International Journal of Research in Engineering, Science and Management
Volume 4, Issue 9, September 2021
https://www.ijresm.com | ISSN (Online): 2581-5792

Playfulness and Entry Assessment Performance of Incoming Kindergarten and Grade I Pupils

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***Abstract*: In the advent of the COVID-19, children have missed a meaningful interaction with their classmates in school. It is supposedly customary to play with each other while the teachers offer this time solely for the enjoyment and recreational moment. But intentionally due to the unprecedented virus, the DepEd prohibits them in such events. In determining how various plays during the pandemic have experienced, the study was conducted and correlated playfulness and assessment performance of children before entering into formal schooling. The respondents were incoming kindergarten and grade I pupils. Descriptive-correlation design was employed since the sample mean ($\bar{X}$)and standard deviation (*s*) were used for initial analysis, and inferential statistics is employed to test the null hypotheses. Samples were selected through a stratified random sampling and yielded incoming Kindergarten = 43, and grade I = 54. The playfulness was measured through the 5-point Likert scale. Incoming Kindergarten obtained a *WM*=3.07 with *VD*-"Sometimes," and *WM*=3.68, *VD*-"Very Often." While a validated and reliability tested, a questionnaire was used for the entry assessment.**

The Kindergarten obtained $\bar{X}$ = 82.23, "Satisfactory," *s*=13.03, and grade I, $\bar{X}$= *92.33 "Outstanding," s=6.06. The* socio-demographic profiles such as sex and income showed no significant relationship with playfulness and entry assessment performance for both grade levels. The calculated Pearson product- moment correlation coefficient showed no significant relationship between playfulness and entry assessment performance, Kindergarten, *r(43)=.194, p=.425,* and *r(54), .151, p=.492* for grade I. There was no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypotheses of no significant relationships; instead, they retained them as the study's findings. The levels of the playfulness of these children have nothing to do with their entry assessment performance, and sex and income did not give sufficient evince to convey that they were related.

***Keywords*: Entry assessment, Grade I pupils, Kindergarten, Playfulness, School performance.**

1. Introduction

During the pandemic, children are restricted from going out for any reason. The World Health Organization (WHO) firmly delimits them from direct exposure to anybody, causing them to ask earnestly in playing with peers. Playfulness is widely different from a typical play performing outside of the home because of the COVID-19. It sounded unusual, especially children's playtime is no longer a practical experience with their co-children. According to Chazan (2002, p. 19), play involves a moment outside of the everyday event. It is also during this interaction to gradually develop their skills and attitudes since environmental aspects are considered contributors to the significant progress of a child's confidence, cognition, and psychomotor. Healthy movement behaviors contribute to the mental and physical of youth and children (Carson et al.,2017). Children and adolescents face the COVID-19 pandemic globally that has shaken all facets of their lives and pose a significant risk to their well-being and health (Benner & Mistry, 2020).

The restructuring of the education system is rooted in this global health crisis worldwide. The face-to-face to distance learning modality is one of the several features most schools adopt, particularly in the Philippines. The Department of Education initiative to this approach evolved since the learners under the K-12 Basic Education Program regularly discourage visiting schools and learning centers. Only parents have been given the obligation to transact modular responsibility timely and efficiently mainly. However, issues in parental challenges have been raised. Parents have commented unfavorably to the government and teachers why the modular approach on their children is handed to them entirely (Reyes, 2021). But the DepEd believes that despite the parents' getting and returning of modules are considered exhaustible, the guarantee to quality learning will continue.

Several factors might not have been seen during the pandemic. One that precisely alters the situation is the moment of playing of grade I and kindergarten children. The inability to mingle with peers has been perceived as an issue that needs investigation to what extent this affects growth and learning development. Unarguably, playing has an essential contribution to increasing the level of performance in school. According to Sutton-Smith (1997), to dispose of that play as an educational tool becomes so dominant that we forget the playing child. Generally, the children's ideas of play center on having fun, choosing freely, and being with friends. It associates physical, competitive, cooperative, and independent development that parents always consider. But, the present situation is quite tricky if these youngsters are given the opportunity to stay with friends outside their homes while the virus seems unstoppably

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spreading. Parents are in the condition of balancing their children's overall development and safety. It is how the impact of the pandemic deprives everyone's rights. The rights to enjoy, develop, and learn. But, there is a need to overcome the challenges by establishing alternatives to embrace all these hardships and producing a meaningful outcome instead that shows child learning in this crisis.

Thus, this study focuses on the extent of children's playfulness and entry assessment performance conducted by the teachers that serve as a reference of grouping and policy formulation for the coming school year. By knowing whether various plays affected by the pandemic can establish an association to intellectual skills, such as in the entry assessment, serves as a learning query for school improvement. Other than that, socio-demographic profiles have impartially included their attribution to the distinct variables-playfulness and entry assessment.

2. Framework

Children today are bored, anxious, and ill-tempered. They want a new environment to express their joyful emotions with young and adults while spending free time and dreaming that someday, the school allows them to be present not only to play but also to learn. According to Singer (2015), learning and play go hand in hand with young children. But to dwell on the idea that the school can offer this to them currently is somewhat unreasonable. The pandemic has been seemingly contaminating millions of people globally.

This study is premised on Piaget's play theory (Piaget, 1966) as cited in Linaza (1984); games are the last manifestation of children's ludic activity. Piaget addressed to study of marbles and other institutional games (Piaget, 1932) long before he brought out his perceptions on pretend or symbolic play (Piaget, 1946), but in his explanation of the development of play, he already proposes a close interaction between intellectual growth and game activity. Jerome Bruner (1986) insisted that play is less a search for clarity and conceptual order than a much looser narrative expression style that features image-based thinking and multiple interpretations.

Thus, the framework acknowledges the school performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade one pupils as to whether the different categories of play in the pandemic have made a sensible connection. More in previous similar investigations published in the past, but as compared today, the researchers must have to surpass the very dire conditions in reaching out to them.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to investigate children's playfulness during the pandemic and the entry assessment performance. Socio-demographic profiles were included, such as parents' monthly income and sex. Furthermore, the following objectives were formulated; 1. Determine the socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. 2. Determine the level of the playfulness of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. 3. Describe the assessment performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. 4. Determine the significant relationship between playfulness and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils 5. Determine the significant relationship between entry assessment performance and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils 6. Determine the significant relationship between the playfulness and entry assessment performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. This study also sought to test the null hypotheses of the following; 1. There is no significant relationship between playfulness and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. 2. The is no significant relationship between entry assessment performance and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils. 3. The is no significant relationship between the playfulness and entry assessment performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils.

4. Methodology

A. Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive - correlational type of research design. It involved presenting the means, standard deviation, and verbal description taken from the corresponding total scores. Moreover, this is correlational since the significant relationship is given consideration like socio-demographic profile relating to playfulness and school performance. And it was highlighting the relationship between the playfulness and entry assessment performance of these groups of children.

B. Research Site

The Salug Central School, Salug, Zamboanga del Norte, was the study venue located at the town proper. Its distance from the municipal hall is approximately 50 meters, while almost one-kilometer away from the secondary school. Regarding the accessibility for both people and any vehicle, the place has no obstruction and traffic. On the other hand, diverge people's cultural backgrounds is the composition of this municipality. Christians dominate the whole town, while Muslims and others have a remarkable presence that is also considerably huge in number.

C. Research Respondents

The respondents were the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils aging five and six years old, respectively, including socio-demographic profiles such as sex and monthly family income.

D. Sampling Method

Taking all the kindergarten and grade I Pupils is quite exhausting, especially during the pandemic. Strategizing to narrow the number of respondents is reasonable. Stratified random sampling was used for a proper representation that is enough to establish and assume the acceptable level of confidence. Undergoing the process, it yielded 43 incoming kindergartens and 54 grade I Pupils. The finalization listing randomly selected respondents from each stratum to draw these numbers through the lottery method.

E. Research Instrument and Statistical Treatment

To gather the data, a survey questionnaire was used containing a 10-item for the playfulness measured through a five-point Likert Scale such as Always, Very Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. The second tool is the questionnaire in aid of the specified analytic rubric was utilized to arrive at observations in the form of interval data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for appropriate presentation, interpretations, and hypotheses testing. The calculations followed these standard formulas in Mean, standard deviation, Chi-square, point-biserial, and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

5. Results and Discussions

Objective 1. Determine the socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils.

The respondents' profile in terms of sex is supplied in table 1. More males in the kindergarten than females comprise 22.7%, while the grade I males have also dominated in number with 28%. There were 43 and 54 incoming kindergarten and grade I pupils with an overall total of 97.

Table 1
Respondents' profile in terms of sex

	Sex of Respondents		
Pupils	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
Kindergarten	22(22.7)	21(21.6)	43 (44.33)
Grade 1	28(28.9)	26(26.9)	54(55.67)
Total	50(51.50)	47(48.5)	97(100)

In table 2, income below 9,520 received the most responses for both respondents. The implication dwells on the idea that most parents belong to a categorically low-income family (PSA, 2015 & 2017) based on their monthly income from any source.

Table 2
Respondents' profile in terms of income

	Income of Respondents		
Pupils	9,520 below	Between 19,520- 66, 640	Total
Kindergarten	21	22	43
Grade 1	30	24	54
Total	51	46	97

Objective 2. Determine the level of the playfulness of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils.

The playfulness of the incoming kindergarten pupils is presented in table 3 in descending order. Data shows that associative play dominates the entire types of play with a mean of 3.72-"Very Often." It indicates that this was the only feasible way of doing a play during the pandemic by imitating what other children do as observed and performing alone separately. Among items that marked verbal description of "Very Often" are items 4, 5, 6, and 1. Statements 8,9, and 10 for "Sometimes," while 3, 10, and 2 describe as "Rarely." The incoming kindergarten pupils obtained an overall mean of 3.07-"Sometimes" verbal description in their playfulness.

There is a manifestation that the crisis the people face today has influenced the time children supposedly meet with their peers to play and be joyful of the unbounded moment in their lives. The child or person's playfulness has a different style as affected by personality and environmental characteristics like home and set in school (Lieberman, 1977).

Table 3
The level of playfulness of the incoming kindergarten pupils

Statement	Weighted Mean (WM)	Verbal Description (VD)
1. Associative Play The child plays separately but doing what other child does	3.72	Very Often
2. Cooperative Play The child plays together with the other child/children	3.60	Very Often
3. Symbolic Play The child performs singing, drawing, coloring, and counting.	3.48	Very Often
4. Solitary (Independent) Play The child plays with their own through any of the following; *stuffed animals, blocks, toy figures, dolls, tools, and books*.	3.32	Very Often
5. Dramatic/Fantasy Play The child plays dress-up or acts like doctors, nurses, teachers, and others.	3.28	Sometimes
6. Constructive Play The child plays like fitting things together or constructing some materials to build a house or building.	3.20	Sometimes
7. Physical Play The child plays through throwing balls, climbing, riding, and others	2.92	Sometimes
8. Parallel Play The child and the other child play inside the room but separately.	2.40	Rarely
9. Competitive Play The child plays like fitting things together or constructing some materials to build a house or building.	2.40	Rarely
10. Onlooker Play The child observes other children playing and never participates in the action.	2.36	Rarely
Overall Mean	**3.07**	**Sometimes**

1.0-1.7-Never, 1.8-2.5-Rarely, 2.6-3.3-Sometimes,3.4-4.1-Very Often, 4.2-5.0-Always

Cooperative play ranks the first among different plays reflected in table 4 with a WM=4.44 described as "Always" Verbal Description (VD). The symbolic play that gives the child the opportunity to perform singing, drawing, coloring, and counting has a WM=4.32 with "Always" VD. Of the statements in the table, items 5, 6, and 1 are the top three as rank in descending order. Items 7,9,10,4, and 8 had verbal descriptions of "Very Often," while item 2 obtained "Sometimes," and "Rarely" for item 3. During the pandemic, these children had the chance of playing with each other as cooperative play defines in the tables. However, in general, the incoming grade one pupil demonstrated "Very Often," which presumes that the present global crisis has nothing to do with their ability to engage in different plays.

Table 4
The level of playfulness of the incoming grade I pupils

Statement	Weighted Mean (WM)	Verbal Description (VD)
1. Cooperative Play The child plays together with the other child/children	4.44	Always
2. Symbolic Play The child performs singing, drawing, coloring, and counting.	4.32	Always
3. Solitary (Independent) Play The child plays with their own through any of the following; *stuffed animals, blocks, toy figures , dolls, tools, and books*.	4.28	Always
4. Physical Play The child plays through throwing balls, climbing, riding, and others	4.04	Very Often
5. Constructive Play The child plays like fitting things together or constructing some materials to build a house or building.	3.88	Very Often
6. Competitive Play The child plays with the other child And claiming who among them were the winners.	3.76	Very Often
5. Associative Play The child plays separately but doing what other child does	3.56	Very Often
6. Dramatic/Fantasy Play The child plays dress-up or acts like doctors, nurses, teachers, and others.	3.52	Very Often
7. Onlooker Play The child observes other children playing and never participates in the action.	2.60	Sometimes
8. Parallel Play The child and the other child play inside the room but separately.	2.40	Rarely
Overall Mean	**3.68**	**Very Often**

1.0-1.7-Never, 1.8-2.5-Rarely, 2.6-3.3-Sometimes,3.4-4.1-Very Often, 4.2-5.0-Always

Objective 3: Describe the assessment performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils.

The result of the entry assessment of the two groups of pupils is presented in table 5. Grade 1 performs better than the kindergarten getting the WM= 92.33 with the SD=6.06. Based on D.O. 8, s. 2021, this grade belongs to the interval of outstanding. It shows further that all the scores do not have a high level of variability and assumes the scores confine closely with the mean in the normal distribution. Unlikely, the kindergarten scores vary widely from mean and expected the scattering of grades. Kindergarten performs only satisfactorily during the conduct of the assessment.

Table 5
Assessment performance of incoming kindergarten and grade one pupils

Incoming Pupils	Weighted Mean (WM)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Verbal Description (VD)
Kindergarten	84.23	13.03	Satisfactory
Grade I	92.33	6.06	Outstanding

Note: below 75-Did not meet expectation,75-79, Fairly Satisfactory, 80-84, Satisfactory, 85-79, Very Satisfactory, 90-100, Outstanding (D.0,8, s. 2015)

Objective 4. Determine the significant relationship between playfulness and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I pupils

The sex of the respondents in both kindergarten and grade I was correlated with playfulness and appeared in table 6. The Point Biserial ($_rpb$)= 2.025 with the *p*-value of .395 is greater than the alpha level of .05. Thus, it implies not to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between sex and playfulness of the incoming kindergarten pupils. Regardless of whether a male or female, it does not influence their level of play. A similar idea on grade I pupils as the point-biserial ($_rpb$)= 1.684 at *the p*-value of .431 greater than the alpha level of .05. Again, there is no reason to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship.

Table 6
The relationship between sex and playfulness

Sex	Coefficient of Correlation	*p*- value
Kindergarten	rpb= 2.025	.395
Grade 1	rpb= 1.684	.431

*p<.05, significant

Objective 5. Determine the significant relationship between entry assessment performance and socio-demographic profile of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils

Table 7 presents the sex and entry assessment of both groups of students- Kindergarten and Grade One. Kindergarten marks ($_r$pb)=0.840, *p*-value= .657, and ($_r$pb)=1.642, *p*-value= .440 greater than the alpha level of .05. The data assumes that sex such as male and female has nothing to do with the scores obtained by the respondents as they took the assessment for entry purposes. Research shows that girls perform better than boys throughout their academic career in subjects that require verbal competence (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974; Stevenson and Newman,1986), as cited in Burke (1989). However, the study shows that regardless of what sexes the children have, their school performance does not rely on males or females.

Table 7
The relationship between sex and school performance

Sex	Coefficient of Correlation	*p*- value
Kindergarten	rpb= 0.840	.657
Grade 1	rpb= 1.642	.440

*p<.05, significant

The income and playfulness are supplied in table 8. The kindergarten has a computed $X^2(2,N=43)=0.190,p=.910$. The *p*-value is greater than the alpha level of .05, making it impossible to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship because there is insufficient evidence to support this action. Regardless of the level of income, the respondents have possessed, there is no distinct association of their playing. Grade one shows $X^2(2,N=54)=0.678,p=.713$ and gives a further interpretation that no established association or relationship is based on the given results. It has been argued that the accurate predictor of students ' achievement is the extent of family involvement in a child's education, not the level of family income (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Table 9 reveals $X^2(2, N=43)=0.011,p=.994$ for kindergarten. To interpret this data, it implies that income does not influence a better grade. Whether the child's family has a low or high monthly income, there is no relationship between these

variables being notified. Similarly, the incoming grade I pupils' calculation presents $X^2(2,N=54)=0.645,p=.724$, which shows that income is never associated with their entry performance. No sufficient evidence to conclude that the relationship is significant.

Table 8
The relationship between income and playfulness

Kindergarten	Playfulness	A/VO	S	R/N	X^2	*p*-Value
Income	9,520 & Below	9	6	6	0.190	.910
	Above 9,520	8	7	7		

Grade I	Playfulness	A/VO	S	R/N	X^2	*p*-Value
Income	9,520 & Below	15	8	6	0.678	.713
	Above 9,520	10	7	7		

Table 9
The relationship between income and entry assessment

Kindergarten	Playfulness	A/VO	S	R/N	X^2	*p*-Value
Income	9,520 & Below	10	7	8	0.011	.994
	Above 9,520	12	8	9		

Grade 1	Playfulness	A/VO	S	R/N	X^2	*p*-Value
Income	9,520 & Below	18	8	4	0.645	.724
	Above 9,520	14	5	5		

Objective 6. Determine the significant relationship between the playfulness and entry assessment performance of the incoming kindergarten and grade I Pupils.

Table 10 reveals the correlation between playfulness and entry assessment performance. Kindergarten obtained, $r(43)=.194, p=.425$. There is no sufficient evidence to suggest that the null hypothesis will be rejected. Instead, the p-value is greater than the alpha level of .05, which bears the idea that playfulness and entry assessment performance have no relationship. Grade I obtains the $r(54),.151,p=.492$. Again, the evidence is not sufficient to suggest the rejection of the null hypothesis; instead, it implicitly assumes to retain and favor the no significant relationship between these variables. There is nothing to worry about if the parents imposed limitations on their children's play because of the pandemic. These activities have no indicative presumptions to affect their ability to perform specifically to the assessment set by the school.

Table 10
Correlation between playfulness and entry assessment performance

	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Kindergarten	r = .194	.425
Grade I	r = .151	.492

Note: *p<.05, significant

6. Conclusion

Regarding the pandemic, whether the children at home would still participate in any play singly or collectively needs to be answered. Knowing the strict prohibition in going out even to step in public places made the parents also limit to meet with other children. Then, to what extent is this play relevant and ideal to experience to the children, and how this impacts the entry assessment score? Thus, this study underpins numerous information as it is purposely conducted to acknowledge the effect of the pandemic on children not only to be involved in such activities they felt enjoyable and self-motivating but to seek how these associate with cognitive ability. The incoming kindergarten pupils mainly demonstrated associative play. They played alone by imitating what other children did to suit the situation that they were not allowed to roam around and look for a team to play. Through the aid of stuffed animals, blocks, toy figures, dolls, tools, and books, incoming grade I pupils tended to spend time manipulating them alone. As to narrow the level of play for the sake of generalizability, the incoming kindergarten pupils establish only sometimes, while the incoming grade I pupils give very often. Entry assessment was high for grade one that marks outstanding and satisfactory only for kindergarten. Sex and income as part of their socio-demographic profiles have nothing to do with their playfulness and entry assessment scores. No attributed indications show that correlations in these variables are manifested. Similarly, the Pearson product-moment coefficient correlation indicates that the playfulness for kindergarten and incoming grade I Pupils has no significant relationship with entry assessment performance. According to Proyer's (2011) study, participants with both higher and lower IQ have no difference in their playfulness. Low and high playfulness teens appear to engage likely coping processes for every stressor; hence, playfulness has low predictability in adolescent coping (Staempfli, 2007). As premised, the theory of Piaget explaining the close interaction of intellectual growth and gaming activities refuted as this current investigation does not support this claim.

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