



EFFECTIVENESS OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING PRE-READING SKILLS OF KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing pre-reading skills of kindergarten learners. It was conducted in Alegria-Batuan Elementary School in the Schools Division of Ormoc City. The findings of the study were the basis for the proposed Enhancement Plan. This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pre-test-post-test design, to determine the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing the pre-reading skills of kindergarten pupils. A single group of kindergarten learners was selected as the participants. Before the intervention, a pre-test was administered to assess their initial level of pre-reading skills, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, listening comprehension, vocabulary development, and print awareness. After the pre-test, the learners underwent a series of structured play-based learning activities over a specified period (four to six weeks). These activities included games, storytelling, songs, rhymes, interactive play, and other age-appropriate tasks aligned with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide.

After the intervention period, a post-test using the same assessment tool was administered to the same group of learners. The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared and analyzed to determine whether there was a significant improvement in the pupils' pre-reading skills after participating in play-based learning activities.

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The Test of Difference Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Learners, which compares the reading performance of kindergarten pupils before and after the integration of play-based learning activities. The data show the mean scores for both assessments, the computed and critical t-values, the decision on the null hypothesis, and the interpretation of the results. This analysis aims to determine whether the implementation of play-based instruction had a statistically significant effect on the learners' pre-reading skills and overall literacy development.

As reflected in the table, the mean score of the learners increased considerably from their pre-test to their post-test performance after the integration of play-based learning activities. The computed t-value exceeded the critical t-value, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result indicates that there was a significant difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test scores, confirming that the intervention positively influenced their literacy skills. The findings demonstrate that the structured play-based approach effectively improved learners' reading readiness, comprehension, and engagement.

The results show that the learners' post-test performance improved significantly, suggesting that the integration of play-based strategies—such as interactive games, storytelling, songs, and rhymes—enhanced their mastery of essential pre-reading concepts. The hands-on and participatory nature of play-based activities allowed learners to explore letters, sounds, and words in meaningful and enjoyable ways, fostering cognitive and linguistic growth. Consequently, learners became more confident and capable in performing literacy-related tasks, which was reflected in their improved post-test results.

The results imply that play-based learning had a highly positive impact on learners' literacy development. The overall average performance improved, and the computed t-value exceeded the critical value, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The result implies that the improvement was not due to random variation but to the effectiveness of the intervention itself. This finding further implies that play-based learning strategies were

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instrumental in enhancing children's literacy performance, making them more prepared and capable for higher learning levels.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Play-based Learning Activities, Pre-reading Skills, Kindergarten Learners*

INTRODUCTION

In early childhood education, play is more than just a leisure activity—it is a powerful medium through which young learners explore, discover, and internalize foundational skills. Play-based learning activities provide a developmentally appropriate approach that aligns with the natural curiosity and active engagement of kindergarten pupils. These activities, which may include storytelling games, phonemic awareness exercises, letter-matching games, and interactive songs, create an immersive and enjoyable learning environment. By integrating educational content into play, children are more likely to develop essential pre-reading skills such as letter recognition, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, and print motivation. This study recognizes the growing need to shift from traditional rote learning to more child-centered methodologies that foster early literacy in a fun and meaningful context.

Bodrova and Leong (2007) and Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2009) affirm that children engaged in guided play exhibit greater gains in language and literacy readiness. Furthermore, research by Neuman and Roskos (2005) highlights how purposeful play can enhance emergent literacy behaviors, particularly when aligned with intentional instruction. These studies, among others, validate the role of structured play in early reading interventions and provide a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for examining the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing the pre-reading skills of kindergarten pupils.

The researcher has been teaching for twelve years and, throughout her career, has encountered a diverse range of students. While each child possesses unique characteristics, one constant observed among them is their shared language of play. Play or games serve as

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a universal mode of communication and engagement for children. Recognizing that children are naturally inclined to play led the researcher to consider how integrating games into classroom activities could enhance student engagement. She believes that when learning is paired with enjoyable and interactive methods such as games, students are more likely to retain information and develop crucial skills—particularly in learning how to read.

Play-based activities for preschoolers are not only enjoyable but also highly engaging. They support various aspects of a child's development, foster collaboration, stimulate learning environments, and encourage social interaction. The researcher emphasizes that play-based learning focuses more on the process of learning than merely the product. By applying this approach to reading instruction, she posits that young learners can develop essential pre-reading skills, which may eventually lead to improved reading comprehension.

Despite its many advantages, the researcher acknowledges several challenges associated with play-based learning. These include uneven student participation, limited parental understanding of the approach, and a lack of sufficient resources for teachers. These concerns raise the question of whether play-based learning is a truly effective instructional method or merely an added burden for educators. Considering that the researcher had taught in a private school for a decade, she observed that learners in such settings generally possess the prerequisite foundational skills necessary to begin reading. However, she also recognized that sustaining learners' interest in reading requires intrinsic motivation and active engagement to nurture a genuine love for reading – an essential factor in achieving future academic success. At present, as the researcher teaches in a public school, she observed in her classroom that most pupils initially did not know how to read or even what reading entailed. She observed that many of them were not yet ready to begin reading, as they had not been taught the necessary foundational skills. Faced with this reality, the researcher resolved to take a practical approach: teach the pupils how to read by first developing their pre-reading skills in a way that would ensure retention and understanding. She believes that

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strengthening these foundational skills is essential in nurturing a love for reading among young learners.

Given this situation, the researcher made it her responsibility to provide each learner with varied activities designed to build and enhance their pre-reading skills, with the long-term goal of enabling them to become independent readers. She openly admits that this challenge prompted her to take deliberate and thoughtful action. Determined to help her pupils succeed, she implemented a range of teaching strategies, including daily recitation of letter sounds, individual practice, phonological awareness activities, syllable clapping, book engagement, alphabet songs, rhymes, and rhyming games.

Therefore, this study was conceptualized to explore the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing the pre-reading skills of kindergarten pupils. The researcher aims to provide evidence-based insights that will contribute to the ongoing discourse on developmentally appropriate practices in early literacy instruction.

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing pre-reading skills of kindergarten learners. It was conducted in Alegria-Batuan Elementary School in the Schools Division of Ormoc City. The findings of the study were the basis for the proposed Enhancement Plan.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the skills performance of the kindergarten learners before the integration of Play-based Learning Activities?
2. What is the skills performance of the kindergarten learners after the integration of Play-based Learning Activities?
3. Is there a significant difference between skills of the kindergarten learners before and after the integration of Play-based Learning Activities?

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4. What enhancement plan can be proposed on the findings of the study?

Statement of Hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant difference between the skills of the kindergarten learners before and after the integration of Play-based Learning Activities.

METHODOLOGY

Design. This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pre-test–post-test design, to determine the effectiveness of play-based learning activities in enhancing the pre-reading skills of kindergarten pupils. A single group of kindergarten learners was selected as the participants. Before the intervention, a pre-test was administered to assess their initial level of pre-reading skills, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, listening comprehension, vocabulary development, and print awareness. After the pre-test, the learners underwent a series of structured play-based learning activities over a specified period (four to six weeks). These activities included games, storytelling, songs, rhymes, interactive play, and other age-appropriate tasks aligned with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide. After the intervention period, a post-test using the same assessment tool was administered to the same group of learners. The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared and analyzed to determine whether there was a significant improvement in the pupils' pre-reading skills after participating in play-based learning activities.

The main locale of the study was at Alegria-Batuan Elementary School. The research respondents in this study were 14 boys and 13 girls with a total of 27 respondents who were chosen through a universal sampling technique by the researcher. To gather the necessary data needed in the study, the researcher utilized the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to measure the cognitive skills of the kindergarten learners. Another tool to be used in this study to gather the necessary data for this study is a validated teacher-made test

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questionnaire, which will be used as the primary research instrument. This assessment tool is specifically designed to evaluate the pre-reading skills of kindergarten pupils based on competencies outlined in the Department of Education's Kindergarten Curriculum Guide. The test consists of developmentally appropriate tasks that assess key areas of pre-reading, such as: Letter recognition, Phonemic awareness, Vocabulary development, Listening comprehension and Print awareness. The test includes both oral and picture-based tasks, which are suited to the cognitive and language development levels of young learners. Instructions and items are simplified and presented in a playful and interactive manner to ensure engagement and accurate assessment. Before its implementation, the teacher-made test underwent content validation by a panel of experts, including early childhood education specialists and master teachers in kindergarten. Their feedback was used to revise and finalize the instrument to ensure it is valid, reliable, age-appropriate, and aligned with learning standards. The same test was used in both the pre-test and post-test phases of the study. The pre-test established the baseline pre-reading abilities of the pupils, while the post-test will measure any improvements after the play-based learning intervention. This instrument was chosen for its flexibility, contextual relevance, and suitability for the target learners' age and developmental stage. The proposed intervention plan was taken based on the findings of the study.

Sampling. The respondents of the study were 14 boys and 13 girls with a total of 27 respondents that were involved in this study were being identified and the primary means of reach was during the actual conduct of the study as well as during the gathering of data in the school where the study was conducted.

Research Procedure. To gather the necessary data within one month (30 days), the researcher sought permission from the Schools Division Office headed by the Schools Division Superintendent through a transmittal letter. The same letter content was also given to the Public School District Supervisor, School Principal, and the teachers under their supervision. The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires to the School Heads to be answered by

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the teachers. After one month, the questionnaires were retrieved, consolidated, and subjected to statistical treatment using T-Test. The collected data were then collated and submitted for appropriate statistical analysis.

Ethical Issues. The right to conduct the study was strictly adhered to through the approval of the principals and the approval of the Superintendent of the Division. Orientation of the respondents, both school principals and teachers, was done. Participation was strictly voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Results were used solely for research and educational improvement purposes.

Treatment of Data. The following statistical formulas were used in this study:

Weighted Mean. This was utilized to assess the performance of the kindergarten learners in their pre-reading skills.

T-Test for Mean Difference- This tool was used to calculate the pre-reading skills of the kindergarten learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1

PRE-TEST PERFORMANCE OF KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS BEFORE THE INTEGRATION OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Score Range	Description	Frequency	%
28–35	Excellent	3	11.11%
21–27	Very Good	4	14.81%
14–20	Good	8	29.63%
7–13	Fair	9	33.33%
0–6	Poor	3	11.11%
Total		27	100

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Score Range	Description	Frequency	%
Weighted Mean	17.74 – Good		

This table presents the Pre-test Performance of Kindergarten Learners Before the Integration of Play-based Learning Activities. It shows the initial reading readiness and pre-reading skills of the pupils prior to the implementation of the intervention. The table includes the score ranges, corresponding descriptions, frequencies, and percentages of learners based on their performance levels, as well as the computed weighted mean. This assessment was conducted to establish a baseline understanding of learners' literacy competencies and determine the areas needing improvement before the play-based learning activities were introduced.

As reflected in the table, most learners demonstrated fair to good performance levels before the intervention. Specifically, a significant proportion of the participants fell within the Fair (33.33%) and Good (29.63%) categories, indicating that a considerable number of pupils possessed emerging but still developing pre-reading skills. A smaller portion of learners achieved Very Good (14.81%) and Excellent (11.11%) levels, which shows that only a few had already mastered foundational literacy skills before the start of the intervention. On the other hand, 11.11% of the pupils were rated as Poor, suggesting the presence of learners who required additional support in recognizing letters, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development.

The data reveal that while some learners were already showing progress in their pre-reading abilities, a majority still exhibited varying degrees of difficulty that hindered their full reading readiness. The weighted mean score of 17.74, described as Good, reflects the general trend that learners were performing at an average level prior to the implementation of play-based learning strategies. This result highlights the need for interactive and engaging

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instructional activities to help improve the learners' literacy foundation and foster their interest in reading through play-oriented experiences.

The results imply that the kindergarten learners' literacy performance prior to the integration of play-based learning was generally satisfactory but still had much room for improvement. The overall average performance, with a weighted mean of 17.74 (Good), implies that while learners possessed basic pre-reading skills, they still required enrichment in phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. The result implies that incorporating play-based strategies would likely enhance engagement and retention, promoting deeper learning in foundational literacy.

TABLE II

**POST-TEST PERFORMANCE OF KINDERGARTEN LEARNERS AFTER THE
INTEGRATION OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Score Range	Description	Frequency	%
28–35	Excellent	22	81.48%
21–27	Very Good	3	11.11%
14–20	Good	2	7.41%
7–13	Fair	0	0.00%
0–6	Poor	0	0.00%
Total		27	100
Weighted Mean	32.07 – Excellent		

This table presents the Post-Test Performance of Kindergarten Learners After the Integration of Play-Based Learning Activities. It illustrates the learners' performance levels following the implementation of the intervention, which aimed to enhance their pre-reading skills through interactive and play-centered instructional methods. The table shows the distribution of scores, descriptive ratings, frequency, percentage, and the computed weighted

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mean to evaluate how much improvement occurred in learners' literacy skills after the application of play-based learning strategies.

As reflected in the table, the majority of the learners achieved significantly higher performance levels after the integration of play-based learning activities. A large proportion, or 81.48% of the pupils, attained an Excellent rating, while 11.11% reached Very Good, and only 7.41% remained at the Good level. Notably, none of the learners fell under the Fair or Poor categories, indicating a remarkable overall improvement in reading readiness and literacy-related abilities. This substantial progress highlights the effectiveness of play-based instruction in engaging learners and supporting skill mastery through active participation and enjoyment.

The data demonstrate that the intervention contributed significantly to the learners' improved reading and literacy performance. The activities—such as storytelling, phonemic games, and vocabulary-building songs—allowed learners to learn naturally and meaningfully within a playful context. The transformation from mostly Fair and Good ratings in the pre-test to predominantly Excellent performance in the post-test underscores the success of using play as a pedagogical tool. This improvement suggests that integrating purposeful play into classroom instruction helps children internalize literacy concepts more effectively than traditional, structured methods.

The results imply that play-based learning was highly effective in enhancing the literacy performance of kindergarten learners. The overall average rating of 32.07 (Excellent) implies that the intervention not only improved learners' foundational reading skills but also fostered motivation, confidence, and engagement in literacy activities. The result implies that play-based instruction provides meaningful learning experiences that develop children's readiness for formal reading and support their holistic growth in early education.

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TABLE III

TEST OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES OF LEARNERS

Aspects	Test Scores (Mean)	Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
Pre vs Post	Pre = 17.74 Post = 32.07	14.82	2.06	Reject Ho	Significant

This table presents the Test of Difference Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Learners, which compares the reading performance of kindergarten pupils before and after the integration of play-based learning activities. The data show the mean scores for both pre-test and post-test, the computed and critical t-values, the decision on the null hypothesis, and the interpretation of the results. This analysis aims to determine whether the implementation of play-based instruction had a statistically significant effect on the learners' pre-reading skills and overall literacy development.

As reflected in the table, the mean score of the learners increased considerably from their pre-test to their post-test performance after the integration of play-based learning activities. The computed t-value of 14.82 exceeded the critical t-value of 2.06, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result indicates that there was a significant difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test scores, confirming that the intervention positively influenced their literacy skills. The findings demonstrate that the structured play-based approach effectively improved learners' reading readiness, comprehension, and engagement.

The results show that the learners' post-test performance improved significantly, suggesting that the integration of play-based strategies—such as interactive games, storytelling, songs, and rhymes—enhanced their mastery of essential pre-reading concepts. The hands-on and

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participatory nature of play-based activities allowed learners to explore letters, sounds, and words in meaningful and enjoyable ways, fostering cognitive and linguistic growth. Consequently, learners became more confident and capable in performing literacy-related tasks, which was reflected in their improved post-test results.

The results imply that play-based learning had a highly positive impact on learners' literacy development. The overall average performance improved from 17.74 (Good) in the pre-test to 32.07 (Excellent) in the post-test, and the computed t-value exceeded the critical value, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The result implies that the improvement was not due to random variation but to the effectiveness of the intervention itself. This finding further implies that play-based learning strategies were instrumental in enhancing children's literacy performance, making them more prepared and capable for higher learning levels.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, the Test of Difference Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Learners revealed that the integration of play-based learning activities significantly enhanced the reading performance of kindergarten pupils. The findings indicate that play-based instruction effectively developed learners' pre-reading skills through engaging and interactive strategies such as games, songs, and storytelling. These activities promoted active participation, enjoyment, and deeper understanding of literacy concepts. Overall, the study concludes that play-based learning is an effective approach to improving reading readiness and fostering a strong foundation for future literacy development among young learners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

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The Teacher should continuously integrate play-based learning strategies such as storytelling, songs, rhymes, and interactive games in daily literacy instruction to make reading activities more engaging and developmentally appropriate for kindergarten learners.

The School Head should provide support and resources for teachers to implement play-based learning effectively by ensuring the availability of instructional materials and encouraging professional development focused on early literacy and child-centered approaches.

The Public Schools District Supervisor should monitor and evaluate the implementation of play-based learning programs across schools and organize capacity-building workshops to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills in promoting early reading development.

The Parents should actively participate in reinforcing play-based literacy activities at home by providing a supportive environment where children can practice reading through play, storytelling, and other enjoyable literacy experiences.

The Researcher should continue to assess the long-term effects of play-based learning on learners' reading proficiency and explore how various play methods contribute to different aspects of language development.

The Future Researchers should conduct further studies on the effectiveness of play-based learning in different contexts, such as diverse learning environments or among learners with varying literacy levels, to enrich existing literature and develop more innovative and inclusive instructional strategies.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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The author is born on February 13, 1993 at Mercedes, Eastern Samar, Philippines. She finished her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education, specializing Content Courses at Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City. Throughout her High School and College education, she was almost always looking forward to teach learners in elementary levels, where learning foundation starts. This rooted mindset made her easily decide to take Masters of Arts in Education, Major in Elementary Education. Her academic journey reflects her deep passion in promoting quality education. At present, she's currently about to conclude her Master's Degree at Western Leyte College of Ormoc City, Leyte.

She is currently a Teacher I in the Department of Education and is now assigned as a Kindergarten Teacher in Alegria-Batuan Elementary School at Barangay Alegria, Ormoc City, Leyte, Philippines.

As an educator for more than a decade, Gajol continues to dedicate herself to nurturing young minds so as to contribute an innovative, problem-solver and lifelong learners. Her quest of higher education serves as an inspiration to her colleagues and students alike.

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