

Correlation Between Educator's Understanding and Applying of Role Play Activities for Preschooler's Development

Huang Xi Chun and Loy Chee Luen

Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Human Development, Universiti
Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between educators' understanding of role play activities for preschooler's language, social, and emotion development. This study employs a quantitative method design and the population of the study is 352 educators who teach preschoolers aged from five to six years old in kindergartens in Chaozhou, China. The sample was chosen through stratified random sampling and the instruments of this study are Role Play Activity and Preschooler's Development Rating Scale. The findings revealed a positive relationship between educators' understanding of role play activities and applying role play activities for preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development. The findings also show that, while educators recognize role play activities are beneficial to early childhood development, the level of use is still low. To facilitate preschoolers' development, the following educational suggestions are put forward at the end of the study: in practical teaching activities, kindergarten educators should focus on optimizing role play activities teaching methods, establishing performance cognition, and allowing children to exercise language skills fully in activities. Educators should focus on optimizing the teaching methods of role play activities, establishing behavioral cognition, and allowing preschoolers to exercise language skills. Educators should use various game materials to cultivate preschoolers' social behaviors with their peers, intervene subtly in preschool children's games, and promote their social development. Qualitative research and interview data are recommended in future research, adding more dimensions for a deeper understanding of the research and more accurate data.

Keywords: Role Play Activities, Educator's Understanding, Applying, Preschooler's Development

Introduction

Preschool education is early preparation for formal education. This stage is a vital experience that equips children with skills and enthusiasm to prepare for formal and lifelong education (Ali & Mahamod, 2015). From birth to six years old is a period when people learn faster than other periods in life (Wang & Liu, 2017). Early childhood education can also make it easier for children to achieve success in future school life (Cui, 2019).

Children's development is changing behavior from immaturity to maturity, from simple to complicated. Children master abilities to prepare for future development, including exploration, adventure, fine motor skills, and gross motor development. Play can acquire these abilities effectively (Yogman et al., 2018). Given that children's nature is "play," the curriculum they engage in should be accomplished through play (Aras, 2015). Play offers the ideal learning experience for children (Pyle & Alaca, 2016).

Games or role play activity are essential stimuli for children. Children development can be best nurtured and maximized through play activities. Play significantly affect children's social, behavioral, cognitive, and language development. It is a critical thing for the healthy development of society. As children have fewer opportunities to play, various social problems have also arisen (Daubert et al., 2018). In the context of social development, Play provides children with opportunities to interact with others. In education and psychology, the term "learning by playing" is commonly used to describe how children acquire knowledge from their learning environment (Fynn, 2021). This method is student-centered throughout the teaching and learning process and relies on play. It is stated that learning through play is the best method as it is linked to the natural characteristics of children who enjoy playing. As a result, the implementation of this method should take into account preschoolers' needs and interests, and educators should guide and support their preschoolers' play activities (Marouf et al., 2015).

As an indispensable development in preschoolers' lives, preschoolers' language, social and emotion development is attracting the attention of mainstream education circles and has become a hot topic. Unfortunately, the goals of language education are challenging to achieve, and the teaching method is single in many Chinese preschools. However, many issues in educational practice, social, educational goals, unsystematic educational content, and random teaching methods indicate that kindergarten education in the social field is still marginalized (Chen, 2019). Also, when teachers chase the syllabus and place too much emphasis on the curriculum, they overlook play's relevance for children (Irvin, 2017). Overall professional quality of kindergarten educators in China still needs to be improved, and there are problems such as low academic qualifications (Feng, 2017).

Play can help youngsters be more imaginative by being creative and participating in pretend games. It also helps children enhance their communication and language skills while having fun (Whitman, 2018). The teaching and learning process may be more effective if the educational curriculum is game-based. Play activities allow youngsters to learn and understand the world around them in a fun and meaningful. Preschool educators are the primary implementers of kindergarten education and teaching activities, and they are the central guides of children's life and learning (Rojas & Abenavoli, 2021).

Regarding role play activity, some scholars believe that it positively impacts children's development. Others held that role play activity has shortcomings (Puspitorini, 2018). Role play is a waste of time because participants lack prior knowledge and experience to play their roles. Recent research has revealed that certain kindergartens have relatively low preschool quality (Li et al., 2016, 2019). Even though the scope of preschool education in China is quickly rising, empirical research on the link between preschool education quality and children's development is quite limited. In response to the debates on role play activities, this paper will conduct further research to confirm the relationship between role play activities for the development of preschoolers. This study primarily concerns the development of language, social, and emotion in preschoolers. To gain deeper understanding of this issue, this study will attempt to answer these research questions:

- i. What is the level of educator's understanding of applying role play activity and preschooler's (language, social, emotion) development?
- ii. What is the level of applying role play activities among educators at preschool?
- iii. What is the relationship between educator's levels of understanding and the level of applying role play activities for preschooler's (language, social, emotion) development?

Literature Review

Role Play in Preschool Curriculum

White and Carlson (2021) defined role play in the preschool curriculum as the intersection of two more significant concepts: play and pretend. Although the defining characteristics of games are challenging to determine, a useful definition of pretend games is to project an imaginary situation into an actual situation in a playful manner rather than for survival. Pretend play is frequently manifested in behavior, such as pretending to be asleep when one is not. It usually includes substitutes (for example, pretending a piece of cloth is a pillow) and imaginary objects (pretending to have a pillow without objects). Role play activity is a developmental stage in which children demonstrate advanced social-cognitive skills. Pretend play necessitates the ability to transform objects and actions symbolically, and it is promoted further through interactive social dialogue and negotiation (Jaggy et al., 2020).

Scholars have explained the definition of role play activity in the preschool curriculum. Role play activities give children the identity, so preschoolers in an assumed environment make assumptions about themselves, making the game more prosperous and enjoyable. Yogman et al (2018) believe that the significance of role play activity in the preschool curriculum enables preschoolers to experience social roles and relationships. These are what children cannot learn from daily observation of adult behavior. Wyness (2019) regards role games as children's practice, experience, and an opportunity to test complex societal roles, such as setting up a school or hospital to play role activities.

Richard et al., (2020) summarized the basic elements of role play as "PROPELS": Plan, Roles, Props, Extended time frame, Language, Scenario. "PROPELS" can help parents and teachers design role games under the acceptance of role games by children of different ages, to be more suitable for children psychological development.

Related Theory

According to Fuhl (2020), people learn from each other through observation and imitation. People can learn new information and behaviors by observing others. Due to the influence of policies and special Chinese national conditions in China mainland, there are some problems in semester education. Firstly, the organizational forms of early childhood teaching are similar, and there is a lack of innovative teaching methods such as role play activities. Secondly, due to the profound influence of the collectivist culture, Chinese teachers, and even their kindergarten classrooms, place more emphasis on following the teacher's guidance, which means that the teacher determines the content and form of learning. Finally, preschool teachers in most kindergartens have less teaching experience, so teachers lack creativity in the classroom (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). Based on the above-mentioned preschool teaching situation and related content of social learning theory, this study mainly explores the relationship between educators' understanding of role play activities and the application of role play activities on preschool children's (language, social, emotion) development.

In preschool role play activities, preschoolers use language to play roles according to their needs. They are more empathetic and cooperative in classroom activities. Role play activities are a great way to improve a child's emotional control and see the world differently. Therefore, Sociocultural theory, Zone of proximal development theory, and Theory of mind are consistent with the content of this study on the development of preschoolers.

Conceptual Framework

Social learning theory believes that the individual's "observational learning" is critical for individual behavior. Certain behaviors of the individual's observation object will cause the observer to perform the same or similar behaviors in similar situations. When young children actively interact with their peers in games or use a foolproof method to solve communication problems, other children imitate their peers' behavior when they encounter such situations next time (Lee & Rutherford, 2018). Therefore, when children observe their game partners, they will acquire specific communication skills.

According to social learning theory, real-life experiences and direct or indirect contact with children develop behavior. The mechanism of this learning can be various, including imitation and reinforcement (Hicks et al., 2020). Children's techniques for controlling emotions, settling conflicts, and communicating with others are taught via experience and developed in conjunction with the environment and time (Kirk & Jay, 2018). Accordingly, the framework of the research is as described in Figure 1 :

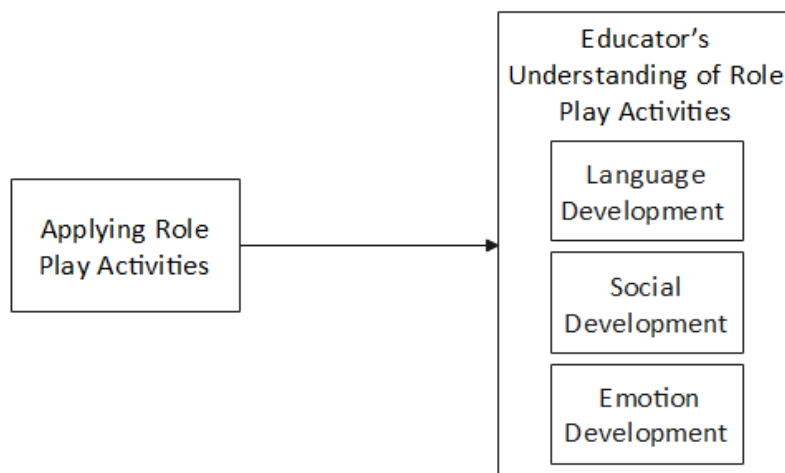


Figure 1: Research Framework

Related Study

Language Development

According to Neumann (2018), literacy is vital in school-age and adolescent language development. Teenagers master about 2000-3000 words each year, and there are almost 40,000 words in high school. Early literacy skills (phonetic and phoneme awareness, written structure, and decoding) provide the tools needed to decode text and are linked to later reading comprehension. However, without adequate speech skills, children may have future difficulties with reading comprehension (Bratsch-Hines et al., 2019). Teachers' attractive phrases are directly associated with later knowledge and the children's vocabulary score in a large-group kindergarten setting (Abualzain, 2020).

In early childhood, preschoolers typically learn language by communicating with their caregivers. Children will create a range of terms to describe all elements of events, things, and people as their vocabulary grows. Three to five years old children have a higher capacity to adjust to linguistic task hints and descriptive discourse and adapt to changes in the meaning of continuous speech information due to inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. (Šimleša et al., 2017).

Understanding normal language development is crucial to support children's language development in preschool and kindergarten effectively. Morphology, vocabulary, and syntax are three components of language that are critical to children's entire communication abilities and practical experience. Early childhood and kindergarten educators must create a high-quality language environment in the classroom (Terrell & Watson, 2018). To encourage children's vocabulary development, we must provide real-world opportunities to apply and practice newly learned vocabulary. Children typically develop receptive knowledge of the word through word contact and direct word meaning guidance, followed by appropriate use in speech. An expressive understanding is required for the word. Suppose children are not given opportunities to use newly learned vocabulary. In that case, the transition from receptive to expressive knowledge may be hampered (Saydakhmetova, 2020).

For the language development teaching of children, teachers should make full use of drama activities so that children can have a broader language training platform so that children's comprehensive language ability can be fully exercised. As we all know, a good drama environment can stimulate children's interest in learning, cultivate language awareness, affect children's language thinking, and exercise language ability (Chen, 2019).

Social Development

The early childhood stage is a critical period for the formation of individual social communication skills. Good social communication skills and social adaptability strongly impact individuals' social understanding, social emotions, and social behaviors. There are two reasons. Firstly, children enter a sensitive period of self-regulation development at the age of three (Montroy et al., 2016). Secondly, children's behavioral skills, including attention and social-emotional behaviors, begin to stabilize from kindergarten to early elementary school, which indicates that appropriate interventions during this period can help shape children's behavioral patterns (Navsaria et al., 2020).

Cultivating children's social communication skills is not only a need for children's development but also an urgent problem to be solved in today's early childhood. Education (Brata et al., 2021). Role play games creatively reproduce real life through children's imitation and imagination, provide opportunities for children to communicate and cooperate with their peers, and help promote the development of children's communication skills.

The situation of role play opens up a natural and vivid way of social interaction for young children. The development of children's communication skills depends on a good external environment. A suitable and rich communication situation can make children's communication with others more diverse and active (Maleki et al., 2019). Role-playing games take things in real life or children's stories as the starting point and then carry out situational and creative reproduction of real-life or children's stories. From the theme and plot of the game to the materials and props used, they all create specific ideas for young children. It provides opportunities for communication, builds a communication platform, satisfies the situational nature of children's communication, and enables children to cooperate and communicate with each other in a free and relaxed game situation.

Role play activities allow children to understand themselves and others fully (Sadatovna & Nurullaeva, 2021). Children reproduce the interpersonal situation in society by imitating social roles and understanding and learning how to communicate with others through cooperation.

Emotion Development

Longitudinal studies suggest that this link may be causal based on children's emotional regulation abilities. Academic achievement in the first years of school appears to be based on the precision of children's emotional and social skills for many children. A large body of longitudinal evidence supports the importance of social and emotional adjustment to children's success in early learning environments (Denham et al., 2016). Yelverton and Mashburn (2018) mentioned that it is ideal for improving children's emotional regulation throughout kindergarten, before first grade, and before entering school. The factors affecting

children's emotional comprehension ability mainly include individual and environmental factors.

Children's vocabulary level can promote the development of emotional understanding ability, and a higher level of language development can also promote mixed emotional understanding ability (Xu, 2018). During early childhood, children can gradually understand their own and others' emotional feelings, express their own emotions, and be able to regulate their own or others' emotions. In role play games, young children interact with others in different simulated social environments with different role identities and experience the communicative emotions of their roles. There is a unique relationship between role play and children's emotional development. Role play provides children with opportunities for emotional experience, emotional expression, and emotional regulation, which can promote the development of children's emotional abilities (Hughes & Evans, 2018). Therefore, teachers should guide children to maintain positive emotions and regulate negative emotions in role games. From the preparatory stage of the role game to the summary stage, improve children's emotional expression ability and promote children's emotional development.

Role play activities positively affect children's psychological development (Yelverton & Mashburn, 2018). First, role play expands and deepens children's understanding of things around them and promotes the development of children's imagination. The process of role play activities is a process of learning various knowledge, such as various props in the game, which are imitated from natural objects in real life, and their functions and functions are observed in real life. Secondly, role games also exercise children's willpower. In order to be able to participate in the game they like, the child needs to be fully committed to completing it, and the child is praised when it is completed. They have fun with it, increasing their sense of success and self-confidence to overcome difficulties.

Methodology

Sample characteristics

Three hundred fifty-two kindergarten teachers from kindergartens in different regions and different school types located in Chaozhou, China, participated in the study. They teach classes for preschoolers aged five to six years old. This survey employs Role Play Activity and Preschooler's Development Rating Scale. The scale is divided into demographics, educators' level of understanding of roleplay activities, and preschool children's development and use of role play activities. Most of the teachers are between twenty-six and forty-five years old. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic variables of the respondents

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Under 25	63	17.0
	26-35	181	51.4
	36-45	92	26.1
	Above 46	16	4.5
Gender	Male	9	2.6
	Female	343	97.4
Teaching experience	5 years and below	150	42.6
	6 to 10 years	99	28.1
	11 to 15 years	34	9.7
	16 years and above	69	19.6
Educational background	Postgraduate	2	6
	Undergraduate	110	31.3
	College	149	42.3
	Others	91	25.9
Location	Urban area	211	59.9
	Rural area	141	40.1
Type of kindergarten	Public kindergarten	169	48
	Private kindergarten	183	52

Instrument and Data Collection

This study uses Role Play Activity and Preschooler's Development Rating Scale, which contains three sections: Demographics, Educator's Level of understanding of role play activity, preschooler's development, and Level of use of role play activity. There are three subsections regarding educators' views on role play activity and preschooler development: preschoolers' language development, social development, and emotion development. The scale contains 57 items and is presented on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Strongly disagree,' 'Disagree,' 'Not sure,' 'Agree,' to 'Strongly agree.'

The central part of the scale is included four sub-sections. Firstly, the language development section is adopted from Kindergarten Children's Language Expression Ability Questionnaire (Yu, 2020). Then, the social development section is adapted from the evaluation form for children's social development (teacher questionnaire) (Zeng, 2017). Moreover, the emotion development section is adapted from the Emotion Regulation Strategies of Young Children Rating Scale (Lu, 2011). Finally, the level of role play activity section is adopted from Children's Art and Creative Expression (Loy, 2021).

Procedure*Validity of the Questionnaire*

In this study, five experts were invited to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire. They are experts with 20 years of experience. All kindergarten principals in preschool and teachers in universities majored in early childhood education, including two principals with 30 years of experience in kindergarten work and three early childhood education teachers in colleges.

They jointly tested and evaluated the study's construct validity and content validity (original English version and translated Chinese version). The result shows that the structure, content, and overall design of the questionnaire are relatively complete, with high validity and scientific. After receiving feedback from these five experts, the researchers deleted three items of Part B3 from the original questionnaire consisting of 60 items, added some items in the questionnaire, and piloted the modified questionnaire to preschool educators.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire is 0.976. Questionnaires with reliability higher than 0.7 are acceptable. The Corrected Item-Total Correlation of 57 items was all higher than 0.4. In other words, 57 items have significant relevance and should be retained. The Cronbach's Alpha between each dimension is more significant than 0.9, indicating that the scale has high reliability.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 26.0), and the study's results were interpreted. This study focused on the relationship between the independent variable of applying role play activities and the dependent variable of educators' understanding of role play activities (language, social and emotion development of preschools). This study uses descriptive analysis, correlation analysis.

Finding

Descriptive Statistics of educator's understanding

Table 2

Mean and standard Deviation of the variables

Variables	Mean	St. Deviation
Language Development	4.4775	.6391
Social Development	4.3961	.7201
Emotion Development	4.3581	.6925
Level of Use	3.1687	.8774

Table 2 presents the overall descriptive analysis of the Educator's Understanding of Role Play Activities (preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development) as dependent variables. All variables are on a five-point scale. The mean value is preschoolers' language development (M=4.47), preschoolers' social development (M=4.39), and preschoolers' emotional development (M=4.35). As seen from the results in the table below, most respondents answered on a scale of 4 (agree), which leads to the conclusion that most respondents are satisfied with all three dimensions of the Educator's Understanding of Role Play Activities.

Furthermore, Standard deviations for the Educator's Understanding of Role Play Activities are as follows; preschooler's language development (SD=.64), preschooler's social development (SD=.72), and preschooler's emotional development (SD=.69).

Descriptive Statistics of levels of applying role play activities

Table 3

Mean and standard Deviation of the variables

Variables	Mean	St. Deviation
Conduction	3.0985	.9437
Combination	3.3097	.9402
Equipment	3.0511	.9706
Level of Use	3.1687	.8774

Descriptive statistics for the mean and standard deviation are obtained from the independent variables. The data analysis of the independent variable applying role play activity (level of use) is presented in table 3 (including three dimensions of role play activities conduction, role play activities combination, and role play activities equipment). Every variable is rated on a 5-point scale. The value of mean is role play activity conduction (M=3.10), role play activity combination (M=3.31), and role play activity equipment (M=3.05). As shown in the table below, the overall average of Level of Use (M=3.17), most respondents replied close to 3 points (sometimes), indicating that the frequency of utilizing role play activities is twice per week. The finding was that most respondents were broadly consistent in their utilization of all three characteristics of role play exercises by instructors.

Additionally, the standard deviation is another measure of data dispersion on interval and ratio scales that offers an indicator of the distribution's or data's variability. Because of the statistical flow principles with a normal distribution, the standard deviation and the mean are precious tools. The graph also reveals that the standard deviation of the used role play activity (level of use) is 0.88. The following standard deviations were found for educators' usage of role play activities: role play activities conduction (SD=.94), role play activities combination (SD=.94), and role play activities equipment (SD=.97).

Correlation analysis

Table 4

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Language	0.207	352	0.000	0.749	352	0.000
Social	0.201	352	0.000	0.794	352	0.000
Emotion	0.177	352	0.000	0.834	352	0.000
Level	0.090	352	0.000	0.985	352	0.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

This research explores the correlation matrix between the dependent and independent variables and then compares the results of this analysis with the hypotheses presented in this study. Before exploring the correlation between the core explanatory variable Level of Use and the dependent variable, the normality test of the analysis variable is firstly carried out. The adequate sample size of this study was 352, and the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were used to judge the normality of the data. It can be seen from table 4 that neither the core explanatory variable Level nor the three dependent variables conform to the normal

distribution ($p < 0.001$). Based on this, the Spearman correlation test method, which has a looser requirement on data normality, is used for correlation analysis.

Language Development

Hypothesis 1

H0: There is not significant relationship between educator's understanding of role play activities and applying of role play activities for preschooler's language development.

Table 5

Correlations 1

		Language Development	Level of Use
Language Development	Spearman's Correlation	rho1	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
Level of Use	Spearman's Correlation	rho.313**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	352

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 above shows a positive correlation between applying role play and the educator's understanding of role play activities for preschoolers' language development. The Spearman correlation coefficient is positive. There is a 0.313 correlation between the Level of use variable and the language development variable. Therefore, when using role play activities, the educator's understanding of role play activities in facilitating preschoolers' language development is more significant. The p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.01. All in all, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Social Development

Hypothesis 2

H0: There is not significant relationship between educator's understanding of role play activities and applying of role play activities for preschooler's social development.

Table 6
Correlations 2

		Social Development	Level of Use
Social Development	Spearman's	rho1	.310**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
Level	Spearman's	rho.310**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	352

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 above indicates a positive correlation between the use of role play activities and educators' understanding of role play activities on preschoolers' social development. The correlation coefficient is positive. The Spearman correlation coefficient between the level of use variable and the variable of social development was 0.310. Therefore, educators have a greater understanding of role play activities in promoting social development in preschoolers when using role play activities. A p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.01. In short, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Emotion Development

Hypothesis 3

H0: There is not significant relationship between educator's understanding of role play activities and applying of role play activities for preschooler's emotion development.

Table 7
Correlations 3

		Emotion Development	Level of Use
Emotion Development	Spearman's	rho1	.300**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	352	352
Level of Use	Spearman's	rho.300**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	352	352

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As reflected in table 7 above, there is a positive correlation between the use of role play activities and educators' understanding of role play activities on preschoolers' emotion development. The correlation coefficient is positive. The Spearman correlation coefficient between the level of use and emotion development variables was 0.300. Thus, educators have a greater understanding of role play activities in preschoolers' emotion development when

using role play activities. The value of p (0.000) is less than 0.01. In short, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the correlations between educators' understanding of and use of role play activities for preschoolers' development in three subcategories. Educators' understanding, which includes the understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's language development, social development, and emotion development.

The real-world opportunities can offer newly learned vocabulary to encourage a child's vocabulary development. Preschoolers develop receptive knowledge of words, usually through word exposure and direct instruction on word meanings, and then use them appropriately in specific contexts to develop proficiency. The results in the subcategory of preschoolers' language development are consistent with Saydakhmetova's (2020) view that the transition from receptive to expressive knowledge may be hindered. The results show a positive correlation between the application of role play and the educator's understanding of role play activities for preschoolers' language development. Evidence shows that children's thinking is mainly based on concrete image thinking, so role play activities are more suitable for children's language learning as a changeable, lively, and stimulating education method. Simple "injection" learning makes language learning tedious and may hinder children's language development (Su et al., 2020).

The data indicates a positive correlation between the use of role play activities and educators' understanding of role play activities on preschoolers' social development. Good social communication skills and social adaptability strongly influence an individual's social understanding, social emotion, and social behavior. First, children enter a sensitive period of self-regulation that begins to develop at age three. Second, children's behavioral skills, including attention and social-emotional behavior, from kindergarten to early primary school, suggesting that appropriate interventions can help shape children's behavior patterns during this period (Navsaria et al., 2020). Role play activities' prescribed situations and rules are conducive to strengthening children's communication awareness and role norms and then prompting them to build their comprehension of the world around them, which is in line with the result of (Sadatovna and Nurullaeva, 2021).

Results of preschoolers' emotion development indicate that role play activities allow children to experience positive emotions and adjust their negative emotions. It is also a channel for expressing or venting their emotions. In games, children experience various emotions, such as happiness, fear, sympathy for others, the joy of success. Preschoolers can control these emotions themselves. Children are engrossed in role play activities with little restraint and restriction, and their joy, satisfaction, fears, and worries can be revealed and expressed through games. On the one hand, the kindergarten can increase the opportunity to control the environment, obtain the satisfaction of success, and increase self-confidence (Yelverton & Mashburn, 2018).

The data analysis showed the application of role play activities (Including three dimensions of role play activities conduction, role play activities combination, and role play activities equipment). Most respondents answered close to three (sometimes), indicating that early childhood educators Use role play activities twice a week:

- a. Most respondents incorporated role play sessions in teaching activities less frequently.
- b. There were few examples of combining role play sessions in teaching activities in different types of classrooms, such as music classes, storytelling, and reading classes.
- c. Costumes, props, and scripts are less used in role play activities.

Currently, many kindergartens have the problem of too many preschoolers, and the children's range of activities is limited. In this context, most kindergarten teachers have insufficient knowledge of preschool education and lack sufficient in-depth knowledge and understanding of the concept and value of role play activities. This conclusion is also similar to previous research by (Ma, 2021).

Concerning recommendations for classroom practices, it can be stated that preschool educators can encourage preschoolers to express their opinions bravely, learn to follow the rules of the game consciously, and improve children's language ability by making the game rules. Educators should optimize role play activities teaching in the classroom, stimulate children's desire to explore, and allow children to exercise language skills. Furthermore, educators make game materials such as storybooks and music so children can interact with others during role play activities, learn to share, and improve their peer communication skills. At the same time, educators respect children's differences in play behavior and transform individual experiences into collective experiences to stimulate children's positive emotions. Preschools can organize cross-preschool training activities to provide educators with the necessary practical guidance.

As for the limitations of this study, it can be stated that the sample was collected among 352 educators in kindergartens in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province, China, and the results may not be generalizable to other samples in different regions of China. It would be even better if the research could be carried out across all the Eastern Guangdong regions of China, involving more kindergarten educators. Second, the findings are based on data collected using questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Third, a few dimensions of early childhood development are used in this study, and more dimensions can be included, such as healthy development, artistic development, scientific development.

Finally, recommendations for future studies can be stated that some interview data of educators and observational data of kindergarten classrooms can be added to gather a deeper understanding of the research and more accurate data. It is hoped that it will increase the understanding of role play activities for early childhood development. Besides, the sample can be expanded to include other organizations or institutions in future research, such as early childhood education institutions, to see similarities and differences in results. This study also encourages adding more dimensions of early childhood development. Last but not least, the research results can be disseminated to curriculum planners and policymakers so that relevant education departments can make more rational decision-making options.

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Appendix

Role Play Activity and Preschooler’s Development Rating Scale

Part A: Demographics

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Teaching experience:
 - 5 years and below 6 to 10 years 11 to 15 years 16 years and above
4. Educational background
 - Postgraduate Undergraduate College Others
5. Location
 - Urban area Rural area
6. Type of kindergarten
 - Public kindergarten Private kindergarten

Part B: Educator’s level of understanding of role play activity and preschooler’s development

INSTRUCTIONS: For each statement below, please tick (v) in the most appropriate box with your own opinion without being influenced or dictated by others. Please use a scale following as your guide.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Not sure
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

B1: Role play activity and preschooler’s language development

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
	General development					
B1-1	I understand role play activity is important for developing preschooler 's language skills.					
B1-2	I understand role play activity improves preschooler 's interest in language learning.					

B1-3	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers have civilized language habits.					
B1-4	I understand role play activity increases the vocabulary of preschoolers. Statement					
No.	Listening and expression					
B1-5	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to listen carefully to others.					
B1-6	I understand role play activity allows children to express their ideas clearly and completely.					
B1-7	I understand role play activity enables preschooler's pronunciation more accurate when they speak.					
B1-8	I understand role play activity improves children's ability to use vocabulary when expressing in different environments.					
B1-9	I understand role play activity makes children use different types of sentences when expressing.					
No.	Reading and writing preparation					
B1-10	I understand role play activity improves preschooler's reading comprehension.					
B1-11	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to understand other people's words.					
B1-12	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to retell other people's words.					
B1-13	I understand role play activity gives preschoolers the desire to express in writing.					
B1-14	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to use pictures and symbols to express things or stories.					

B2: Role play activity and preschooler's social development

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
	communication and interaction					
B2-1	I understand role play activity enables young children to cooperate with others in groups.					
B2-2	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to negotiate and resolve conflicts with other children.					

B2-3	I understand role play activity enable preschoolers to respect others.					
B2-4	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to learn to think from the perspective of others.					
No.	Self-development	1	2	3	4	5
B2-5	I understand role play activity makes preschoolers believe in their abilities and can accomplish things on their own.					
B2-6	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to work hard to persevere when they encounter difficult problems.					
B2-7	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to take the initiative to put forward their own ideas in activities.					
B2-8	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to have the courage to insist on their opinions and give reasons when they disagree with others.					
No.	Social adaptation	1	2	3	4	5
B2-9	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to understand and abide by the rules of the association.					
B2-10	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers like and adapt to group life.					
B2-11	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers responsible.					
B2-12	I understand role play activity gives preschoolers an initial sense of belonging.					

B3: Role play activity and preschooler's emotion development

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
	Recognition and understanding of emotion					
B3-1	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers understand the basic emotions (e.g., happy, angry, sad, scared).					
B3-2	I understand that in the role play activity process, preschoolers can experience the emotions, anger, sorrow and fear of the characters.					
B3-3	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to recognize some high-level emotions (e.g., anxiety, jealousy, shame, pride, depression, etc.).					

B3-4	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to understand some ironic words in the situation.					
B3-5	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to understand the emotions of their peers.					
No.	Expression of emotion	1	2	3	4	5
B3-6	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to express their various emotions and thoughts in appropriate ways (actions, and behaviors).					
B3-7	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to accurately express their sadness with words.					
B3-8	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to accurately express their anger with words.					
B3-9	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to accurately express their disappointment with words.					
B3-10	I understand role play activity enables preschoolers to accurately express their guilt with words.					
No.	Regulation of emotion	1	2	3	4	5
B3-11	I understand role play activity improves preschoolers' ability to regulate their emotions.					
B3-12	I understand role play activity improves preschoolers' ability to regulate anger when they conflict with their peers.					
B3-13	I understand role play activity improves preschoolers' ability to regulate their disappointment when they are rejected by their peers.					
B3-14	I understand role play activity improves preschoolers' ability to listen to teachers or other close companions and accept their guidance.					
B3-15	I understand role play activity improves preschoolers' ability to seek help from others when they encounter difficulties.					

Part C: Level of use of role play activity

INSTRUCTIONS: For each statement below, please tick (✓) in the most appropriate box with your own opinion without being influenced or dictated by others. Please use a scale following as your guide.

1. Never
2. Ever (once a week)
3. Sometimes (twice a week)
4. Often (three times a week)
5. Always (more than three times a week)

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	I conduct role play activity while language class.					
2.	I conduct role play activity while drama class					
3.	I conduct role play activity during social activities					
4.	I combine role play activity with storytelling.					
5.	I combine role play activity with music.					
6.	I combine role play activity with reader theater.					
7.	I combine role play activity with picture books.					
8.	I using a prop in role play activity.					
9.	I using costumes in role play activity.					
10.	I using the script in role play activity.					