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## **Influence of Socio-Dramatic Play on Pre-School Children's Holistic Development in Homa-Bay District**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Play has found little, if any acceptance in most of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Homa Bay District. Observation reveals that parents and ECD Managers/Head teachers appear to pressurize the pre-school teachers to undertake academic work as opposed to allowing children learn spontaneously through play. The purpose of this study therefore was to determine the influence of play on pre-school children's holistic development with special reference to social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. The study employed correlation research design. The target population comprised ECD children, teachers and pre-school Managers/Head teachers in Homa Bay District. Out of a target population of twenty thousand (20,000) pre-schoolers, three hundred and seventy seven (377) pre-schoolers were selected for the study through proportionate stratified random sampling procedure. This enabled the selection of the subjects from the two categories of pre-schools, namely Public and Private ECD centres to represent the 7 Divisions in the District. Purposive sampling was then used to select thirty three (33) ECD Managers / Head teachers and twenty six (26) ECD teachers. Two sets of questionnaires were used to gather information from the Managers/Head teachers and ECD teachers while an observation checklist was used to establish the presence of play materials and their use in learning. The study collected both Quantitative and Qualitative data which was then analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics involved Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Qualitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics which comprised of percentages, means, frequency tables and value judgment. Hypotheses were tested by use of Pearson's Product Moments Correlation Coefficient. The findings of the study showed that various forms of play activities influenced pre-school children's holistic development. Majority of pre-schoolers who were involved in meaningful play activities were found to have a high degree of holistic development. The findings are significant to stakeholders, mainly ECD Teachers, Managers/Head teachers and parents in that it may change their perception about pre-school children's play. ECD curriculum developers and supervisors, especially KIE and MoE would also find the study useful in designing pre-school curriculum to incorporate more play time to enhance holistic development of ECD children.

**KEY WORDS:** Socio Dramatic Play, Holistic Development, Play Materials, ECD Managers/Head Teachers ECD teachers.

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## **Introduction**

According to Ingule and Rono (1996) Socio dramatic play is vital in helping children learn social and cultural rules of interaction and it helps to develop co-operation skills and build friendship. Hyun (1998) notes that children learn survival skills, independence and how to get along with others. Socio dramatic playing therefore helps the children build a foundation of social skills that will benefit them as they mature. Leahy and Harris (1997) indicate that socio dramatic play with others gives children the opportunity to match their behaviour with others and to take into account viewpoints that differ from their own. Thus socio dramatic play provides the rich experience children need to learn social skills, become sensitive to others needs and values, handle exclusive and dominance, share space and ideas with others. A study by Olds and Papalia (2005) shows that during the third year of life a child's positive emotions become more frequent during socio dramatic play. Socio dramatic play in a playful context support intrinsic motivation that is driven by positive emotions.

Positive emotions such as curiosity generally improve motivation and facilitate learning and performance by focusing learner's attention on the task. Negative emotions such as anxiety, panic, threat and stress generally distract children's motivation (Simons & Santrock, 1994). Curiosity flexibility, rightful thinking and creativity are major indicators of the learner's intrinsic motivation to learn, which to a large extent is a function of meeting basic needs to be competent and to exercise personal control. Because socio dramatic play is intrinsically motivating learners perceive it to be interesting, personally relevant, meaningful and appropriate in terms of their abilities and their expectations of success Mangal (2007). Boyle (2008) observed that young children need early exposure to both auditory and visual stimuli. They are interested in colors, sizes, shapes and sounds; enjoy working with toys that encourage matching, ordering and comparing. Socio dramatic play with equipment stimulates vocabulary and concept building. Children's socio dramatic play with these materials is by grouping them according to size, color, form, texture and function (Doe, 1997). Bordens and Herwitz (2002) states that clay, sand and mud are play materials that give children of all ages opportunities to explore changes in form as they mould the substances. Adding water enables younger children observe changes in substance and the older to build more complex shapes. According to Deaux (1984) socio dramatic play is important to children's development. Children need opportunities to act and dress up like people they know. Equipment's that encourages socio dramatic play includes housekeeping, furniture dolls, dress up clothes, utensils, blocks and other materials encourage initiation as well as conversation and creative expression of ideas and understanding (Doe, 1997, Hurlock 2006;).

A study by Piaget (1962) showed that socio dramatic play leads to discovery, verbal judgment and reasoning as well as developing manipulative skills. Children learn to discover about consequences and evaluate risk while socio dramatic playing which helps them in decision making as they grow up. Banyard and Hayes (1994), states that socio dramatic play is a fantastic tool that helps children believe they are competent and capable learners. It is a process by which the child is helped to explore her feelings, attitudes and release pent up emotions. Children should be exposed to more socio dramatic play activities that have play materials to influence holistic development. Maccoby (1983) holds that in the early years socio-dramatic play is usually with the mother or older siblings. As the child develops and gain opportunities to meet peers, other age-mates become common play partners. According to McConnel and Philip (1992) socio-dramatic play usually involves symbolic activities such as feeding a doll with makes believe foods.

In Homa Bay Sub County socio-dramatic play often focuses on adult behaviour that is fishing, paddling, hunting or cattle rearing. Wolf (1994) holds that by age 3, children's socio-dramatic play becomes more complex, co-operative and dramatic in which children share symbolic meaning. Leahy and Harris (1997) states that 3 year olds and 4 ½ year olds will accept the role of Robin or Joker more readily recognizing that their turn as Batsman will come later. A study by Waithaka (2005) in Thika district Kenya, suggests that socio-dramatic play helps children learn social, emotional, cognitive and cultural rules of interaction and help them develop holistic skills. Children play a lot even if not provided with toys but make their own toys from local materials. Socio-dramatic play is rampant among pre-scholars in Homa Bay Sub County.

Bergen (2001), suggests that it is more likely that socio-dramatic play engages many areas of the brain because it involves emotions, cognition, language and sensori motor actions, and thus it may promote the development of dense synoptic connections. Deaux (1984) linked socio-dramatic play to young children's mathematics readiness while Bergen (2001) showed that there is a strong relation between cognitive strategies, social and linguistic competence and academic skill development realized during socio-dramatic play activities. Sdorow(1993) theorized the relationship of socio-dramatic play to specific cognitive strategies such as self-regulation narrative and recall, divergent problem solving and understanding the rule of the game

Olds and Papalia (2005) suggest that socio-dramatic play fosters holistic development. Through socio-dramatic play, children learn about their environment, explore their creativity and discover how to think logically and solve problems which builds their self-confidence. Hurlock (2006) states that when children involve in socio-dramatic play, they express feelings such as anger, frustration, fear, joy, happiness and develop muscles strength, co-ordination and control. Piaget (1962) postulates that socio-dramatic play expands intelligence and it is a testing ground for language and reasoning connecting to the challenges children face in school, such as literacy, math and science concepts. Socio-dramatic play stimulates imagination, encourages creativity and problem solving. Bergen (2001) observed that socio-dramatic play help to develop confidence, self-esteem, a sense of strength and weakness and positive attitude towards learning and is a significant factor in brain and muscle development.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted correlation research design. Purposive sampling was used to select Homa Bay Sub County because it is the district with the largest number of ECD centres in the former South Nyanza District. The target population was 20, 000 ECDE children in Homa Bay Sub County.

The study used Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of determining sample size from a given population. For a population of twenty thousand (20,000) according to the table we got a sample size of 377 ECD children. Stratified random sampling was used to divide the Sub County into seven (7) strata which was represented by the seven Divisions in the sub county. This ensured that each division was adequately represented. Simple random sampling was then used to select fifty four (54) ECD children from each division to be included in the study. Purposive sampling was then used to sample twenty six (26) ECD teachers and thirty three (33) ECD Managers/Head teachers with different levels of training to take part in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select twenty six (26) ECD teachers and thirty three (33) ECD Managers/Head teachers to take part in the study. The researcher developed three research instruments. The first was an observation checklist designed to observe the sampled ECD children during various play

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activities. It comprised of eleven (11) items (Appendix A). The second one was a questionnaire for the ECD teachers which was used to obtain information about the ECD teachers perception about children's play and their use of various form of play to enhance holistic development. It comprised of thirty one (31) test items refer to (Appendix B). The third questionnaire was designed for the ECD Managers/Head teachers to obtain information about their use and provision of play opportunities for the ECD children. (Refer Appendix C). The instruments were developed after a wide reading in Psychometrics and consultation with research experts from the Department of Psychology, Counselling and Educational Foundations at Egerton University to ensure their validity.

A pilot study was conducted before the main study. For this purpose fourteen (14) ECD centers were selected two (2) per division i.e Asego, (2), Rangwe (2), Upper Nyokal (2), Lower Nyokal (2) Riana (2) Ndhiwa (2) and Nyarongi (2). Eighty (80) ECD children, ten (10) ECD Managers/Head teachers and fifteen (15) teachers were involved in the exercise. This was done in order to measure the reliability and ensure the validity of the data collection instruments as well as to enable the researcher understand the logical issues of the study. Reliability was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method for internal consistency. This method was used to estimate the reliability of an instrument upon a single administration (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The questionnaires had a reliability of 0.73.

According to (Kothari, 2006) a reliability of 0.70 is considered acceptable for internal consistency levels. Hence the instruments were considered reliable enough for the study. The data generated was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) windows version 11.5. The instruments were scored on a five point Likert scale and the responses were assigned rating scores between 1 and 5 which were used to determine the measure of the attributes. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Descriptive statistics included frequency tables, percentages, and cross tabulation which was used to explain the various attributes of the variables under study, while inferential statistics used Pearson's Correlation to test the hypotheses. Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient which was heavily used in this study was deemed suitable because it was used to test the degree of the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Orodho, 2005).

## **Results and Discussion**

This chapter presents research findings, interpretation of data and discussions. The study was conducted to establish the influence of play on Holistic development of pre-school children, A case study of Homa Bay Sub County. The data was analysed aided by a computer package Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows version 11.5. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The hypotheses were tested by the application of Pearson's Correlation. The entire hypotheses tests were performed at a significant level of 0.05. Acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was based on the calculated test statistics and the value of probability of significance (p value). The null hypothesis was accepted if  $p \geq 0.05$  and was rejected if  $p < 0.05$ . The chapter further gives a discussion of the findings and comparison with similar studies done earlier. The conclusions made on whether to accept or reject the stated hypotheses were based on the data collected from the three cadres of respondents (ECD children, ECD teachers and ECD Managers/ Head teachers) and a comparison made according to their demographic characteristics (age of ECD children, qualification of ECD teachers and level of training of ECD

Managers/Head teachers). The results are presented and discussed in order of the objectives followed by the testing of the hypotheses.

Children’s involvement in socio-dramatic play was noted by an observation on the behaviour on jumping and other rhythmic movement of whole or part of the body. The study established that, 72.9 % (n = 275) of the children very often involved in socio-dramatic play. 15.5% (n = 58) often involved in socio-dramatic play and 9.5% (n = 36) occasionally involved in socio-dramatic play, while 2.1% (n=8) rarely got involved. This is as indicated in Table 1

Table 1  
Number of Children Observed to be Involved in Socio-Dramatic Play

Involvement	Frequency	Percentage	Rank (1 – Highest number)
Very often	275	72.9	1
Often	58	15.5	2
Occasionally	36	9.5	3
Rarely	8	2.1	4
Total	377	100%	

One hundred and eighty six (49.3%) of the children observed, moved with a moderate degree of ease during socio-dramatic play. 39.0% (n = 147) of the children moved with high degree of ease, 10% (n = 38) moved with very high degree of ease while 1.9% (n = 7) of the children rarely moved with ease during socio-dramatic play. During expressive and socio-dramatic play 9.5% (n = 36) of the children very often showed spontaneity, 62.1% (n = 234) often showed spontaneity, 24.9% (n = 94) occasionally while 3.4% (n = 13) rarely showed spontaneity during expressive and socio-dramatic play. This is represented in figure 13 below.

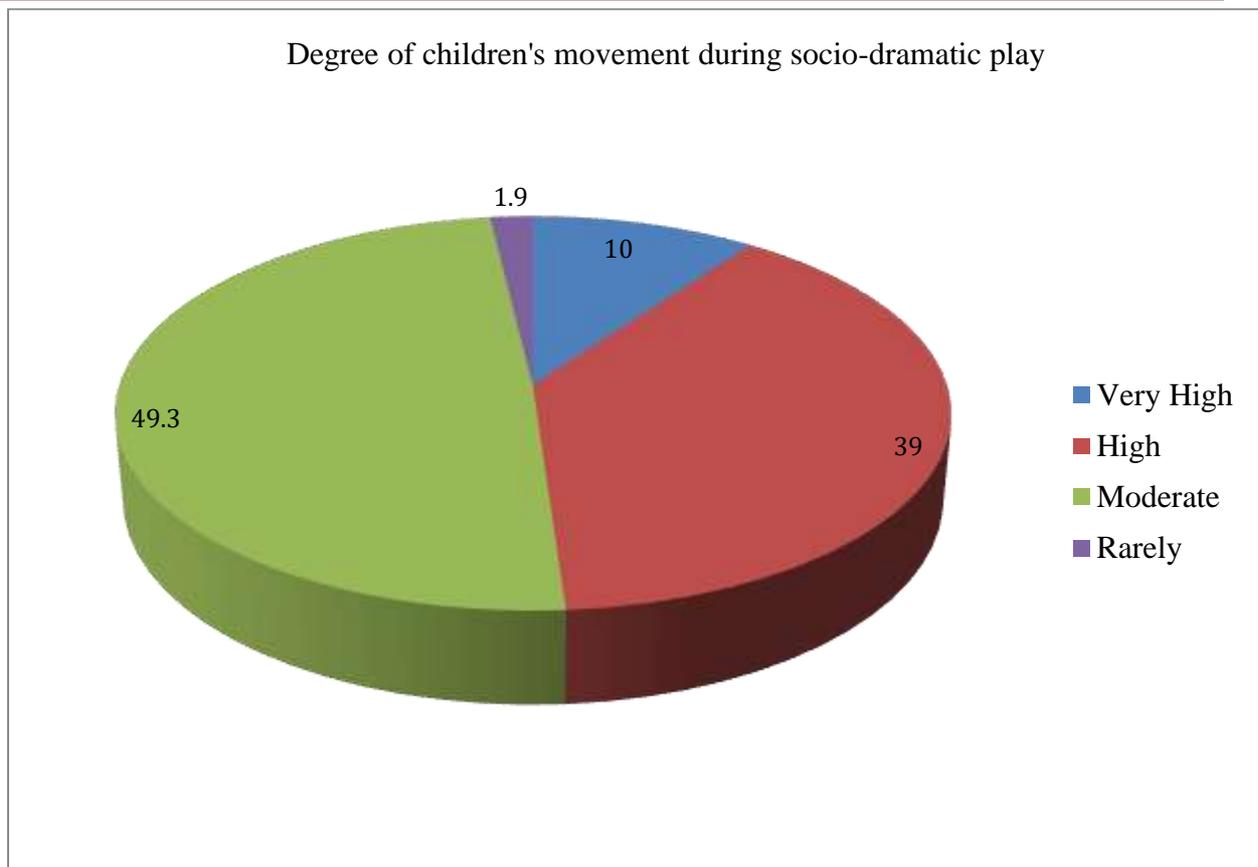


Figure 1: Degree of children’s movement during socio-dramatic play

### Teacher’s Views on Socio-Dramatic Play

The teachers considered pre-school children’s ability to socialize with their peers. The ECD teachers view on the children’s ability to make friends indicated that 34.6% (n=9) make friends highly well, 23.1% (n=6) make friends quite well while 42.3% (n=11) makes friends very well. The children easily make friends and they like to involve in socio-dramatic play with other ECD children. However, 65.4% (n=17) tend to cry easily during socio-dramatic play and are always somewhat emotional when their play materials was snatched or spoilt during socio-dramatic play. It was also noted that 15.4% (n=4) of the ECD children involved in socio-dramatic play highly well, 26.9% (n=7) involved quite well, 53.8% (n=14) involved very well while only 3.8% (n=1) was not sure. The results are well stipulated in Table 2.

Table 2  
Teachers Views on Children’s Socio-Dramatic Play

Teachers views	Highly well	Quite well	Very well	Not sure	Not at all
Children make friends easily	9 (34.6%)	6 (23.1%)	11(42.3%)	-	-
Like to involve in Socio-dramatic play	4 (15.4%)	7 (26.9%)	14 (53.8%)	1 (3.8%)	-
Tend to be somewhat emotional when his material is snatched	6 (23.1%)	6 (23.1%)	12 (46.2%)	-	2 (7.7%)
Children recite from memory, poems and rhythms during play	2 (7.7%)	9 (34.6%)	14 (53.8%)	-	1(3.8%)
	S. agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	S. disagree
Tend to cry easily during play	1 (3.8%)	17 (65.4%)	2 (7.7%)	5 (19.2%)	1 (3.8%)

The overall comments by the teachers about ECD children’s socio-dramatic play were:-

- i. Pre-school children’s socio-dramatic play is healthy for children’s growth.
- ii. Pre-school children’s socio-dramatic play enabled them to deal with and control their emotions.
- iii. The Ministry of Education should not approve schools without adequate play grounds for this does not provide the ECD children with the opportunity to play and exercise their bodies.

**Managers / Head teachers View on Socio-Dramatic Play**

When the children were utilising their socio-dramatic play time, 63.36% (n=21) of the Managers/ Head teachers indicated that they were satisfied with their involvement by taking part in children’s socio-dramatic play or they initiate socio-dramatic play with the children. 12.12%

(n=4) of the ECD managers / head teachers were extremely satisfied with their involvement in the children’s socio-dramatic play while 24.24% (n=8) were neutral.

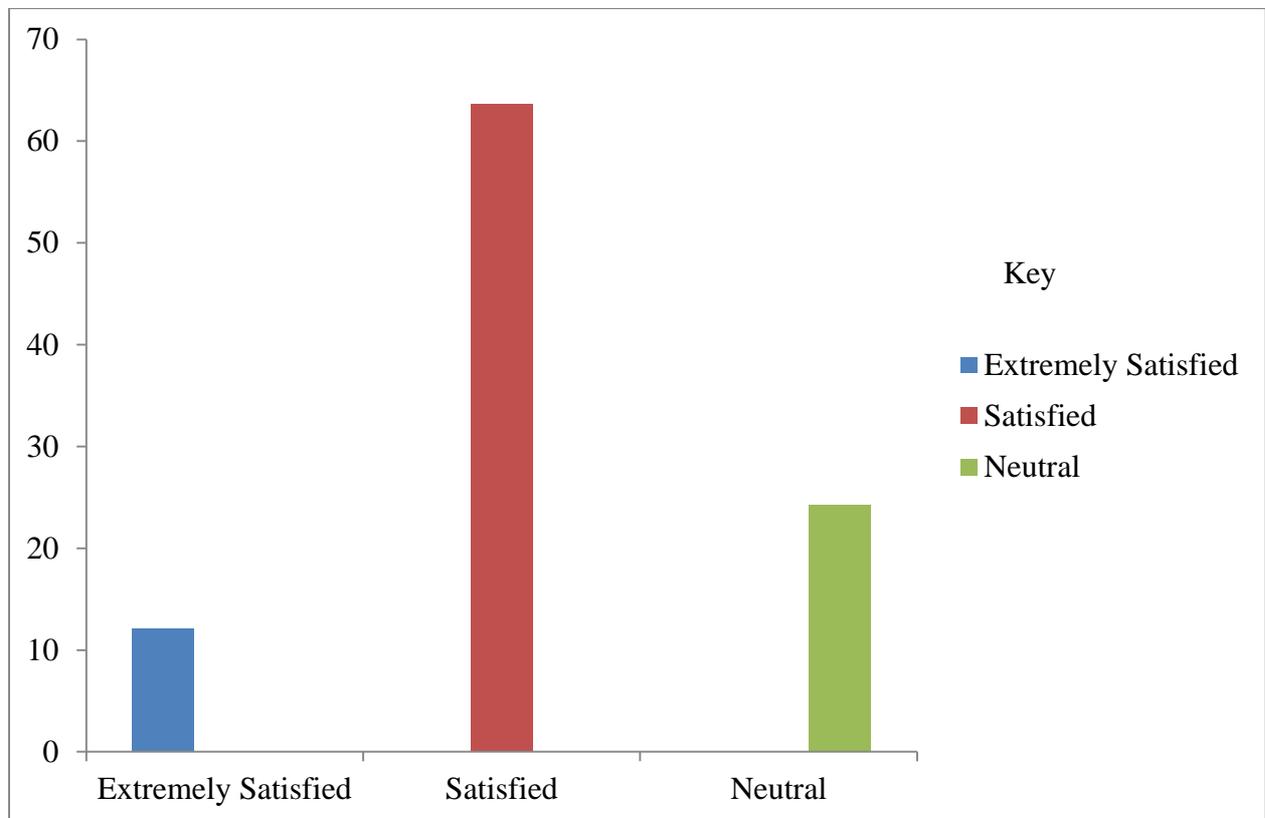


Figure 14: Managers / Head teachers View on Socio-Dramatic Play

In this study, the findings showed that 57.57% (n=19) of the Managers / Head teachers were not satisfied with the support parents / guardians gave to pre-school children’s socio-dramatic play time. This was noted by the Manager / Head teachers when the parents failed to take part in making socio-dramatic play materials for their children and they themselves did not play with the children. This confirmed Waithaka’s (2005) findings that most parents did not involve in their children’s socio-dramatic play neither did they buy play materials or play with their children. This is articulated in Table 3.

Table 3

Managers View on Parents / Guardians Support to Pre- School Children’s Socio-Dramatic Play

Managers / Headteachers view	Frequency	Percentage
Dissatisfied	19	57.57%
Satisfied	8	24.24%
Neutral	0	0
Rarely	6	18.18%
Total	33	100%

**Hypothesis: There is no Statistically Significant Relationship between Socio- Dramatic Play and Pre-School Children’s Holistic Development.**

The Hypothesis indicated above was tested by correlating Socio-Dramatic Play and Pre –School Children’s Holistic Development. The results are as computed in Table 4.

Table 4

Relationship between Socio-Dramatic Play and Children’s Holistic Development

		Socio-Dramatic play	Wholistic development
Socio-Dramatic Play	Pearson Correlation	1	.113**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.029
	N	374	374
Holistic development	Pearson Correlation	.113**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029	.
	N	374	374

The study findings indicated that, children who involved in socio-dramatic play had a very high degree of holistic development ( $r=.113, p<0.05$ ). The researcher therefore failed to accept the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant relationship between socio-dramatic play and pre-school children’s holistic development. This showed that socio-dramatic play has a great influence on pre-school children’s holistic development.

**SUMMARY**

To establish the influence of socio-dramatic play on pre-school children’s holistic development in Homa-Bay District. This study was conducted in Homa-Bay District. Sampling was done by stratifying the population into divisions along the demographic characteristic of ECD Children, ECD Teachers and ECD Managers /Head teachers. To achieve representativeness, allocation of the sample was based on proportionate sampling of the population under study. Stratified Random Sampling was employed in selection of ECD centres and ECD children per division. Statistical analysis was employed to draw inferences according to the stated hypothesis. Based on the analysis and subsequent interpretation of the results, as well as testing the hypotheses, the study came up with the following conclusion in relation to the stated objectives:-

1. Socio-dramatic play:-
  - i) There was a positive correlation between pre-school children’s degree of movement with ease and pre-school children’s holistic development.
  - ii) Children were found to make friends easily as they share play materials during socio-dramatic play.
  - iii) Pre-schoolers learnt and explored their environment which enabled them to realize their holistic development.
  - iv) During socio-dramatic play the children explored their creativity and learnt how to think and reason logically.

- v) Problem solving techniques and self-confidence are developed during socio-dramatic play activities.

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were made on the basis of the findings:-

- i) Socio dramatic play activities helped ECD children to realize holistic development which is necessary for a healthy living.
- ii) The involvement of ECD teachers in the ECD children's play activities would offer safety to the children and avoid accidents.
- iii) The ECD teachers, parents and managers/head teachers should get involved in production of playing materials to make directed play more enriched and meaningful.
- iv) The ECD teachers should ensure that they involved in the ECD children's socio-dramatic play. When teachers act a scene it makes the children to be attentive and their interest in the activity sustained.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above conclusions the researcher made the following recommendations.

- i) ECD teachers should incorporate socio dramatic Play in their teaching and also get involved in children's Socio dramatic Play activities. This can be done by the use child centered method of teaching, participatory learning or thematic integrated learning approach.
- ii) ECD teachers to be around during ECD children's socio dramatic Play activity to offer security and to avoid accidents of scrambling for play materials or some domineering ECD children to deny the weak ones to get involved the on-going play activity.
- iii) ECD parents and teachers to be actively involved in the provision and development of socio dramatic playing materials in the ECD centres. This can be done by having a common materials development workshop day at the ECD centre.
- iv) The ECD managers /Head teachers that there are adequate indoor and outdoor socio-dramatic play materials. This can be done by ensuring that there are adequate playing materials for every child or group of children.

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