

**CORRELATION BETWEEN EDUCATOR'S
UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING OF ROLE
PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLER'S
LANGUAGE, SOCIAL AND EMOTION
DEVELOPMENT**

HUANG XI CHUN

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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OF ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLER'S LANGUAGE, SOCIAL
AND EMOTION DEVELOPMENT**

HUANG XICHUN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the relationship between educators' understanding and applying of role play activities for preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development. A quantitative study was used to collect questionnaires from preschool educators in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province, China, who teach preschoolers aged five to six years old. A total of 352 educators (Private Urban N=110, Private Rural N=73, Public Urban N=101, Public Rural N=68) were chosen as research samples using stratified random sampling. The online platform Questionnaire Star is used for questionnaire distribution, which has been validated by experts and pilot studies. Inferential statistical analyses, such as correlation and regression models, are used to interpret the findings. Results showed that educators' understanding and applying of role play have a positive effect on preschoolers' language development ($r=0.31$, $p<0.00$), social development ($r=0.31$, $p<0.00$), and emotion development ($r=0.30$, $p<0.00$). However, neither teaching experience nor types of preschools have a significant effect. Educators conduct little role play sessions in teaching activities, and costumes, props, and scripts are less used in role play activities. In conclusion, this study enriches the educational connotation of role play activities, comprehensively studies preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development, and further innovates and expands the theoretical research methods of preschoolers' development. Simultaneously, it provides a more scientific foundation for front-line educators and preschools to implement role play activities suitably.

HUBUNG KAIT ANTARA KEFAHAMAN PENDIDIK DAN PENGAPLIKASIAN AKTIVITI MAIN PERANAN UNTUK PERKEMBANGAN BAHASA, SOSIAL DAN EMOSI PRASEKOLAH

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan hubungan antara kefahaman pendidik dan aplikasi aktiviti main peranan untuk perkembangan bahasa, sosial dan emosi kanak-kanak prasekolah. Kajian kuantitatif telah digunakan untuk mengumpul soal selidik daripada pendidik prasekolah di Chaozhou, Wilayah Guangdong, China, yang mengajar kanak-kanak prasekolah berumur lima hingga enam tahun. Seramai 352 orang pendidik (Bandar Swasta N=110, Luar Bandar Swasta N=73, Bandar Awam N=101, Luar Bandar Awam N=68) telah dipilih sebagai sampel kajian menggunakan pensampelan rawak berstrata. Platform dalam talian Questionnaire Star yang telah disahkan oleh pakar dan kajian rintis digunakan untuk pengedaran soal selidik. Analisis statistik inferensi, seperti model korelasi dan regresi, digunakan untuk mentafsir penemuan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kefahaman pendidik dan pengaplikasian main peranan memberi kesan positif terhadap perkembangan bahasa ($r=0.31$, $p<0.00$), perkembangan sosial ($r=0.31$, $p<0.00$) dan perkembangan emosi ($r=0.30$, $p<0.00$) kanak-kanak prasekolah. Walau bagaimanapun, pengalaman mengajar mahupun jenis kanak-kanak prasekolah tidak mempunyai kesan yang signifikan. Pendidik kurang menjalankan sesi main peranan dalam aktiviti pengajaran, dan pakaian, prop dan skrip kurang digunakan dalam aktiviti main peranan. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini memperkayakan konotasi pendidikan aktiviti main peranan, mengkaji secara menyeluruh perkembangan bahasa, sosial, dan emosi kanak-kanak prasekolah, dan seterusnya menginovasi dan mengembangkan kaedah penyelidikan teori perkembangan kanak-kanak prasekolah. Pada masa yang sama, ia menyediakan asas yang lebih saintifik untuk pendidik barisan hadapan dan prasekolah untuk melaksanakan aktiviti main peranan dengan bersesuaian.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
DV	Dependent Variable
IV	Independent Variable
MOEPRC	Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Science

APPENDIX LIST

- A Role Play Activity and Preschooler's Development Rating Scale
- B Applications for conducting research

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Early childhood education is the foundation and key to today's educational development. Educators in China are heavily involved in integrating play and early childhood development. Simultaneously, the concept of "role play activities" became popular. This study aims to investigate the relationship between educators' understanding and role play activities on preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development. This chapter shows an overview of the research background. It includes the problem statement and existing gap, research objectives, research questions, hypothesis of study and significance of the study of this topic, which is related to independent variable

(educator's understanding of role play for preschoolers' language, social and emotion development) and dependent variable (applying of role play).

1.2 Research Background

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

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

Rather than focusing on academic skills, the primary goal of early childhood

education is for preschoolers to learn through play (Einarsdóttir, 2017). For preschoolers, play is natural, and inseparable, and it is also the proper focus of all preschool activities. Preschoolers should be allowed to play freely according to their circumstances, and they should be able to express their feelings. In play, preschoolers can form social groups and create their culture in which they can convey themselves while respecting the opinions of other preschoolers. (Theobald et al., 2015).

Yogman et al. (2018) argued that preschoolers perceive play as a self-initiated activity that is intrinsically pleasant, and frequently involves social interactions in which they use their imagination, play roles. Preschoolers frequently regard play as a social activity because they value someone play with them (Rhijn et al., 2019).

Games or role play activity are essential stimuli for preschoolers. Preschoolers development can be best nurtured and maximized through play activities. Play significantly affect preschoolers' social, behavioral, cognitive, and language development. It is a critical thing for the healthy development of society. As preschoolers have fewer opportunities to play, various social problems have also arisen (Daubert, Ramani, & Rubin, 2018). In the context of social development, Play provides preschoolers with opportunities to interact with others. In education and psychology, the term "learning by playing" is commonly used to describe how preschoolers acquire knowledge from their learning environment (Fynn, 2021). This method is student-centered throughout the teaching and learning process and relies on play. It is stated

that learning through play is the best method as it is linked to the natural characteristics of a preschooler who enjoy playing. As a result, the implementation of this method should take into account preschoolers' needs and interests, and educators should guide and support their preschoolers' play activities (Marouf, Che-Ani, & Tawil, 2015).

1.3 Problem Statement

As an indispensable development in preschoolers' lives, preschooler's language, social and emotion development are attracting the attention of mainstream education circles and has become a hot topic at present.

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China is a department of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in charge of education and language work. The following article refers to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, which will be abbreviated as MOEPRC. The MOEPRC develops and oversees the preschool education department's policies, while local governments ensure accessibility, affordability, and quality of preschool education. The government places significant importance on promoting preschoolers' overall development (MOEPRC, 2012). The national curriculum framework by MOEPRC (2012) outlines the ideal aims of child development and mandates preschool institutions to design learning programs to enhance preschoolers' overall development in five areas: health, language, social and

emotion, science, and art. The learning experience is mostly offered through free games, educator-guided learning activities, and outdoor sports.

Preschool education in China began relatively late and is currently facing challenges in curriculum reform and education system improvement. Improving preschool educators' academic ability and promoting the development of preschoolers has become a significant focus in the field of early education. There are two main factors for this issue: the limitation of educators' understanding and the problem of preschoolers' development.

In China, the overall professional quality of preschool educators in our country still needs to be improved, and there are problems, such as a need for more suitable academic qualifications (Feng, 2017). The changing social culture and policy environment affects early childhood education development. As a result, cultural values and concerns about parenting, socialization, learning, and development take on new dimensions (Hu et al., 2017). Because they were so profoundly influenced by collectivist culture, Chinese educators, and even Chinese educators' early childhood classrooms, emphasized discipline and attempted to instill a sense of order in preschoolers (Li, 2019). Preschoolers are taught to follow the educators' lead, which means that the educators determine the content and format of learning. Yang and Hu (2019) believed that preschoolers are often passive learners in this educator-centered approach to learning, following the educators through a series of scheduled activities.



They spend most of their time listening to the educators, answering questions, and having little time for self-exploration and thinking and little time for free play (Hu et al., 2018). Also, when educators chase the syllabus and place too much emphasis on the curriculum, they overlook play's relevance for preschoolers (Irvin, 2017).

Duan (2019) interviewed preschool educators, and She found that there are the following problems in preschoolers' language development in China: a. Insufficient attention is paid to preschoolers' language useability, b. Educators' understanding of language education goals is not unified, c. Language education goals are challenging, and the teaching method is single.



In observing the language teaching of preschoolers, scholars have found that the procedures, teaching methods, and organizational forms are the same, which lacks flexibility. In addition, there is much time for group activities in teaching activities and little time for individual activities. Most teaching activities only use oral communication to teach (Duan, 2019). Preschoolers' thinking is mainly based on concrete image thinking, so changeable, lively, and exciting educational methods are more suitable for learning a language. The simple "injection" learning makes language learning boring and may hinder preschooler's language development (Su et al., 2020).

The "Guidelines for Preschool Education" and "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged from three to six years old" clarified the educational





goals of preschools in the social field. There are also practical suggestions for most early childhood educators to carry out education and teaching in the social field. The promulgation of these two documents shows that the research perspective of current social education in China has gone deep from macro theoretical discussion to micro practical application. However, many issues in educational practice, goals, unsystematic educational content and teaching methods indicate that preschool education in the social field is still marginalized (Chen, 2019). Focusing on the problems of preschool social field education and exploring comprehensive and flexible preschool social field education and teaching practice are the inevitable efforts of educators.



One-child families can be seen everywhere in China, and preschoolers lack the opportunities to interact with their peers. Hence, preschool education is crucial for their emotion and social development. Early childhood education can give preschoolers more chances to understand others' viewpoints, and an environment close to real social life can be provided (Qiao, 2018). Accordingly, preschoolers can fully have the chance to communicate with peers of different ages and psychological states. Preschoolers can fully experience the role of themselves and their partners, which will undoubtedly promote their emotional and social development (Xu & Bo, 2017). In this urgent need, there is a need for a more suitable form for preschoolers' social and emotion development, such as role play activities.



In general, there are limited studies in flexible and creative teaching methods fields. Most preschool educators have little teaching experience. Research showed that educators who have been in the profession for longer are more creative, better at managing classroom activities, and report more vital teaching skills (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2017). They are also more likely to introduce unpredictability into the classroom, which learners prefer. Under such a background, most preschool educators need more knowledge of preschool education, so they need more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the concept and value of role play activities. Liu (2021) conducted a questionnaire survey on some preschool educators. She found that most educators have a limited understanding of role play activities, leading to inappropriate or even wrong behaviors when guiding preschoolers to carry out role play activities, making the teaching effect less than expected.

Due to different cost constraints and interests of public and private preschools, many currently have too many preschoolers, and the scope of preschoolers' activities could be expanded. There needs to be more space to carry out role play activities. Then some preschools have more preschoolers in one class (Tsergas & Fragkos, 2021). Then aggravates the venue's limitations on the development of activities. The preschoolers' lack of game experience will gradually lose their interest in role play games and weaken their teaching effect. Besides, the frequency of preschoolers' activities themselves is low. Once there is unscientific time planning, the time for role play activities will be further reduced so that preschoolers have not had time to integrate into the role. The



activities will end, and preschoolers cannot get a good game experience, directly leading to a decrease in the quality of teaching (Ma, 2021).

Due to different cost constraints and interests of public and private preschools, many currently have too many preschoolers, and the scope of preschoolers' activities could be expanded. There needs to be more space to carry out role play activities. Then some preschools have more preschoolers in one class (Tsergas & Fragkos, 2021). Then aggravates the venue's limitations on the development of activities. The preschoolers' lack of game experience will gradually cause them to lose interest in role play games and weaken their teaching effect. Besides, the frequency of preschoolers' activities themselves is low. Once there is unscientific time planning, the time for role play activities will be further reduced so that preschoolers have not had time to integrate into the role. The activities will end, and preschoolers cannot get a good game experience, directly leading to a decrease in the quality of teaching (Ma, 2021).

Studies have shown that role play activities aid in preschoolers' development. It allows preschoolers to practice repeatedly throughout the activity (Kalkusch et al., 2020). This form is ideal for preschoolers who enjoy repetition and can provide them with a lot of freedom and space to enjoy the fun of acting and interacting with others. Without the strict supervision of educators, preschoolers can imagine and create situations that meet their specific needs, and their creativity can flourish.



Today, the role of play in early childhood development is often overlooked. This research discusses the impact of role play activities on preschoolers' development. In China, educators are the foremost leaders in preschool classrooms, and preschoolers' role play activities focus on results rather than processes, ignoring preschoolers' theatrical experience. Whether it is the current worrying situation of preschool education or preschoolers with rapid physical and mental development, the researcher deeply feels the necessity of revealing the current situation of educators' guidance in role play activities. The level of educators' application of role play activities needs to be clarified, and educators' awareness and application of role play activities need to be improved. In short, innovative activity models need the guidance and assistance of preschool educators. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between preschool educators' understanding and application of role play activities for preschoolers' development and to improve educators' guidance level, which is the purpose of this research.

1.4 Research Objectives

Research Objective 1

Identify the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's language development.

Research Objective 2

Identify the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's social development.

Research Objective 3

Identify the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's emotion development.

Research Objective 4

Identify the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's language development.

Research Objective 5

Identify the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's social development.

Research Objective 6

Identify the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's emotion development.

Research Objective 7

Identify the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's language development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

Research Objective 8

Identify the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's social development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

Research Objective 9

Identify the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's emotion development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

1.5 Research Questions

Research Question 1

What is the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's language development

Research Question 2

What is the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's social development?

Research Question 3

What is the level of educator's understanding and applying the role play activities and preschooler's emotion development?

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's language development?

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's social development?

Research Question 6

What is the relationship between educator's level of understanding and level of applying role play activities and preschooler's emotion development?

Research Question 7

What is the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's language development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience?

Research Question 8

What is the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's social development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience?

Research Question 9

What is the relationship between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's emotion development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience?

1.6 Hypothesis of the Study

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is not significant relationship between educator's level of understanding of role play activities and level of applying of role play activities for preschooler's language development.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is not significant relationship between educator's level of understanding of role play activities and level of applying of role play activities for preschooler's social development.

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: There is not significant relationship between educator's level of understanding of role play activities and level of applying of role play activities for preschooler's emotion development.

Hypothesis 4

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's language development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

Hypothesis 5

H₀₅: There is no significant difference between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's social development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

Hypothesis 6

H₀6: There is no significant difference between educator's understanding of applying role play activities for preschooler's emotion development according to types of preschools and educator's teaching experience.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Due to the influence of policies and special Chinese national conditions in China mainland, there are some problems in semester education. Firstly, the organizational forms of early childhood teaching are similar, and there is a lack of innovative teaching methods such as role play activities. Secondly, due to the profound influence of the collectivist culture, Chinese educators, and even their preschool classrooms, place more emphasis on following the educators' guidance, which means that the educators determine the content and form of learning. Thirdly, due to the different cost constraints and benefits of public preschools and private preschools, many preschools currently have the problem of too many preschoolers and limited scope of activities. Finally, preschool educators in most preschools have less teaching experience, so educators lack creativity in the classroom (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). Based on the relationship between the nature of role play activities and the development of preschoolers, this study uses the following relevant theories for further research to enrich and improve educators' understanding and application of role play activities in related fields.

Accordingly, the detailed study of the three theories will be discussed in chapter 2 and the theoretical framework of the research is as in Figure 1.1:

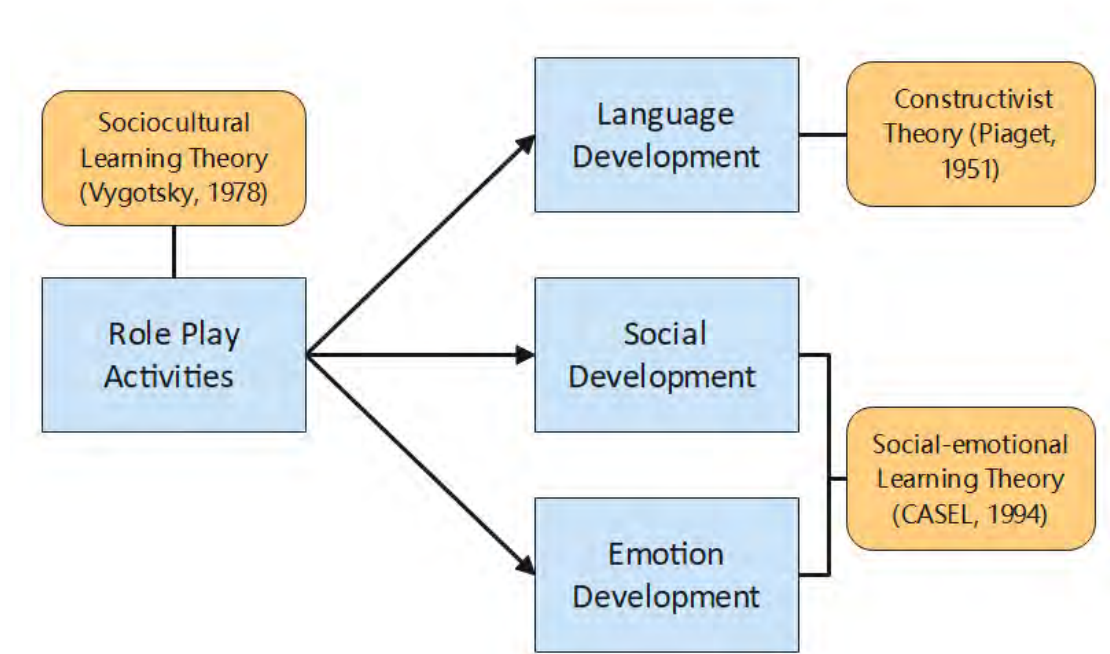


Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework

1.8 Conceptual Framework

This study combines sociocultural learning theory constructivist theory and social-emotional learning theory to test the correlation between educator's understanding and applying of role play activities for preschooler's language, social and emotion development.

Preschoolers actively interact with their peers in games or use a foolproof method to solve communication problems during role play activities, other preschoolers will

imitate their peers' behavior when they encounter such situations next time (Lee & Rutherford, 2018). Therefore, when preschoolers observe their game partners, they will acquire specific communication skills and improve the corresponding language communication skills. Preschoolers' techniques for controlling emotions, settling conflicts, and communicating with others are all taught via experience and developed in conjunction with the environment and time (Kirk & Jay, 2018).

The types of preschools include public and private preschools, and they have many differences. Public preschool educators are relatively rich in education level and teaching experience and have more opportunities to receive training, while private preschools have relatively few (Hicks, Kernsmith, & Smith-Darden, 2020). The types of preschools affect their application frequency and ability to use them in implementing role play activities. If the educator's ability to apply role play activities is good, it can positively affect preschoolers because they will learn from observing educators' behaviors. Years of teaching experience affect an educator's creativity, predictability, classroom management, and teaching skills. Such educators are more creative in the classroom, better at managing classroom activities, and report more vital teaching skills and more innovation (Dewaele, Gkonou & Mercer, 2018).

The independent variable (IV) used in this study is applying role play activities, which contains three main contents: at the same time, the dependent variable (DV) is educator's understanding of role play activities for preschoolers' language, social and

emotion development. Law et al. (2017) stated that the importance of spoken language in a child's growth could not be neglected. Language development occurs naturally in the majority of preschoolers. Parker, Rubin, Erath, Wojslawowicz and Buskirk (2015) stated that social development is a description of preschoolers' social behavior and its continuous development and change process with age, and a description of preschoolers' relationship with peers and adults, emotional experience and expression, and ability to communicate in groups. Emotion development include socialization, enrichment and deepening, self-regulation. Then, in this study, types of preschools and educator's teaching experience these two serve as control variables. These variables are thought to influence educators' ability to apply role play activities. Accordingly, the framework of the research is as in Figure 1.2:

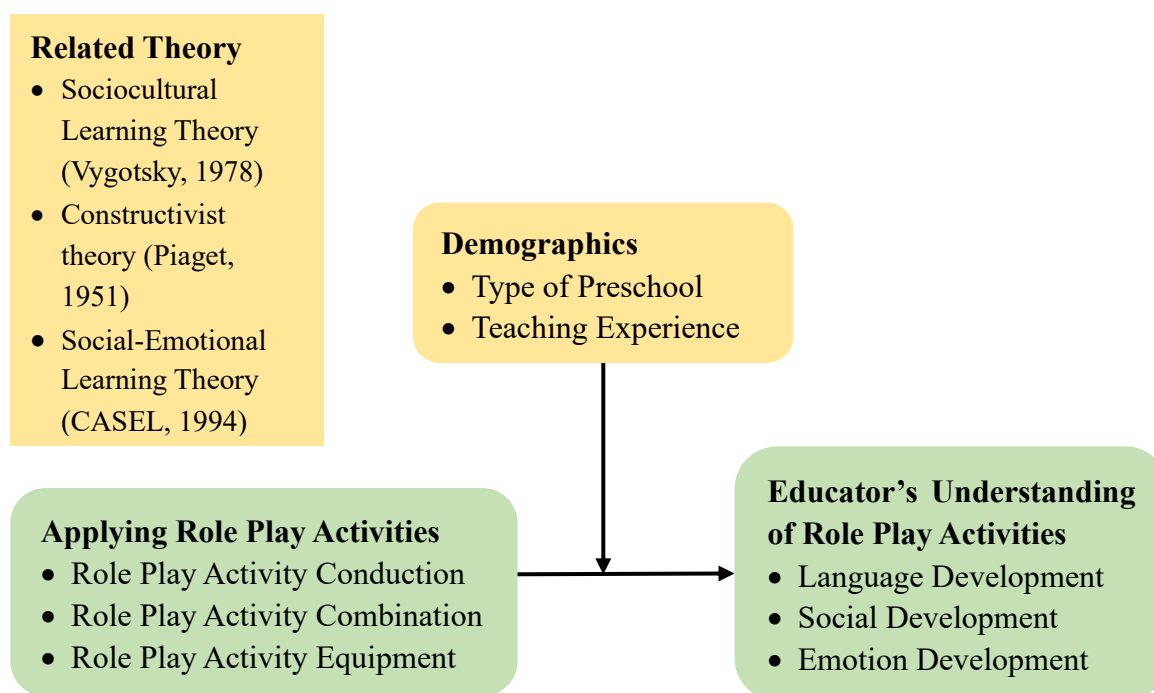


Figure 1.2. Research Framework

1.9 Operational Definition

1.9.1 Educator

Educators serve as role models for students. The preschool educator is a hard worker when it comes to the early childhood development curriculum (Zee, Jong, & Koomen, 2017). Before starting primary school, an increasing number of preschoolers spend time with educators in a school-like setting. Educators, like parents, are regarded as essential and competent social partners in developing preschoolers' learning and social interactions (Rojas & Abenavoli, 2021). According to research on preschool educators' quality, one of the main factors influencing preschool educator quality is educator ability (Baez Hernandez, 2019). As a result, educators must be capable of educating and teaching preschoolers. Educators must have teaching, personal, social, and professional competence to provide quality education. At the same time, the ability to think creatively. In classroom teaching and learning, educators' pedagogical competence is critical (Jusuf, Sopandi, Wulan, & Sa'ud, 2019).

In this study, educators refer to preschool educators from different kinds of preschools. They also possess the pedagogical and professional competencies mentioned in previous studies, and educators use language that preschoolers can master at all ability levels with straightforward explanations (Ibrahim, Yusof, Yaakob, & Othman, 2019). Educators can impart knowledge about preschoolers within their field,

actively participate in preschoolers' teaching activities in preschool classrooms, and demonstrate educators' abilities. We comprehensively consider preschool educators' teaching content, knowledge, methods, learning orientation, and attitudes. The characteristics of these educators are preschools from Chaozhou, China, from different regions, including urban and rural areas, and different educational backgrounds, including postgraduate, undergraduate, college, and others. They have teaching experiences ranging from 5 years and below, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 years and above. Different recruitment systems and educational experiences in public and private preschools inevitably lead to different working conditions for educators. Therefore, the range of early childhood educators studied in this paper also needs to consider these two factors.

1.9.2 Preschooler

Early childhood usually refers to the period from birth to six years of age, especially three to six years old, and early childhood is the first stop for preschoolers to meet the world. Preschoolers are referring to preschoolers who are not yet of school age. Globally, different countries have different regulations regarding the age of preschoolers entering school, typically five or six years old. As a result, the age limit for preschoolers varies (Caganaga & Kalmis, 2015). Preschoolers have some characteristics at this stage, and preschoolers' intelligence and physical abilities

improve rapidly. Preschoolers begin to investigate the world and gain firsthand knowledge of events as they interact with others. (Shahc, Mann, Singh, Bangar, & Kulkarni, 2020).

According to the Early Learning and Development Guideline for Three to Six Years Old Children (2012), the school age for Chinese preschoolers is six years old, so children younger than this age group are preschoolers. Preschoolers are the subjects who participate in various educational activities and are the core elements of preschool education. Although some studies refer to the term preschoolers as preschoolers or early childhood, this study refers to preschoolers aged from five to six years old in preschools in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province, China.

1.9.3 Role Play

Preschoolers' standing in the social connection system has varied over history, resulting in role play activity. Throughout this process, role play activity became a creative game, and youngsters reflected on real-world events through role interaction (Vinogradova & Ivanova, 2016). Role play activity is a broad phrase that encompasses imagination, social theatre, and role playing. It is a fundamental, global, and cross-cultural feature of preschooler development. Pretend play appears before the age of two years in the typical development of preschoolers, increases around three to four years old, and



declines around six years old. It hits its peak between the ages of five and six (Thompson & Goldstein, 2019).

By analyzing previous scholars' concepts, the term "role play activities" in this research primarily refer to an activity that preschoolers engage in through role play against a specific theme background. Creatively imitate and express characters and emotions based on their impressions, understandings, and imaginations of the scene content, guided by preschool educators. It is a veritable goldmine of improvisation, role play activities, and script knowledge in various forms. Role play activities must depict other people's thoughts and actions, as well as emotional depictions appropriate for a variety of situations and roles. Role play activities are frequently used in preschool picture book classes and reading classes. Preschoolers can thus better understand the personality traits of the characters in the stories.

1.9.4 Understanding of Role Play

By analyzing previous scholars' concepts, the term "role play activities" in this research primarily refer to an activity preschoolers engage in through role play against a specific theme background. Creatively imitate and express characters and emotions based on their impressions, understandings, and imaginations of the scene content, guided by preschool educators. It is a veritable goldmine of improvisation, role play activities, and



script knowledge in various forms. Role play activities must depict other people's thoughts and actions and emotional depictions appropriate for various situations and roles. Role play activities are frequently used in preschool picture books and reading classes. Preschoolers can thus better understand the personality traits of the characters in the stories.

In this research context, educators' understanding of role play includes three dimensions: the impact of role play activities on preschoolers' language, social, and emotional development. Preschool educators are the primary implementers of preschool education and teaching activities and are the central guides of preschoolers' life and learning. The understanding of role play activities in this study mainly refers to educators' perceptions and evaluations of role play activities for preschoolers' language, social, and emotional development.

1.9.5 Applying of Role Play

The goal of applying role play activity is to give preschoolers a more comprehensive range of expression options. As a result, connecting verbal expressions of emotions to feelings that students have already identified is a goal in and of itself. More role play activity based on roles and narratives can benefit from increased vocabulary and feelings expressed differently from everyday life. The purpose of role play activity, as

the name implies, is to create characters. Through a series of actions and words, preschoolers can gain a deeper understanding of the characters' emotions and inner worlds during applying role play activity and form correct values (Tian & Xiao, 2019). Ward (2018) claimed that role play activity is a practical approach for activating the teaching and learning environment, attracting learners' interest, and achieving excellent language acquisition.

The applying of role play in this study refers to the situation in which preschool educators carry out preschoolers' role play activities, including the use of teaching aids such as props, costumes, and script in the implementation. The application of role play also means combining it with other teaching methods, such as music, storytelling, reader theater, and picture books. In addition, the implementation of role play activities also includes use in the classroom, such as language class, drama class, and social activities. This study focuses on the frequency of role play activities in these contexts.

1.9.6 Language Development

Over the last 25 years of research, there has been evidence for at least two essential generalizations about preschoolers' language acquisition. First, language acquisition is when old ways or forms express new meanings and communicative functions. These may be gestures, vocalizations, words, or sentence structures. Second, new forms of



social behavior frequently emerge to express preschoolers' pre-existing communicative intentions (Krijnen, Steensel, Meeuwisse, Jongerling, & Severiens, 2020). Preschoolers language acquisition that there are many similarities in preschoolers' language development, such as when they say their first word and begin to use grammar and morphemes. However, even in a relatively limited cultural or linguistic environment, there are appreciable individual differences (Justice, Jiang, & Strasser, 2018).

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1.9.7 Social Development

Blazevic (2016) proposed that preschoolers' social education goals include knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, appreciation, and social participation. When formulating social goals, full consideration should be given to democratic traditions, social expectations, and the influence of citizens' social ethics, Etc. Dyson, Howley, and Shen (2020) pointed out that preschoolers' social education goals should cultivate a sense of social responsibility and social behavior. The researcher also emphasized that the social field should focus on the emotion development of preschoolers, like cultivating preschoolers' social responsibility and social behavior ability. Furthermore, propose corrective programs for preschoolers' behaviors that do not meet social requirements. In 1999 and 2000, Japan successively promulgated the "Preschool Education Essentials." The preschool curriculum was divided into five aspects: interpersonal relationship, language, expression, health, and environment. Social education is one of them, and its primary connotation is embodied in "interpersonal relationships" (Moore, 2019).

For the preschooler's social development in this research context, the goals of preschool education in the social field, such as interpersonal communication and social adaptation, are divided into eight intermediate goals and 74 specific small goals. In interpersonal communication, preschoolers learn to express the goal as willing to interact with others in activities, get along with peers, have self-esteem, self-confidence, independent performance, and take the initiative to care for and respect others.





Regarding social adaptation, preschoolers learn to adapt to group life, abide by the basic code of conduct in role play activities, and have an initial sense of belonging to the group and family. There are three sections of social development: communication and interaction, self-development, and social adaptation.

1.9.8 Emotion Development

Emotional self-regulation, efficient communication, active social contact, and social adaptability are aspects of social-emotional development. Emotion management, developing communicative emotions and conflict resolution/avoidance skills, demonstrating empathy, demonstrating good contact and classroom collaboration, and adhering to fundamental behavioral norms are all aspects of social-emotional abilities (Shi et al., 2021). Villalobos, Pacios, and Vázquez (2021) stated that the high-level cognitive control and appraisal process, on the other hand, is at an early or developing stage in preschoolers. Sub-cognitive emotional structures that are more evolved neurobiologically, such as those connected to temperament and emotions, are still in the embryonic stage of development. It may also impact emotional control, perfection, and growth.

For the preschooler's emotion development in this study, it involves the preschoolers' ability to understand the causes and results of emotions and express their



emotions based on understanding and to use the information obtained to respond appropriately to the emotions of themselves and others. There are three sections of emotion development: recognition and understanding of emotion, expression of emotion, and regulation of emotion.

1.10 Research Limitation

This study is subjected to the following limitations. First, a limitation of this study is that even though the sample was collected among 352 educators in preschools in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province, China, the results may need to be generalizable to other samples in different regions of China. It would be even better if the research could be carried out across all the Eastern Guangdong regions of China, involving more preschool educators to improve and disseminate the research findings. Second, the findings are based on data collected using questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. Third, a few dimensions of early childhood development are used in this study, and more dimensions can be included, such as healthy, artistic, and scientific development. Social aspects such as social perception should also be considered in future research. This factor needs to be validated in more extensive studies involving more participants. This is because more data will enrich our understanding of the work of preschools education and teaching.

Despite its apparent limitations, this study provides insight into the relationship between the independent variable (application of role play activities) and the dependent variable (educator's understanding of role play activities). This research suggests preschool educators can use role-playing activities to enhance early childhood development. China's recent three-child policy has further demonstrated the importance of early childhood education and development.

1.11 Importance of Research

In China, the academic ability of preschool educators is generally low. Preschool education has a single teaching method, and preschoolers' activities are mainly based on educators-injected education, which is not conducive to preschoolers' language, social and emotion development. This study aims to explore the educators' understanding and level of application of role play activities. The research results of this paper have particular theoretical and practical significance.

From a theoretical point of view, domestic and foreign attention has been paid to the development of preschoolers, and there are many related studies. Still, most focus on game activities to promote preschoolers' language and cognitive development. Previous research on classroom role play activities is conflicting, and comprehensive research on preschoolers' language, social, and emotion development is lacking. Based

on actively learning from previous research, this study expands its horizons. It explores the relationship between educators' understanding and the level and application of role play activities for preschoolers' development to enrich the educational connotation of role play activities and further innovate and extend research methods for preschoolers' development. At the same time, it also provides a more scientific basis for the practical activities of role play in preschools.

From a practical point of view, the significance of this research lies in three points. For preschools, it provides lessons for preschool curriculum reform, and different preschools can learn from each other, thereby improving teaching efficiency and promoting the excellent development of preschools. For preschool educators, the research uses quantitative data analysis that can provide specific references and help with educators' creative drama activities, improving the status quo of role play activities. This situation also improves educators' guidance level and provides better guidance for educators to support preschoolers' activities. This is beneficial for educators to guide preschoolers' behavior more effectively and scientifically when they carry out role play activities in everyday teaching. Role play activities provide preschoolers with a unique field of peer interaction. This process is inseparable from communication and peer cooperation to promote language progress. In addition, preschoolers will learn the correct concepts and methods of peer interaction through role performance or observation and transfer the learned content to their daily life. Thereby preschoolers learn to improve negative emotions and promote good peer interaction behaviors. Then,

it will contribute to preschoolers' social life, laying a solid foundation for their social development.

1.12 Summary

Overall, this chapter discusses the research background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, research hypothesis, conceptual framework, operational definition, limitations, and implications of the study. This study explored preschool educators' understanding and application of role play activities. This research uses sociocultural learning theory, constructivist theory, and social-emotional learning theory to build a conceptual framework of role play activities and preschoolers' language, social and emotion development. This study's independent variable (IV) is applying role play activities, and the dependent variable (DV) is the educator's understanding of role play activities for preschoolers' language, social and emotion development.