

Difficulties of Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning

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Abstract

Play-based learning is a vital aspect of early childhood education that provides children with a meaningful and enjoyable way to learn and explore the world around them. The key purpose of this study is to find out the difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in two districts of a large-sized division in Central Philippines for the school year 2024-2025 as the basis for an intervention plan. Descriptive research was conducted and used a 30-item survey questionnaire as a tool to gather data from thirty (30) kindergarten teachers and to find out their difficulties in teaching play-based learning. The results revealed that the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the areas of motor skills, creativity skills, and social skills was moderate. Furthermore, a comparison of their demographic profiles revealed no significant difference in the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in these three areas. The findings of this study provide a foundation for kindergarten teachers to enhance their instructional delivery within the kindergarten program. This calls for education authorities to give more attention to the kindergarten program by providing teachers with training and development programs and should be supported by stakeholders in order to overcome the difficulties faced by kindergarten teachers.

Keywords: Difficulties, kindergarten teachers, teaching play-based learning

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Play-based learning is becoming more widely acknowledged as an effective approach to promote learner engagement, inclusivity, and comprehensive skill development that extends beyond preschool. This method facilitates transitioning from preschool to formal education by utilizing children's innate interests (Parker et al., 2022).

The Kindergarten MATATAG Curriculum states that Kindergarten Education aims to develop holistic learners with foundational skills imbued with physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and values development through play-based learning (DepEd Memo No. 054, s. 2023). Play is a child's natural activity that helps them discover and make meaning in the world around them. Children engage in play activities while the teacher acknowledges the learning process and reflects on their observations to determine what activities should be supported and extended. DepEd also emphasizes play-based experiences as an approach to learning to young learners (DepEd Order No. 47, s.2016). Moreover, Hyvonen (2012) expressed that play may be a profitable and critical instrument in early childhood education and proposed that educators incorporate techniques in their instruction programs to design compelling, lively learning forms and to create an agreeable learning environment.

In today's rapidly evolving world, foundational skills development is no longer limited to intellectual ability, communication skills, and critical thinking but encompasses a broader set of skills essential for success. Developing and unleashing learners' ability through play where competency-based activities are carefully designed, putting prime considerations on the child's well-being and development stages, age, socio-cultural identity, socio-emotional skills, gender equity, and growth mindset, and are anchored on the principles of collaboration. However, researchers have found that kindergarten teachers face difficulties embedding play-based learning practices into their academic instruction (Pyle et al., 2018). Having worked as a Kindergarten teacher in the local educational context, it is inevitable to face challenges in the work place in areas such as Communication, Socio-emotional, Aesthetic/Creative, and Motor Development. Furthermore, a study by Ndlovu et al. (2020) highlighted the insufficient understanding of play pedagogies among practitioners in rural areas, negatively impacting the standard provisions for play-based learning suited for young children.

For this reason, the researcher, as a kindergarten teacher, was motivated to determine the difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in play-based learning in the kindergarten program as the basis for an intervention plan.

Current State of Knowledge

Kindergarten teachers play a crucial role in shaping foundational life skills by fostering a fun and engaging environment that supports creativity, social-emotional growth, and problem-solving through play-based learning (PBL). Research highlights PBL's benefits, incorporating free and guided play to enhance curiosity and school readiness (Tekyi-Arhin, 2023; Chatsworth International, 2023; Haile & Ghirmay, 2024). However, challenges arise due to inconsistent definitions of play, pressure from standards-based accountability, and limited resources (Paterson, 2020; Khalil et al., 2022; Gannon, 2020). Many teachers rely on direct instruction to meet academic benchmarks, reducing opportunities for holistic development. Professional development is essential in equipping educators with skills to integrate structured learning objectives into play effectively (Caven, 2022). Encouraging autonomy, providing diverse materials, and aligning play with clear learning goals can enhance engagement and overall learning outcomes (Boryga, 2022).

Teaching kindergarten in the Philippines requires a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate approach that balances play, structured activities, and both teacher- and child-initiated exploration (Baldoza, 2024). While play-based learning fosters cognitive, social, and emotional growth, teachers face challenges such as developing motor skills, maintaining attention, and meeting curriculum demands (Donasco, 2024; Lucero, 2023). DepEd Order No. 047, 2016 adds to their responsibilities by mandating observation and documentation of children's learning. Fostering creativity remains difficult due to pressures from standardized testing, but leadership support and diverse teaching strategies can empower educators to implement effective literacy interventions (DepEd Memo No. 054, s. 2023; Guanzon et al., 2024). Social skill development is also crucial, as seen in the "P.L.A.Y." approach at the 9th Avenue School in Manila, which integrates structured and unstructured play (Garcia, 2018). The DepEd MATATAG curriculum and initiatives like the "Growing Good to Great Kids" (3G) program in Muntinlupa promote hands-on, play-based learning while supporting teacher professional development (The PTC Group, 2024).

Beuilby (2023) found that kindergarten teachers in Michigan struggle to balance curriculum standards with play-based learning, leading to a tension between academic readiness and fostering creativity and social skills. Teachers feel pressured to prioritize formal instruction over playful exploration, limiting hands-on learning opportunities. Similarly, Acevedo (2022) discovered that while kindergarten teachers in the Northeast United States integrate both planned and unstructured play-based activities to support literacy and social-emotional development, a lack of professional training hinders effective implementation. Without structured guidance, educators struggle to align play-based learning with curriculum goals, creating uncertainty in fostering critical thinking and social skills. Hunter (2020) further emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development and mentoring partnerships to enhance teachers' competence in play-based learning, highlighting the need for sustained support in integrating PBL into mainstream education.

Aguilar (2024) found that play-based learning fosters cognitive growth, emotional well-being, literacy development, social skills, creativity, and motor skills in Vietnamese private preschool settings, creating an interactive learning environment. However, no significant relationship was found between the concept of play-based learning and its actual implementation in these schools. Similarly, Irizarry (2019) highlighted that Boston kindergarten teachers trained under the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) initiative struggled to maintain play-based practices due to high academic expectations and challenges in assessment methods. Kheioh and Low (2022) emphasized that Malaysian preschool teachers need greater knowledge of play-based learning to avoid perceiving play and learning as separate concepts. In Indonesia, Hodijah and Kurniawati (2020) found that most preschool teachers lack music education backgrounds, underscoring the need for specialized training in music education and musical instruments to enhance early childhood instruction. These studies collectively highlight the importance of professional development in ensuring the effective integration of play-based learning in early education.

Donasco (2024) explored kindergarten teachers' challenges in implementing play-based instruction, identifying a "Constructive Journey" framework that helps educators enhance their teaching practices. Dela Cruz and Barrios (2023) found that while teachers in Nabas, Aklan utilized various play-based strategies, resource and training gaps hindered effective implementation. Similarly, Omega and Alieto (2019) emphasized that play supports literacy but noted difficulties in engaging children in collaborative activities. Student teachers in Bataan faced challenges in facilitating dramatic play due to learners' hesitancy to interact. Mabiscay (2023) highlighted that play-based teaching fosters social skills but found that private school teachers often lacked sufficient training. Baldoza (2024) identified language and literacy activities as the most difficult aspects of play-based learning, particularly due to low cognitive and social skills in learners. Padillo et al. (2024) affirmed the effectiveness of play-based learning in developing literacy and numeracy but noted issues like lack of materials, supervision challenges, and inadequate space. Reyes and De Chavez (2021) found that play-based activities moderately contributed to holistic development in Batangas schools, recommending further research to optimize implementation. Collectively, these studies underscore the need for enhanced teacher training, resource allocation, and structured play-based strategies to maximize early childhood learning outcomes.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was anchored on Perkin's Theories of Difficulty in 2007. The underlying assumption of this theory is that it identifies learners' characteristics and trouble spots for a particular area of instruction and includes some casual analysis of why they occur toward improved teaching and learning (Perkin, 2007). The specific behavior of a learner that leads to learning challenges that require a teacher's response may sometimes fall short, leading to difficulty in teaching. According to Holy in 2005, difficulties represent challenges and obstacles during learning. A better response and an in-depth understanding should be shown to expand learning amidst these difficulties. Perkin (2007) states that instead of blaming the learner's weaknesses, a better reaction is to "teach harder," exert more effort, and give enough attention to unnecessary behaviors and problems that learners have established. Moreover, possibly "teach smarter" is the most effective way for Perkin to improve learning.

Furthermore, Perkins emphasizes that difficulties in learning can arise from the nature of the content itself or from how it is taught. Learners' backgrounds, behaviors, and learning styles in classrooms may differ, making a tough time contemplating and reflecting by the teachers involved. Perkins's ideas denote that difficulties are not inherent obstacles but challenges that can be addressed through scaffolding, simplifying complex tasks, and making clearer relationships and interpretations.

This theory of difficulty is significant to this study for it emphasizes the best reaction towards learning challenges that build up teaching difficulties on the part of the teachers. They also face many difficulties in their everyday routine, from the preparation of materials needed to the choice of teaching approaches to the effective discipline activities for all the learners to adhere to. They become the front liners in the instilling of wisdom. It is a noble job requiring great patience and enormous compassion to deliver the best education for all. These difficulties may continuously affect the welfare of every teacher. Thus, it is essential to focus on and study how to address these difficulties so that these brave teachers will receive sufficient support, especially when teaching kindergarten learners in a play-based classroom.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in two districts of a large-sized division in Central Philippines for the school year 2024-2025 as the basis for an intervention plan. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions: 1) the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in terms of motor skills, creativity skills, and social skills; and 2) the significant difference in the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Methodology

This section presents the research design, locale of the study, respondents of the study, research instrument, validity, reliability, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

To develop an intervention strategy for the 2024–2025 academic year, the descriptive research design was utilized to ascertain the challenges kindergarten teachers face when implementing play-based learning. This method offers a means to depict the current state of a situation at the time the study is conducted. According to Sileyew (2019), The descriptive method is a research design that collects information about current phenomena and events. The nature of the situation at the time of the study can be described using the descriptive research method. Finding a specific research problem or question and developing hypotheses based on accepted theories or knowledge are the first steps in the process. To find patterns or relationships, data is then gathered using various techniques, including surveys, experiments, and secondary sources, and then statistical analysis is performed (Ghanad, 2023). The strategy also sought to ascertain the most common conditions and to collect data regarding kindergarten teachers' challenges with play-based learning. Significant differences and relationships will be found using statistical tools, offering a framework for inferences and recommendations based on factual data.

Study Respondents

Thirty (30) kindergarten teachers from two districts of a sizable division in the Central Philippines participated in this study as respondents. Purposive sampling was used because the number of responders is manageable. Using a non-probability technique called purposeful sampling, researchers deliberately choose study participants with particular traits to obtain an in-depth understanding. Researchers use purposive sampling to reach a specific subset of people because each survey respondent is chosen based on a predetermined profile (Ames et al., 2019).

Instruments

The researcher used the questionnaire created for the study. The respondents' age, number of ECE trainings attended, and average family monthly income are all included in Part 1, which is devoted to personal information.

The difficulties kindergarten teachers face in teaching play-based learning was covered in Part 2. There were thirty (30) questions with ten (10) line questions in each of the three sections of the instrument. Except for the first section pertaining to their personal information, each section of the questionnaire requires participants to read the items and mark the option they prefer. A 5-point Likert scale, with 5 representing always, 4 representing frequently, 3 representing occasionally, 2 representing rarely, and 1 representing almost never, was used to gauge kindergarten teachers' difficulty when instructing play-based learning for each item. The research instrument was subjected to validity (4.93-excellent) and reliability (0.942-excellent). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study followed a systematic approach to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data. The researcher will be asked permission through written communication from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Negros Oriental, district supervisors, and respective school heads of the public elementary schools, requesting to allow the researcher to distribute the questionnaires to the target respondents. After granting permission, the researcher sent the Google link to the respondents so they can access the questionnaire form. Likewise, consent from every respondent was also considered. The purpose of the study was adequately explained to respondents by the researcher. To ensure 100 percent retrieval, the researcher sent each respondent a follow-up message through Facebook Messenger.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1 also used the descriptive-analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in motor skills, creativity skills, and social skills.

Objective No. 2 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning when grouped and compared according to profile variables.

Ethical Consideration

This research paper strives to minimize the risk of harm to its target respondents by assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses and ensuring their anonymity throughout the entire research process. At the onset, this researcher secures their free, prior informed consent and assures them of their right to withdraw from their research participation if deemed necessary. No personal data compromising the respondents' identity will be collected in adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, specifically on accessing the data both by the researcher and the analyst. The respondents are assured that no information that discloses their identity will be released or published without their consent, except when extremely necessary. All collected materials will be appropriately disposed of by machine shredding or dissolved in water after the submission of the study. At the same time, soft copies of the data will be deleted, leaving no chance of future retrieval.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study. All these were made possible by following certain appropriate procedures so as to give the exact data and solution to each specific problem.

Table 1

Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Motor Skills

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a kindergarten teacher, I encountered difficulties due to...</i>		
1. less training on curriculum content and pedagogies in supporting motor skill development in play-based learning.	2.73	Moderate Level
2. inadequate manipulative toys for motor skill development, such as blocks, puzzles, play-dough, tangrams, etc., during teacher-supervised activity.	3.13	Moderate Level
3. less competent in conducting performance-based assessments and reporting kindergarten learner progress in motor skill development.	2.43	Low Level
4. difficulty of the learners in personal independence activities, namely scribbling, drawing, building with blocks, molding figures using playdough, etc., during independent activity.	3.03	Moderate Level

5. insufficient classroom space when conducting individual and group performance activity assessments.	2.30	Low Level
6. inadequate training and workshops in planning and designing gross and fine motor skills activities in teaching play-based learning.	3.17	Moderate Level
7. difficulty of learners to fine motor skills such as putting small objects in/out of containers, opening lids and containers or unwrapping food, etc., during supervised recess.	2.53	Moderate Level
8. limited time in giving individualized support to pupils with motor skill challenges through play-based learning.	3.50	High Level
9. lack of parental support in developing basic fine motor skill practices, namely using all five (5) fingers to get food/toys placed on a flat surface, drawing a human figure (head, eyes, trunk, arms, hands/fingers), drawing a house using geometric forms, etc.	3.27	Moderate Level
10. limited space for conducting outdoor games to develop the gross motor skills of the learners, like balancing, running, throwing, and catching.	2.33	Low Level
Overall Mean	2.84	Moderate Level

Table 1 presents the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based in the area of motor skills. The respondents obtained an overall mean score of 2.84, interpreted as a moderate level.

Examining the table further, the respondents obtained the lowest mean of 2.30 on item No. 5, stating insufficient classroom space when conducting individual and group performance activity assessments, interpreted as a low level. On the other hand, the highest mean score of 3.50 was on item No. 8, stating limited time in giving individualized support to pupils with motor skill challenges through play-based learning interpreted as a high level.

The result implies that most respondents experienced difficulty giving individualized support to pupils because of time constraints. This is due to the large number of pupils in the classroom; kindergarten teachers cannot offer equal attention and provide all the needs of the pupils given limited time and resources. Thus, kindergarten learners face limited participation in play-based learning, fewer motor skill activities, and fewer learning opportunities.

The finding is supported by the study conducted by Abroampa (2020) on kindergarten teachers' challenges using play activities as teaching pedagogy. The study revealed that inadequate time allocation, lack of emphasis on play activities, insufficient funding, and untrained staff hindered the implementation of these essential experiences. Limited time and resources can prevent teachers from setting up various play stations or interactive learning environments, encouraging creativity and exploration. This scarcity limits the quality and variety of experiences teachers can offer and may lead to missed developmental opportunities for children.

Table 2

Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Creativity Skills

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a kindergarten teacher, I encountered difficulties due to...</i>		
1. insufficient local and available materials for arts and crafts, building and construction activities, and sensory play.	3.40	Moderate Level
2. inadequate training in fostering aesthetic sense and creative expression in play-based learning through drawing, painting, and manipulative activities.	3.37	Moderate Level
3. insufficient skills in managing disruptive behavior during storytelling and imaginative play.	2.70	Moderate Level
4. less ability to create engaging activities in teaching play-based learning that will cater to the diverse needs of learners.	2.70	Moderate Level
5. lack of multimedia and computer-aided materials such as rhymes, songs, stories, and interactive educational games.	2.10	Low Level
6. less efficient in employing creative skills in groups, in pairs, and individually through arts and crafts activities, storytelling, puppet shows, imaginative play, music and dance exploration, etc.	2.77	Moderate Level
7. a few trainings and workshops in the conduct of various play-based activities to foster creativity in young learners.	3.10	Moderate Level
8. lack of hands-on training in using selected percussion instruments, such as tambourine, ukulele, xylophone, wood block, etc., in teaching kindergarten.	4.10	High Level
9. no available technology supporting creativity in play-based learning, such as a projector, TV, etc.	1.77	Low Level

10. the difficulty in realizing desired learning outcomes because of the large class size.	2.60	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.86	Moderate Level

Table 2 reveals the level of difficulties kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of creativity skills. The respondents obtained an overall mean score of 2.86, interpreted as a moderate level.

Investigating the table further, the respondents obtained the lowest mean of 1.77 on item No. 9, stating that no available technology supporting creativity in play-based learning, such as a projector, TV, etc., was interpreted as low. On the other hand, the highest mean score of 4.10 was on item No. 8, stating a lack of hands-on training in using selected percussion instruments, such as tambourine, ukulele, xylophone, wood block, etc., in teaching kindergarten, interpreted as a high level.

The result suggests that most respondents are not adequately trained in using basic musical instruments in teaching pedagogy in kindergarten education. Kindergarten teachers do not have enough exposure to musical instruments or the confidence to conduct learning activities using them. This is because most of the workshops they participated in were geared toward kindergarten teachers. If there is, it only covers theoretical aspects of music and musical instruments; it doesn't detail how to play an instrument. This lack of training and exposure indicates a significant gap in the professional development of kindergarten teachers, which could hinder their ability to integrate music into their teaching practices effectively. Consequently, this may limit the benefits of musical education for young learners during a critical stage of their development.

The finding is supported by the study conducted by Baldoza (2024). The majority of kindergarten teachers have no skills in playing musical instruments. Most of those surveyed lack proficiency in piano, guitar, and other percussion instruments. The researcher recommended organizing skills training on selected musical instruments for all kindergarten teachers. Moreover, higher education institutions offering baccalaureate degree majors in kindergarten and early childhood education may add subjects or lessons on hands-on playing of selected musical instruments.

Table 3

Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Social Skills

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a kindergarten teacher, I encountered difficulties due to...</i>		
1. learners' difficulty communicating using greetings and polite expressions to teachers and peers during arrival time in the school.	2.07	Low Level
2. less ability to strengthen communication skills such as speaking, listening, telling stories, and exchanging ideas in a play-based kindergarten classroom.	2.63	Moderate Level
3. less seminars received in employing the kindergarten circular themes (knowing who we are and our family, exploring our community, appreciating our country, and caring for our world)	2.93	Moderate Level
4. hesitant learners to participate during small groups or in pair classroom activities.	2.73	Moderate Level
5. requiring learners to ask permission to play with a toy used by others, wait for their turn, play organized group games fairly, etc.	2.57	Moderate Level
6. learners' difficulty relating personal experience to story events during read-aloud activity.	2.67	Moderate Level
7. less competent in employing socio-emotional development activities about awareness of one's social identity and appreciation of cultural diversity among the school, community, and others.	2.70	Moderate Level
8. insufficient professional development training on effective social skill-building strategies.	3.13	Moderate Level
9. less ability to conduct socio-emotional learning activities for learners through working with others and how to relate with others, schools, and the community.	2.93	Moderate Level
10. difficulty for learners in delivering learning insights or morals from the activities before the class ends.	2.67	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.70	Moderate Level

Table 3 divulges the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based social skills. The respondents obtained an overall mean score of 2.70, interpreted as a moderate level.

Upon further analysis of the table, the respondents obtained the lowest mean score of 2.07 on item No. 1, indicating learners' difficulty in communicating greetings and polite expressions to teachers and peers during school arrival, which was interpreted as a low level. On the other hand, the highest mean score of 3.13 was on item No. 8, stating insufficient professional development training on effective social skill-building strategies interpreted as a moderate level.

The result implies that most respondents have insufficient professional development training on effective social skill-building strategies. This is because there were only a few free trainings and seminars related to kindergarten education offered by the government. This is why most kindergarten teachers finance their postgraduate education, using their funds to attend training and seminars provided by private institutions and professional organizations, all to earn various certificates related to kindergarten education.

The finding is supported by Reyes and De Chavez (2021) on the extent of implementing play-based activities in the development of kindergarten pupils. The study revealed that most were relatively new to the profession and had limited participation in seminars and training related to kindergarten teaching. Play-based activities were assessed as contributing moderately to the holistic development of pupils, highlighting the need for additional activities to enhance kindergarten learning.

Table 4

Difference in the Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Motor Skills When Grouped and Compared According to Age, Number of ECE Trainings Attended, and Average Family Monthly Income

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	14	18.25	73.50	.108		Not Significant
	Older	16	13.09				
Number of ECE Training Attended	Few	14	15.50	112.00	1.000	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	16	15.50				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	15	16.67	95.00	.466		Not Significant
	Higher	15	14.33				

Table 4 summarizes the comparative analysis of the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of motor skills according to profile variables.

The computed *p*-values are 0.108, 1.000, and 0.466, respectively, which are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance and thus interpreted as not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of motor skills when compared according to age, number of ECE training attended, and average family monthly income is accepted.

The findings imply that kindergarten teachers have similar difficulties in teaching play-based learning through motor skills activities regardless of their background profile. Most of them experienced difficulty in giving individualized support to pupils because of time constraints. The issues they encounter are not influenced by demographic backgrounds but other external factors.

The result is supported by Baldoza (2024), wherein there was no significant difference in the difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in the block of time when grouped and compared according to their profile variables.

Table 4

Difference in the Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Creativity Skills When Grouped and Compared According to Age, Number of ECE Trainings Attended, and Average Family Monthly Income

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	14	15.68	109.50	.917		Not Significant
	Older	16	15.34				
Number of ECE Training Attended	Few	14	13.18	79.50	.173	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	16	17.53				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	15	17.50	82.50	.209		Not Significant
	Higher	15	13.50				

Table 4 reviews the comparative analysis of the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of creativity skills according to profile variables.

The computed *p*-values are 0.917, 0.173, and 0.209, respectively, which are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance and thus interpreted as not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of creativity skills when compared according to age, number of ECE training attended, and average family monthly income is accepted.

The result implies that the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning through creativity skills when compared according to age, number of trainings in ECE, and average family monthly income does not vary. Kindergarten teachers met the same difficulty in the use of percussion instruments as teaching tools for kindergarten pupils. The result is supported by Baldoza (2024), wherein there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in the use of musical instruments for teaching when compared according to their profile variables.

Table 5

Difference in the Level of Difficulties by Kindergarten Teachers in Teaching Play-Based Learning According to Social Skills When Grouped and Compared According to Age, Number of ECE Trainings Attended, and Average Family Monthly Income

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	14	15.57	111.00	.966		Not Significant
	Older	16	15.44				
Number of ECE Training Attended	Few	14	14.32	95.50	.488	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	16	16.53				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	15	15.37	110.50	.933		Not Significant
	Higher	15	15.63				

Table 5 reviews the comparative analysis of the level of difficulties by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of social skills according to profile variables.

The computed p -values are 0.966, 0.488, and 0.933, respectively, which are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance and thus interpreted as not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers in teaching play-based learning in the area of social skills when compared according to age, number of ECE training attended, and average family monthly income is accepted.

The findings imply that kindergarten teachers have similar difficulties in teaching play-based learning through social skills regardless of their background profile. The respondents shared the same concerns with professional development opportunities. This suggests that the respondents' concerns must also be given priority and prime consideration in the crafting of a professional development plan in their locale. The result is supported by Garibay (2023), wherein there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by kindergarten teachers when compared according to their profile variables.

Conclusions

The study found that most respondents were senior kindergarten teachers with extensive ECE-related training and diverse economic backgrounds. Limited time for motor skill activities hindered individualized support, while a lack of hands-on training reduced the use of percussion instruments in instruction. Teachers also had fewer professional development opportunities, particularly in fostering social skills, and difficulties in play-based learning were consistent across areas regardless of demographic factors. To address these challenges, recommendations include division-wide training on multiple learning domains, district-wide technology-assisted instruction workshops, and increased technical assistance from school heads. Strengthening motor skills development through PTA meetings and parental involvement was also suggested. To enhance creativity, training on musical instruments and manipulative toys should be organized, alongside fundraising efforts for resources and curriculum enhancements in higher education institutions. For social skills development, workshops on play-based learning, scholarships for postgraduate studies, and accessible training opportunities should be provided, along with in-service training on pupil behavior management and transition activities.

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