in private preschools, except one teacher, the rest did not get adequate training in ECCE. The teachers in the government preschools have a little bit better qualification than the private one. Most of the teachers in the private schools are below the standard though the problem is also prevalent in the government school. Currently, most of the teachers in sampled government and private schools are not qualified in ECCE; particularly the problem is worse in private school due to high turnover of teachers from private preschools and joined the government preschool. As a result, shortages of teachers are observed in sampled private preschools. Currently, the assistant teachers are forced to teach children as main teacher in one sampled private school. Hence, there is serious issue of quality teaching because the teachers are not qualified for the level.

Concerning conducive learning environment, the inside learning environment of government preschools is better than the private preschool. The classroom is decorated and full of pictures. Besides, the classroom is wide for children to freely play. However, the outside learning environment in private preschools is better than the government preschools. The outside environment in private preschools are attractive. It is decorated with flowers and pictures on wall though the space is small.

Pertaining to students' interaction with play materials and equipment, students' interaction with playing materials was found low due to limited play materials and number of students particularly the problem is severe in government preschools. Students' interaction with playing materials and equipment were found better in private preschools due to the availability of playing

materials and equipment. Overall, pertaining to play materials and equipment, private preschools had adequate play materials and equipment than government schools.

4.2.2. Challenges that hinder the Implementation of Play-based Pedagogy

There have been a lot of challenges that hinder the implementation of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos sub-city. Some of the challenges identified by respondents are: shortages of resources and uncomfortable compound (T01); shortages of various play materials and equipment (T03); uncomfortable outside space (T04); Limited play space, uncomfortable playground and shortages of play materials (T05); unsuitable classroom (T02); small class size (T06); overcrowded playground (T01). Another problem was found COVID pandemic. T02 disclosed that she is currently unable to apply cooperative play in the field due to COVID pandemic. This hinders students' interaction (T01). One of the respondents had to say:

The time given for students' for outdoor play is not convenient because it is carried-out in the afternoon. Frequently, in the afternoon, the sun is too hot to let children play so that play is not implemented outside the classroom regularly. As a result, students are forced to sit under the shade and play alone (T02:Feb.01, 2021).

T03, during the interview, noted that:

The school compound is not comfortable for children play because the playground is made of cement. This can easily hurt students if they fall. So, the playground is not suitable for children play. So, I'm facing challenges in teaching children. Another problem is shortage of resources in my school (Feb. 01, 2021).

In relation to the above idea, T04 have strengthened the idea like this; the afternoon time is not convenient for children outdoor play. Another challenge is lack of specialized teachers in ECCE (T06). Most of the teachers have taken three month training in ECCE. But this is not adequate to teach preschool students. At least, they need to have diploma in ECCE. This problem is very severe in private sampled preschools due to high teachers' turnover.

From the school observation, the researcher observed the following challenges that hinder the implementation of play based pedagogy. These include lack of conducive learning environment, small school size (particularly in private preschools), inadequate play materials both for indoor and outdoor play, lack of qualified teachers that meet the standard (severe in private sampled

preschools), lack of content based teaching (mostly observed in private preschools) and severe budget constraint particularly in government preschools because the sampled government preschools get their budget from their primary schools (there is no separate budget for preschool). Their budget and overall management is under the control of primary schools. The preschools are not independent.

In relation to challenges related to play based pedagogy, the principal assured that,

Teachers' related problems include lack of knowledge, lack of adequate teacher training, and unwillingness to teach students in games. Problems with the school include lack of toys, principal pressures, insufficient play space outside the classroom, and inability to play due to the large size of the table in the room. Lack of parental supervision and some parents perceive play games as a joke not as formal instruction (P01: Feb. 04, 2021).

Another principal from the private preschool confirmed that,

There are shortages of pre-school teachers who are qualified in ECCE (only one out of 6 preschool teachers' graduated in ECCE). Others are not qualified in ECCE. So, the biggest problem in my preschool is lack of trained teachers. Other factors include lack of learning resources, more of academic oriented learning, lack of school facilities, and lack of outdoor play materials (P04: Mar. 16, 2021).

From school observation, the researcher noticed the following challenges that hinder the implementation of play based pedagogy. Several teachers did not get adequate training on ECCE; the sampled preschools did not have enough play space and playing materials; lack of inputs; the outdoor environment is not conducive to children's play; the playground is crowded and a small courtyard; lack of understanding of the play based pedagogy and increased number of students.

Another challenge related to play was that the playing materials in outdoor space were limited and not adequate for all students. Although there were some playing equipment/ materials like slide, merry go round, balance, ladder and tire. They were not adequate enough as compared to the number of children the school had. Most of the children did not get the opportunity to play with these playing materials/ objects. They simply run in the compound and play with their

mates. Other observed problems in the sampled preschools are lack of teachers' competence, lack of training, problem in assessing children, lack of critical observation and documentation as well as the inability of the outside environment to play.

4.2. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate play-based pedagogy practices and its challenges in preschools of Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa. In the current study, 48 early childhood teachers and 6 principals' were selected and data were collected through interviews, questionnaire and observations. The findings reveal that teachers understood the significance of play to children holistic development and learning process. The discussion section is presented as follows.

Play Based Pedagogy Implementation: Pertaining to the application of play based pedagogy, play based pedagogy is not fully implemented in sampled government and private preschools, particularly the problem is severe in private preschools. However, there are some attempts by teachers to implement play based pedagogy in their instructions. Overall, the play based pedagogy implementation was found unsatisfactory. The teachers' knowledge towards play based pedagogy was found low and different among teachers. Besides, it was found that teachers participate in different play activities including free play, cooperative play and solitary play. In addition, the teachers used different approaches of play. Few teachers used more structured play led by rules and regulations. However, some teachers used a more relaxed, unstructured free play. In relation to this, Aras and Merdin (2020) indicated that teachers relatively used unstructured and free play with no rules. Overall, the play based pedagogy is not properly implemented in the sampled preschools effectively. Majority teachers still use traditional teaching model (more of lecture). However, Aras and Merdin (2020) stated that teacher-centred practices do not address children's developmental characteristics.

Furthermore, interview and observation results assured that the time given for hand work is not adequate. The students' did not participate actively in teaching-learning process. However, the study by Aras and Merdin (2020) confirmed that most of the teachers provide opportunities for children to make them actively participate in activities that involve learning through concrete materials. Moreover, the external learning environment is not conducive for children play in some preschools. As a result, only some teachers have implemented play based pedagogy. This

finding is somehow consistent with Aras and Merdin (2020) findings. They indicated that there are distinctions among teachers' play-based teaching strategies. Lungu, and Matafwali (2020) also indicated that the implementation of play varied across ECE Centres with some teachers integrating play in the delivery of lessons and others engaged children in play activities only during the time allocated for play time on the timetable.

During observation, the researcher noticed that in circle time outside the classroom, students learn more about their parts of the body using play, calendar, days of the week, months of the year, how to count numbers and letters and about physical exercise. But most of the above activities are mostly done in flag ceremony. These activities are not the daily classroom activities of children. According to Ludlow (2010), play-based learning supports children to build social skills, inspiration to learn, and even language and numeracy skills. Therefore, implementation of effective curriculum-based play in fostering the development of children's skills is balanced in the 21st century.

Although play-based pedagogy can improve children's performance, especially in terms of motivation, enthusiasm and creativity in learning, the approach and strategy is still widely unsystematically used. As indicated in literature, dominant early childhood education and care (ECEC) curriculum is play-based (OECD, 2006; Stephen, 2012). The Ethiopian National ECCE policy (2010) also supported this idea that, children should learn through play based approach.

Furthermore, play-based pedagogy is an approach to teaching that provides space, time and opportunity, for students to learn through direct, active, hands-on play with the thoughtful consideration of an attentive adult who guides their learning by expanding and extending on their inquiries and interests (Hennessey, 2016). However, in the study, it was found that the external space for children play is not adequate. Besides, the time given for play is not sufficient. Much time is given for lecture in the classroom not for hand work. Literature further reveals that skills and knowledge of children will be able to properly enhance especially when they are involved in play time that is shared with friends and supported by adults (Kamisah & Aini, 2013). In addition, children can improve their knowledge and skills in a more meaningful environment. Therefore, activity or play-based pedagogy that are applied in a structured manner is said to be able help improve the cognitive skills, social, creativity, as well as increasing motivation and concentration of children. The play-based pedagogy in preschool should be strengthened in

shaping the children's competitiveness in terms of knowledge and skills. It also helps to develop children creativity skills (Davies et al., 2013a). Therefore, teachers in sampled preschools should implement the play based pedagogy to the holistic development of children.

Overall, from the discussion above, it is easy to say that the practice of play based pedagogy is not effective as expected in sampled preschools due to various reasons as mentioned in the findings. In general, play-based pedagogy is essential pedagogical approach that uses play as an instructional tool in early childhood contexts. Therefore, practitioners should implement play-based pedagogy to offer children with chances to work together with their mates (Danniels & Pyle, 2018), to discuss and to reach compromises (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006), permit children to make selections of the materials or strategies (Thomas, Warren & DeVries, 2011). Teachers take into consideration what children convey to the learning moment (Thomas, Warren & DeVries, 2011).

Types of Play: Teachers use various types of play. In the study, it was found that teachers in both private and government preschools used more cooperative and solitary play. Parallel play and associative play are not often implemented by teachers. After COVID pandemic, teachers stopped using cooperative play. Now, solitary play is predominantly used by teachers in preschools. Parallel play, associative play, make-believe play, and role play are rarely implemented in sampled preschools. Furthermore, most of the time, teachers selected the type of play for their children rather than freely chosen by children. Children did not choose the type of play. As a result, children's play needs are rarely fulfilled. In connection to this, Fleer, (2010) stated that child-centred play in the early childhood curriculum is essential to a depth of knowledge regarding the importance of teacher interactions during children's play.

Teachers' Attitude towards Play Based Pedagogy: Both the teachers and principals in the interview disclosed that teachers have positive attitude and good feeling towards play based pedagogy. This result is also confirmed by school observation. During the observation, the researcher assured that teachers have positive attitude towards play. But they do not have similar understandings about play based pedagogy. In relation to this, Hennessy (2016) also disclosed that moving along a continuum from a traditional teaching to a more play-based pedagogical approach requires change in attitude and practice. This will be a gradual change for some

teachers as they learn which of their traditional routines and activities align with play-based pedagogy and which ones need to be revised or rethought.

Teachers' Role in Play: In the interview and observation, it was found that teachers' role was found somehow good although few teachers did not perform their roles properly. The results indicated that several teachers guide children, motivate children and play with them. Particularly, the role of majority of the teachers was found promising in the classroom. They facilitate the children learning, and follow-up children play. In relation to this, Hennessey (2016) notes that teachers have an integral role in the planning, guiding, observing and documenting children's play experiences, seeking out necessary supports, and incorporating/utilizing other essential evidence based strategies to support individual student learning, as required. Hennessey further described that as teachers become more comfortable with their role during the play process – at times an observer, at times a facilitator, and at times a play-partner – they will recognize that curricular outcomes are being met in an integrated and complementary way (Hennessey, 2016). However, in the study, teachers confirmed that they do not critically observe children and document children's results. Literature also indicates that the differing teacher roles in play based contexts complex the challenges teachers face as they integrate play into classroom environments (Pyle & Bigelow, 2014). Teachers must not only determine the type of play to foster in the classroom and the environmental contexts that can support productive play, but they must also determine the extent to which they will involve themselves in these playful contexts. In connection to this, a research finding by Tuğrul et al. (2014) found that only 1% of the children stated that they played with their teachers.

In general, teachers who employ a play-based pedagogical approach in their classrooms will have the opportunity to be responsive to all of their students in ways that are more meaningful and effective.

Play Interaction: From school observation, the researcher noticed that the teachers were positive and happy to help students to do their job. They have good interaction with children. They use different strategy and methods as well as materials to teach children. They give love for the children and support them. In relation to this, Majumdar (2020) indicated that interaction with peers, playful movements (climbing, hopping, swinging are examples of movements) are

necessary for child development at the age of 4 to 6 years. Playing with an object like toys is essential to develop sensory-motor skills.

During the observation very few teachers were found negligent and they were doing their own tasks and few teachers left children in the play field and do their own tasks. In relation to this, Gülay Ogelman's (2014) study found that most teachers became preoccupied with other jobs or duties during the free play time, and a few of them left the classroom altogether. Generally, from the observation, the researcher noticed that the interaction between the teachers and students is somehow good. Moreover, students' interactions with other students were found strong. They play together; they talk, share ideas, dance together, express their emotions and do things together. In connection to this, Durualp and Aral (2010) found that children made progress in terms of listening, sharing, helping, understanding and expressing emotions through the interaction with other students. Attachment and developmental theories demonstrated that children with secure and effective teachers-child relationships will be able to interact with others more and learn better social behavior (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, 1999). Conversely, children with uncertain, less-close and more-conflicting teacher-child relationships will show poorer social skills (Elicker, Egeland & Sroufe, 1992; Iruka et al., 2010).

On the other hand, students' interaction with playing materials was found low due to limited playing materials and large numbers of students. Furthermore, students' interaction with their environment is found to be good. Students often want to interact with the surrounding environment. They water flowers, protect the plants and some students talk with plants and flowers. Others students play with their toys. But in terms of participation, only few children participate in the class. Teachers' domination is still high. In relation to children interaction, Hedges, (2000) assured that children construct their own knowledge in interaction with a well-designed environment and effective teacher assistance. Teachers facilitate and extend children's learning through systematic observation, effective feedback, and purposeful questioning. Interactions are respectful among students, classmates and the teacher, with clear expectations, rights and responsibilities being articulated at the beginning of the year and throughout the year. Excellent settings tend to achieve an equal balance between adult-led and child-initiated interactions, play and activities (Hennesey, 2016).

Play in Indoor and Outdoor Space: Both in the interview and observation, the respondents revealed that the indoor and outdoor space for play is not adequate in private sampled preschools. However, in the government preschools, the indoor space is adequate for play though the outdoor space is not sufficient for children play. As a result, only some children got the chance to play with play equipment to limited space. This severely hampers children holistic development. In relation to this, recent research indicates that children find fewer opportunities to play (Lynch, 2015; Miller & Almon, 2009). The increased attention towards academic development and school readiness has placed little emphasis on playful activities. Considering that play is the most developmentally appropriate way of learning in early years and children learn best with play (Pyle, 2018). Therefore, play is often considered as beneficial to children's development (Myck-Wayne 2010; Wallerstedt & Pramling 2012). The benefits have been explored in terms of children's social and emotional development (Bodrova et al., 2013)

Hennessey (2016) further noted that, with outdoor play, children have opportunities to play differently. They expend their energy through gross motor activities such as running, jumping or skipping; they learn about, incorporate and generalize curriculum outcomes to a natural setting (e.g., learning about living things from a book vs. experiences in real life); and they have further opportunities to engage in the different types and categories of play. Just as with playing indoors, children benefit from creating their own play experiences outdoors in free, unstructured play that develops imagination, problem solving, collaboration, and creativity. The outdoor environment is rich with play possibilities. Therefore, incorporating outdoor play into the regular school day encourages respect for the natural environment and supports the social, emotional and physical well-being and development of all children.

Play Materials and Equipment: During the interview and observation in preschools, it was found that although sampled preschools have not adequate playing materials in quantity and quality, as compared to the government sampled preschools, sampled private schools have relatively better playing materials than sampled government preschools. The researcher also observed that the preschools are suffering from shortages of play materials and equipment. Only few playing materials and equipment are available in the government preschools both in quantity and quality. In the classroom, there are playing materials produced by teachers though they are not adequate and inaccessible for all children. There is no sandbox in the three sampled private

preschools. Overall, the researcher observed that puzzles, toys, blackboard, beads, charts, pictures, books, blocks, flashcards, musical instruments, models, abacus and medical tools are available in the sampled preschools. However, children use these play materials and equipment rarely.

In connection to this, literature indicates that teachers require more appropriate resources and materials to stimulate students' language learning and teaching activities should be taking the children's language ability in consideration (Ali, A., & Mahamod, 2017). Meihua and Karen (2016) in their finding has emphasized that materials and resources can be added to learning environment, if and as required, to enhance play opportunities for children with exceptionalities.

The materials and equipment should be available both in number and variety to occupy all children in attendance; be similar with the developmental abilities of children in attendance; be available for much the day; offer many types of play choices, for blocks of time, to provide different opportunities for children to experiment, explore and learn ; be accessible to children where they can reach and use the materials by themselves with adaptations to furniture to meet all children's needs (Henessey, 2016).

Teachers' Training: It was found that the teachers in the government preschools have a little bit better qualification than the private one. Most of the teachers in the private schools are below the standard though the problem is also prevalent in the government school. Currently, most of the teachers in sampled government and private schools are not qualified in ECCE, particularly the problem is worse in private school due to high teachers' turnover. As a result, shortages of teachers are observed in sampled private preschools. Currently, the assistant teachers and the guardians are forced to teach children as the main teachers in two private schools. As a result, this affects the quality of education. The observation result also revealed that, teachers' qualification is not up to the standard. Most teachers' in sampled preschools are not qualified in ECCE. Study results show that higher teacher qualifications are significantly correlated with higher quality early childhood education and care. The education level of the teachers or caregivers is positively correlated to overall ECEC qualities measured by the environment rating scale. There is also a positive correlation between teacher qualification and subscale ratings including program structure, language and reasoning (Manning, Garvis, Fleming, & Wong, 2017). According to Holm and Horn (2003), a teacher training programme should equip teachers

with knowledge and skills so that they can help students with what to know and how to know, and endue teachers with teaching strategies which help them get used to powerful learning experiences; make them acquire and understand knowledge of their subject area; help them to comprehend the role of evaluation and to design different ways of evaluation, giving them knowledge about its application; instill in them a habit of reflection; teach them to be in cooperation with their colleagues, families and society.

In general, literature also indicates that the early childhood teacher should contribute to the quality of education and care and better learning outcomes for all children being educated and cared for in a range of ways including working directly with the children and providing mentoring, coaching and support to other educators (Kucukturan, 2011).

Learning Environment: it was found that the learning environment is not convenient for children learning in sampled preschools. Some of the preschools' environment is not good for play. They are located near drinking houses and business areas which are difficult to teach children and attract their attention of the children. So, the environment is not stimulating for children. Majumdar,(2020) indicated that child care environment has to be clean and has enough staffs for their care, a free play-based curriculum or programming where outdoor and indoor both gets similar importance, quiet environment, smoke-free environment, healthy nutritious meal. Research also indicates that it is difficult to deny an environment to children is challenging (Blakemore & Frith, 2005). They added that the environment for learning then has to be a stimulating space not a 'deprived' environment. Day and Midbjer, 2007) on the other hand, stated that the physical environment affects human behavior and enables children to know themselves during the childhood years (Francis, 1997). Francis further indicated that children become socialized and learn about the environment as a result of their experiences in the physical environment. A growing body of research in the US and Europe revealed that the physical environment has great effect on children cognitive and socio-emotional development (Ferguson et al., 2013). In addition, Pyle (2018) revealed that play-based learning should be an inherent aspect of early childhood learning environments.

Overall, the environment can have influence on the implementation of play based pedagogy. Hence, within a play-based learning environment, teachers are also able to modify the

environment and resources regularly to promote best learning experiences for all children based on individual development, interests, and preferences.

Challenges of Play Based Pedagogy: Several challenges hindered the implementation of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos Sub-city. The observation and interview results identified numerous challenges including lack of teachers adequate training in ECCE; inadequate play space for children and insufficient playing materials and equipment; lack of inputs or infrastructure; uncondusive outdoor learning environment, crowded playground, lack of understanding of the play based pedagogy, lack of parents' follow-up, increased number of students, lack of teachers' competence, problem in assessing children, lack of teachers critical observation and documentation of children progress. In relation to this, Lungu, and Matafwali, (2020) disclosed that notable challenges faced by teachers were lack of age appropriate play infrastructure that supported learning, lack of implementation guidelines, and curriculum overload. Henessey (2016) also identified that lack of ample space to develop physical skill, shortages of play materials and equipment, lack of adequate trees and hiding places for children, inconvenient topography are some the challenges that affect the play based pedagogy.

It was also indicated that teachers, teaching and learning materials are the main factors that influence the implementation of ECCE curriculum. This is consistent with the findings of Azzi-Lessing (2009) that infrastructure accessible at the pre-school centers affects the teaching and learning. The results of the study again offer evidence to Curriculum Research and Development Division (2006) that curriculum of preschoolers cannot be fruitful without suitable and right teaching and learning materials

Furthermore, it was found that teachers have problems of documentation of students' progress and continuous changes. In connection to this, Ali, Constantino, Hussain and Akhtar (2018) noted that teachers are required to document each child's expression of knowledge and utilize them as a justification of the child's progress of the curriculum goals.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The main purpose of the study was to examine the practice and challenges of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa. In order to realize the objectives, the study addressed the following three basic research questions:

- 1 To what extent does teachers use play based pedagogy in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration?
2. What type of play based pedagogy do teachers use in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration?
3. What are the challenges that hinder teachers to implement play based pedagogy in the preschools of Addis Ababa City Administration?

To address the above basic research questions, concurrent mixed research design were used. Data were collected from 48 teachers and 6 principals using questionnaire, interview and observation. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. In the following section, the major findings, conclusion and recommendations are forwarded.

5.1. Major Findings of the Study

5.1.1. Benefits of Play

1. The findings indicated that teachers understood the significance of play to children holistic development. Play has many benefits for children including physical, social, emotional and cognitive benefits

5.1.2. Play Based Pedagogy Implementation

1. It was found that play based pedagogy is not fully implemented in sampled government and private preschools, particularly the problem is severe in private preschools. However, there are some attempts by teachers to implement play based pedagogy in their instruction to some extent.
2. Teachers participate their students in different play activities including free play, cooperative play and solitary play. Besides, the teachers used different approach to play. Some used more structured play led by rules and regulations. Others use a more relaxed, unstructured free play.

3. The interview results and observation conducted assured that the time given for hand work is not adequate. The students' did not participate actively in their learning. Moreover, the external learning environment is not conducive for children play in some preschools.

4. During observation, the researcher noticed that in circle time outside the classroom, students learn more about their body parts, calendar, days of the week, months of the year, how to count numbers and letters. But most of the above activities are mostly done in flag ceremony. These activities are not the daily classroom activities of children in the classroom.

5. It was found that the external space for children play is not adequate. Besides, the time given for play is not sufficient. Much time is given for lecture in the classroom not for hand work.

5.1.3. Types of Play

1. In the study, it was found that teachers in both private and government preschools used cooperative play and solitary play more often. Parallel play and associative play is implemented adequately by teachers in preschools. After COVID pandemic, teachers stopped using cooperative play. Now, solitary play is predominantly used by teachers in preschools. Parallel play, associative play, and role play are rarely implemented in sampled preschools.

2. Most of the time, teachers selected the type of play they apply for their children rather than freely chosen by children. Children did not choose the type of play most often. Children's play needs are rarely fulfilled.

5.1.4. Teachers' Attitude towards Play Based Pedagogy

1. Both the teachers and principals in the interview disclosed that teachers have positive attitude and good feeling towards play based pedagogy. During the observation, the researcher assured that teachers have positive attitude towards play. But they do not have similar understandings about play based pedagogy. This difference is appeared among teachers due to the limited training they have about play.

5.1.5. Teachers' Role in Play

1. In the interview and observation, it was found that teachers' role was found somehow good. Some teachers guide children, motivate children, critically observe, assess children progress and

play with them. However, in the study few teachers assured that they do not critically observe children, document children results, and do not play with children.

5.1.6. Play Interaction

1. From observation, the researcher noticed that several teachers have good interaction with children. They use different strategy and methods as well as materials to teach children. They give love for the children and support them. But very few teachers were found negligent, less interactive with students.

2. Students' interactions with other students were found strong. They play together; they talk, share ideas, dance together, express their emotions, feelings and do things together.

3. Students' interaction with playing materials was found low due to limited playing materials and large number of students. Some students play with their toys.

4. Students' interaction with their environment is found to be good. Students often want to interact with the surrounding environment. They water flowers, protect the plants and some students talk with plants and flowers.

5.1.7. Play in Indoor and Outdoor Space

1. Both in the interview and observation, the respondents revealed that the indoor and outdoor space for play is not adequate in private sampled preschools. However, in the government preschools, the indoor space is adequate for play however; the outdoor space or environment is not adequate for children play though they have better space than private preschools.

5.1.8. Play Materials and Equipment

1. During the interview and observation in preschools, it was found that although sampled preschools have not adequate playing materials in quantity and quality, as compared to the government sampled preschools; private schools have relatively better playing materials than sampled government preschools.

2. The researcher observed that puzzles, toys, blackboard, beads, charts, pictures, books, blocks, flashcards, musical instruments, models, abacus and medical tools are available in the sampled preschools. However, children sometimes use these play materials and equipment.

5.1.9. Teachers' Training

1. It was found that most of the teachers in sampled government and private schools are not qualified in ECCE, particularly the problem is worse in private school due to high teachers' turnover.

2. Majority of the teachers both in private and government preschools did not get adequate continuous training on ECCE. Relatively, government preschool teachers got better chance of training as compared to private preschool teachers. They took some training on continuous assessment, students' record keeping and child care.

5.1.10. Learning Environment

1. It was found that the learning environment is not convenient for children learning in sampled preschools. Some of the preschools' environment is the worst. They are located near drinking houses and business areas which are difficult to teach children. So, the environment is not stimulating for children.

5.1.11. Differences in Practice of Play-based Pedagogy in private and government preschools

1. With regard to the implementation of play-based pedagogy, the respondents reported that play-based pedagogy was not properly implemented in both private and government preschools. Relatively speaking, teachers in government schools had better understandings of play-based pedagogy and tried to implement it in their lesson to some extent.

5.1.12. Challenges of Play Based Pedagogy

1. The observation and interview results identified numerous challenges in the implementation of play based pedagogy including lack of teachers adequate training in ECCE; inadequate play space for children and insufficient playing materials and equipment; lack of inputs or infrastructure; unconducive outdoor learning environment, crowded playground, lack of

understanding of the play based pedagogy, lack of parents' follow-up, increased number of students, lack of teachers' competence, problem in assessing children, lack of teachers critical observation and documentation of children progress.

5.2. Conclusion

The objective of the study was to explore the practice and challenges of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos sub-city, Addis Ababa. It was found that play has significant benefits for children holistic development and health. Though teachers and educators conceptualized play in different ways, play based pedagogy was implemented to some extent in sampled preschools. In the present study, the play environment, the indoor and outdoor space, the play materials and equipment, the training of teachers, the play interaction etc. were found inadequate and unattractive for children. As reported by the respondents, there is a decrease in the amount of time devoted to play in preschools learning environments. Though other comprehensive and large scale studies are needed, the implantation of play based pedagogy was found promising to some extent. If additional efforts, resources and supports are applied, it will be more applicable in preschools of Ethiopia. Therefore, teachers need to expand their understanding towards the play based pedagogy and use it both in the classroom and outside because teachers' understanding towards play based pedagogy was found low. It was also found that there are some challenges identified by the study that hinder the implementation of play based pedagogy in preschools of Kirkos preschools including lack of teachers adequate training in ECCE; inadequate play space for children and insufficient playing materials and equipment; lack of inputs or infrastructure; less conducive outdoor learning environment, crowded playground, lack of understanding of the play based pedagogy, lack of parents' follow-up, increased number of students, lack of teachers' competence, problem in assessing children, lack of teachers critical observation and documentation of children progress. From the above discussion one can conclude that teachers have different implementations regarding play as pedagogical tool. So, it is possible to conclude that play based pedagogy is not fully implemented in sampled preschools of Kirkos Sub-city, Addis Ababa though promising changes are observed.

5.3. Recommendation

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are forwarded for the practice, policy makers and future researchers.

I. Recommendation for the Practice

1. It was found that the implementation of play based pedagogy was found unsatisfactory. There were differences among teachers in implementing play based pedagogy. The study therefore, recommends that teachers should be provided with guidelines on how to implement play-based pedagogy in preschools. In addition, provision of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning materials remains essential for effective implementation of play-based pedagogy.

2. It was found that teachers in preschool lacked the required specialized training in ECCE. Besides, short term trainings are not given in a continuous basis for teachers in the area of ECCE. Therefore, intensive training both long term and short term need to be provided for teachers in ECCE in general and play based pedagogy in particular so as to narrow the knowledge gaps in the area. There is also need for capacity building for teachers on the implementation of a play-based ECCE curriculum together with on-going mentorship by standard education officers to ensure effective implementation of play-based teaching and learning. This can help to well-informed teachers with respect to the practice of play based pedagogy in early childhood curriculum and its impact on children education. Therefore, the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau needs to provide continuous training for teachers to update and upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills. This can be achieved by collaboratively working with Addis Ababa University, Center for Early Child Care and Education as well as with Kotobe Metropolitan University, ECCE department. Furthermore, private owners and government authorities supervising the pre-school program should organize frequent in-service training for both teachers and parents with respect to early childhood education curriculum in general and play based pedagogy in particular.

2. The study identified numerous challenges in the implementation of play based pedagogy including lack of teachers adequate training in ECCE; inadequate play space for children and insufficient playing materials and equipment; lack of inputs or infrastructure; unconducive outdoor learning environment, crowded playground, lack of understanding of the play based pedagogy, lack of parents' follow-up, increased number of students, lack of teachers' competence, problem in assessing children, absence of separate budget for preschools, lack of teachers critical observation and documentation of children progress. Along with challenges identified in the study, the respondents have suggested different ideas which they saw as areas of

improvement. These areas of improvement fall under different themes like content related, supply of materials related, and follow up and support related.

With regard to content related solution, the teachers need to put the lessons into levels as per their developmental level of the children; increase the handwork time from 10 minutes to 20 minutes; reduce the lecture time from 20 minutes to 5 minutes and there should be a 5 minutes transition from course to course. Besides, it is better if the lessons are well aligned with the contents of the curriculum (the five themes of syllabus: Take proper care for proper body development; Communicating with others in an acceptable way; Assess the environment in terms of interactions with the environment; Introduce the concept of mathematics into daily activities; Proper use of language).

Pertaining to supply of materials and equipment, it is better if the number of play materials and equipment as well as reference materials increased so that students can get the opportunity to use them. It is also better if the nursery or KG1, KG2 and KG3 lesson is supported with the video, posters and pictures. Fulfill children's play materials and equipment, fulfilling preschool resources and infrastructure, creating conducive learning environment is essential to implement play based pedagogy. In addition, increase supplementary books in type and quantity; it would be good if inputs can be fulfilled for the preschools. For example, chairs for the children and teachers to sit on; play materials and equipment, and adequate space for play.

With regard to follow up and support, continuous follow-up, support, supervision, motivation and incentives are essential for children and teachers. Allocate independent or separate budget for preschools; Involving parents in their children's learning and in fulfilling the required inputs are essential. The follow up and support should be consistent and adequate.

Overall, the sub-city Education Department, the Woreda Education Office is committed to supporting teachers along their journey to implement best practices in play-based learning. Besides, through discussion and ongoing professional development, the ZED and WEO expert, school principal or administrators, teachers, and others within the education system as well as external service providers (e.g., early childhood educators, early intervention staff, allied health professionals), parents/caregivers and other family members work together to provide children with the best environments they can have during the all-important early years.

II. Recommendation for Policy Makers

1. As found in the study, several teachers did not implement play based pedagogy in their respective preschools. To alleviate this problem, the study has recommended the need for the Ministry of Education to put in place guidelines on play based pedagogy and learning in ECCE for teachers so that teachers can get better understanding and implementation of play based pedagogy. The implications of this study have the possibility to assist policy makers and educational leaders in discovering by analyzing early childhood teachers' challenges faced regarding play based curriculum implementation as well as finding out how pre-school teachers can overcome those challenges.

III. Recommendation for Future Researcher

1. Research on play based pedagogy is still lacking in Ethiopia preschools. Thus, exploration and research in this area should be developed in order to provide a positive impact on the improvement of children's learning in preschools. Therefore, this study can help future researchers as a guiding or reference to conduct similar studies. Besides, play-based pedagogy in early years needs to be examined within diverse research contexts so as to draw attention to this critical issue. Therefore, more studies are needed on teachers' play-based strategies in so as to describe what their existing practices are particularly in a national context. Moreover, this study discovered that teachers have different implementations concerning play as pedagogy, therefore, it would be valuable to study the reasons behind the differences observed among the practices of teachers on play based pedagogy in a fully detailed context.

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APPENDIX A
አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የትምህርትና ስነ-ባህሪ ጥናት ኮሌጅ

የህፃናት ትምህርትና እንክብካቤ ማዕከል

ውድ መምህር:

የዚህ የዳሰሳ ጥናት አጠቃላይ ዓላማ በአዲስ አበባ ከተማ አስተዳደር በቂርቆስ ክፍለ ከተማ የቅድመ መደበኛ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ በጨዋታ ላይ የተመሠረተ የፔዳጎጂ ልምድ እና ተግዳሮቶች መረጃን ለመሰብሰብ ነው። ስለዚህ እርስዎ ባሉት ልምድ እና እውቀት መሠረት ለቀረቡት ጥያቄዎች ምላሽ እንዲሰጡ በአክብሮት እጠይቃለሁ። የምርምር ውጤቱ እውነተኛነት እና ትክክለኛነት የሚለካው እርስዎ በሚሰጡት መረጃ ላይ የተመሠረተ ነው። ስለዚህ መጠይቁን በጥንቃቄ እንዲሞሉ እና በተጠቀሰው ጊዜ (በሶስት ቀናት ውስጥ እንዲመለሱ) መልሰው እንዲልኩ በትህትና እጠይቃለሁ። የዚህ የዳሰሳ ጥናት አካል ሆኖ የሚሰበሰበው መረጃ ለምርምር ስራ ብቻ የሚውል ሲሆን እርስዎ የሚሰጡን ምላሾች ሚስጥራዊነታቸው የተጠበቀ ነው ።

በቅድሚያ ምስጋናዬን አቀርባለሁ!

አጠቃላይ መመሪያ

1. እባክዎን መልስዎን በተዘጋጀው ቦታ ውስጥ x ምልክት ያስቀምጡ።
2. ምላሽ ሰጪው ለአንዳንድ ጥያቄዎች ከአንድ በላይ ምላሽ መምረጥ ይችላል።
3. ምላሽ የማይፈለግበትን ኮድ ይዘለሉ ፤
4. ክፍት ለሆኑ ጥያቄዎች ምላሽዎን በክፍት ቦታ ላይ ይፃፉ።

ክፍል አንድ - የግል መረጃ

የታ _____ ወንድ _____ ሴት

ዕድሜ - _____ ዓመታት

የትምህርት ደረጃ:

_____ የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት ያጠናቀቀ/ች

_____ የምስክር ወረቀት

_____ ዲፕሎማ

_____ ዲግሪ

_____ ኤምኤ/ኤም.ኤስ

የማስተማር ልምድ

- _____ ከ 5 ዓመት በታች
- _____ 5-10 ዓመታት
- _____ ከ10-15 ዓመታት
- _____ ከ 15 ዓመታት በላይ

ክፍል ሁለት: እባክዎን የሚከተሉትን ጥያቄዎች በቀረበው ቦታ ላይ ይመልሱ።

1. የማስተማር ዘይቤዎን ይግለጹ (የማስተማሪያ ዘዴዎችን እና የሥርዓተ ትምህርቱን ዓይነት ያካትቱ)

2. የጨዋታ ትርጓሜዬ _____
3. ጨዋታ የት ነው የሚካሄደው? _____
4. የመማር ትርጉም _____
5. ትምህርት የት ይካሄዳል? _____
6. በቅድመ ትምህርት ቤት ተማሪዎቹ እንዲማሩ የምፈልገው-----

ክፍል ሶስት - በጨዋታ ስነ-ዘዴ የማስተማር አተገባበር

ይህ የዳሰሳ ጥናት በቂርቆስ ክፍለ ከተማ የቅድመ መደበኛ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ በጨዋታ ላይ የተመሠረተ የትምህርት አሰጣጥ መጠንን በተመለከተ የእርስዎን ሀሳቦች ለማወቅ የተነደፈ ነው። ስለዚህ ትክክለኛ ወይም የተሳሳተ መልሶች የሉም። በመግለጫው ምን ያህል እንደሚሰማሙ/እንደሚይስማሙ እባክዎን እያንዳንዱን ጥያቄ ይመልሱ። መልስዎን ክብብ ያድርጉ ወይም 'X' ምልክት በተሰጠው ቦታ ላይ ያድርጉ።

	በጨዋታ የማስተማር ስነ-ዘዴ አተገባበር	1 = በጥብቅ አልስማማም; 2 = አልስማማም; 3 = ገለልተኛ; 4 = እስማማለሁ; 5 = በጽኑ እስማማለሁ				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	በትምህርት ቤት ውስጥ ልጆች በእረፍት ጊዜ ብቻ መጫወት አለባቸው።					
2	ጨዋታ የህፃን ስራ ነው					
3	መ-ዘ-ቃ እና ዘፈን ለጨዋታ ብቻ የሚያገለግሉ እንቅስቃሴዎች ናቸው።					
4	ልጆች ሲጫወቱ ማየት ምን ያህል ብልህ እንደሆኑ ለመናገር መንገድ ነው					
5	ዕድሜያቸው ለትምህርት ያልደረሱ ሕፃናት እየተማሩ መሆናቸውን					

	ለማረጋገጥ ከሁሉ የተሻለው መንገድ በወርክ-ሺት ነው				
6	ጨዋታ ልጆች በዙሪያቸው ስላለው ዓለም እንዲያውቁ ያግዛል።				
7	የቅድመ ትምህርት ቤት ልጆች በመጫወቻ ሜዳ ላይ ሲጫወቱ ብዙ ነገሮችን ይማራሉ።				
8	የጨዋታው ዋና ዓላማ ዕውቀትን እና ክህሎቶችን ማግኘት ነው				
9	በእንቅስቃሴዎች ላይ ያሉ እጆች ለቅድመ ትምህርት ቤት ተማሪዎች ምርጥ የመማሪያ ዓይነት ናቸው።				
10	ትምህርት በአስተማሪ መመራት አለበት።				

ክፍል D: በግራ ዓምድ ውስጥ የተዘረዘሩትን እያንዳንዱን ክህሎቶች ለማስተማር ከሁሉ የተሻለው መንገድ ነው ብለው የሚያምኑትን የእንቅስቃሴ ዓይነት (የክብብ ጊዜ ፣ የተዋቀሩ እንቅስቃሴዎች ወይም ነፃ ጨዋታ) የሚገልጽ ሳጥን ላይ ምልክት ያድርጉ።

ተ.ቁ		የክብብ ጊዜ (መምህራ ያስተማራቸው ትምህርቶች)	የተዋቀሩ እንቅስቃሴዎች (የተወሰኑ ዓላማ ያላቸው እንቅስቃሴዎች)	ነፃ ጨዋታ (በልጅ የሚመራ ጨዋታ)
	የአካዳሚክ ክህሎቶች			
	ቁጥሮች			
	ቅርፆች			
	ቅጠች እና ቅደም ተከተል			
	ልኬት			
	ድንገተኛ ንባብ (ኤቢ.ሲ.ኤስ ፣ ፊደሎች ድምጾችን ያስማሉ)			
	ቋንቋ (መናገር ፣ ማዳመጥ ፣ ውይይት)			
	ማህበራዊ ጥናቶች (ያለፈው እና የአሁኑ ፣ የአድራሻ ማህበረሰብ)			
	የሳይንስ ችሎታዎች (ፈጠራ ፣ የማወቅ ጉጉት ፣ እቅድ እና ነፃነት)			
	የአካል ጤና (መሠረታዊ የጤና እና የደህንነት ህጎች)			
	ማህበራዊ/ስሜታዊ ችሎታዎች			
	ፈጠራ			
	ስሜቶችን ይግለጹ			
	ችግር ፈቺ			
	ራስን መግዛት			
	መመሪያዎችን መከተል			
	አካላዊ ችሎታዎች			
	አነስተኛ ሞተር (መቁረጥ ፣ እርሳስ መያዝ)			
	ጠቅላላ ሞተር (መሮጥ ፣ መዘለል ፣ መዘለል)			
	ማስተባበር			

ክፍል ሠ ከሚከተሉት ተግባራት ለመማር-ማስተማር የሚጠቀሙት የቱ ነው? መልስዎን ክብ ያድርጉ።

ተ.ቁ	መምህሩ የሚፈፅማቸው ተግባራት/ ስራዎች	አዎ	ምናልባት	አይደለም	ደረጃ
1	መፅሃፍት				
2	ስዕል				
3	የፍላጎት ካርዶች				
4	በሊጥ/ ጭቃ መጫወት				
5	የመጫወቻ መኪናዎች				
6	ዎር-ሺት				
7	የሚጠበቁ ደቃዎች				
8	ብሎኮች				
9	መዝፈን				
10	በአሻንጉሊት መጫወት				
11	ቀለም መቀባት				
12	መሮጥ				
13	ማንጠልጠል				
14	መሰላል መውጣት				
15	መንሸራተት				
16	የአሸዋ ሣጥን				

Appendix B

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የትምህርትና ስነ-ባህሪ ጥናት ኮሌጅ

የህፃናት ትምህርትና እንክብካቤ ማዕከል

ለመምህራንና ርዕሰ መምህራን የተዘጋጀ ቃለ-መጠይቅ

በቅድሚያ ጥሪያችንን አክብረው ለምናደርገው ቃለመጠይቅ በመገኘትዎ አመሰግናለሁ። ስሜ መንግስቱ አማረ እባላለው። በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የህፃናት ትምህርትና እንክብካቤ ድህረምረቃ ተማሪ ነኝ። የዚህ ቃለመጠይቅ ዋና ዓላማ በአሁኑ ሰዓት በአዲስ አበባ ከተማ ጨርቆስ ክፍለ ከተማ በሚገኙ ቅድመ መደበኛ ት/ቤቶች ላይ የመምህራን በጨዋታ የማስተማር ስነ-ዘዴ አተገባበርና ተግዳሮቶቹ በሚለው ርዕሰ ዙሪያ መረጃ ለመሰብሰብ ነው።

ቃለመጠይቁን ከመጀመራችን በፊት በቅድሚያ ፈቃደኝነትዎን ቢገልጹልኝ።

ፈቃደኛ ነኝ----- ፈቃደኛ አይደለሁም-----

ሀ. አጠቃላይ መረጃ

ሀ1. የቅድመ መደበኛው ት/ቤት ስም-----

ሀ2. ቃለመጠይቅ የተደረገለት መምህር ሙሉ ስም-----

ሀ3. ቃለመጠይቅ የተደረገለት መምህር ስም ወንድ ሴት

ሀ4. ቃለመጠይቅ የተደረገለት መምህር ዕድሜ-----

ሀ5. ቃለመጠይቅ የተደረገለት መምህር የትምህርት ደረጃ-----

ሀ6. በቅድመ መደበኛ ትምህርት በሰርተፍኬት ፤ በዲፕሎማ ወይም ዲግሪ ስልጠና ካልዎት የትኛው እንደሆነ ይግለጹ.....

ሀ7. በቅድመ መደበኛ ትምህርት አጫጭር ስልጠናዎችን ወስደው ከነበረ ስንት ጊዜ፣ እና በምን ጉዳዮች ላይ እንደነበረ ቢገልጹልኝ-----

ሀ9. ህፃናቱን በጨዋታ ለማስተማር የሚያገለግሉ እርስዎ በግብአትነት የሚጠቀሙባቸው ቁሳቁሶች ምን ምን እንደሆኑ ቢገልጹልኝ(ለምሳሌ፣ መሳሪያዎች፣ መጻሕፍት፣ ፖስተሮች፣ ፍላሽ ካርዶች ወዘተ)-----

ለ. በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ አተገባበርና ችግሮች

- 1. ለአንተ/ቺ የልጆች ጨዋታ ማለት ምን ማለት ነው?
- 2. በአብዛኛው ተማሪዎችን ለማስተማር የምትጠቀሙትን የማስተማር ዘዴ ቢዘረዝሩልኝ?
- 3. ህፃናትን ተማሪዎችን ለማስተማር ምን አይነት የጨዋታ አይነቶች ትጠቀማሉ?
- 4. በህፃናት ጨዋታ ጊዜ የመምህሩ ሚና ምንድን ነው?

5. በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ አተገባበር በት/ቤታችሁ ምን ይመስላል?
6. በጨዋታ የማስተማርን ዘዴ ለመተግበር የሚረዱ የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶችና ምቹ አካባቢ ምን ይመስላል?
7. መምህራን በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ ለመተግበር ዕንቅፋት የሆኑባቸው ምክንያቶች ምንድን ናቸው?
8. እነዚህን እንቅፋቶች ለመቅረፍ ምን መደረግ አለበት ትላለህ?

Appendix C

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

የትምህርትና ስነ-ባህሪ ጥናት ኮሌጅ

የህፃናት ትምህርትና እንክብካቤ ማዕከል

የክፍል ውስጥ ምልከታ (Observing play)

የዚህ የክፍል ምልከታ ዋና ዓላማ በተመረጡ የቅድመ መደበኛ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ አተገባበርና ችግሮቹ በተመረጡ ክፍሎችና ከክፍል ውጪ ምልከታ በማካሄድ መረጃ መሰብሰብ ሲሆን ትኩረት የሚደረግባቸው ጉዳዮች የሚከተሉት ናቸው፡፡

- ጨዋታ ተኮር መማር ማስተማርና አተገባበሩ
- የክፍል ውስጥ ተራክቦና የማስተማር/መማር አቀራረብ
- በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴን ለመተግበር የሚረዱ የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶችና ምቹ አካባቢ
- በጨዋታ የማስተማርን ዘዴ ለመተግበር እንቅፋት የሆኑ ችግሮች

ይህን ምልከታ ለማድረግ ቢያንስ ቢያንስ ለሳምንት አምስት ክፍለ ጊዜያት ለ 30 ደቂቃ ያህል ምልከታዎችን ማድረግ ያስፈልጋል፡፡ ከምልከታው በፊት ከመምህራን ጋር ቃለ-መጠይቅ ማድረግ ለምልከታው ጠቀሜታ አለው፡፡

ሀ. አጠቃላይ መረጃ

ሀ1. የቅድመ መደበኛው ት/ቤት ስም_____

ሀ2. የተመልካቹ ሙሉ ስም_____

ሀ3. ለምልከታ የተመረጠው ቅድመ መደበኛ ት/ቤት ደረጃ_____ ሴክሽን_____

ሀ4. ምልከታው የተደረገበት ሰዓት ከ_____ እስከ _____ ሰዓት

ሀ5. በምልከታው ጊዜ የተገኘው መምህር ሙሉ ስም_____

ሀ6. በምልከታው ጊዜ የተገኙት ህፃናት ብዛት፣ ወንድ_____ ሴት_____

ሀ7. የክፍሉ አጠቃላይ ሁኔታ

- ከህፃናቱ ቁጥር አካያ ሲታይ ለጨዋታ በቂነቱ_____
- የህፃናቱን ክፍል ውስጥ እንቅስቃሴ ማስቻሉ_____
- ክፍል ውስጥ የሚገኙ ለጨዋታ የሚያለግሉ መርጃ መሳሪያዎች፣ እቃዎች፣ ቁሳቁሶች፣ ጥቁር ሰሌዳን ጨምሮ ይዘርዝሩ_____
- ህፃናቱ ምን ያህል እነዚህን መሳሪያዎች፣ እቃዎች፣ ቁሳቁሶች ይጠቀሙባቸዋል_____

➤ መምህሩ ምን ያህል እነዚህን መሳሪያዎች፤ እቃዎች፤ ቁሳቁሶች በጨዋታ ለማስተማር ይጠቀምባቸዋል_____

ለ. ጨዋታ ተኮር መማር ማስተማር

- ለ1. በክፍል ውስጥ ጨዋታ መቼና እንዴት ይጀመራል?
- ለ2. ልጆች ምን ዓይነት ጨዋታ መጫወት እንዳለባቸው የሚወስነው ማን ነው?
- ለ3. መምህሩ በአንድ ክፍለ ጊዜ ውስጥ ምን ያህሉን ጊዜ በጨዋታ ለማስተማር ይጠቀማል?
- ለ4. ልጆችን በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ ወቅት የመምህሩ ሚና ምንድን ነው?
- ለ5. መምህሩ በጨዋታ ዘዴ ለማስተማር ምን ዓይነት የጨዋታ ቁሳቁሶችን ይጠቀማል?
- ለ6. በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ ወቅት የህፃናት ሚና ምንድን ነው?
- ለ7. በጨዋታ ማስተማር ለህፃናት አእምሮዊ፤ አካላዊ ፤ ስሜታዊ፤ ማህበራዊ ዕድገት ያለው አስተዋፅኦ ምንድን ነው?

ሐ. የክፍል ውስጥ ተራክቦና የማስተማር/መማር አቀራረብ

- ሐ1. በጨዋታ ወቅት ህፃናት ስሜታቸውን እንዴት ይገልጻሉ?
- ሐ2. በጨዋታ ወቅት የህፃናት መስተጋብር/ ተራክቦ ምን ይመስላል?
- ሐ3. መምህራን በጨዋታ የማስተማር ሂደት ላይ የነበራቸው ተሳትፎ?
- ሐ4. በትምህርት ጊዜ ጭብጥ ላይ ያተኮረ ውይይት ይደረጋል ወይ?
- ሐ5. መምህራን የሴቶችና የወንዶችን ህፃናትን ተሳትፎ እኩል ያበረታታሉ ወይ?

መ. ምቹ የመጫወቻ አካባቢና የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶች

- መ1. ህፃናት በቂ የመጫወቻ አካባቢ በክፍል ውስጥ አላቸው ወይ?
- መ2. በክፍል ውስጥ በቂ የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶች ለህፃናት አሉ?
- መ3. ከክፍል ውጪ ያለው አካባቢ ለህፃናት መጫወቻ በቂ ነው ወይ?
- መ4. ከክፍል ውጪ በቂ የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶች ለህፃናት አሉ ወይ?
- መ5. ከክፍል ውጪ ያለው ቦታ ለህፃናት መጫወቻ ምቹ ነው ወይ?
- መ6. የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶቹ ከህፃናት ቁጥር ጋር ተመጣጣኝ ናቸው ወይ?

ሠ. በጨዋታ የማስተማርን ዘዴ ለመተግበር እንቅፋት የሆኑ ችግሮች

- ሠ1. የክፍሉ ስፋት በቂ አለመሆን
- ሠ2. የመምህራን የዕውቀት እጥረት

ሠ3. የመጫወቻ ቁሳቁሶች እጥረት

ሠ4. የውጪ አካባቢ ምቹ አለመሆን

ሠ5. ድንጋያማና ወጣ ገባ የበዛበት ግቢ

ሠ6. የቆሽሹ መጫወቻ ቦታዎች

ሠ7. የመምህራን በጨዋታ የማስተማር ዘዴ ግንዛቤ አናሳ መሆን

ሠ8. የተማሪዎች ቁጥር መብዛት

Annex I

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on the type of play activity in Circle Time, Structured Activities, and Free Play

No	Items	Circle Time (Lessons taught by the teacher)		Structured Activities (Activities with a specific purpose)		Free Play (Child directed play)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
I	Academic Skills						
1	Numbers	26	54.2	5	10.4	17	35.4
2	Shapes	25	52.1	10	20.8	13	27.1
3	Patterns and Sequencing	24	50	6	12.5	18	37.5
5	Measurement	19	39.6	22	45.8	7	14.6
5	Emergent Reading (ABCS, letters make sounds)	24	50	18	37.5	6	12.5
6	Language (speaking, listening, conversation)	20	41.8	14	29.2	14	29.2
7	Social Studies (past and present, address community)	15	31.9	18	38.3	14	29.8
8	Science Skills (inventiveness, curiosity, planning and reflection)	15	31.3	15	31.3	18	37.5
9	Physical health (basic health and safety rules)	18	37.5	14	29.2	16	33.3
	Weighted Percentage		43.2		28.3		28.5
II	Social/Emotional Skills						
1	Creativity	16	33.3	14	29.2	18	37.5
2	Express Emotions	14	29.8	13	27.7	20	42.5
3	Problem solving	21	43.7	14	29.2	13	27.1
4	Self-control	18	38.3	15	31.9	14	29.8
5	Following directions	26	54.2	18	37.5	4	8.3
	Weighted Percentage		39.9		31.1		29
III	Physical Skills						
1	Fine Motor (cutting, holding a pencil)	16	33.3	22	45.8	10	20.9
2	Gross Motor (running, jumping, hopping)	6	12.4	20	41.7	22	45.9
3	Coordination	18	38.3	19	40.4	10	21.3
	Weighted Percentage		28		42.6		29.4