



## Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 5 NO. 3 (2026) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at [www.dwijmh.org](http://www.dwijmh.org)

Journal homepage: <http://www.dwijmh.org>

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# Effects and challenges of play-based learning on learner engagement and classroom participation

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: May 20, 2026

Received in rev. form. July 15, 2026

Accepted: August 17, 2026

Published: September 10, 2026

**Keywords:** *Play-based learning, Learner engagement, Classroom participation, Instructional approach, Learning tool, Holistic development*

JEL Classification: I26

### ABSTRACT

This study used descriptive research to examine the implementation of play-based learning among public elementary schools in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte. The study involved 53 teacher-respondents who were selected via purposive sampling. A survey questionnaire was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data, which were analyzed using weighted mean and thematic analysis.

Findings showed that the play-based learning strategies were highly implemented with a weighted mean of 4.26. The elementary teachers in Sarrat District commonly used storytelling, educational games, collaborative activities, role-playing, and manipulative tasks to improve their pupils' engagement and classroom participation. The study also revealed that play-based learning improved learners' motivation, communication skills, confidence, and classroom interaction. However, challenges and limitations such as limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and limited classroom space affected implementation.

A thematic analysis identified four primary themes in the respondents' answers. First, the use of play as an effective learning tool, the promotion of active student participation, the enhancement of teacher creativity and flexibility, and the challenges associated with limited resources. The findings indicate that play-based learning remains an effective instructional approach for increasing student engagement and supporting holistic development in elementary education.

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## Introduction

The Department of Education encourages teachers to use strategies that support students and focus on their needs. One of these strategies is play-based learning, which helps students learn by doing activities. This method is especially helpful for elementary students moving from simple to more organized lessons. At this age, children can explore with their minds and bodies, express themselves, and take an active part in learning through play.

The children mostly join in activities like storytelling and games, which help them better understand the lessons. Play-based learning has many benefits, including improved school performance, greater creativity, and stronger teamwork among students. Play-based learning is recognized as an effective approach for teaching elementary students (Dela Cruz, 2026; Velasco, 2025).

DepEd (2025) notes that elementary teachers use different teaching methods to meet students' needs, even when they have large classes, few resources, small classrooms, or students who are not ready to learn. To address these challenges, teachers often use play-based learning to make lessons more fun and engaging. They encourage students with play, group activities, storytelling, and by allowing everyone to participate (Riño et al, 2025). Play-based learning helps students engage and stay interested, making it an effective teaching method.

A play-based learning strategy is a planned and flexible set of activities that help learners be inclusively involved in the learning process. Unlike traditional methods, where teachers do most of the talking, play-based learning encourages students to think, be creative, talk with others, work together, and be active (Gianan, 2024). This way also helps create a positive and encouraging classroom. A few studies in Philippine public schools have shown that play-based activities improve student interest and classroom outcomes (Dela Cruz, 2026).

Despite being one of the most widely implemented and recognized as an effective approach for developing learners' cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skills, there is limited empirical evidence describing how it is implemented in actual elementary classrooms, particularly in schools in the Sarrat District.

This study investigates and explores how elementary teachers in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte, use play-based learning. It focuses on how often teachers use play-based activities, how these activities affect student interest and participation, and what problems teachers face. By examining teachers' responses and experiences, the study offers insights into how play-based learning improves teaching in Grade 3 classrooms.

## ***Review of related literature***

This review of related studies connects the research to prior and ongoing work and demonstrates the role and impact of play-based teaching. It presents the main ideas and methods that guide the study and avoids repeating past research. The review also helps readers understand the topic, builds trust in the researcher, and provides a structure for examining how elementary teachers in the Sarrat District integrate play-based instruction.

### ***Play-based learning as an instructional strategy***

Play-Based Learning (PBL) is a learner-centered instructional strategy that uses structured, purposeful play to facilitate learning and development. According to Dean and Wenner (2025), play-based learning combines academic objectives with activities that promote choice, curiosity, creativity, and engagement. Rather than relying solely on direct instruction, teachers create opportunities for learners to explore

concepts through games, role-playing, simulations, storytelling, and hands-on experiences. This approach allows learners to actively construct knowledge while enjoying meaningful learning experiences, making learning both effective and enjoyable.

The effectiveness of play-based learning lies in its ability to enhance cognitive development. Dean and Wenner (2025) found that play-based pedagogies encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and deeper understanding across various academic disciplines. Through playful exploration, learners can connect new information to prior knowledge, thereby improving comprehension and retention. Similarly, Dela Cruz (2025) reported that Grade Two pupils in the Philippines who were exposed to play-based learning strategies demonstrated better academic performance than those taught through traditional methods, highlighting the instructional value of play in improving learning outcomes.

Beyond cognitive gains, play-based learning significantly contributes to learners' social and emotional development. Huzhou, Su, and Masud (2024) emphasized that play-based instruction promotes collaboration, communication, self-expression, and interpersonal skills among learners. During group play activities, children learn how to cooperate, negotiate, share responsibilities, and resolve conflicts constructively. These experiences help develop self-confidence, empathy, and emotional regulation, which are essential competencies for lifelong learning and social interaction.

Play-based learning also aligns with contemporary constructivist and experiential learning principles. According to Whitton, Goodley, Lewin, and Woolley (2025), learning through play creates meaningful contexts where learners actively engage with content and develop deeper understanding through exploration and interaction. In this instructional approach, teachers function as facilitators who guide, observe, and scaffold learning rather than merely transmit information. By allowing learners to experiment, discover, and reflect on their experiences, play-based learning fosters autonomy, creativity, and higher-order thinking skills that are necessary for success in the 21st century.

Recent educational research continues to support the integration of play-based learning across different educational levels. Dean and Wenner (2025) noted that while play-based learning is most implemented in early childhood and elementary education, its principles can also be adapted to higher grade levels to promote engagement and holistic development. Current educational initiatives worldwide increasingly recognize play as a powerful instructional strategy that supports academic achievement while nurturing learners' cognitive, social, emotional, and creative growth. Consequently, play-based learning remains an effective and relevant pedagogical approach for fostering meaningful and lifelong learning experiences.

### ***Implementation of play-based learning in Public Elementary Schools***

The implementation of play-based learning in public elementary schools has gained increasing attention as educators recognize its effectiveness in promoting holistic child development and improving learning outcomes. Play-based learning is an instructional approach that integrates structured and unstructured play activities into classroom instruction to support cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. According to Cañete et al. (2025), teachers in public elementary schools consistently incorporate play-based activities into their daily lessons, demonstrating a strong commitment to creating

engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young learners. Their study found that play-based learning has become an essential component of classroom instruction, particularly in the early grades, where active engagement and experiential learning are crucial.

In Philippine public elementary schools, the implementation of play-based learning is often aligned with learner-centered teaching approaches that encourage exploration, creativity, and collaboration. Gerlie and Cressy (2025) reported that teachers in the Division of Camiguin utilized various play-based strategies, including educational games, role-playing, storytelling, and hands-on activities, to facilitate learning among Grade 1 to Grade 3 pupils. Their findings revealed that the utilization of play-based learning positively influenced pupils' academic performance by increasing engagement and participation during classroom activities. This demonstrates that play can be effectively integrated into formal instruction without compromising curriculum standards and learning objectives.

The successful implementation of play-based learning largely depends on teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and instructional practices. Santos et al. (2024) found that elementary school teachers generally perceive play-based teaching as an effective approach for developing learners' social skills, motivation, language abilities, and academic competencies. Teachers acknowledged that play provides meaningful opportunities for children to construct knowledge through active participation rather than passive reception of information. Consequently, many public-school teachers have adopted playful learning experiences to make lessons more interactive and responsive to learners' developmental needs.

Despite its benefits, implementing play-based learning in public elementary schools faces several challenges. Florita and Sabud (2025) identified issues such as limited instructional materials, inadequate classroom space, time constraints, and the need to balance curriculum requirements with play-based activities. Similarly, Lim and Tepacia (2025) reported that kindergarten teachers experienced moderate difficulties in facilitating activities that promote creativity, motor development, and social skills due to resource limitations and varying learner needs. These findings suggest that while teachers recognize the value of play-based learning, effective implementation requires sufficient resources, professional development, and administrative support.

Recent studies continue to emphasize the importance of strengthening the implementation of play-based learning in public elementary schools. Cañete et al. (2025) found that classrooms with consistent integration of play-based activities exhibited higher levels of learner cooperation, sharing, and empathy. Likewise, studies on teachers' experiences revealed that supportive school leadership, collaborative planning, and flexible learning environments contribute significantly to successful implementation. As educational systems increasingly prioritize learner-centered instruction, play-based learning remains a valuable pedagogical approach that fosters academic achievement while nurturing the social, emotional, and creative development of elementary learners.

## ***Challenges in the implementation of play-based learning in Public Elementary Schools***

One of the major challenges in implementing play-based learning in public elementary schools is the lack of adequate instructional materials and resources. Although play-based learning requires a range of manipulatives, educational toys, learning centers, and interactive materials, many public schools face budgetary constraints that limit access to these resources. Lim and Tepacia (2025) found that kindergarten teachers experienced moderate difficulties implementing play-based learning due to insufficient materials for developing learners' motor, creative, and social skills. As a result, teachers often have to improvise or create their own learning materials, which may increase their workload and affect the quality of implementation.

Another challenge is the need for continuous teacher training and professional development. Effective play-based learning requires teachers to possess specialized skills in facilitating, observing, and assessing learning through play. However, many teachers were traditionally trained using more teacher-centered instructional approaches and may find it difficult to transition to a facilitative role. According to Florita and Sabud (2025), teachers implementing play-based learning encountered difficulties in designing meaningful play experiences that align with curriculum standards while simultaneously meeting diverse learner needs. This underscores the need for sustained professional development programs that strengthen teachers' competence and confidence in implementing play-based pedagogies.

Time constraints and curriculum demands also pose significant barriers to the successful implementation of play-based learning. Public elementary school teachers are often required to cover extensive curriculum content within limited instructional time. Consequently, some educators perceive play-based activities as time-consuming compared to traditional teaching methods. Dean and Wenner (2025) observed that implementing play-based learning in formal educational settings is often hindered by pressure to meet academic standards and assessment requirements. Teachers may struggle to balance curriculum coverage with opportunities for exploratory, learner-centered play experiences, particularly at higher elementary grade levels.

Classroom management and diverse learner needs present another challenge. Play-based learning environments are generally more active and dynamic than traditional classrooms, requiring teachers to manage movement, interaction, and learner engagement effectively. Randing (2025) reported that teachers implementing play-based learning encountered difficulties in facilitating social development while simultaneously addressing behavioral concerns and maintaining productive learning environments. Additionally, learners differ in their interests, developmental levels, and learning styles, making it challenging for teachers to design inclusive, beneficial play activities for all students.

Finally, misconceptions about the educational value of play continue to affect the implementation of play-based learning in public elementary schools. Some parents, administrators, and even educators still associate learning primarily with direct instruction, worksheets, and formal academic tasks. As a result, play-based learning may be viewed as less rigorous or less effective than traditional approaches. Dean and Wenner (2025) emphasized that despite growing evidence supporting play-based learning, its

implementation often faces resistance due to conventional beliefs about teaching and learning. Addressing these misconceptions through advocacy, stakeholder orientation, and evidence-based practices is essential for promoting wider acceptance and successful implementation of play-based learning in public elementary schools.

## ***Statement of the problem***

This study aimed to examine the implementation of play-based learning strategies among elementary teachers in public schools in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of play-based learning on learner engagement and classroom participation?
2. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing play-based learning activities?

## ***Scope and delimitation of the study***

The purpose of this study is to conduct research that describes the Implementation of Play-Based Learning Activities in Elementary Schools of the Sarrat District. The fifty-three (53) teacher-respondents who participated in this study are limited to selected Elementary teachers in the Schools Division of Ilocos Norte, Sarrat District, who were chosen via purposive sampling. The data-gathering instrument is a Google survey link.

## ***Research methodology***

This chapter presented the research design, the study locale, the population, the sampling procedure, the data presentation instrument, the data-gathering procedure, the research methodology, the ethical considerations, and the data presentation and analysis.

### ***Research design***

This study employed a descriptive research design to determine the implementation of play-based learning strategies among the elementary teachers in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte. The descriptive method is best used because it focuses on describing the extent of implementation, the effects on learner engagement and classroom participation, and the challenges teachers encounter when using play-based learning activities.

The study also employed a thematic analysis of teachers' qualitative responses regarding their experiences and perceptions in implementing play-based learning strategies. This approach allowed the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative information and helped provide a deeper understanding of the study.

### ***Locale of the study***

The study was conducted in public elementary schools in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte. The schools were chosen because they offer and implement a learner-centered instructional strategy aligned with the Department of Education curriculum. The schools represented different classroom contexts and learning environments within the Sarrat district.

### ***Population and sampling***

The teacher-respondents in the study were 53 elementary teachers from different public elementary schools in the Sarrat District. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all participants teach elementary learners and implement play-based learning activities in their classrooms.

### ***Data gathering instrument***

The research instrument used to gather data was a researcher-developed Google Forms survey with two parts. The first part focused on implementing play-based learning strategies in elementary schools in the Sarrat District, including learner engagement, classroom participation, and the instructional effectiveness of these strategies. The second part consists of open-ended questions that allowed the teacher-respondents to share their own ideas, experiences, and different challenges they encountered while implementing play-based learning activities.

The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale for quantitative responses and open-ended questions for qualitative responses to support thematic analysis.

### ***Data gathering procedure***

Before the data-gathering procedure, the researcher first sought permission from the school authorities to conduct the survey. After approval, a Google Form link containing the survey questionnaires was distributed to the teacher respondents. Before completing the survey, they were informed of the study's purpose and given sufficient time to answer the questionnaire honestly.

After retrieving the data gathered through the online questionnaires, the responses were tabulated and analyzed. Quantitative data were computed as weighted means, while qualitative responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns related to teachers' experiences implementing play-based learning.

### ***Ethical considerations***

The study observed the ethical standards in conducting the research. Respondent participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. The respondents were assured that all information gathered would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. The identities of the participants and schools involved in the study were not disclosed to ensure privacy and anonymity. Furthermore, the researcher respected the rights, opinions, and responses of all participants throughout the study.

## Results and discussion

This chapter discusses the study's findings on the implementation of play-based learning strategies among elementary teachers in the Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte. The presentation of results includes the extent of implementation of play-based learning, its effects on learner engagement and classroom participation, challenges encountered by teachers, and the themes derived from the respondents' experiences.

### ***Problem 1: What is the extent of play-based learning on learner engagement and classroom participation?***

#### **Extent of implementation of play-based learning strategies**

After selection of respondents and distribution of the survey link, the fifty-three (53) teacher-respondents answered the online questionnaire, which generated the data needed to furnish the study and address the research questions and research gaps.

The survey findings revealed that play-based learning strategies were widely implemented among elementary teachers in Sarrat District, with an overall weighted mean of 4.21, interpreted as “Highly Implemented.” The Teachers frequently integrated educational games, storytelling activities, collaborative group tasks, role-playing, and manipulative activities during classroom instruction.

Among all indicators, “Play-based instruction creates a positive learning environment” had the highest weighted mean (4.45), followed by “Play-based activities increase learners' participation during lessons” with a weighted mean of 4.38. These findings suggest that teachers recognize the importance of interactive, learner-centered approaches for improving classroom engagement and motivation.

The results support the findings of Santos et al. (2024), which emphasized that play-based learning promotes active participation, creativity, and collaborative learning among elementary learners. Similarly, Dela Cruz (2025) found that learners exposed to play-based activities demonstrated better classroom participation and improved comprehension of lessons.

Table 1. Sarrat District Elementary Teachers' extent of implementation of play-based learning activities

| Indicators                                                                | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Rating |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I use educational games during classroom instruction.                  | 4.25          | Highly Implemented |
| 2. Play-based activities increase learners' participation during lessons. | 4.38          | Highly Implemented |
| 3. Learners actively participate in group play activities.                | 4.20          | Highly Implemented |
| 4. Storytelling and role-playing activities motivate learners to learn.   | 4.30          | Highly Implemented |

| Indicators                                                                | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Rating        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 5. Play-based learning improves learners' confidence and self-expression. | 4.18          | Highly Implemented        |
| 6. Play-based activities improve learners' understanding of lessons.      | 4.24          | Highly Implemented        |
| 7. I integrate collaborative activities in my classroom instruction.      | 4.15          | Highly Implemented        |
| 8. Learners become more attentive during play-based activities.           | 4.27          | Highly Implemented        |
| 9. Play-based learning enhances learners' communication skills.           | 4.16          | Highly Implemented        |
| 10. Play-based instruction creates a positive learning environment.       | 4.45          | Highly Implemented        |
| <b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>                                              | <b>4.26</b>   | <b>Highly Implemented</b> |

Table 1 shows the extent of implementation of play-based learning strategies among Grade 3 teachers in public elementary schools in the Sarrat District. The overall weighted mean of 4.26 indicates that respondents “Highly Implemented” play-based learning strategies.

The highest-rated indicator was “Play-based instruction creates a positive learning environment” with a weighted mean of 4.45. This implies that teachers believe play-based activities help create engaging, enjoyable, and learner-centered classrooms. Meanwhile, “Play-based activities increase learners’ participation during lessons” also obtained a high weighted mean of 4.38, showing that learners become more active and participative during interactive classroom activities.

The findings support Santos et al. (2024), who emphasized that play-based learning enhances learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration among elementary learners.

## ***2. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing play-based learning activities?***

### **Challenges encountered in the implementation of play-based learning**

Aside from the positive outcomes, the teacher-respondents of Sarrat District identified several challenges that they experienced that affect the implementation of play-based learning strategies. The most common challenges included limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited classroom space, insufficient time for activity preparation, and inconsistent parental support.

Among these challenges, “Limited instructional materials affect the implementation of play-based learning” obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.32. Teachers shared that although they recognized the effectiveness of play-based activities, the lack of resources and large class sizes sometimes limited the quality and frequency of implementation.

Nevertheless, the respondents demonstrated creativity and adaptability by improvising, using locally available instructional materials, and modifying activities to suit available resources and learners' needs. The findings support the study of Diwara (2024), which revealed that teachers in public schools commonly encounter resource-related challenges in implementing interactive instructional approaches.

**Table 2. Challenges encountered in the implementation of play-based learning by Sarrat District Elementary Teachers**

| Challenges                                                     | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Rating |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. Limited instructional materials affect implementation.      | 4.32          | Strongly Agree     |
| 2. Overcrowded classrooms make activities difficult to manage. | 4.20          | Agree              |
| 3. Limited classroom space affects learner participation.      | 4.15          | Agree              |
| 4. Time constraints limit the use of play-based activities.    | 4.08          | Agree              |
| 5. Lack of parental support affects implementation.            | 3.95          | Agree              |
| <b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>                                   | <b>4.14</b>   | <b>Agree</b>       |

Table 2 presents the different challenges encountered by Sarrat District elementary teacher-respondents in implementing play-based learning activities. The overall weighted mean of 4.14 indicates that respondents generally agreed that several factors affect the implementation of play-based learning.

Among the identified challenges, “Limited instructional materials affect implementation” obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.32. This suggests that the lack of resources remains a major concern among public elementary school teachers. Teachers also identified overcrowded classrooms and limited classroom space as barriers affecting classroom management during interactive activities.

Despite these challenges, teachers continued to implement play-based learning strategies by improvising localized and low-cost instructional materials. These findings support Diwara (2024), who noted that teachers often encounter resource limitations when implementing learner-centered approaches in public schools.

### ***Thematic analysis***

The qualitative responses gathered from the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four major themes emerged from the responses of the teacher-respondents.

#### ***Theme 1: Play as an effective learning strategy***

Teachers described play-based learning as an effective instructional approach that improves learner understanding and classroom participation. Respondents shared that learners become more interested and motivated when lessons include games, storytelling, and collaborative activities.

*“Learners participate more actively when lessons are enjoyable and interactive.”*

This finding supports Dela Cruz (2025), who emphasized that play-based learning improves learner engagement and comprehension.

### ***Theme 2: Active learner participation***

Teachers observed that learners became more confident, more engaged, and more collaborative during play-based activities. The interactive classroom tasks encouraged learners to express their ideas and collaborate with classmates.

*“The group games and role-playing activities help learners communicate and interact better with their classmates.”*

The findings align with the study by Riño et al. (2025), which highlighted that play-based instruction enhances learners' social interaction and communication skills.

### ***Theme 3: Teacher creativity and adaptability***

The respondents emphasized the importance of teacher creativity in implementing play-based learning despite limited resources. Teachers improvised localized materials and modified activities according to learner needs.

*“Even with limited materials, teachers find ways to make activities engaging and meaningful.”*

This indicates that teacher adaptability plays an important role in sustaining learner-centered instruction in public schools.

### ***Theme 4: Challenges in resource availability***

The teachers identified the lack of instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient classroom space as common challenges affecting their implementation of play-based instruction.

*“Limited materials and large class sizes sometimes make classroom activities difficult to manage.”*

This finding suggests the need for stronger institutional support, adequate learning resources, and improved classroom facilities to strengthen the implementation of play-based learning in public elementary schools.

## ***Results and discussion***

The overall results of the study have practical implications for teachers, school administrators, and education stakeholders. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating play-based strategies to create interactive and learner-centered classrooms.

The study also contributes to the field of educational theory by providing empirical support for the constructivist and social learning perspectives within the context of elementary education. This suggests that learning is more meaningful when learners are actively involved in learning experiences, interacting with peers, and participating in interactive activities (Tegegne et al., 2025; Zajda, 2021).

The results also extend the understanding of play-based learning by showing that it functions not only as a teaching strategy but also as a mechanism for developing learner participation, confidence, communication, and social interaction. The study provides local evidence from the Sarrat District, filling a gap in documentation of play-based learning implementation in public elementary school settings (Sitorus et al., 2025; Aguilar, 2025).

The study has offered valuable insights, but there are several limitations to consider. First, the study was limited to elementary teachers in Sarrat District, Division of Ilocos Norte; thus, the findings may not be representative of the experiences of teachers in other districts or settings. The study used a descriptive research design and relied mainly on teacher responses through a questionnaire. The findings reflect teachers' perceptions and reported practices but are not direct measures of learner performance or long-term learning outcomes.

Future researchers may conduct similar studies that include a wider variety of schools or districts to gain a broader understanding of the implementation of play-based learning, given its limitations. Future studies may also include learners' perspectives, classroom observations, and other assessment measures to validate teachers' reported practices. Researchers may also explore the relationship between play-based learning and learner outcomes, including academic achievement, motivation, creativity, and social skills in greater depth. Studies may also explore the impact of professional development programs and the significance of factors such as resources, class size, and school support in bolstering play-based learning strategies.

## ***Conclusion***

This study explored the implementation of play-based learning strategies among elementary teachers in public schools in the Sarrat District, focusing on how these strategies are applied in the classroom, their influence on student engagement and participation, and the challenges teachers encounter in their implementation. The findings revealed that play-based learning is widely practiced by teachers, who regularly integrate storytelling, educational games, role-playing, collaborative activities, and hands-on learning experiences into their daily instruction. These approaches help create interactive, enjoyable, and learner-centered classrooms that encourage active participation.

The study further demonstrated that play-based learning positively influences students' engagement, participation, communication skills, confidence, and motivation. Teachers observed that learners became more attentive, actively involved in classroom activities, and more willing to collaborate with their peers. These findings reinforce existing literature emphasizing that play-based learning not only enhances academic engagement but also supports the holistic development of children's social, emotional, and communication skills, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

Despite these encouraging outcomes, the study also identified several challenges that affect the effective implementation of play-based learning. Among these were limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning spaces, and insufficient parental support. Nevertheless, teachers

demonstrated resilience and creativity by developing improvised instructional materials, modifying activities to suit available resources, and adopting practical strategies that allowed them to continue providing engaging learning experiences despite these constraints.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences, the researcher developed a questionnaire that combined quantitative and qualitative components. This mixed-method approach enabled the collection of both measurable data and rich narrative insights. The quantitative findings provided an overview of teachers' implementation practices and perceptions. At the same time, the qualitative responses offered a deeper understanding of the realities, challenges, and coping strategies associated with play-based learning in public elementary schools.

Overall, the study concludes that play-based learning is an effective and developmentally appropriate instructional approach for Grade 3 learners. It promotes active participation, meaningful learning, and holistic child development while fostering a more engaging classroom environment. However, maximizing its benefits requires continuous professional development for teachers, adequate instructional resources, supportive school leadership, and stronger collaboration with parents and the wider community. Strengthening these areas will help ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of play-based learning in elementary education.

**Author's contribution:** The author planned, carried out, and wrote the study.

**Ethical statement:** The study followed ethical guidelines, and participants' privacy was protected.

**Funding statement:** The author funded the study.

**Conflict of interest:** The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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