



Exploratory Study of Playway Method in Primary Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council of The Fct, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Play helps in all areas of child development socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. Play is an essential component of learning among children, because they learn best through play. Without using play, learning in children will be impaired and apparently, the performance is affected. The study investigated the use and effect of play way method in teaching social studies in primary schools in Gwagwalada. The objectives of the study was to use play way method and investigate the effect of play way method on pupils' achievement. Two public primary schools were purposively selected to constitute experimental and control groups respectively. The experimental group was taught using play way method while the control group was taught with the conventional method. The design for this study was quasi-experimental research design where non-equivalent pretest posttest control group design was used. The scores obtained from the two groups were compared to see the effect of the play way teaching method in primary four pupils' performance in social studies. The finding revealed that play way method does not affect the performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area Council. It was also indicated that gender does not have any significant difference on the male and female performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja when using play method of teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a scientific process through which teachers imparted knowledge and skills to an individual and its major components are content, communication, and feedback. Teaching is can be regarded as an art or science. As an art, it stresses on the imaginative and artistic abilities of the teacher in creating a useful situation in the classroom to enable students to learn. As a science, it sheds light on the logical, mechanical, or procedural steps to be followed to attain an effective achievement of goals. Different educationists hold different ideas regarding the concept of teaching). Teaching as an intimate contact between a more matured personality and a less mature one which designed to further the education of the latter (Kosholap et al., 2021). Gage as stated in Kosholap et al. (2021) defined Teaching as a form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing behavior of another person.

Professional teachers with amply of expertise should be aware of the best teaching approaches to apply at each stage of the teaching-learning process. The nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of our educational system should be taught by trained and qualified teachers who understand what and how to teach at each level. Thus, that as a result of the immaturity of the child at primary level, professional teachers must take care to employ the practical method of instruction. At the early childhood stage, teachers should employ methods that will help learners to learn the things they need to learn instead of confusing them and making them incapable of learning (Melnik et al., 2022).

Play is children's natural tendency and widely regarded as providing a rich context for children's learning in the field of early childhood education. A commitment to play has underpinned many traditional approaches to early childhood curriculum. During play, children examine and refine their learning in light of the feedback they receive from the environment and other people. Play as subset of life and arrangement in which one can practice behaviour without fearing its consequences (Ahmed et al., 2023). It is through play that children develop their imagination and creativity. The cognitive, physical, emotional and social behaviours of children are connected to play (Kaizar & Alordiah, 2023). There is a widespread belief that play materials help young children to socialize better, and frequently use in pre-primary classrooms in the majority of Sub-Saharan African nations. Socialization a child receives impacted on the quality of life. For example, a study conducted in Oppong Frimpong (2021) established that play is a tool of socialization amongst children in their early years, and thus has an influence on the personality, performance of roles, perceptions and definition of roles for the child. The early childhood development in African countries emphasized that techniques/methods used by both teachers and pupils in teaching and learning are vital in promotion of self-mastery of skills and concepts especially at the tender age.

Many educationalists have concluded that the most valuable learning comes through play, through which children add to their knowledge of the world. Themes theories, that play is considered to have a special role in learning and is distinguished from teacher-directed activities or work (Bird et al., 2025). Early educators such as Owen, Froebel, Montesson, Steine, Vygotsky, Piaget, McMillan and Isaacs, and current experts in early childhood education provide a powerful argument for the use of play in promoting children's development and learning. Play is an appropriate approach to young children learning (Keung & Fung, 2021). Stressed that play to young children implied changing movement; to act or imitate part of a person or character; to employ a piece of equipment; exercise or activity for amusement or recreation; fun or just as contrasting to seriousness or even the action of a game (Lunga et al., n.d.). Besides, Granziera et al. (2023) maintained that teachers related

factors must also be addressed well if play way method of teaching must succeed in elementary schools. Play way method involves encouraging children to learn via hands-on activities, exploration and games, instead of through traditional classroom teaching. The idea is to create an engaging and interactive learning environment that fulfils a child's natural curiosity and creative desires. Play-way method of learning is a complete package that enables overall development of the child by developing in terms of feelings, intellect and skills parameters. Play way method is described as a method where children learn through recreation and entertainment. It is maintained that a child learning through group activities, from peers, the role that a youngster performs during instruction in the classroom is permanently deep-seated in their brain. Play way method of teaching makes it possible for learners to give free reins to their thoughts and express it in creative language, thus paving the way to meaningful education. Besides, play way method have a free knowledge from the preserves of the elites, few gives a greater number of people access to education and personal development. Stressed that play way method is superb because it enables the child to improve numerous skills such as motor, creative, imaginative, aesthetic, cognitive and linguistic (Severino et al., 2024).

The importance of the concept formation in learning process should not be treated with a wave of hand. It helps the child to be assured psychologically with his family even when outside the home, thereby making the learning environment a familiar-place, which would have been strange to him. He expresses himself easily in his play way method of learning. It is expected that this familiar environment will facilitate the learning process. Learning environment requires teachers to be involved with children (Acharya & Sigdel, 2024). Suggested that ECDE teachers should create the right environment to encourage children, but decided to remain tough and not interact with children while having fun (Parker et al., 2022). Play way method is used in teaching because it is natural and pleasant way of promoting learning across all areas of curriculum (Parker et al., 2022). It enhances disposition to learn, self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, curiosity, creativity, self-expression, autonomy, concentration and so on. It encourages teacher to make learning enjoyable, make learning relevant, involves pupils in the planning process, consider the holistic development of the pupil as well as promoting the imaginative/creative, and monitoring progress of the pupils. Play way cheers pupils to enjoy learning, be informed and make responsible decision, manage their learning, take some responsibility for their learning and transfer learning to real life situation (Parker et al., 2022). Play way method can be used at both language and literacy lesson, mathematics/numeracy, science, arts, physical education, during personal development and mutual understanding. Play way cannot only be used in the school environment but at home, outdoor/school grounds, halls, share learning areas, local areas or places of interest. Also, while using the play way method, the pupils, school community, teachers, parent and local community in which the school is located has role to play for the effective success of the method (Getenet, 2022).

The effectiveness of play way method can be seen when pupils demonstrate what they have learnt through drawings, poems, recounts description, mapping, diagrams/charts, making booklets, explanation to others, think, share, drama, role-play, presentation, assemblies etc.

Play way method in teaching allows for the teacher to evaluate the activity of the play itself. This can be done through individual, group or whole classroom discussions, through ongoing obstructive observation, by asking pupils to communicate their thinking in a variety of ways, by observing behaviors such as concentration, perseverance, through response to prompt/key question or by setting task which require children to use certain skills or apply

ideas. During lesson, where play way method is applied the evaluation is to assess the skills and personal capabilities of the planners', learning intentions and success criteria, the learning/play environment language, language disposition, active involvement of pupils, the teaching strategies, the process used in the completion of task, appropriateness of task and resource and enjoyment. Since play way method in teaching and learning process is not only meant for entertainment and recreation, the need to observe how the method is conducted become paramount.

Goldstein in Mutindi et al. (2022) indicated children need many outside opportunities such as learning in addition with method to develop essential social skills necessary for attainment. Teaching or learning using play way method involves using recreation and entertainment as well as providing opportunities for teachers and pupils to develop their own ideas and interest. Besides, it stimulates and provides appropriate learning environment. Learning through play way method allows pupils to create opportunities to make choices and decisions, develop thinking skills and personal capabilities which provide practical, interactive and enjoyable play experience. Children delight to participate in open-ended activities, dramatic play, singing and dancing which occur either in formal or informal settings. Stressed that Play-way method of learning is child-centered approach that engages the child naturally, pleasurably and actively with objects in the environment (Oraelosi et al., 2022).

In 1962, Piaget shifted the focus of study from social and emotional aspects of play to children's cognition. He placed play within his stage-based theory of cognitive development and assigned it a significant role in the growing of children's minds. Underpinning his views of how play contributes to children's cognitive development are two processes whereby children construct knowledge, assimilation and accommodation. Piaget maintained that it is assimilation that is dominant in play. Children take something and make it fit to what they know, such as when a child makes rolled paper to be a royal scepter. Talking about symbolic play, he outlined the importance of play in the development of children's mental representation and abstract thinking.

Therefore, this study used Cognitive theory of play by Piaget. He supported that play consolidates learning that has already taken place while allowing for the possibility of new learning in a relaxed atmosphere. They have made, and continue to make, a highly significant contribution to how early childhood educators plan and implement their curriculum, set up learning experiences, organize their physical environment with play areas, and observe and assess children's development in play situations. In this context of early childhood education, the theory will explore the relevance of play to assessing the teaching and learning of social studies in primary school pupils.

Also, in connection to this research work is the psychoanalytic theory of play by Freud and Erikson (Gunderman, 2022). They are with the opinion that play reduce anxiety by giving children a sense of control over their world and an acceptable way to forbidden impulse.

It is easier for children to learn while they play because children don't generally like to learn where the environment is not on a playing level. It is imperative to always make a learning space like a playing ground so as to catch the attention of the children. Children learn better through playing with concrete materials. Game play and play-way approach improved children's achievement in science related subjects like Mathematics among others. Using play-way method in teaching children basic science process skills and other skills are highly effective especially at preschool and elementary schools. Investigated the effectiveness of play way on pupils in Gwale local government area of Kano State and revealed that pupils taught with play way method performed better academically than those taught with traditional method. examined the gender difference in the academic performance of pupils

taught with play way method and revealed that the mean score of the male pupils is greater than that of the female pupils. Play-based approaches cater for the holistic development of children, including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and creative aspects (Barz et al., 2024; Keung & Fung, 2021).

However, Veijalainen et al. (2021) reported that gender does not have any significant difference on achievement of child at elementary level using a play method of teaching. Play way teaching method and reported that it could be used advantageously for the teaching of all children (male and female) without any adverse learning effect. The attribute of play and learn is mostly absent in our primary level of education in Nigeria as some children are not motivated to go to school and learn.

The purpose of the study is to explore play way method in primary schools in Gwagwalada Area council of F.C.T. 1) To use play way method to teach primary 4 pupils in Gwagwalada area council of the F'C'T. 2) To examine the effect of play way method among primary 4 male and female pupils in Gwagwalada Area council. 3) To examine the interactive effect of gender on experimental and control groups. Research Hypotheses: 1) There is no significant difference on the effect of play way method on male and female primary 4 pupils in Gwagwalada Area Council. 2) There is no significant interactive effect of gender on experimental and control groups.

Given the diverse findings regarding the effectiveness of the play way method, as well as the uneven implementation of this method in Nigerian elementary schools, particularly in the Gwagwalada Area Council, this study is important in order to provide the latest empirical evidence on the extent to which this method can improve student learning outcomes. In addition, this research is also needed to determine whether gender differences play a role in the response to the play way method, so that the results can be used as a basis for more appropriate pedagogical decision-making in primary education. Thus, this study is expected to make a real contribution to efforts to improve the quality of learning through an approach that is more in line with the characteristics of child development.

2. METHODS

This study used a quasi-experimental method with a non-equivalent pretest–posttest control group design (Kohan et al., 2024). Involving two schools that were purposively selected as the experimental group taught using the play way method and the control group taught using conventional methods. Pretests and posttests were administered to measure the learning outcomes of fourth-grade students in social studies, then analyzed using ANOVA to determine the effect of the method and its interaction with gender. The research questions focused on whether the play way method affected learning outcomes, whether there were differences in influence based on gender, and whether there was an interaction between gender and type of treatment. Based on this, the hypothesis stated that there were no significant differences between male and female students, and there was no significant interaction effect between gender and learning method on learning outcomes. Studies have been carried out on play method in sciences such Mathematics and Basic sciences in various states like Kano, Ekiti and Gombe states in Nigeria and Ghana. Thus, there is a dire need of more study on this method because of scanty information on the use of play way method in parts of Nigeria. So, study play way method in primary schools in Gwagwalada area council of the FCT, Nigeria. Hence, the need to fill the gap in this present study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis obtained from the pretest and posttest conducted on the experimental and control groups. The results of the study are presented to answer the research questions regarding the effect of the play way method on the learning outcomes of fourth-grade students, differences based on gender, and the interaction between gender and type of treatment. The findings are systematically organized through descriptive data presentation and statistical tests to provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the learning method used.

Research question 1: Is the use of play way method affect performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area council? Can see **Table 1**.

Table 1. Dependent variable posttest

Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Experimental	Male	10.94	2.955	16
	Female	10.55	3.738	22
	Total	10.71	3.392	38
Control	Male	11.65	2.090	17
	Female	9.81	4.230	16
	Total	10.76	3.382	33
Total	Male	11.30	2.531	33
	Female	10.24	3.914	38
	Total	10.73	3.363	71

Table 1 show that the mean score of pupils in experimental group is 10.71 while the mean score of pupils in control group is 10.76 this shows that the use of play way method does not affect the performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area Council.

Research question 2: Is the play way method of teaching affect primary 4 male and female school pupils' performance in Gwagwalada Area council?

Table 1 shows that the mean experimental group for male is 10.94 and the mean experimental group for female is 10.56 while the mean control group for male is 11.65 and the mean control group for female is 9.81 this means that there is no gender difference in experimental and control groups. This means that for the male school pupils, play way method did not affect their performances because the mean control group for male is greater than the mean for male in experimental group. The mean experimental group for female is 10.56 while the mean control group for female is 9.81 this means that play way method affects the performance of primary 4 school female pupils

Research question 3: What is the interactive effect of gender on experimental and control groups?

Table 1 shows that the mean scores for male primary 4 school pupils in both experimental and control groups is 11.30 while the mean scores for female primary 4 school pupils in both experimental and control groups is 10.24. This means that the males' pupils in the two groups performed better than the female pupils. Can see **Table 2**.

Table 2. Test of between-subjects effects - dependent variable posttest

*Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	31.599 ^a	4	7.900	.686	.604
Intercept	1105.734	1	1105.734	95.984	.000
Pretest	2.395	1	2.395	.208	.650
Group	.021	1	.021	.002	.966
Gender	20.888	1	20.888	1.813	.183
group * gender	9.833	1	9.833	.854	.359
Error	760.317	66	11.520		
Total	8970.000	71			
Corrected Total	791.915	70			

. R Squared = .040 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

Research Hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference on the effect of play way method on male and female pupils

Table 2 shows that for gender, P value of .183 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 which means that there is no significant difference in the effect of play way method of teaching male and female primary 4 school pupils in Gwagwalada Area council. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant interactive effect of gender on experimental and control groups

Table 2 shows that the P value of .359 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 which means that there is no significant interactive effect of gender on the experimental and control groups in the use of play way method in primary 4 school pupils in Gwagwalada Area council. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected

The results indicated that the use of play way method using experimental group does not affect the performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area Council. The implication is that pupils taught with conventional method performed better than pupils taught while using play way method. Invariably, play method does not affect the performance of primary 4 school pupils in Gwagwalada Area Council This study is in line with the work of (Barz et al., 2024; Mo et al., 2024). Reported that gender does not have any significant difference on achievement of child at elementary level using a play method of teaching. Play way teaching method could be used advantageously for the teaching of all children (male and female) without any adverse learning effect. However, the study was in contrary with the study of (Bappah & Umbugadu, 2023). Revealed that pupils taught with play way method performed better academically than those taught with traditional method in Gwale local government area of Kano State. Play-method provided great performance when compared to conventional teaching techniques on Academic performance among Nursery school pupils in Gombe Metropolis, Gombe State (Bappah & Umbugadu, 2023). There was gender difference in the academic performance of pupils taught with play way method and that the mean score of the male pupils is greater than that of the female pupils. Male pupils in the post test performed slightly better than their female counterparts in both conventional and play way methods.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, it was concluded that play way methods of teaching may be a good teaching method at elementary level but does not affect the performance of primary 4 school pupils' in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. This implies that others factors such as teacher's experience, availability of teaching aids, better environment among others could account for improvement of teaching and learning at nursery and primary schools among pupils of Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

It was recommended that play way as a method of teaching was unbiased of gender, therefore, it should be adopted at elementary stage of education. It is also recommended that adequate teaching resources and conducive learning environment should be provided by school administrators and government to enhance better productivities. Qualified and experience teachers should be employed at nursery and primary school in Nigeria. The study should be replicated in other parts of the country.

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