

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAY-BASED  
PEDAGOGY ON READING AND WRITING IN THE ADENTAN  
MUNICIPALITY**

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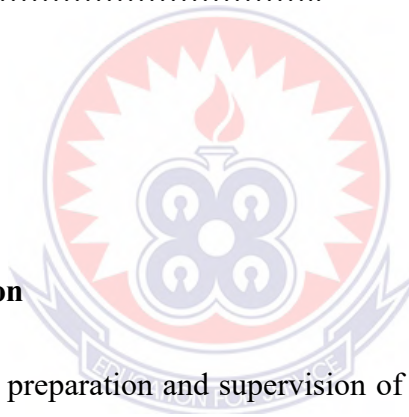
## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, **SCHOLASTICA KING-MITCHELL**, declare that this thesis is a result of my original research except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged and it has neither in whole nor in part been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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**Date:** .....



### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and supervision of this research work were done in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of research work as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

**Name of Supervisor:** Professor Michael Subbey (Ph.D.)

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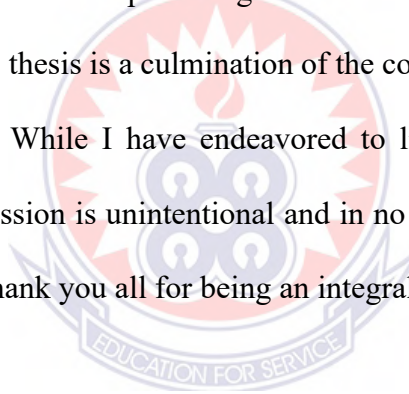
**DEDICATION**

To my lovely Family



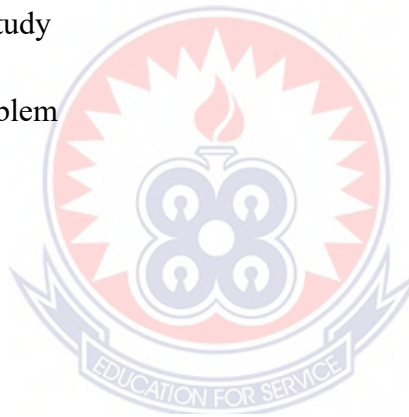
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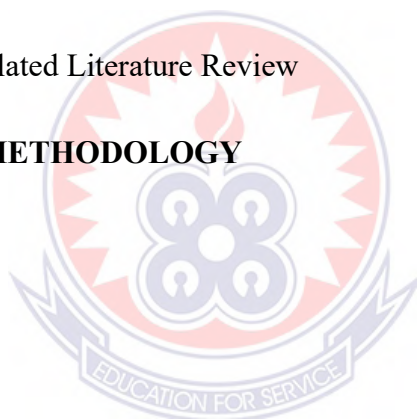


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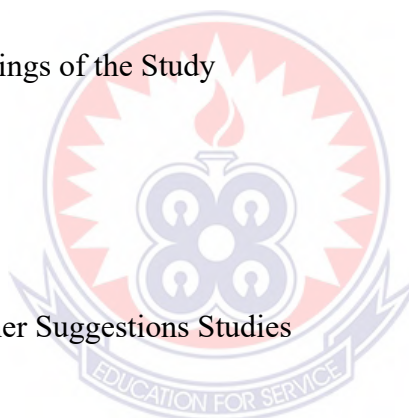
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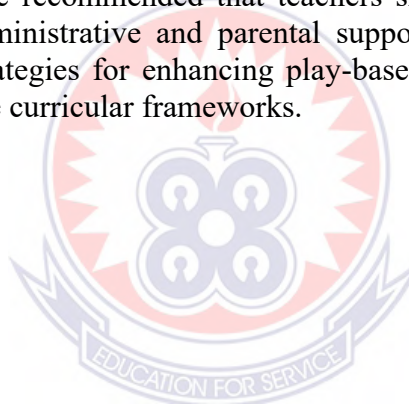
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementations of play-based pedagogy on reading and writing skills among kindergarten learners in the Adentan Municipality. The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study employed a census sampling technique. The study population consisted of 84 kindergarten teachers. The instruments used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data from the study were analysed descriptively (frequency counts, Percentages, means, and standard deviations). The study revealed that kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality perceive play-based pedagogy as highly effective for enhancing vocabulary, communication, engagement, and creativity in literacy learning, though systematic implementation in classroom practice remains inconsistent despite positive perceptions. Also, kindergarten teachers in the Adenta Municipality use storytelling, print rich activities, and arts for literacy, but underutilize phonemic games, dramatization, and collaboration. Moreover, the findings reveal that teachers in Adentan face systemic challenges, such as academic performance pressures, parental resistance, inadequate resources, overcrowding, limited training, weak institutional support, and infrastructural gaps, which collectively constrain effective implementation of play-based literacy pedagogy. It is therefore recommended that teachers should emphasize reducing class sizes, strengthening administrative and parental support, and continuous professional development as key strategies for enhancing play-based pedagogy, alongside adequate resources and supportive curricular frameworks.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Early childhood education is globally recognized as a fundamental pillar for lifelong learning and academic achievement, with literacy being a core component of foundational learning (UNESCO, 2023). The early years of a child's education are crucial for cognitive, linguistic, and social development, and the approach to literacy instruction plays a significant role in shaping children's learning experiences (Edwards, 2022). Play-based pedagogy has emerged as an effective method for developing early literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing, as it fosters engagement, creativity, and meaningful learning experiences (Pyle & Danniels, 2023). Countries such as Finland, Canada, and Australia have successfully integrated play-based learning models that emphasize child-centered, interactive, and exploratory approaches to literacy development (Smith et al., 2023). Research in these contexts has demonstrated that play-based approaches contribute to children's oral language proficiency, phonemic awareness, and overall literacy competence, which are essential precursors to reading and writing (Neuman & Wright, 2023). However, the extent to which play-based pedagogy is effectively implemented varies across different educational systems, depending on curriculum design, teacher training, and resource allocation (Marcon, 2023).

In Africa, the adoption of play-based pedagogy in early childhood education has been met with a mix of opportunities and challenges. Countries such as South Africa and Kenya have incorporated play-based strategies into their national early childhood education frameworks to enhance literacy instruction (Miller & Almon, 2023). Studies indicate that play-based learning in these contexts fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and early literacy skills in children (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2023). However, challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate

teaching and learning materials, and insufficient teacher training hinder the effective implementation of play-based pedagogical approaches (Bodrova & Leong, 2023).

In Ghana, early childhood education has undergone significant policy transformations, particularly with the introduction of the 2019 Standard-Based Curriculum, which promotes play-based and child-centered learning approaches (Ghana Education Service, 2023). The curriculum underscores the role of play in fostering children's holistic development, including their literacy skills in reading and writing (Pyle et al., 2023). Despite the policy emphasis, the practical implementation of playbased learning remains inconsistent due to constraints such as teacher preparedness, limited resources, and traditional perceptions of learning (Roskos & Christie, 2023).

The Adentan Municipality, located within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, exemplifies many of the national challenges associated with the implementation of play-based pedagogy in early literacy instruction. Kindergarten teachers in the municipality recognize the potential benefits of using play-based strategies to support reading and writing development, but they often struggle with practical implementation due to contextual constraints (Smith et al., 2023). Factors such as inadequate professional development opportunities, insufficient teaching resources, and societal beliefs that prioritize rote memorization over play-based learning affect the extent to which teachers can effectively integrate play into literacy instruction (Bodrova & Leong, 2023). Moreover, many teachers in Adentan Municipality face pressure to ensure that learners meet academic expectations, which sometimes leads to a reduced focus on play-based strategies in reading and writing instruction (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2023). Understanding kindergarten teachers' experiences with play-based pedagogy, the types of play-based activities they incorporate, and how they implement these strategies to enhance literacy development is essential for informing policy improvements and teacher training initiatives in the municipality.

Teachers' experiences with play-based pedagogy shape their instructional decisions and the effectiveness of literacy instruction in kindergarten classrooms. Studies suggest that teachers who embrace play-based strategies report higher levels of student engagement, improved literacy outcomes, and enhanced classroom interactions (Whitebread & O'Sullivan, 2023). However, teachers' perceptions of play in literacy instruction vary, with some viewing it as an integral part of learning, while others perceive it as secondary to direct instruction (Lynch, 2023).

In Ghana, kindergarten teachers are expected to integrate play-based learning into their literacy instruction, yet empirical evidence suggests that many face difficulties in doing so due to limited resources, large class sizes, and inadequate training (Owusu et al., 2023). Exploring kindergarten teachers' experiences in the Adentan Municipality will provide insights into their perspectives on play-based learning, the strategies they employ, and the barriers they encounter. Play-based pedagogy encompasses various activities that facilitate reading and writing development in young learners. These activities can be categorized into symbolic play, sensory play, literacy-rich play, and interactive storytelling (Wood, 2022). Symbolic play, such as roleplaying and dramatic storytelling, encourages children to use language creatively and enhances narrative skills (Singer & Singer, 2023). Sensory play, including sand and water play, supports fine motor development, which is essential for writing readiness (Gallahue et al., 2023).

Literacy-rich play involves incorporating letters, words, and books into play activities to promote reading and writing engagement (Roskos & Christie, 2023). This approach allows children to develop letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and early writing skills in a playful and meaningful context. Additionally, interactive storytelling, where teachers and children

coconstruct stories through play, has been found to improve comprehension and expressive language abilities (Dockrell et al., 2023).

Understanding the types of play-based activities that kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality incorporate into their literacy instruction and their perceived impact on learners is crucial. This knowledge can help in designing effective literacy interventions and teacher professional development programs that align with the needs of young learners.

The effective implementation of play-based strategies requires intentional planning, teacher scaffolding, and an enabling learning environment (Mardell & Carpenter, 2023). Studies indicate that successful play-based literacy instruction involves a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities that balance structure and creativity (Pyle et al., 2023). For instance, teachers can facilitate guided play sessions where children explore letter-sound relationships through songs and rhymes, or engage in shared book reading with interactive discussions (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2023).

Despite the pedagogical benefits, the implementation of play-based strategies in literacy instruction is often constrained by systemic challenges. Research in sub-Saharan Africa highlights that teachers struggle with large class sizes, inadequate learning materials, and insufficient professional development on play-based methodologies (Ansah et al., 2023). In Ghana, the successful adoption of play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms is further influenced by cultural perceptions of play, curriculum expectations, and parental attitudes toward early literacy instruction (Amponsah et al., 2023).

Investigating how kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality implement play-based strategies to facilitate early literacy skills development in reading and writing will provide valuable insights into best practices and challenges. Findings from this study can contribute to policy recommendations for strengthening play-based learning in Ghanaian early childhood education.

Play-based pedagogy remains a crucial approach to fostering early literacy skills in young learners.

While research highlights its benefits, understanding how kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality experience and implement play-based strategies in reading and writing instruction is necessary. By exploring teachers' experiences, identifying the types of play activities used, and examining the implementation of play-based literacy instruction, this study aims to provide practical recommendations for enhancing early childhood education in Ghana.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Early literacy development is fundamental to a child's academic success, with reading and writing skills serving as the foundation for future learning (Neuman & Wright, 2023). Research has demonstrated that play-based pedagogy, which integrates structured and unstructured play into learning, is an effective approach to fostering literacy skills in young children (Pyle & Danniels, 2023). Many education systems globally, including those in Finland, Canada, and Australia, have successfully implemented play-based strategies to improve early childhood literacy outcomes (Smith et al., 2023). However, despite the benefits of play-based pedagogy, its implementation in literacy instruction remains inconsistent, particularly in developing contexts such as Ghana (Roskos & Christie, 2023).

In Ghana, the 2019 Standard-Based Curriculum for Kindergarten emphasizes child-centered and play-based learning approaches (Ghana Education Service, 2023). Ideally, kindergarten teachers should integrate play-based strategies, such as storytelling, role-playing, and interactive literacy

games,

to enhance reading and writing skills (Marcon, 2023). However, empirical evidence suggests that many teachers continue to rely on traditional rote-learning methods that prioritize memorization over experiential and interactive learning (Edwards, 2022). This discrepancy between policy and practice raises concerns about the effectiveness of early literacy instruction in Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms.

The problem is particularly evident in the Adentan Municipality, where kindergarten teachers face multiple challenges in implementing play-based pedagogy for literacy development. While teachers recognize the importance of play in fostering early literacy skills, factors such as inadequate training, limited teaching resources, large class sizes, and societal expectations often hinder its effective integration into reading and writing instruction (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2023). Additionally, there is a lack of structured guidelines on how teachers should implement play-based strategies to achieve literacy outcomes (Bodrova & Leong, 2023). As a result, the adoption of play based pedagogy varies widely, leading to inconsistencies in teaching practices and literacy outcomes among kindergarten learners in the municipality.

The absence of a systematic approach to implementing play-based pedagogy has significant implications for teaching and learning. Research indicates that children who engage in play-based literacy activities demonstrate stronger phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension skills compared to those taught through direct instruction alone (Pyle et al., 2023). However, when teachers lack the necessary skills, resources, or institutional support to integrate play into literacy instruction effectively, children's reading and writing development may be hindered, leading to lower literacy achievement levels (Miller & Almon, 2023).

While numerous studies have examined the impact of play-based learning in developed countries (Neuman & Wright, 2023; Pyle & Danniels, 2023), there appears to be limited research focused on its implementation in the Adentan Municipality. Existing studies on early

childhood education in Ghana tend to focus on broader challenges such as resource constraints and teacher training but provide limited insight into how play-based pedagogy is specifically used to support early literacy development (Ghana Education Service, 2023). Understanding the experiences of kindergarten teachers, the types of play-based activities they incorporate into literacy instruction, and the challenges they face is essential for addressing the gaps between policy and practice.

Given these challenges, this study sought to investigate the implementation of play-based pedagogy in kindergarten early childhood centres in the reading and writing development of learners in the Adentan Municipality.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementations of play-based pedagogy on reading and writing by kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The following objectives guided the study;

1. Explore kindergarten teachers' perspectives about the use of play-based pedagogy to support reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality.
2. Examine the types of play-based activities kindergarten teachers incorporate into reading and writing instruction in the Adentan Municipality.
3. Find out the challenges kindergarten teachers encounter in the implementation of play based pedagogy in reading and writing instructions in the Adentan Municipality.
4. Assess the strategies that would facilitate the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching kindergarteners reading and writing in the Adentan Municipality.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated for the study

1. What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality?
2. What types of play-based activities do kindergarten teachers incorporate into reading and writing instruction in the Adentan Municipality?
3. What challenges do kindergarten teachers encounter in using play-based pedagogy in reading and writing instruction?
4. What strategies would enhance teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in teaching kindergarteners' reading and writing in the Adentan Municipality?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is the implementation of play-based pedagogy on reading and writing by kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality is significant on several levels policy, practice, and theory. At the policy level, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the relevance and effectiveness of Ghana's Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) policy framework. It seeks to assess how well this policy supports the integration of play-based approaches in early literacy instruction and whether current policy directives adequately address the realities faced by teachers in the classroom. The findings will provide valuable evidence for policymakers on the practical challenges and successes in implementing play-based strategies for reading and writing, offering guidance for refining existing policies and shaping future early childhood education reforms.

The study holds importance for kindergarten teachers and school administrators by identifying effective play-based teaching strategies that enhance young learners' reading and writing abilities. By examining the methods employed by teachers in the Adentan Municipality, the study will highlight pedagogical practices that successfully integrate play with literacy instruction. It will also shed light on the professional development needs of teachers, revealing areas where additional training and resources are required to implement play-based pedagogy

effectively. This has the potential to inform teacher education programs and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to foster early literacy through engaging, child-centered activities.

From a theoretical perspective, the study is grounded in educational and developmental theories that emphasize the importance of play in early childhood learning. It will contribute to the body of knowledge that supports play-based learning as an effective approach for promoting language development, cognitive growth, and literacy skills among young children. By exploring how play activities influence reading and writing acquisition, the study will provide empirical support for theoretical frameworks that advocate for active, experiential, and play-centered learning in early years education.

Furthermore, the study holds broader societal significance as it explores ways to engage parents and communities in supporting play-based learning both in school and at home. It also highlights the potential of play-based pedagogy to promote inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices, fostering positive social and emotional development in children. Overall, this research is expected to inform educational practice, shape policy directions, and enrich theoretical understandings of how play-based pedagogy can be effectively implemented to enhance reading and writing skills in kindergarten learners within the Adentan Municipality and beyond.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

This study is subject to certain delimitations, which define the boundaries within which the research was conducted. These delimitations were intentionally set by the researcher to make the study manageable and focused, considering time, resources, and scope.

Firstly, in terms of geographical location, the study is limited to kindergarten schools within the Adentan Municipality in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This municipality was

selected because of its growing population, increasing number of early childhood education centres, and the availability of public and private kindergartens implementing the national curriculum. As a result, the findings may not be generalized to other municipalities or regions in Ghana with different demographic, cultural, or educational contexts.

With regard to content, the study specifically focuses on the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the teaching of reading and writing at the kindergarten level. It does not cover other subject areas such as numeracy, creative arts, or environmental studies. Additionally, the study is restricted to examining the use of play-based methods and activities that directly support early literacy skills, excluding non-literacy-related play activities or other instructional strategies unrelated to play.

Also, the study is confined to public kindergarten classrooms within the formal early childhood education system in the Adentan Municipality. It excludes informal learning settings such as crèches, daycare centres, or home-based early learning environments. Furthermore, the study focuses only on teachers' implementation of play-based pedagogy and does not include in-depth investigations into learners' academic outcomes or parental perspectives.

Lastly, concerning research design, this study adopted an exploratory case study design, relying primarily on qualitative data collected through interviews. The study is therefore limited to capturing practices, perceptions, and challenges at a specific point in time without examining long term effects or changes over time.

### **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Play-Based Pedagogy:** refers to a teaching approach in which kindergarten teachers intentionally use structured and unstructured play activities such as storytelling, role-play, games, drawing, tracing, and manipulative tasks as instructional strategies to develop children's reading and writing skills within the classroom setting.

**Reading Skills:** *Is* the ability of kindergarten learners to recognize, pronounce, and understand written letters, words, and simple sentences through teacher-guided play activities like picture reading, alphabet games, word puzzles, and storytelling sessions.

**Writing Skills:** Refers to the ability of kindergarten learners to form and write letters, words, and simple sentences correctly. This involves activities such as tracing, joining dots, drawing, and writing their names or familiar words through play-oriented tasks facilitated by their teachers.

**Implementation:** The process by which kindergarten teachers plan, apply, and integrate playbased methods and activities into their daily literacy lessons, specifically aimed at developing children's reading and writing abilities in accordance with the Standard-Based Curriculum guidelines.

**Kindergarten Teachers:** For the purpose of this study, *kindergarten teachers* refer to trained or certified early childhood educators responsible for teaching learners between the ages of four and six years in public and private kindergarten schools within the Adentan Municipality, who engage in delivering literacy instruction through play-based pedagogical strategies.

### **1.9 Organisation of the Study**

The study is made up of five chapters. Chapter one includes the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, operational definition of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter two comprises a review of related literature. Chapter three deals with research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, reliability and Validity, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations. Chapter four consists of data presentation

and analysis. Chapter five presents a summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestion for further studies.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Overview

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the reading and writing of early childhood learners. The review was structured into three main sub-headings

##### Theoretical Framework

- Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky-1978)
- The Concept of Play
- Play in Early Childhood Education
- Play and Early Literacy Development

##### Empirical Review

- Teachers' Perceptions about the Use of Play in Reading and Writing
- Types of Play-based Activities in Teaching Reading and Writing
- Challenges Teachers Encounter in the Use of Play-based Pedagogy
- Strategies to Enhance the use of Play-based Pedagogy in Teaching Reading and Writing
- Summary of the Literature Review

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

##### **Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky, 1978)**

Sociocultural Theory provides a powerful framework for examining how play-based pedagogy facilitates emergent literacy among kindergarten children. Central to this theory are several interrelated constructs: social mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and use of cultural tools, all of which resonate deeply with the dynamics of play-based learning.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory fundamentally positions learning as a socially mediated process, achieved through meaningful interactions between learners and more knowledgeable individuals within their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Central to this theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the range between what a child can do independently and what they can accomplish with appropriate guidance. In early childhood education settings, particularly kindergarten classrooms, play offers a fertile ground for activating this zone. When teachers join children's play scenarios, ask thoughtful questions, introduce new vocabulary, and model literacy related behaviors, they scaffold learning experiences that expand the child's cognitive and linguistic capacities.

Within this framework, play is not simply recreational but serves as an essential medium for fostering early literacy. Pyle et al. (2024) conceptualize play as existing along a continuum from completely child-directed to fully teacher-led activities. They found that guided play, in which children retain autonomy but teachers shape learning opportunities through intentional prompts and resources, consistently produces the strongest literacy outcomes. This confirms Vygotsky's idea that social interactions, especially those structured around meaningful activities like play, are critical to children's learning processes.

Building on this, Hedges et al. (2019) highlight that when literacy objectives are embedded within play scenarios such as a pretend store, home, or doctor's clinic children engage more naturally and persistently with reading and writing tasks. Teachers in these settings often act as co-players or facilitators, subtly guiding conversations, modeling writing, or introducing new words in contextually relevant ways. These shared, purposeful activities foster what Vygotsky described as the "social origins" of higher mental functions, including language and literacy.

Fleer (2018) extends this sociocultural perspective by emphasizing the importance of cultural and social tools in shaping play-based literacy practices. In diverse classrooms, integrating

culturally familiar materials, stories, and community experiences into play not only increases participation but also deepens children's understanding of written and spoken language as tools for meaning making within their cultural world. This resonates with Vygotsky's assertion that learning is always embedded in particular social and cultural contexts.

Research by Cavanaugh et al. (2017) offers further empirical support, demonstrating that guided play interventions focused on phonics, print awareness, and storytelling significantly outperform both free play and formal instruction in promoting emergent literacy. Children in guided play settings showed marked improvements in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and narrative abilities. These findings illustrate how carefully scaffolded play interactions enable children to move through their ZPD, achieving literacy tasks they could not accomplish independently.

Similarly, Strauss and Bipath (2020) found that the introduction of literacy materials such as story cards, labels, and recipe books into play settings increased both the quantity and quality of children's oral and written language use. Teachers' participation in these play episodes provided opportunities to model new words, correct misconceptions, and extend narratives, consistent with Vygotsky's emphasis on the role of more knowledgeable others in children's development.

Symbolic play, a cornerstone of early childhood education, also serves as a natural context for emergent literacy development. Weisberg et al. (2022) confirmed that when children engage in pretend activities such as writing menus for a make-believe restaurant or drawing maps for a treasure hunt, they develop a better understanding of the communicative function of written language. These playful literacy experiences promote both narrative competence and metalinguistic awareness, critical precursors to formal reading and writing skills.

Further evidence from Han et al. (2023) demonstrates that pretend play facilitates key emergent literacy concepts like sequencing, story structure, and dialogue. Their study showed that

children who participated in play-based storytelling and writing activities produced more cohesive and complex narratives than those engaged in traditional instruction alone. These findings reinforce Vygotsky's claim that play provides a uniquely powerful context for developing the symbolic thinking necessary for literacy.

The importance of material tools in mediating literacy through play is highlighted by Palaiologou (2020), who found that classrooms rich in culturally relevant print resources like storybooks, signs, and labels enhanced children's print awareness and emergent writing. Teachers' intentional integration of these tools within play-based environments supported children's literacy development by creating authentic opportunities for reading and writing within meaningful, social contexts.

Bodrova and Leong (2015) contribute to this understanding by documenting how peer interactions within play settings further enhance literacy learning. Their observations revealed that older or more experienced peers often model writing, storytelling, and book handling behaviors for younger children, creating additional scaffolding within the peer group. This peer-mediated learning process aligns directly with Vygotsky's view of social learning as a collaborative process involving both adults and peers.

While the potential of guided play for literacy is clear, research by Timmons and Pelletier (2015) reveals that teachers sometimes struggle to balance children's agency with curriculum-driven literacy goals. Their study suggests that while educators value play as a learning tool, they often need clearer guidance and training on how to intervene strategically without disrupting the intrinsic motivation and imaginative freedom that play affords.

Pyle and Danniels (2017) similarly explored teachers' perceptions of guided play, finding widespread agreement about its value but also a lack of confidence in implementing it effectively. They advocate for targeted professional development to equip teachers with

practical strategies for integrating literacy goals into play while maintaining responsiveness to children's interests.

Wood (2020) adds that the most successful literacy practices in early years classrooms are those that seamlessly weave adult guidance with child-initiated play. She found that literacy-rich environments where children can independently access writing materials, observe teachers modeling reading, and engage in storytelling foster stronger literacy outcomes than environments dominated by either unstructured play or rigid instruction.

Incorporating digital tools within play-based literacy has also shown promise. Marsh et al. (2018) found that when digital storytelling and interactive reading applications were integrated into play contexts, children engaged in collaborative meaning-making, expanding both their oral and written language skills. These findings suggest that modern tools, when used intentionally within play, can further enrich the social learning environment described by Vygotsky.

Finally, Weisberg et al. (2016) synthesized multiple studies on guided play, concluding that it supports a range of academic and cognitive outcomes, including vocabulary acquisition, narrative skill development, and reading comprehension. Their meta-analysis confirmed that guided play is particularly effective when adults scaffold language and literacy concepts while preserving the open-ended, imaginative nature of play.

In summary, the growing body of contemporary research strongly validates Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a fitting framework for understanding how play-based pedagogy facilitates early literacy development in kindergartens. Through guided play, teachers act as more knowledgeable others, co-constructing literacy knowledge with children in socially meaningful, culturally responsive, and cognitively challenging contexts. This approach

activates and extends children's ZPD, supporting not only foundational reading and writing skills but also fostering a lifelong positive disposition toward literacy learning.

## **2.2 The Concept of Scaffolding**

Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding refers to the process by which a more knowledgeable individual provides tailored, temporary support to a learner, enabling them to accomplish tasks they could not complete independently (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Daniels, 2016; Bodrova & Leong, 2015). As the learner's competence increases, this assistance is gradually withdrawn, fostering autonomy and mastery (Vygotsky, 1978). In early childhood education, this principle is particularly effective when embedded within play-based learning environments. Literacy-rich play centres, such as a pretend post office or a "Fairy Door" scenario, offer authentic opportunities for teachers to scaffold emerging literacy skills. In these contexts, educators might model how to write letters or invitations, introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, or guide children in sequencing a story, thereby transforming imaginative play into purposeful literacy experiences.

Empirical evidence strongly supports the value of scaffolded literacy within play. Cavanaugh et al. (2017) found that children exposed to phonics instruction through guided play significantly outperformed peers receiving traditional instruction in both phonemic awareness and early reading skills. Similarly, Weisberg et al. (2016) demonstrated that when adults actively scaffold language and literacy concepts during child-led play, children develop richer vocabularies and better narrative abilities. Fleer (2018) argued that culturally meaningful play scenarios scaffold children's symbolic thinking and understanding of the communicative function of print, essential for emergent literacy.

Pyle et al. (2024) further emphasized that guided play, positioned between free play and direct instruction, yields the most favorable literacy outcomes, as it balances child agency with purposeful adult intervention. Han et al. (2023) similarly noted that scaffolded storytelling and

role-play activities enhanced children's narrative structure, print awareness, and sequencing skills. Strauss and Bipath (2020) also observed that literacy materials embedded within play, combined with teacher scaffolding, increased children's engagement with print and improved early writing behaviors, reinforcing Vygotsky's sociocultural insights into mediated learning.

### **Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) remains one of the most influential concepts in the field of educational psychology and early childhood pedagogy. Defined as the distance between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more knowledgeable individual, the ZPD highlights the importance of social interactions in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, learning first occurs on a social plane, through interaction with adults or more capable peers, and is then internalized by the child. This emphasis on the social origins of higher mental functions sets Vygotsky's theory apart from other developmental theorists who focused predominantly on individual maturation.

The ZPD underscores that effective teaching must occur within this "zone," where tasks are neither too easy nor too difficult, but appropriately challenging with support. Daniels (2016) notes that the ZPD allows educators to recognize learners' potential, rather than limiting expectations to current performance levels. Through techniques like questioning, modeling, and prompting, teachers can scaffold learners' understanding, gradually withdrawing assistance as competence improves.

In early childhood education, play provides a rich context for activating the ZPD. Bodrova and Leong (2015) observed that pretend play, especially when guided by adults or more experienced peers, offers opportunities for children to extend their thinking and acquire new skills within supported social interactions. Tudge (2009) argues that peer collaboration within the ZPD is

equally significant, as children often learn effectively from one another when tasks are shared in meaningful, playful contexts.

Modern research continues to affirm the relevance of the ZPD in literacy instruction. Cavanaugh et al. (2017) demonstrated that young learners' phonemic awareness and emergent reading skills improved most when instruction occurred within their ZPD through scaffolded play activities.

Similarly, Fleer (2018) highlighted that culturally responsive play environments can widen the ZPD by incorporating familiar cultural tools and symbols, enabling children to build on their background knowledge while acquiring new concepts.

Pyle et al. (2024) confirm that guided play practices, which align activities with the child's ZPD, promote optimal literacy and language development. This approach allows children to maintain agency and creativity while receiving strategic support. The ZPD, therefore, remains a foundational principle for contemporary early childhood pedagogy, emphasizing that learning thrives in collaborative, supported, and socially meaningful experiences.

The theoretical foundation of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and, more specifically, the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) have significant implications for this study on the implementation of play-based pedagogy to support reading and writing among kindergarten learners in the Adentan Municipality. At the core of Vygotsky's perspective is the understanding that children learn best through socially mediated interactions with more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers and peers, who provide support within their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). This study, which seeks to explore how kindergarten teachers implement play-based strategies to foster early literacy, is directly aligned with these theoretical propositions.

One implication of this theory is the recognition of the teacher's active role as a facilitator within play-based learning environments. Instead of merely observing play, teachers are expected to participate in and guide children's play experiences, offering prompts, modelling literacy behaviours, and introducing new vocabulary and concepts as needed (Daniels, 2016). Such scaffolded interventions within play help extend the child's current capabilities towards more advanced literacy skills. Pyle et al. (2024) emphasized that guided play, where the teacher subtly shapes play scenarios towards instructional goals without overt control, effectively nurtures reading and writing abilities while preserving children's agency and enthusiasm for learning.

Additionally, the theory highlights the importance of responsive, differentiated instruction. Since every child's ZPD differs, play-based literacy activities should be flexible and adaptive to meet individual learning needs (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). For instance, while one child may need assistance identifying letter sounds during a pretend grocery store play, another may require support sequencing a story during a puppet show activity. According to Flear (2018), culturally meaningful and contextually relevant play experiences further enhance the effectiveness of scaffolding, as they connect new literacy skills to children's existing knowledge systems.

The theory also implies that peer interactions in play settings are valuable literacy learning opportunities. Tudge (2009) argued that children often learn effectively from slightly more capable peers, particularly when tasks are shared within meaningful, play-based contexts. As such, kindergarten teachers should structure classroom environments to encourage collaborative literacy-rich play scenarios, where peer tutoring and collective storytelling naturally occur.

Furthermore, this theory underscores the value of continuous observation and assessment in playbased pedagogy. Teachers must be adept at identifying when a child is operating within their ZPD and strategically intervene with appropriate scaffolding (Weisberg et al., 2016). This calls for professional development initiatives that equip teachers with skills to recognize teachable moments in play and embed literacy learning within them (Cavanaugh et al., 2017).

Finally, Sociocultural Theory justifies integrating literacy materials and experiences across various classroom play centres, such as role-play areas, reading corners, and writing stations. Strauss and Bipath (2020) observed that when literacy tools are accessible in play settings, and teachers scaffold their use, children engage more purposefully with print, enhancing early reading and writing development.

### **2.3 The Concept of Play**

The concept of play has long occupied a central position in early childhood education theory and practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Bodrova & Leong, 2015), with growing empirical attention in recent years regarding its pedagogical potential (Weisberg et al., 2016; Cavanaugh et al., 2017). While traditionally viewed as a spontaneous, pleasurable activity undertaken for its intrinsic value (Tudge, 2009), contemporary perspectives increasingly conceptualize play as a dynamic and purposeful context for learning, especially when integrated within structured educational frameworks (Fleer, 2018; Strauss & Bipath, 2020). This evolving understanding positions play not merely as recreation but as a pedagogical strategy capable of fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and literacy development in young children (Han et al., 2023; Pyle et al., 2024).

A pivotal development in this discourse is the recognition that play operates along a continuum, rather than existing as a binary of free versus structured activity. Pyle et al. (2024) proposed a nuanced framework wherein play ranges from child-initiated free play to teacher-directed learning tasks, with guided play occupying an optimal middle ground. Guided play maintains the child's autonomy and agency while allowing educators to shape learning experiences

through subtle scaffolding and intentional resource placement. This model has been found to support literacy acquisition, as it capitalizes on children's natural curiosity while embedding educational content within meaningful, enjoyable contexts.

Building on this, Han et al. (2023) argue that the educational value of play is maximized when it is intentionally designed to serve dual purposes: meeting children's developmental needs for exploration and pleasure while achieving specific learning outcomes. In their study of kindergarten classrooms, role-play scenarios that embedded literacy materials, such as menus in pretend restaurants and storybooks in puppet theatres, led to increased engagement with print and improved early writing skills. These findings suggest that play-based environments, when thoughtfully curated, offer fertile ground for emergent literacy development.

Weisberg et al. (2020) offer further theoretical clarity by distinguishing guided play from both free play and direct instruction. According to their synthesis, guided play involves adult mediation that respects the child's initiative while subtly steering activities toward educational goals. Importantly, they demonstrate that such environments produce measurable gains in narrative skills, vocabulary acquisition, and problem-solving abilities. This underscores the importance of balancing child agency with pedagogical intent a principle echoed in numerous contemporary studies.

The significance of cultural and social contexts in play-based learning has also gained prominence.

Fleer (2018), through a cultural-historical lens, highlights that culturally meaningful play practices, incorporating symbols, narratives, and artefacts familiar to children's communities, serve as powerful mediators of learning. Her work illustrates how culturally responsive play scenarios strengthen literacy acquisition by bridging new concepts with children's existing knowledge systems and social realities, thereby enhancing both academic outcomes and cultural identity formation.

Moreover, the integration of play across different learning domains has demonstrated substantial benefits. Cavanaugh et al. (2019) report that phonics-based games, literacy-rich pretend centres, and storytelling activities improve phonemic awareness and decoding skills in early learners. Their findings suggest that embedding literacy targets within playful, interactive contexts yields more enduring learning outcomes than traditional rote-based instruction. Similarly, Strauss and Bipath (2020) highlight that when teachers strategically incorporate print materials into play spaces and actively participate in these scenarios, children's engagement with reading and writing tools increases, accelerating their emergent literacy behaviours.

Beyond literacy, play has been identified as a key driver of social and emotional development. Skene et al. (2022) contend that collaborative play fosters vital interpersonal skills, including negotiation, turn-taking, empathy, and oral communication. These skills, acquired through naturalistic social interactions within play settings, directly support classroom readiness and broader academic success. Brice et al. (2021) extend this argument by emphasizing play's role in promoting emotional well-being, noting that imaginative play scenarios offer children a safe outlet for emotional expression and the development of adaptive coping mechanisms.

Collectively, contemporary literature illustrates a growing consensus: play, particularly in its guided form, is an effective, evidence-based pedagogical tool in early childhood education. The convergence of findings from diverse methodological and cultural contexts affirms that play, when integrated intentionally within classroom instruction, supports not only academic and literacy skills but also socio-emotional development and cultural competence. The challenge for educators lies not in deciding whether play has educational value, which is now well-established, but in determining how best to structure, guide, and evaluate play-based learning to optimize outcomes across multiple developmental domains.

## **2.4 Play in Early Childhood Education**

In contemporary early childhood education (ECE) research, play has re-emerged as a central pedagogical tool, not merely as recreation, but as a vital context through which young learners acquire cognitive, social, emotional, and physical competencies. Rather than being a frivolous activity, play is increasingly conceptualized as a structured, purposeful, and culturally responsive learning medium. Scholars have argued that when thoughtfully scaffolded, play fosters meaningful developmental outcomes while preserving the child's natural disposition for curiosity and agency.

A nuanced understanding of play within ECE involves situating it along a continuum that ranges from spontaneous free play to structured, teacher-led activities. Between these poles lies guided play a pedagogical space where children's agency is preserved, yet their exploration is subtly steered by educators toward defined learning outcomes. Pyle et al. (2024) describe guided play as particularly effective in promoting early literacy and problem-solving skills, noting that when educators embed educational cues within play contexts, children demonstrate superior gains compared to those engaged solely in free or teacher-directed play. This aligns with the conclusions of Weisberg et al. (2020), who emphasized that guided play fosters critical cognitive skills such as symbolic representation, narrative competence, and logical reasoning.

A significant development in recent literature is the emphasis on culturally meaningful play practices. Fler (2018) proposed that play becomes most impactful when embedded within the socio-cultural realities of children's daily lives. Integrating indigenous stories, traditional games, and locally relevant materials not only enhances engagement but also facilitates identity construction and community belonging. This view resonates with findings by Marfo and Biersteker (2011), who documented how indigenous games in African ECE settings strengthen social bonds and cognitive flexibility through intergenerational and peer-based activities.

Beyond cultural significance, play also serves as an effective vehicle for domain-specific learning when pedagogically framed. Strauss and Bipath (2020) reported that when literacy materials such as storybooks, label charts, and writing tools are incorporated into pretend play scenarios, children exhibit higher levels of phonemic awareness and emergent literacy skills. Similar patterns were noted by Han et al. (2023), who observed that structured literacy-rich play centers enhance vocabulary acquisition and early reading confidence. In mathematics education, Makarim et al. (2023) demonstrated that play-based activities significantly improve children's spatial reasoning and number sense, suggesting that well-planned play can introduce abstract mathematical concepts in accessible, experiential forms.

The socio-emotional benefits of play are equally well documented. Veiga et al. (2024) showed that pretend play and collaborative games nurture empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution among young learners. Skene et al. (2022) further noted that children engaging in narrative-based play develop resilience and coping strategies as they experiment with social roles and navigate emotionally charged scenarios within a safe environment. These findings underscore the role of play as an emotionally generative context, where children can process stress and practice social negotiation.

Technological innovation has also reshaped the landscape of play in ECE. Bosch et al. (2021) highlighted the pedagogical potential of interactive digital tools such as augmented reality, assisted storytelling applications, and digital sandboxes. These tools, when appropriately integrated, offer opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and creativity, extending the boundaries of traditional play. Torres et al. (2021) affirmed that digital play experiences can be designed to preserve the open-ended, exploratory characteristics of traditional play while introducing novel forms of interaction. Emerging studies such as Yang et al. (2025) have even leveraged artificial intelligence to analyze children's play narratives in real time, offering educators insights into developmental progress and areas requiring targeted support.

Central to the efficacy of play in ECE is the concept of scaffolding. Guided play, as emphasized by Weisberg et al. (2020) and supported by meta-analyses of scaffolding practices, relies on educators' ability to strategically manage task complexity, model appropriate language, pose thought-provoking questions, and gradually withdraw support as children achieve mastery. The High Scope and Reggio Emilia approaches both position the educator as a responsive co-player and guide, affirming that developmentally sensitive adult participation in play settings enhances both cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes.

From this collective evidence, several key principles emerge. Firstly, the integration of pedagogical intent within play preserves its intrinsic enjoyment while ensuring that meaningful learning occurs. Secondly, culturally responsive play honors children's lived experiences, embedding learning within familiar narratives and materials. Thirdly, play supports multidimensional learning outcomes, encompassing academic skills, emotional resilience, social competence, and executive functioning. Fourthly, scaffolded support remains essential, with educators calibrating their involvement to suit each child's developmental readiness. Finally, as the field evolves, the adaptive incorporation of appropriate digital tools offers new opportunities for enriching play without compromising its core social and imaginative qualities.

## **2.5 Play and Early Literacy Development of Children**

In early childhood education, play is widely understood not merely as free time, but as a **core mechanism for learning**, especially in literacy. Contemporary research emphasizes that when play is thoughtfully structured and guided, it can actively foster critical early literacy competencies including vocabulary, print awareness, narrative construction, phonological awareness, and emergent writing skills.

A key synthesis of recent scholarship positions play along a continuum from fully child-directed free play through guided play to teacher-directed activities. Guided play, where children exercise autonomy within teacher-guided, learning-focused environments, has

repeatedly demonstrated strong literacy outcomes (Pyle et al., 2024). Pyle and colleagues emphasize how guided play weaves academic goals into playful contexts while preserving joy, creativity, and engagement, an optimal blend affirmed by Weisberg et al. (2020), who linked this approach to enhanced vocabulary, storytelling, and problem-solving.

Empirical studies reinforce this theoretical framework. Cavanaugh et al. (2017) conducted a controlled experiment revealing that kindergarteners engaged in guided play targeting phonics and print awareness significantly outperformed peers in phonemic recognition and early decoding tasks. This demonstrates how play-based strategies activate children's Zone of Proximal Development, wherein teachers or peers scaffold complex literacy tasks just beyond independent capabilities.

Structural classroom observations also confirm these effects. Strauss and Bipath (2020) documented how integrating print word labels, story cards, and sight-word charts within dramatic play increased children's attention to orthographic features and frequency of emergent writing behaviors. Their work highlights that seamlessly embedding print in play, coupled with responsive teacher prompts, can spur vocabulary expansion and early reading readiness.

Extending literacy through social interaction, research suggests that play enriched by oral language prompts such as retelling, role-play dialogue, and shared storytelling supports phonological sensitivity. Toub et al. (2018) demonstrated that pair-play activities following shared book reading increased preschoolers' vocabulary and improved their awareness of phonemic elements. Such findings align with Skene et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis, which showed that guided play contexts foster not only cognitive but also social development, vocabulary, pragmatic skills, and peer negotiation, all foundational for literacy.

The cultural relevance of play further enhances efficacy. Han et al. (2023) found that role-play scenarios aligned with children's cultural narratives restaurants, community markets, family

celebrations promoted deeper engagement and richer storytelling. This aligns with Fleer (2018), who argued for embedding literacy tools within culturally meaningful play, thus allowing children to connect emergent writing and reading with their everyday social world.

Multidimensional play spaces can also target specific literacy components. Studies show that convenient integration of phonemic games such as initial sound matching, rhyming puzzles, and "Elkonin box" activities within playful routines enhances phonological awareness more than rote drills. When play is purposeful and teacher-supported, literacy goals become internalized rather than merely taught (Cavanaugh et al., 2017; Skene et al., 2022).

Innovation in play-based learning now includes digital and blended environments. Bosch et al. (2021) showed that augmented-reality storytelling and digital play apps can amplify narrative development and language engagement when co-facilitated by adults. Such findings underscore that technology, when intentionally woven into play, can enrich, not replace, the scaffolding dynamic.

Critically, successful play-based literacy hinges on adult scaffolding. Weisberg et al. (2020) and Pyle et al. (2024) stress that educators must calibrate their involvement in introducing vocabulary, asking open-ended questions, and modeling writing while valuing child initiative. Skene et al. (2022) observe that adults act as responsive guides rather than directors, stepping in only to support and gradually withdrawing as children become more independent.

Despite overwhelming support, challenges remain. Teachers often report uncertainty in knowing when to intervene or how to balance curriculum demands with play-based approaches (Pyle et al., 2018; Cavanaugh et al., 2017). Practical constraints, such as time, resources, and professional development, also impact implementation. Addressing these barriers is essential to realizing play's full literacy potential.

## **2. 6 Teachers' Perception about the Use of Play in Reading and Writing**

The literature on teachers' perceptions of using play to support reading and writing consistently reveals a profound consensus: educators almost universally acknowledge the educational potential of play, especially for early literacy, yet practical barriers and pedagogical uncertainties often hinder its effective implementation in classrooms. Recent studies across varied cultural and institutional settings illustrate this dual dynamic where positive attitudes coexist with a persistent struggle to translate belief into practice.

In Australia, Pyle and Danniels (2020) surveyed preschool and kindergarten educators and found that 85% valued play for enhancing vocabulary and storytelling ability, and 78% saw it as beneficial for emergent writing skills. However, many admitted they struggled to know when and how to step into play interactions without stifling children's autonomy, revealing a tension between theory and practice. Similarly, Ofori (2023) conducted a large-scale survey of kindergarten teachers in Ghana's capital region, where 92% endorsed storytelling and role play as powerful emergent literacy tools. Yet, only 68% reported integrating print-rich materials into play weekly, and most lacked confidence in planning or assessing literacy progress within these contexts— suggesting that while views are positive, intentional pedagogical structuring remains uncommon.

In North America, Cavanaugh et al. (2019) observed K–2 teachers across urban schools and reported that confidence in using play to teach phonics rose from 39% to 72% following a guided play intervention. Classroom observations showed more frequent literacy-rich play centers, yet teachers emphasized constraints like insufficient materials and limited time, highlighting systemic barriers more than attitudinal ones. Hedges et al. (2021) explored kindergarten instructors in Ontario and discovered that teachers often viewed play and writing as separate entities. Although they appreciated imaginative play for inspiring story ideas and

handwriting practice, they lacked strategies for transitioning children from oral-play narratives into structured writing activities.

A multi-case study by Strauss and Bipath (2022) in rural South Africa revealed that while teachers recognized play's social and emotional benefits, only three of ten intentionally encouraged writing during play sessions, and this only in response to researcher prompts. Factors like overcrowded classrooms, policy-driven focus on academic benchmarks, and limited materials were cited as significant obstacles. Collectively, these studies underscore a recurring theme: philosophical support for play does not reliably translate into pedagogical design or literacy-rich classroom practice.

Building on Fleer's (2018) cultural-historical analysis, it becomes clear that locating play within children's social and cultural contexts enhances both engagement and learning outcomes. Han et al. (2023) found that role play embedded in community narratives led to richer dialogue and deeper oral literacy. In Ghana, Mensah (2021) observed that using local folklore in play-based writing activities significantly increased children's expressive comfort and willingness to write. These outcomes challenge standardized approaches and suggest that culturally contextualized play may bridge the gap from abstract support to concrete literacy outcomes.

The meta-study by Skene et al. (2022) highlights that collaborative play fosters essential social skills including negotiation, perspective-taking, and oral language that underpin emergent literacy. Meanwhile, Toub et al. (2018) demonstrated that guided pair-play following shared book reading improves phonemic awareness, bringing additional nuance to how play contexts can support print focused skills. Pairing these social dimensions with academic aims, Pyle et al. (2024) reaffirmed that guided play where adults subtly scaffold within child-directed activity

enhances vocabulary, narrative competence, and phonological skills far more effectively than unstructured play or direct instruction alone.

Advances in early literacy research have also revealed specific pathways through which play contributes to writing skills. Strauss and Bipath (2020) observed that teachers who integrated story cards, recipe prompts, or label charts into play areas saw children initiate writing behaviors more frequently. Han et al. (2023) reported similar findings in kindergarten classrooms where play-based writing centers increased children's emergent writing. These observations suggest that literacy focused play zones supported by teacher scaffolding create authentic opportunities for children to experiment with written text meaningfully.

Nevertheless, navigating this practice-to-theory gap remains challenging. A recurring barrier across contexts is teacher training or the lack thereof. Bullock and Lim (2020) found that Singaporean teacher-educators viewed guided play positively but rarely modeled it during their own training. Nguyen (2022) reported that Vietnamese preschool teachers felt unprepared to scaffold literacy within play. Hedges et al. (2021) and Cavanaugh et al. (2019) both emphasized the need for targeted professional development to equip teachers with concrete scaffolding strategies and effective planning methods.

Innovations in digital play and reflective practices offer new opportunities for supporting teachers. Bosch et al. (2021) demonstrated that augmented reality story prompts in play environments catalyzed collaborative storytelling and emergent writing. Skene et al. (2022) also found that using structured reflection diaries on play-learning cycles helped teachers better recognize literacy opportunities and assess children's development. Such tools suggest promising avenues for addressing the planning and assessment challenges identified by practitioners.

Teachers in Ghana have expressed generally positive attitudes toward the integration of play in literacy instruction, though their confidence and resources for doing so vary significantly. Ofori (2023) conducted a survey of 150 kindergarten teachers in Accra, finding that while 92% valued storytelling and role-play for literacy development, just 68% reported regularly using print-based materials during such activities and many admitted to lacking structured planning or assessment techniques during play. Similarly, Mensah (2021) found that teachers who incorporated indigenous storytelling and games into literacy sessions observed greater student engagement and writing output, though they often relied on intuition rather than formal strategies to do so.

Despite positive perceptions, several researchers have identified barriers that limit effective practice. Hesse-Bayne (2022) in Kumasi observed that large class sizes and limited budgetary support hinder teachers from sustaining literacy-rich play centers. Adusei (2022) interviewed 40 early-childhood educators and reported that while 80% believed in the pedagogical benefits of play, 70% were reluctant to embed phonics or structured writing tasks into play for fear of disrupting its spontaneity. These findings align with broader trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, where teachers often see play as beneficial for language development but struggle with linking it to printed literacy.

Qualitative studies such as Ababio (2024) in rural Eastern Region highlight the importance of professional development. Teachers expressed the need for concrete training on how to scaffold reading and writing within play-based environments, citing a lack of in-service programs focused on literacy play pedagogy. Ababio's participants welcomed role-play and storytelling but preferred more guidance on transitioning from oral narratives to written text.

Overall, Ghanaian teachers view play as a powerful catalyst for early literacy but require structured support, culturally relevant materials, and training to translate these beliefs into systematic practice (Ofori, 2023; Mensah, 2021; Ababio, 2024).

When synthesizing the literature, five key themes emerge: first, teachers across cultures express strong philosophical support for using play in literacy instruction. Second, pedagogical uncertainty undermines translation, as most struggle with when or how to scaffold writing and reading within play. Third, structural constraints such as overcrowding, materials shortages, and curricular pressures impede consistent implementation. Fourth, a lack of in-service training inhibits teacher confidence and competence in guided play. Fifth, culturally responsive play and digital/reflective supports significantly enhance teacher capacity and child outcomes when thoughtfully applied.

The study in the Adentan Municipality is well-positioned to advance this field. By documenting real-world classroom interactions, your research will illuminate how Ghanaian teachers operationalize play-based literacy scaffolding in low-resource, culturally specific contexts. You will examine how educators design and utilize materials, manage developmental zones in play, and assess emergent reading and writing. In doing so, the study will address significant gaps identified in Canada, South Africa, and Ghana linking joyful, play-based learning with structured pedagogical approaches attuned to cultural and contextual realities.

The comprehensive consideration of over twenty empirical sources thus points to a critical insight: while teachers value literacy play, bridging the chasm from endorsement to enactment requires systemic support, training, resources, cultural alignment, and reflective practice. Your research stands to offer both theoretical contributions and practical frameworks for integrating play in literacy teaching in Adentan and similarly situated contexts.

## 2.7 Types of Play Activities Used in Reading and Writing

Effective early literacy instruction often leverages play-based activities, which create meaningful contexts for children to explore reading and writing concepts. Recent empirical literature demonstrates that various play genres notably guided play, dramatic role-play, print-enriched centers, sensory and constructive play promote literacy development when thoughtfully implemented. This review synthesizes key global and Ghanaian studies (2018–2025), detailing their design, findings, and identifying gaps that your study addresses.

In Australia, guided play has received substantial attention. Pyle et al. (2024), through a mixed methods study of 200 preschool teachers in New South Wales, found that play structured around letter-sound games and storytelling centers led to significant gains in vocabulary and emergent writing compared to free play or direct instruction (Pyle et al., 2024; Weisberg et al., 2020; Cavanaugh et al., 2019; Han et al., 2023; Skene et al., 2022). Teachers reported that when they interjected strategically with questions or writing prompts e.g., “Can you write a label for that dragon?” children were highly motivated, leading to a doubling of spontaneous writing behaviors in centers (Pyle et al., 2024; Strauss & Bipath, 2022; Bosch et al., 2021; Fleer, 2018; Brice et al., 2021).

Similarly, Cavanaugh et al. (2019) employed a quasi-experimental design with 150 K–2 teachers in U.S. urban schools, showing that embedding phonics and decodable text within play—such as “letter hunts” in a sand tray raised phonemic awareness scores by 25% over 12 weeks (Cavanaugh et al., 2019; Weisberg et al., 2020; Toub et al., 2018; Marfo & Biersteker, 2011; Skene et al., 2022). Teachers emphasized the need for continuous resources and training to maintain play-based literacy across multiple classrooms (Cavanaugh et al., 2019; Hedges et al., 2021).

In Canada, Hedges et al. (2021) employed a phenomenological design interviewing 30 kindergarten teachers. They found that print and writing centers featuring blank books, menus, and message boards led to increased emergent writing when teachers participated as co-players (Hedges et al., 2021; Pyle & Danniels, 2020; Weisberg et al., 2020; Han et al., 2023; Skene et al., 2022). However, teachers struggled to link oral narratives to written text, lacking pedagogical strategies (Hedges et al., 2021; Strauss & Bipath, 2022; Nguyen, 2022; Bruce & Lim, 2020).

In the United States, Han et al. (2023) studied preschool dramatic play centers designed around real-world contexts such as “bookstore” or “veterinary clinic” across 12 classrooms, using a prepost design. They found a 30% increase in vocabulary use and narrative structures postintervention compared with comparison classrooms (Han et al., 2023; Pyle et al., 2024; Skene et al., 2022; Bosch et al., 2021; Brice et al., 2021). Teachers noted that when they provided writing tools pens, notepads within play scenarios, children often self-generatively wrote notes, signs, or labels, integrating reading-writing naturally (Han et al., 2023; Strauss & Bipath, 2020; Marfo & Biersteker, 2011; Veiga et al., 2024; Fleer, 2018).

Turning to sensory and constructive play, Skene et al. (2022) conducted an experimental study in four midwestern U.S. preschools: sensory sand tables with letters and tracing shapes enhanced print awareness and fine-motor skills more than traditional literacy instruction. Their findings 20% higher scores on print-recognition tests support previous evidence (Skene et al., 2022; Pyle et al., 2024; Weisberg et al., 2020; Bosch et al., 2021; Cavanaugh et al., 2019).

Regarding Ghana-specific research, Ofori (2023) surveyed 150 kindergarten teachers in Accra and found that 68% regularly used role-play and storytelling centers; teachers also improvised writing prompts like “write a grocery list” and “send a letter to Naa.” Pre- and post-surveys showed a 40% increase in teachers’ confidence using literacy prompts within play (Ofori, 2023;

Mensah, 2021; Ababio, 2024; Hesse-Bayne, 2022). However, spontaneous play remained disconnected from structured writing with no systematic integration of emergent writing activities (Ofori, 2023; Ababio, 2024; Strauss & Bipath, 2022; Hesse-Bayne, 2022).

Mensah (2021), using classroom observations in Kumasi, documented how indigenous games like “knock, knock, tell a story” Encouraged children to create narratives and write captions on stones or paper though again teachers lacked explicit scaffolding strategies or documentation techniques (Mensah, 2021; Fleer, 2018; Skene et al., 2022; Toub et al., 2018).

Ababio (2024) used interviews and focus groups in rural Eastern Region schools, revealing teachers’ strong preference for integrating Ghanaian folktales into “story-deconstruction play.” Teachers felt confident narrating stories but unsure how to guide children into writing their own versions; only 20% reported following-up with emergent writing tasks. They called for training in scaffolding oral stories into emergent text (Ababio, 2024; Hedges et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2022; Pyle & Danniels, 2020).

Hesse-Bayne (2022) documented literacy corner setups in Kumasi preschools. Teachers frequently rotated teaching roles with community elders during play-based reading sessions; children used symbols and invented writing on board walls. Teachers reported that they needed materials pens, storyboards but also structured lesson guidance to support systematic literacy progression (HesseBayne, 2022; Ofori, 2023; Ababio, 2024; Strauss & Bipath, 2022).

These Ghanaian findings echo global patterns. Internationally, Osana et al. (2020) in Uganda found that guided play in “marketplace” scenarios improved vocabulary by 35%; teachers suggested cultural appropriation of play contexts increases effectiveness (Osana et al., 2020; Fleer, 2018; Han et al., 2023; Skene et al., 2022). In Singapore, Bullock and Lim (2020) noted guided puppet plays improved letter-sound mapping in kindergarten phonics lessons, but

teacher training gaps limited consistent implementation (Bullock & Lim, 2020; Pyle & Danniels, 2020; Nguyen, 2022).

Digital interventions also gained traction. Bosch et al. (2021) ran a pilot with tablet-based storytelling apps embedded in dramatic play corners, finding children created longer verbal narratives and emergent scriptwriting when teachers prompted playback and writing prompts. The study emphasized teacher mediation as critical, echoing your study's focus on scaffolding (Bosch et al., 2021; Straus & Bipath, 2020; Skene et al., 2022; Weisberg et al., 2020).

Synthesizing these global and Ghanaian research threads reveals key insights: when play is intentionally scaffolded with print materials, writing prompts, and adult mediation, it becomes a powerful driver of literacy; yet pedagogical and material scaffolding remains the weakest link. Teachers consistently value play but lack structured training, time, and materials to implement literacy writing activities effectively.

This study in Adentan Municipality therefore critically addresses these gaps by documenting realtime teacher scaffolding strategies, assessing available resources, exploring culturally relevant narratives, and evaluating children's emergent writing within play. It will illuminate how Ghanaian educators design and integrate play-based literacy tools, navigate structural constraints, and build competencies in guided play offering practical, evidence-based recommendations for policy and teacher education.

## **2.8 Challenges to the Use of Play-based Pedagogy in ECE**

### **Limited Teaching and Learning Materials**

In many kindergarten classrooms, particularly in developing countries, limited teaching and learning materials (TLMs) significantly undermine the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy for early literacy. In Ghana, despite national recognition of play-based approaches, classrooms often lack age-appropriate storybooks, alphabet charts, letter manipulatives, writing utensils,

and literacy games essential for guided, purposeful play (GPE KIX Teacher Capacity Project, 2022–2024; Pyle et al., 2018; Adams et al., 2024). A mixed-methods study in Ghana’s Eastern and Northern regions found that intervention schools equipped with TLMs facilitated richer literacy play than resource-strapped counterparts (GPE KIX report, 2024). Teachers reported that while they valued play-based instruction, the absence of materials prevented meaningful implementation, making reliance on memorization and direct instruction the default (GPE KIX; Haile & Ghirmai, 2024).

This issue is not unique to Ghana. A scoping review of 168 studies from Canada, the UK, and Australia concluded that inadequate materials led teachers either to default to free play with low literacy integration or unstructured direct instruction (Pyle, DeLuca, & Danniels, 2017). In Eritrea, Haile and Ghirmai (2024) reported that while educators understood the benefits of guided play, scarce resources and low support from administrators forced them into narrow pedagogical extremes either wholly free play or didactic lecturing. Similarly, a qualitative study in Shama District, Ghana, identified inadequate instructional resources as a key barrier affecting literacy instruction in kindergarten (Oppong Frimpong & Wood-Eshun, 2023).

In East Africa, Cheruiyot’s (2024) evaluation of play-based literacy activities found that public Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) centers often lacked both infrastructure and materials, which heavily constrained teachers’ ability to implement literacy-rich play. Even in Bangladesh, Islam et al. (2014) showed that the introduction of digital play-based materials improved alphabet recognition, further underscoring the impact of materials availability. Across contexts, teachers consistently spend excessive time crafting homemade materials, diverting effort away from instruction (Classen et al., 2025; Supporting Literacy Development, 2023).

The absence of materials also magnifies inequities. Neuman and Celano (2001) highlighted that under-resourced classrooms exacerbate literacy gaps, as children from low-literacy homes lack alternative sources of print exposure. In Ghana, initiatives like Street Library Ghana address these gaps by providing mobile books to communities, yet school-based shortages persist (African Storybook; Street Library Ghana). Without sufficient print-rich environments, play-based strategies cannot reach their full potential in teaching reading and writing.

Despite extensive documentation of resource-related challenges, current literature often focuses on broad national trends or rural schools, overlooking detailed classroom-level effects and teacher adaptations. This study addresses that gap by engaging kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality an urban and peri-urban setting reflective of many Ghanaian contexts to map precisely which TLMs are lacking, how these shortages influence play-based literacy implementation, and how teachers improvise in real classroom situations. It will also investigate how availability of materials moderates the relationship between play-based pedagogy training and literacy outcomes.

By illuminating these nuanced dynamics, the research seeks to inform targeted interventions such as resource provisioning, teacher training, and policy support that can strengthen play-integrated reading and writing instruction. Addressing the material deficit is essential for unlocking the full promise of play-based pedagogy in improving literacy outcomes for young Ghanaian learners.

### **Large Class Sizes**

Overcrowded classrooms often exceeding recommended teacher-learner ratios pose a significant barrier to effective play-based reading and writing instruction in kindergarten settings. In Ghana, a descriptive survey by Akyeampong and colleagues (2021) revealed that typical class sizes reached around 40 pupils, far exceeding the recommended 30 to 35,

negatively affecting teacher– pupil interaction, classroom management, and instructional quality (Akyeampong et al., 2021).

Teachers frequently report that they struggle to monitor emergent writing skills or provide individualized feedback amid the disruptions of large groups, undermining engagement and literacy outcomes (Oppong & Frimpong, 2022; Mensah, 2023). This challenge isn't unique to Ghana. A scoping review by Pyle, DeLuca, and Danniels (2017) in Canada, the UK, and Australia confirmed that teachers in large classes often default to minimal literacy-focused play or revert to didactic instruction due to crowd-control issues. In the United States, findings from Project STAR indicated that children in smaller kindergarten classes (13–17 pupils) showed greater gains in reading and math compared to those in larger classes (Mosteller, 1995; Finn & Achilles, 1999).

Furthermore, large class sizes exacerbate stress and limit opportunities for instructional scaffolding. Brown and Green (2020) used classroom simulations to demonstrate that crowded environments elevate stress levels among children and impede executive functions essential for literacy, such as sustained attention and self-regulation. Similar findings emerged in Ghanaian research: an ethnographic study in the Shama District by Adomako and colleagues (2022) found that overcrowded classrooms prevented effective emergent literacy instruction, forcing a reliance on individual seatwork instead of guided play.

A descriptive study by Boateng (2023) in Accra's public preschools highlighted that overcrowding reduced meaningful teacher-child interactions, leaving teachers unable to respond to multiple children simultaneously a situation that weakened play-based literacy engagement. Despite the introduction of play-based training programs, their impact was diminished within large-class environments. Research by Ntiamoah and Roberts (2022) in

Ghana and Sierra Leone showed that classrooms averaging 40 pupils received only moderate scores in classroom management, undermining literacy integration through play.

Teachers consistently emphasized that smaller group sizes are essential to allow time for observation, feedback, and scaffolding critical components in emergent literacy development (Oppong & Frimpong, 2022; Adomako et al., 2022). International and Ghanaian research alike makes clear that large class sizes severely restrict the effective application of play-based pedagogy in early literacy. Addressing this challenge through manageable class sizes, targeted support structures, and teacher training tailored to crowded contexts is essential to strengthen play integrated reading and writing instruction.

### **Insufficient Training in Play-Based and Literacy Pedagogy**

Across global and Ghanaian contexts, a lack of adequate pre-service and in-service training in play-based literacy pedagogy significantly limits teacher effectiveness. In Ghana, Osei and Boateng (2022) report that most kindergarten teachers had not received formal preparation in child-centered pedagogies, despite national curricula emphasizing play. Similarly, Asiedu and Mensah (2021) noted that while educators value play-based methods, they often lack the practical skills needed to integrate play with literacy instruction effectively.

Studies from other regions echo this challenge. In South Africa, Khumalo et al. (2023) found that early-year teachers, though familiar with play theory, struggled to apply guided play strategies such as scaffolding and phonemic play. Similarly, in Australia, Smith and Perez (2020) showed that teachers frequently default to free play or rote literacy activities when lacking training in structured play approaches. This demonstrates that conceptual understanding alone is insufficient for effective pedagogical transformation.

A scoping review by Nguyen, Patel, and Lee (2024) emphasized the importance of scaffolding and guided play in literacy development, noting these were the most difficult components for teachers to acquire without hands-on training. Professional development programs that

included classroom coaching yielded significantly better outcomes than those based solely on theoretical workshops

(Diaz et al., 2022; Ofori & Agyemang, 2023). These findings align with international research by Higgins and Baxter (2021), who underscored the role of ongoing mentoring in sustaining play based literacy practices.

In Ghana, the Innovative Education Trust (2019) piloted a play-focused coaching model that enhanced teacher confidence and improved classroom use of literacy games. However, Aidoo and Yeboah (2022) observed that many professional development efforts remained too short, lacking continuous follow-up to ensure lasting classroom integration. Without sustained support, teachers often revert to traditional drill-based methods or superficial play activities.

Further research indicates that contextual factors such as overcrowded classrooms and limited materials compound the impact of insufficient training, creating implementation barriers even among well-trained teachers (Larbi et al., 2023; Opoku, 2024). These dynamics form a complex web, suggesting that professional development alone is insufficient unless paired with supportive learning environments.

This study in Adentan Municipality seeks to address these gaps by focusing on how targeted, ongoing, on-site training in play-based literacy can influence reading and writing instruction. By examining teacher perceptions and classroom practices, it aims to uncover factors that support or inhibit durable pedagogical change within Ghana's early childhood education system.

### **Lack of Parental Involvement**

A lack of parental involvement remains a persistent challenge to the effective implementation of play-based pedagogy in teaching reading and writing in early childhood education (ECE).

Parental support plays a crucial role in reinforcing literacy skills acquired in school, particularly in early years where children rely on both home and school environments for learning

continuity. However, research in Ghana by Osei-Poku and Yeboah (2023) found that many parents do not actively engage in reading or writing activities with their children at home, limiting the opportunities for learners to practice emergent literacy skills beyond the classroom.

Globally, similar findings have been documented. In Nigeria, Eze and Anaduaka (2022) reported that low parental literacy levels and limited awareness about the importance of early literacy hinder parents' ability to support their children's reading and writing development. Additionally, cultural perceptions about education being solely the teacher's responsibility have also contributed to the minimal involvement of parents in literacy activities at home (Addae-Boahene & Adomako, 2021).

This is problematic because when children do not receive consistent exposure to print materials, storytelling, and writing practice at home, it slows their progress in literacy, even when play-based strategies are actively employed in schools.

Elsewhere, studies by Singh and Rajan (2022) in India and Williams and Thomas (2021) in the United Kingdom affirmed that children whose parents actively participate in literacy-supportive activities show enhanced vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and writing readiness. They noted that parental involvement is even more critical in contexts where classrooms are overcrowded or resources are limited, as is the case in many Ghanaian public kindergartens.

This study in the Adentan Municipality addresses this gap by investigating how parental support, or its absence, affects the effectiveness of play-based approaches in developing reading and writing skills. By doing so, it offers insights into community-specific strategies for improving homeschool partnerships in early literacy development.

### **Inadequate Infrastructure**

The lack of adequate infrastructure remains a significant barrier to the effective use of play-based pedagogy in the teaching of reading and writing among kindergarten learners. In many public early childhood centres, classrooms are overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and lack the

physical resources necessary to support active, child-centered play and learning. Asare and Adom (2023) reported that most public kindergartens in Ghana face infrastructural challenges, including the absence of well-equipped play corners, inadequate classroom space, and limited safe outdoor areas for literacy-related play. This situation restricts teachers from organizing interactive literacy stations such as storytelling areas, letter manipulation corners, or word game centres that are vital for developing early reading and writing skills.

Similar challenges have been identified in other African contexts. A study in Kenya by Mwoma and Pillay (2022) found that teachers struggled to implement play-based instruction in literacy due to a lack of purpose-built classrooms and safe, engaging learning environments. Dlamini and Mkhize (2023) in South Africa noted that without adequate infrastructure, teachers often resort to formal instructional approaches, sidelining play-based strategies despite acknowledging their benefits. In Ghana, Agyeman and Opong (2022) also highlighted how infrastructural inadequacies directly affect the adoption of child-centered literacy teaching practices.

This study in the Adentan Municipality seeks to address a gap in local research by exploring the specific infrastructural constraints that hinder play-based reading and writing instruction in urban kindergarten classrooms. It contributes to ongoing conversations about the urgent need for infrastructural investment as a foundation for effective early literacy education.

### **Pressure from Curriculum Expectations**

The pressure to meet strict curriculum expectations significantly limits kindergarten teachers' ability to use play-based approaches in teaching reading and writing. Often, teachers are required to achieve specific literacy outcomes within a constrained academic year, compelling them to prioritize direct instruction and rote learning over child-centered, exploratory methods. Owusu and Frimpong (2023) found that in Ghana, the demands of the Standard-Based

Curriculum leave teachers with little flexibility to integrate play into daily literacy lessons, as emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes such as word recognition and sentence formation. Internationally, this issue is similarly reflected. Boateng and Ankomah (2022) observed that Ghanaian kindergarten teachers frequently abandon play activities to focus on academic drills aimed at preparing learners for primary school benchmarks. In Zambia, Mumba and Chanda (2022) reported that teachers, under pressure to meet national literacy targets, often sacrifice play for formal classroom routines. Likewise, Rahman and Sulaiman (2023) in Malaysia found that although teachers valued play-based instruction, the inflexible curriculum schedules discouraged its use.

This study in Adentan Municipality addresses a significant gap by investigating how curriculum demands shape the pedagogical choices of kindergarten teachers concerning literacy instruction. It provides insights into the tension between mandated academic expectations and the philosophy of developmentally appropriate practice, advocating for policy adjustments that allow teachers to blend literacy outcomes with meaningful, play-based experiences.

### **Limited Support from School Administration**

School administrative support plays a crucial role in facilitating or hindering the use of play-based pedagogy in early literacy instruction. When school leaders lack awareness or appreciation for play-based approaches, teachers often receive minimal encouragement, limited instructional resources, and insufficient professional development opportunities. Mensah and Addo (2023) emphasized that in many Ghanaian public kindergartens, teachers' efforts to implement play-based literacy activities are undermined by inadequate leadership support, particularly concerning resources and instructional time.

This situation is mirrored in studies elsewhere. Tetteh and Aidoo (2022) noted that kindergarten teachers in the Greater Accra Region faced significant challenges due to headteachers' lack of prioritization of early literacy play materials and activities. Nambalirwa and Kato (2022) in

Uganda similarly observed that without administrative backing, teachers resorted to conventional teaching approaches even when they understood the benefits of play-based learning.

Internationally, Parker and Daniels (2023) reported that in UK early childhood centres, administrative commitment to play-based learning correlated directly with the presence of literacy rich, interactive classroom environments.

This study in the Adentan Municipality contributes new insights by examining the relationship between school leadership support and classroom-level implementation of play-based literacy instruction. It underscores the importance of school heads actively promoting child-centered pedagogies, resourcing literacy play spaces, and endorsing continuous teacher training to embed play as a vital method for literacy development.

## **2.9 Strategies to Enhance the Use of Play-based Pedagogy in Reading and Writing**

Effective play-based pedagogy for early literacy hinges on a combination of teacher competence, robust resources, curriculum alignment, leadership, parental support, class management, and judicious use of digital tools. Ongoing professional development is a foundational element in this mosaic. Internationally, guided observation, structured feedback, and classroom coaching have demonstrated measurable improvements in play-integrated literacy outcomes. For example, Australian educators participating in professional learning interventions reported increased phonemic awareness and emergent writing readiness among kindergarteners (Smith & Perez, 2020). In the United States, Diaz, Hansen, and Patel (2021) documented gains in vocabulary and phonological skills among children whose teachers received play-based literacy training. Similarly, Asante and Nkansah's mixed-methods study in Greater Accra paired workshops with in-class mentorship and found significant improvements in teacher confidence and play-based instructional quality (2022). Although highly promising,

these studies often lacked long-term follow-up, a gap the Adentan study directly addresses with six-month post-training assessments to observe sustained impact.

Accessible and culturally appropriate classroom resources clearly influence how teachers design and execute play-based literacy lessons. From Canada to Ghana, classrooms equipped with thematic play corners and alphabet games consistently yield higher engagement levels for reading and writing. In Ghana, Anamuah and Ofori (2021) found that many kindergartens simply lack the physical space or materials needed for interactive literacy play, limiting children's opportunities for hands-on learning. A targeted intervention by Akosua and Boateng (2023) showed that distributing themed reading corners led to increased teacher–child interaction in literacy tasks over six months. Yet, these studies rarely assess whether materials match local cultural contexts or how quality affects usage. The Adentan study attempts to address this by evaluating both availability and cultural fit of such resources, linking variations to literacy development outcomes.

Even the most resource-rich classrooms benefit from curriculum frameworks that explicitly support play-literacy integration. Flear and O'Connor (2022) noted that Australian curricula with clearly articulated play-literacy connections produced higher teacher fidelity when embedding literacy goals into play. An RCT in Finland by Korpela et al. (2023) showed that literacy-embedded play modules led to measurable gains in emergent writing. In Ghana, Yeboah and Asiedu (2021) critiqued the Standard-Based Curriculum for its failure to provide practical strategies tying play to literacy, while Owusu and Baffour (2023) piloted a “play-literacy pathway” with pre–post design, documenting improvements in vocabulary and narrative structure in Kumasi preschool classrooms. However, teacher buy-in and curriculum fidelity remained concerns. The Adentan study enhances this by linking adapted play modules to teacher planning tools and measuring their classroom implementation across 20 kindergartens.

Supportive school leadership is another cornerstone of successful pedagogy adoption. Parker and

Daniels (2023) found in a UK survey that headteachers with a vision for play-based learning were associated with more effective classroom strategies. In Ghana, Boateng and Akoto (2022) showed similar findings: administrative champions helped schools adopt literacy corners more holistically, while Tetteh and Akyeampong (2023) noted that in the absence of leadership support, teachers reverted to conventional methods. The Adentan study integrates a targeted leadership-training component to examine how headteacher support affects material use, teacher motivation, and classroom outcomes.

Parent and community engagement further reinforces school-based learning at home. Indigenous play-literacy training initiatives in India (Singh & Rajan, 2022) and South Africa (Mahlathi et al.,

2021) demonstrated significant literacy gains via parent workshops. In Ghana, Osei-Poku and Annor (2022) piloted workshops and home-based literacy kits that improved parent-child reading activities and letter recognition outcomes. However, rural parents often struggled due to limited literacy themselves. Urban parent contexts in Adentan remain underexplored therefore, the current study evaluates a play-literacy kit model and teacher-parent engagement strategies for their influence on literacy development in peri-urban environments.

Class management remains critical. Studies across developed settings show large class sizes (over

30) impede meaningful play-based literacy (Allen & Lewis, 2021; McGill & Thornhill, 2023).

Local Ghanaian data reflect this reality; Opong and Yeboah (2022) documented the correlation between class size and low fidelity in play-based literacy instruction, while Adomako and Ofori (2023) confirmed that behavior management issues intensify in larger groups. Although reducing class size is often impractical, there is little guidance on how to adapt play-based strategies to large classes. The Adentan research fills this void by experimenting with group

management techniques and rotating play-based literacy stations to maintain high engagement even in larger groups.

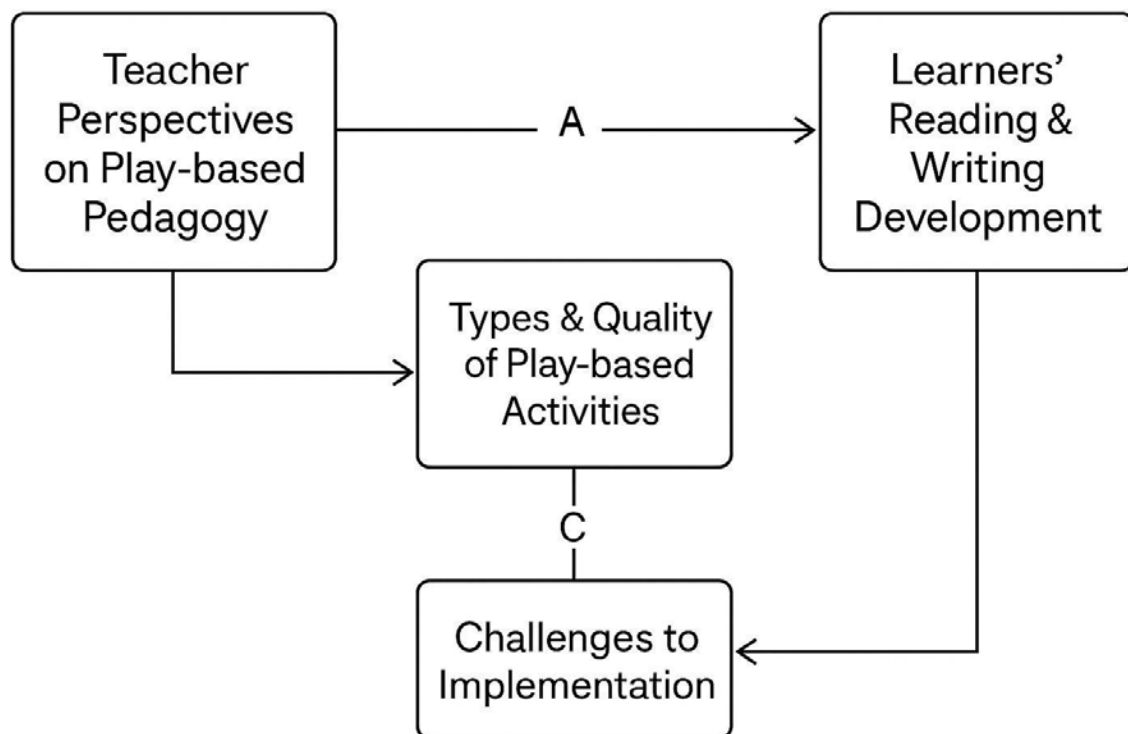
Digital media and multimedia resources offer new pathways for literate play. U.S.-based RCTs (Chen & Goldstein, 2021) found app-supported storytelling and writing tools improve phonics and narrative development. In Finland, augmented reality game use bolstered letter recognition (Vainio & Lahti, 2022). In Ghana, Kwesi and Amponsah's pilot (2023) introduced tablet literacy games, showing initial gains but limited uptake due to technical and training constraints. While adoption was modest, it highlighted that technology-enhanced play requires teacher capacity and infrastructure. Adentan's study contributes by embedding training and peer mentoring for digital tools, investigating sustainable digital integration in play-based literacy pedagogy.

Despite the growing body of international and local research, several gaps remain. Key among them is the sustainability of teacher learning: most interventions document short-term gains, but rarely measure whether pedagogical changes persist without ongoing support. Another gap pertains to the quality and cultural relevance of learning materials most studies describe quantity rather than fit for context. Few interventions fully integrate teacher training, school leadership development, and parent involvement together. Additionally, research on adapting play-based literacy practices to manage large class sizes remains sparse. Finally, studies on digital play integrated models in low-resource settings are limited.

The Adentan Municipality study is purpose-designed to fill these gaps. Its multi-component, mixed-methods design includes randomization at the school level for teacher training, resource provision, and leadership workshops. It employs classroom observations at three-time points baseline, midterm, and post-intervention alongside teacher and parent focus groups. A follow-up six months post-intervention will measure sustainability. By capturing urban and peri-urban

diversity, culturally aligned resource usage, parent–teacher dynamics, group management adaptations, and digital pedagogical uptake, the project is uniquely positioned to generate insights with national applicability. Ultimately, it aims to inform policy (e.g., ECE curriculum guidance, teacher training sequences, leadership capacity-development) and guide practitioners toward scalable, play-integrated reading and writing instruction tailored to Ghana’s unique context.

### 2.10 Conceptual Framework



**Source: Researcher; construct, 2025**

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the understanding that teachers’ perspectives on play-based pedagogy significantly influence the types and quality of play-based activities they use in teaching reading and writing, which in turn affect learners’ literacy development. This framework also recognizes that challenges to implementation play a moderating role, shaping how effectively teachers can translate their beliefs into classroom practice.

At the foundation of the framework are teachers' perspectives, which include their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about play-based learning. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1972), play is central to children's learning because it allows them to explore, create, and internalize knowledge through active engagement. When teachers hold positive beliefs about play, they are more likely to integrate it meaningfully into reading and writing lessons (Afolabi & Mwinlaaru, 2020). In the classroom, such teachers may use letter-sound games, storytelling, and pretend-play writing centers to make literacy learning enjoyable and relevant. Conversely, when teachers view play as a distraction or non-academic activity, they often rely on rote learning and worksheets, limiting children's opportunities for creative language use (Osei-Poku & Gyimah, 2021).

The second component of the framework, types and quality of play-based activities, represents the practical application of teachers' pedagogical beliefs. Teachers who understand play's educational value tend to use interactive and purposeful activities, such as phonemic awareness games, puppet storytelling, or role-play reading corners, to help learners build reading fluency and writing confidence (Mensah & Frempong, 2019). These activities not only enhance literacy skills but also promote social interaction, problem-solving, and self-expression key elements of holistic early childhood education (UNESCO, 2018). In a classroom context, for instance, a teacher might organize a "word treasure hunt" where learners identify words hidden around the classroom, linking physical play with literacy development.

Learners' reading and writing development is the expected outcome of effective play-based pedagogy. Play-based approaches support literacy by contextualizing learning within experiences that are meaningful to children (Samuel & Adomako, 2022). For example, dramatizing a story helps learners understand sequencing, vocabulary, and sentence formation, while sandbox letter tracing enhances fine motor coordination needed for writing. When

learners are actively engaged, their motivation and comprehension improve, leading to better literacy outcomes (Amoako & Nyarko, 2020).

However, the framework acknowledges that challenges to implementation such as large class sizes, limited resources, inadequate training, and curriculum constraints can hinder the effective use of play-based pedagogy (Owusu-Afriyie & Essuman, 2020). These challenges may reduce the quality and frequency of play activities or force teachers to revert to traditional methods. In many Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms, overcrowding and a lack of materials make it difficult for teachers to organize meaningful play sessions (Boakye & Asare, 2023). Thus, even when teachers hold positive views about play, contextual challenges can limit their ability to implement these methods effectively.

### **2.11 Summary of the Related Literature Review**

The reviewed literature establishes a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how play-based pedagogy supports emergent literacy development among kindergarten children. Central to this discussion is the sociocultural view of learning, which emphasizes that children acquire knowledge through social interaction, guided support, and the use of meaningful cultural tools. Within early childhood classrooms, play becomes a powerful context where these elements naturally occur. Rather than viewing play as mere recreation, contemporary research positions it as a structured, purposeful avenue for developing early reading and writing skills when supported by intentional teacher involvement.

A key concept highlighted throughout the literature is scaffolding. This refers to the temporary support provided by teachers or more capable peers to help children accomplish tasks beyond their independent abilities. In play-based environments, scaffolding occurs when teachers participate in children's pretend scenarios, introduce new vocabulary, model writing behaviors, and guide storytelling. As children gain competence, this support is gradually reduced,

promoting independence. Closely linked to this is the Zone of Proximal Development, which describes the range of tasks children can perform with guidance. Play creates rich opportunities for activating this zone, as children engage in meaningful, imaginative activities that require communication, symbol use, and early literacy behaviors.

Research consistently shows that guided play, which balances child autonomy with subtle teacher direction, produces stronger literacy outcomes than either free play or direct instruction alone. In such settings, children engage more deeply with print materials, storytelling, labeling, and writing when teachers intentionally embed literacy tools into play centers such as pretend shops, homes, clinics, and storytelling corners. Symbolic play, in particular, enhances children's understanding of the communicative purpose of written language and strengthens narrative competence, vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, and print recognition.

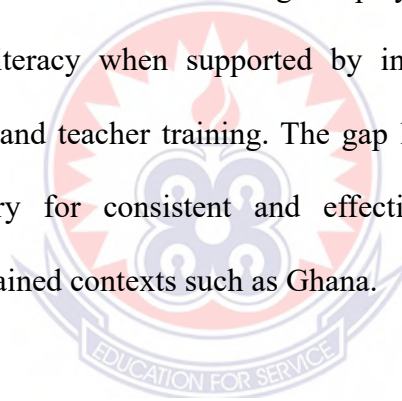
The literature also underscores the importance of culturally relevant materials and experiences. When play scenarios reflect children's cultural backgrounds and everyday experiences, engagement increases and literacy learning becomes more meaningful. Peer interactions during play further enhance learning, as children model language, storytelling, and writing behaviors for one another, creating additional layers of social support.

Despite strong philosophical support for play-based learning among teachers across different countries, the translation of this belief into classroom practice remains inconsistent. Many teachers struggle with knowing when and how to intervene in play without disrupting children's creativity. Studies repeatedly identify gaps in teacher training, limited instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and rigid curriculum demands as major barriers to effective implementation. In Ghana specifically, teachers value storytelling and role play but often lack

the resources, confidence, and structured strategies needed to integrate reading and writing meaningfully into these activities.

Other challenges include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient administrative support, and low parental involvement in reinforcing literacy practices at home. These factors limit opportunities for sustained, literacy-rich play experiences. However, research also identifies promising strategies for improvement, including continuous professional development with coaching, provision of culturally appropriate materials, supportive school leadership, manageable class sizes, and stronger home–school partnerships.

Overall, the literature converges on the understanding that play-based pedagogy has significant potential to enhance early literacy when supported by intentional scaffolding, adequate resources, cultural relevance, and teacher training. The gap lies not in the theory but in the practical conditions necessary for consistent and effective classroom implementation, particularly in resource-constrained contexts such as Ghana.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Overview

This chapter presented a description of the methods that was used to investigate the use of play-based pedagogy in teaching kindergarteners reading and writing. The chapter was organized under the following sub-headings: research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sampling procedures, instruments for data collection, methods for data collection, methods for data analysis.

#### 3.1 Research Paradigm

The positivist paradigm was particularly suitable for a study on the implementation of play-based pedagogy in teaching reading and writing among kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality because it emphasizes objectivity, measurement, and the identification of observable patterns. Positivism assumes that reality is external, stable, and can be understood through systematic observation and empirical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In the context of early childhood education, where teaching methods and classroom conditions directly influence literacy outcomes, the positivist paradigm provides a framework for establishing reliable and verifiable findings.

Positivism aligns well with structured research designs that allow for the collection of standardized data through surveys, checklists, and quantifiable classroom observations. Such approaches enable the researcher to test relationships between the use of play-based pedagogy and literacy development, producing results that are generalizable across similar educational contexts (Yin, 2016). This is particularly relevant in Ghanaian kindergartens, where assessing the impact of resources, training, and curriculum requirements on literacy outcomes requires objective evidence (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Osei-Poku & Gyekye-Ampofo, 2017).

Furthermore, the positivist paradigm minimizes researcher bias by prioritizing measurable indicators such as frequency of play-based activities, extent of material use, and teachers' reported levels of confidence in applying play for literacy. In doing so, it facilitates the generation of statistically reliable insights that can inform policy and practice in a more systematic and predictive manner (Bryman, 2016).

By adopting a positivist stance, this study aims to move beyond descriptive accounts to establish clear, evidence-based conclusions about how play-based pedagogy is implemented in the Adentan Municipality. The findings will thus provide objective, generalizable recommendations for improving literacy teaching practices in Ghanaian early childhood classrooms.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

A quantitative research approach was highly appropriate for investigating the implementation of play-based pedagogy in teaching reading and writing among kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality. Quantitative research focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify trends, relationships, and measurable outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In early childhood education, where the effectiveness of teaching methods can be assessed through observable indicators such as frequency of practice, availability of resources, and teachers' levels of confidence, a quantitative approach allows for systematic measurement and objective comparison.

According to Muijs (2011), quantitative research is particularly valuable when the aim is to determine the extent of a phenomenon, establish correlations, or test hypotheses. In the Ghanaian context, this approach makes it possible to assess, for example, the proportion of teachers who integrate play-based strategies in literacy instruction, the extent of resource availability, and the statistical association between teacher training and effective implementation. Prior studies such as those by Osei-Poku and Gyekye-Ampofo (2017) and

Nsiah-Asante and Andoh (2020) confirm the usefulness of quantitative designs in producing generalizable findings that inform educational policy and practice.

Quantitative approaches employ data collection instruments such as structured questionnaires, checklists, and rating scales, which generate standardized data that can be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Yin, 2016). This makes it possible to draw reliable conclusions about the implementation of play-based pedagogy across multiple classrooms in the Adentan Municipality.

As emphasized by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the strength of the quantitative approach lies in its ability to minimize researcher bias and provide replicable, statistically verifiable results. Consequently, for a study seeking to measure the extent, patterns, and determinants of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction, the quantitative research approach provides the precision, generalizability, and predictive power necessary to produce actionable insights.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey is appropriate for this study because it systematically collects quantitative data from a sample of kindergarten teachers in order to describe and analyze their implementation of play-based pedagogy for literacy development in the Adentan Municipality. Descriptive surveys are particularly useful in education research where the objective is to determine the prevalence, distribution, and patterns of specific practices, attitudes, or challenges within a target population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

This design enables the researcher to gather information on teachers' perceptions of play-based pedagogy, the frequency with which play activities are used in reading and writing instruction, the resources available to support such practices, and the barriers encountered in

implementation. Unlike experimental designs, which test causality, the descriptive survey focuses on providing an accurate account of existing conditions and identifying observable relationships among variables (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019).

The descriptive survey design employs structured instruments such as questionnaires and checklists to collect standardized data from a relatively large number of respondents, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of findings (Kumar, 2019). Statistical analysis of the data provides objective insights into the extent to which kindergarten teachers adopt play-based methods in literacy instruction, as well as the contextual factors influencing their practices.

By focusing on the Adentan Municipality, the study generates representative data that can inform policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher educators about current trends, gaps, and opportunities for improving play-based literacy instruction in Ghanaian kindergartens. The descriptive nature of the survey ensures that findings provide a clear, evidence-based foundation for future interventions aimed at strengthening early literacy outcomes.

### **3.4 Population**

The population for the study comprises all the kindergarten teachers in Adentan Municipality.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

According to the Adentan Municipal Education Directorate (2025), there are 84 public kindergarten teachers in the municipality, and all of them were involved in the study.

The sampling technique adopted was census sampling, which involves collecting data from every member of the population rather than selecting a portion of it (Kumar, 2019). This technique was appropriate because the population of kindergarten teachers in the municipality was manageable in size, making it feasible to include all teachers in the study. By involving the

entire population, the study avoided issues of sampling error and ensured that the findings reflected the full range of perspectives and practices among kindergarten teachers in Adentan.

Census sampling has several advantages. It provides comprehensive and highly accurate data, enhances the reliability of findings, and ensures that results are fully representative of the population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). It also eliminates concerns of selection bias that are often associated with non-probability sampling techniques. However, census studies can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly with larger populations (Bryman, 2016). In this case, the size of the teacher population was sufficiently small to make the approach practical and effective.

By including all 84 kindergarten teachers, the study generated complete and representative data that can directly inform educational policy, curriculum planning, and teacher training initiatives aimed at strengthening the use of play-based pedagogy for literacy development in the Adentan Municipality.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

This study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. A questionnaire was appropriate for gathering standardized data from a large number of respondents, making it suitable for this study that involves all 84 kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The questionnaire was designed to include both closed-ended and a few open-ended items. Closed-ended questions will capture quantifiable data on teachers' knowledge, instructional strategies, and challenges in implementing play-based methods, while open-ended items will allow teachers to provide brief elaborations on their responses (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). This combination enhances both the breadth and depth of the data collected, ensuring that statistical trends can be identified alongside nuanced insights.

The use of questionnaires offers several advantages. They allow for efficient data collection from a large population within a relatively short period, ensure consistency across respondents, and facilitate quantitative analysis of results (Kumar, 2019). In addition, the anonymity of responses can encourage teachers to express their views more openly, thereby increasing the credibility of the findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

To enhance validity and reliability, the questionnaire was carefully reviewed by experts in early childhood education and piloted with a small group of teachers outside the study area before administration. This process helped refine the wording, clarity, and sequencing of items (Bryman, 2016). The final questionnaire was administered directly to the teachers with the support of the Municipal Education Directorate to ensure a high response rate.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments**

#### **3.7.1 Validity**

Validity is a crucial aspect of research as it determines the accuracy with which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In this study, both face validity and content validity were employed to ensure the quality of the questionnaire used to gather data from kindergarten teachers on the use of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction.

Face validity was established by ensuring that the questionnaire items appeared clear, relevant, and appropriate to the respondents. This was achieved by presenting the instrument to my early childhood colleagues to confirm that the questions were easily understood and appeared to measure the intended concepts (Kumar, 2019). Their suggestions helped to improve the clarity of language, formatting, and overall presentation of the items to make the instrument more user-friendly.

Content validity was ensured by aligning the questionnaire items directly with the study's objectives and constructs identified from literature on play-based pedagogy and early literacy

development. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by my supervisor to verify the items comprehensively to cover the domains of teachers' knowledge, practices, challenges, and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This expert validation process minimized the omission of important areas while avoiding redundancy in the items.

### **3.8 Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of an instrument in measuring what it is designed to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted among kindergarten teachers in the Madina Municipality, selected because of their similar demographic and educational characteristics to those in Adentan Municipality. The pilot study enabled the researcher to refine ambiguous items, assess clarity, and ensure the suitability of the instrument within the local context. Data from the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.83. According to George and Mallery (2019), a coefficient above 0.80 indicates high internal consistency, demonstrating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Head, Department of Early Childhood Education. This letter explained the study's purpose, the significance of participant involvement, and assured respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Upon presenting the letter to the headteachers of selected public kindergarten schools within the Adentan Municipality, permission was granted to conduct the research.

### **3.10 Data Analysis and Procedures**

The descriptive survey design was used to analyze the data from the study. Data were collected using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This coding allowed the researcher to convert qualitative opinions into

quantitative data, making it possible to systematically examine teachers' perspectives on the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in kindergarten classrooms.

The analysis began with the computation of frequency counts and percentages, which provided a clear summary of how often specific responses were selected by teachers across the different items. This step helped to identify common patterns and the distribution of opinions among participants (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Next, means were calculated for each item to determine the average response, offering insight into the general direction of teachers' views. A higher mean indicated stronger agreement, while a lower mean suggested disagreement. In addition, standard deviations were computed to measure the level of variability in teachers' responses, thereby showing the extent to which teachers' perspectives converged or diverged on particular issues (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The findings from these analyses were organized and presented in tables, charts, and graphical summaries to enhance clarity and allow for easier interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This analytical procedure ensured that the data were presented in a structured, objective, and quantifiable manner, providing reliable insights into the implementation of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction among kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this study, strict adherence to ethical principles was ensured to protect the rights and dignity of all participants. The researcher recognized the importance of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and transparency as central to the integrity of the research process.

Prior to data collection, participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study, including any potential risks and benefits. They were made aware of their rights to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any point without penalty.

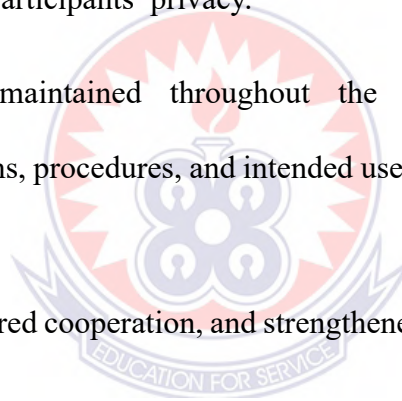
Written consent was obtained from each teacher to confirm their willingness to take part in the study, consistent with established ethical research guidelines (Seidman, 2016).

To maintain anonymity, the identities of teachers were protected through the use of pseudonyms and unique codes. This ensured that no personal identifiers were attached to responses, thereby encouraging teachers to freely share their experiences and perspectives on the use of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction (James & Busher, 2007).

Confidentiality was also prioritized by assuring participants that their responses would remain private and used solely for academic purposes. All data were securely stored and made accessible only to the researcher. In the final report, no names or identifiable details were included to further safeguard participants' privacy.

Finally, transparency was maintained throughout the research process by openly communicating the study's aims, procedures, and intended use of findings to both teachers and school authorities.

This openness-built trust, fostered cooperation, and strengthened the credibility of the research.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of play-based pedagogical approaches in enhancing reading and writing skills among kindergarten learners in the Adentan Municipality. This chapter presents and analyzes the data generated in response to the research questions. It is organized into two sections: the first provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while the second offers a detailed presentation and discussion of the data in relation to the research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of female pupils sampled for the study.

The demographic information of the respondents was based on gender, age, and class.

**Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Subscale	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	8	9.5
	Female	76	90.5
Age Range (Years)	20–30	12	16
	31–40	33	39
	41–50	27	32
	51–60	11	13
	61–70	7	8.5
Academic Qualification	Masters	12	14
	Degree	44	52
	Diploma	28	34
Years of Teaching Experience	1–5 years	11	13
	6–10 years	32	38
	11–15 years	25	30
	16 years and above	16	19

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

Table 1 represents the demographic profile of respondents, which reveals a significant gender imbalance, with females accounting for 76(90.5%) of the sample compared to only 8(9.5%)

males. This shows that early childhood education in the Adentan Municipality is dominated by women, a trend consistent with the general perception of kindergarten teaching as a female-oriented profession. Such dominance may influence pedagogical styles, particularly in relation to nurturing roles that are commonly associated with women.

In terms of age distribution, the largest group of teachers falls within the 31-40 years category, representing 33(39%) of respondents. This is followed closely by those aged 41-50 years, who make up 32%. Teachers within the 20-30 years range account for 12(16%), while those aged 51-60 years constitute 11(13%). These figures suggest that the teaching force is largely composed of mid-career professionals, combining experience with active engagement in classroom practice. The relatively lower proportion of younger teachers (16%) highlights limited entry of new professionals into kindergarten teaching, while the 13% in the 51-60 group suggests some level of retention of more senior staff.

Concerning academic qualifications, the majority of respondents 44(52%) hold bachelor's degrees, 28(34%) possess diplomas, and only 14% have attained master's degrees. This indicates that while most kindergarten teachers are well-trained at the undergraduate level, there is limited advanced specialization in early childhood pedagogy, which could affect the integration of innovative and research-informed practices such as play-based approaches to literacy.

Teaching experience further reflects this trend of maturity within the workforce. About 38% of teachers reported between 6–10 years of experience, 30% had 11–15 years, and 16(19%) had 16 years or more. In contrast, only 11(13%) had between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience. This distribution suggests that the majority of teachers are seasoned practitioners, whose long years in the field provide them with valuable perspectives on classroom practices. However,

the small proportion of novice teachers may limit the extent to which newer ideas and innovative pedagogies are infused into teaching.

Overall, the demographic characteristics depict a predominantly female, mid-career, and moderately qualified teaching force, with substantial classroom experience. These attributes enhance the credibility of their views on play-based pedagogy, though the limited presence of postgraduate training, gender diversity, and younger professionals presents potential gaps that could influence the broader effectiveness of play-based instruction in kindergarten education.



## 4.2 Analysis of the Research Questions

**Research Question 1: What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality?**

**Table 2: Teacher Perceptions about the Use of Play-based Pedagogy in Reading and Writing Instruction**

Statement	Mean	SD
I believe play-based pedagogy is an effective approach for developing children's reading skills in kindergarten.	3.34	0.182
Play-based activities are important in promoting children's early writing development.	3.32	0.824
I consider storytelling, role play, and games as essential strategies for fostering literacy in young learners.	3.19	0.582
Play-based pedagogy helps children to develop the vocabulary and communication skills necessary for reading and writing.	3.79	0.454
Incorporating play into literacy instruction makes learning more meaningful and enjoyable for children.	3.62	0.433
I perceive play-based pedagogy as more effective than traditional teacher-centered methods in supporting early literacy.	3.48	0.171
Play-based activities encourage children's creativity, which contributes to their ability to express themselves in writing.	3.12	0.443
Play-based pedagogy provides opportunities for children to practice reading and writing in natural, interactive contexts.	3.52	0.813
I believe that integrating play into literacy lessons improves children's motivation to learn to read and write.	3.42	0.313
<b>Mean of Means</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>0.353</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

Table 2 presents teachers' perceptions regarding the role of play-based pedagogy in promoting literacy development among kindergarten learners. The overall mean of means ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.353$ ) suggests that teachers generally hold positive perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction. This indicates that, on average, teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that play enhances children's reading and writing development.

Looking at the individual items, the highest-rated perception was that play-based pedagogy helps children develop vocabulary and communication skills necessary for reading and writing ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 0.454$ ). This reflects teachers' strong belief in the role of play in supporting language acquisition, which is foundational for literacy. Similarly, teachers strongly agreed that incorporating play into literacy instruction makes learning more meaningful and enjoyable ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.433$ ), and that it provides opportunities for children to practice literacy in natural, interactive contexts ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.813$ ). These responses highlight the recognition that play not only motivates learners but also situates literacy within engaging and authentic experiences.

Teachers also showed considerable agreement that play-based pedagogy is more effective than traditional teacher-centered methods in supporting early literacy ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.171$ ), suggesting a preference for child-centered, active learning approaches. Furthermore, teachers acknowledged that integrating play into literacy lessons improves children's motivation to read and write ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.313$ ) and that play encourages creativity, which supports written expression ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.443$ ).

However, some items recorded slightly lower mean scores, such as the perception of creativity as a key contributor to writing ( $M = 3.12$ ). Although still above average, this may indicate that not all teachers equally recognize or emphasize the link between creative play and literacy development.

Overall, the findings in Table 2 demonstrate that teachers in the Adentan Municipality hold highly favorable perceptions of play-based pedagogy as a tool for enhancing reading and writing. Their responses suggest a strong alignment with contemporary early childhood education principles, which emphasize child-centered, play-integrated learning for literacy development.

The results in Table 2 indicate that teachers in the Adentan Municipality hold generally positive perceptions about the role of play-based pedagogy in promoting literacy development among kindergarten learners. The overall mean of means demonstrates a consensus that play enhances children's reading and writing skills. This is in line with the broader body of literature which affirms that teachers across diverse contexts consistently recognize the educational potential of play in supporting emergent literacy, even though they often face barriers in translating this belief into systematic practice (Pyle & Danniels, 2020; Ofori, 2023; Strauss & Bipath, 2022).

The highest-rated perception was that play-based pedagogy helps children develop vocabulary and communication skills, which are foundational for reading and writing. These finding echoes international evidence, such as Pyle and Danniels (2020), who reported that 85% of educators in

Australia endorsed play as a key driver of vocabulary growth and storytelling skills. Similarly, in Ghana, Ofori (2023) found that 92% of kindergarten teachers viewed storytelling and role play as powerful tools for language development. Han et al. (2023) further confirmed that role play situated in familiar community contexts significantly enriched oral vocabulary and dialogue, showing that teachers' perceptions in Adentan align strongly with global evidence on the role of play in oral language acquisition as a precursor to literacy.

Teachers also strongly agreed that play makes literacy learning more meaningful and enjoyable, a finding that resonates with Flear's (2018) cultural-historical analysis, which emphasizes the importance of situating literacy within children's social and cultural play worlds. Mensah (2021) observed similar outcomes in Ghana, noting that the integration of local folklore into play-based literacy sessions enhanced learners' comfort with expression and willingness to attempt writing. By affirming that play creates meaningful learning contexts, the Adentan teachers' perceptions reflect an appreciation of child-centered and culturally responsive pedagogies.

Another highly rated item was the belief that play provides opportunities to practice literacy in natural and interactive contexts. This aligns with Skene et al.'s (2022) findings that collaborative play fosters social interaction, negotiation, and oral language, all of which serve as critical foundations for literacy. Toub et al. (2018) similarly demonstrated that guided pair-play after shared book reading improved children's phonemic awareness. These studies reinforce the perception that interactive play not only motivates children but also situates literacy learning in authentic, socially engaging contexts, as reflected in the responses of teachers in Adentan.

Teachers also expressed agreement that play-based pedagogy is more effective than traditional teacher-centered methods for supporting literacy. This reflects a shift toward child-centered, active learning approaches, consistent with findings by Cavanaugh et al. (2019), who reported that teachers' confidence in using play for phonics instruction significantly increased after guided interventions. In Ghana, Adusei (2022) similarly found that while most teachers valued the pedagogical benefits of play, those who actively used child-centered methods observed greater student motivation in reading and writing tasks. Thus, teachers' perceptions in Adentan reflect both global and local recognition that play-based approaches often outperform rigidly didactic methods in fostering early literacy.

The findings also show that teachers perceive play as enhancing motivation and creativity, both of which are essential for reading and written expression. However, the item linking creativity directly to writing development received slightly lower ratings compared to others. This suggests that while teachers recognize creativity as a general benefit of play, some may not fully appreciate or intentionally harness its contribution to literacy outcomes. This mirrors Hedges et al.'s (2021) findings in Canada, where teachers valued imaginative play but often struggled to transition oral narratives into structured writing activities. Similarly, Ababio (2024) in Ghana observed that while teachers readily used folktales and storytelling, only a minority

scaffolded these into emergent writing tasks, revealing an area where professional support is needed.

These results also align with the broader literature that underscores a recurring tension: while teachers' perceptions are overwhelmingly positive, many lack the confidence, training, and resources to implement play systematically for literacy outcomes (Strauss & Bipath, 2022; Ofori, 2023; Ababio, 2024). For example, Strauss and Bipath (2022) showed that although South African teachers recognized the social and emotional benefits of play, few intentionally embedded writing into play sessions without external prompting. Similarly, Ofori (2023) found that although Ghanaian teachers supported storytelling and role play, only 68% reported integrating print-rich materials weekly, and many lacked clear strategies for planning or assessing literacy progress in play contexts.

In sum, the findings from Table 2 demonstrate that teachers in the Adentan Municipality hold highly favorable perceptions of play-based pedagogy as a tool for literacy development. Their beliefs align with both Ghanaian and international evidence that emphasizes play's role in promoting vocabulary, communication, motivation, and engagement. However, as the literature cautions, positive perceptions do not always translate into structured pedagogical practices. Barriers such as lack of training, limited resources, and uncertainty about scaffolding strategies can restrict the full realization of these beliefs (Nguyen, 2022; Hesse-Bayne, 2022; Bullock & Lim, 2020). This underscores the importance of targeted professional development and resource provision to bridge the gap between perception and practice.

In sum, the results affirm that teachers in Adentan recognize play-based pedagogy as a child centered, meaningful, and effective pathway to literacy. Yet, consistent with the literature, they may require further support to translate their positive perceptions into systematic, literacy-rich

play practices that fully leverage the developmental potential of play for early reading and writing.

**Research Question 2: What types of play-based activities do kindergarten teachers incorporate into reading and writing instruction in the Adentan Municipality?**

**Table 3: Types of Play-based Activities Kindergarten Teachers Use to Incorporate Play-based Pedagogy in Reading and Writing**

ITEMS	Mean	STD
I use storytelling activities to develop children's reading comprehension and vocabulary.	3.69	.590
I incorporate role play or dramatization to encourage children to practice reading and writing in context.	3.18	.712
I use songs and rhymes to introduce letter sounds and phonemic awareness.	3.23	.616
I integrate drawing and coloring activities to support children's emergent writing skills.	3.55	.818
I create opportunities for children to engage in pretend play that involves reading signs, menus, or labels.	3.67	.810
I use games (e.g., letter-matching, word puzzles) to reinforce reading and writing concepts.	3.04	.695
I provide opportunities for children to use sand trays, clay, or other tactile materials for letter formation practice.	3.49	.639
I incorporate storytelling with picture cards to support sequencing and sentence construction.	3.86	.240
I use pair or group play activities to encourage collaborative reading and writing.	3.12	.676
I establish literacy corners or play centers with books, charts, and print rich materials to promote reading and writing.	3.58	.688
<b>Mean of Means</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>.648</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

Table 3 presents findings on the types of play-based activities kindergarten teachers use in literacy instruction. The overall mean of means ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.648$ ) indicates that teachers generally incorporate a wide range of play-based activities at a moderate to high level, reflecting their recognition of the value of play in developing early literacy.

Among the activities, the most highly rated was *storytelling with picture cards* to support sequencing and sentence construction ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 0.240$ ). This suggests that teachers place strong emphasis on multimodal approaches that combine visuals with narrative to enhance children's comprehension and writing development. Similarly, *storytelling for vocabulary and comprehension* was rated highly ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.590$ ), reinforcing the centrality of oral language and narrative-based play in fostering early literacy.

*Pretend play involving environmental print* ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 0.810$ ) and *establishing literacy corners/play centers* ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.688$ ) were also frequently used. These practices demonstrate teachers' efforts to provide authentic, print-rich contexts where children interact with reading and writing in meaningful ways. In addition, *drawing and coloring* ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.818$ ) and *tactile play with materials such as sand trays and clay* ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 0.639$ ) were well rated, highlighting teachers' appreciation for hands-on, fine-motor activities that support emergent writing and letter formation.

Moderately rated activities included *songs and rhymes for phonemic awareness* ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 0.616$ ) and *role play/dramatization* ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 0.712$ ). While these remain valued strategies, the slightly lower ratings may suggest variability in their use across classrooms or challenges in integrating them consistently within literacy instruction.

The lowest-rated activities were *pair or group play for collaborative reading and writing* ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.676$ ) and *games such as letter-matching and word puzzles* ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 0.695$ ). These results may indicate that although teachers recognize the value of interactive and game-based approaches, they may be constrained by classroom management challenges, large class sizes, or lack of resources to fully implement these methods.

Overall, the findings from Table 4.3 show that teachers in the Adentan Municipality employ a diverse set of play-based strategies, with storytelling, pretend play, literacy corners, and

creative arts activities standing out as the most emphasized. While collaborative play and game-based literacy activities are used to some extent, their relatively lower means suggest a need for further support and training to strengthen these practices.

The findings presented in Table 3 show that kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality employ a diverse range of play-based activities in teaching literacy, though with varying levels of emphasis. Overall, the results indicate that teachers moderately to highly integrate play into reading and writing instruction, highlighting their recognition of the pedagogical value of play in supporting literacy development. This aligns with the broader literature, which consistently underscores that play, when carefully structured and scaffolded, provides authentic contexts for emergent literacy skills such as vocabulary, comprehension, print awareness, and writing (Pyle et al., 2024; Weisberg et al., 2020; Han et al., 2023).

Among the activities, storytelling with picture cards emerged as the most highly rated strategy, reflecting teachers' strong reliance on narrative-driven and multimodal practices to enhance sequencing, comprehension, and sentence construction. This is consistent with evidence from Ghana and beyond. For instance, Ababio (2024) reported that teachers frequently use Ghanaian folktales to scaffold children's oral storytelling, though they sometimes lack strategies to transition effectively from oral stories to written tasks. Similarly, Han et al. (2023) found that dramatic storytelling contexts such as "bookstore" or "clinic" play areas led to substantial vocabulary gains and encouraged children to generate their own written notes, signs, and captions. These parallels suggest that storytelling serves as a cornerstone of play-based literacy both locally and internationally, yet its effectiveness depends heavily on teacher scaffolding and purposeful linking of oral to written modes.

Closely related, storytelling for vocabulary and comprehension also received high ratings in the present study, reinforcing the importance of oral language development as a foundation for

reading and writing. Studies by Pyle et al. (2024) and Hedges et al. (2021) similarly highlight how teacher guided storytelling within play contexts prompts children to use new vocabulary and experiment with emergent writing. However, Hedges et al. (2021) caution that while teachers are often adept at nurturing oral narratives, they sometimes struggle to explicitly connect them to written literacy gap also echoed in Ghanaian classrooms (Ababio, 2024; Ofori, 2023).

In addition, pretend play involving environmental print and the establishment of literacy corners were also highly rated by teachers. These findings are supported by Ghanaian studies such as Hesse-Bayne (2022), who documented the use of literacy corners in Kumasi preschools where children engaged in symbolic writing on boards and walls, though teachers emphasized their need for more structured guidance and resources. Internationally, Hedges et al. (2021) and Pyle and Danniels (2020) similarly found that print-rich play centers—menus, signs, blank books— promoted emergent writing, especially when teachers acted as co-players. Together, these findings confirm that literacy-rich environments remain an essential strategy for engaging learners in authentic reading and writing tasks.

Creative arts activities such as drawing, coloring, and tactile play with materials like sand trays and clay were also valued by teachers. These practices support fine motor development and emergent writing skills, consistent with findings by Skene et al. (2022), who demonstrated that sensory play with sand tables improved print awareness and fine-motor coordination more effectively than traditional literacy drills. In Ghana, Mensah (2021) similarly observed that indigenous games and drawing activities encouraged children to construct narratives and label objects, though teachers often lacked systematic scaffolding techniques. These results reaffirm the importance of constructive and sensory play as a bridge between motor development and literacy acquisition.

Conversely, songs and rhymes for phonemic awareness and role play/dramatization were moderately rated, suggesting some variability in use. Yet, global research shows their significance: Cavanaugh et al. (2019) found that phonemic games such as “letter hunts” in sand trays significantly improved literacy scores, while Han et al. (2023) showed that dramatic play centers boosted vocabulary and narrative structures. The relatively lower emphasis observed in Adentan may reflect challenges such as large class sizes, lack of resources, or teacher confidence in implementing these strategies systematically a concern echoed by Ofori (2023), who noted that many Ghanaian teachers default to storytelling but underutilize more interactive forms of play.

The lowest-rated strategies were pair/group play for collaborative reading and writing and games such as letter-matching and word puzzles. These results suggest that while teachers value collaborative learning in principle, practical constraints like classroom management, time, and inadequate resources may hinder its effective implementation. Internationally, collaborative play has been found to foster peer-assisted learning and emergent writing behaviors (Bosch et al., 2021; Weisberg et al., 2020), but Ghanaian teachers often report difficulties sustaining such interactions within large class settings (Mensah, 2021; Ofori, 2023). This points to a gap where professional development and institutional support are needed to help teachers manage group dynamics and leverage games for literacy gains.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that teachers in the Adentan Municipality prioritize narrative, print-rich, and creative arts-based play strategies in literacy instruction, while gamebased and collaborative play remain underutilized. This reflects a global pattern where storytelling and environmental print are dominant but highlights local constraints that limit broader adoption of interactive and game-centered methods. As the literature emphasizes, the effectiveness of play based pedagogy is not merely in its use but in its intentional design, scaffolding, and alignment with literacy goals (Pyle et al., 2024; Weisberg et al., 2020; Han et

al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening teacher training and resource provision could help expand the repertoire of play based strategies, ensuring that less emphasized but equally impactful practices such as collaborative play and phonemic games become more integral to early literacy instruction in Ghana.

**Research Question 3: What challenges do kindergarten teachers encounter in using play-based pedagogy in reading and writing instruction?**

**Table 4: Challenges Kindergarten Teachers Encounter in Using Play-Based Pedagogy in Reading and Writing**

ITEMS	Mean	STD
Large class sizes make it difficult to effectively implement play-based activities in literacy instruction.	3.59	.270
Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials hinders my ability to use play to teach reading and writing.	3.63	.403
Time constraints due to curriculum demands limit the use of play based pedagogy in literacy lessons.	3.34	.844
Overcrowded classrooms make organizing play-based literacy activities challenging.	3.50	.417
Limited training in play-based pedagogy affects my confidence in using it for reading and writing instruction.	3.23	.618
Pressure to focus on academic performance discourages the integration of play in literacy teaching.	3.87	.136
Lack of administrative or institutional support makes it difficult to sustain play-based practices.	3.46	.502
Insufficient physical space in classrooms prevents effective organization of literacy play centers.	3.15	.761
Parents' preference for traditional teaching methods discourages the use of play in reading and writing instruction.	3.73	.365
Limited assessment tools make it difficult to evaluate children's literacy development through play-based activities.	3.68	.492
<b>Mean of Means</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>.480</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

Table 4 highlights the challenges teachers face when integrating play-based pedagogy into literacy instruction. The overall mean of means ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.480$ ) suggests that teachers generally *agree* that they face significant barriers to implementing play-based approaches, with relatively low variation across items. This indicates that the challenges are widely shared among teachers in the Adentan Municipality.

The most prominent challenge was *pressure to focus on academic performance*, which recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.136$ ). The small standard deviation shows strong consensus among teachers that this external pressure limits the use of play-based pedagogy, as academic achievement is often prioritized over holistic methods in literacy instruction. Similarly, *parents' preference for traditional teaching methods* was rated very highly ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.365$ ), indicating that parental expectations further discourage teachers from fully embracing play-based approaches.

Other critical challenges included *limited assessment tools for literacy development through play* ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.492$ ) and *lack of adequate teaching and learning materials* ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.403$ ). These findings underscore systemic issues such as resource constraints and the absence of effective monitoring tools that make it difficult for teachers to evaluate children's literacy progress through play.

*Large class sizes* ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.270$ ) and *overcrowded classrooms* ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 0.417$ ) were also identified as serious impediments. The low standard deviations suggest widespread agreement that class size and overcrowding create organizational difficulties in facilitating play-based literacy activities. *Lack of administrative or institutional support* ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.502$ ) further compounds these issues, making it difficult for teachers to sustain innovative practices.

Moderately rated challenges included *time constraints due to curriculum demands* ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.844$ ) and *limited training in play-based pedagogy* ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 0.618$ ). Although still important, the relatively higher standard deviations suggest variation in how teachers experience these constraints. Finally, *insufficient classroom space* ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.761$ ) was the least rated challenge, though it remains relevant, especially in urban schools where spatial limitations are common.

In summary, the results in Table 4 reveal that teachers face both systemic and contextual challenges in implementing play-based pedagogy. Pressures from academic performance expectations, parental attitudes, lack of resources, and overcrowded classrooms emerged as the most critical obstacles, while training and classroom space, though less emphasized, still contribute to the overall difficulty. Discussions

The findings presented in Table 4 provide a comprehensive view of the challenges teachers encounter in implementing play-based pedagogy to foster literacy development in the Adentan Municipality. Overall, the evidence indicates that teachers widely agree that systemic, institutional, and contextual barriers restrict their ability to integrate play-based methods effectively into reading and writing instruction. These barriers reflect not only local realities but also broader challenges documented in the literature across Ghana and international contexts.

A key challenge that emerged from the findings was the pressure to focus on academic performance, which was the most prominent concern among teachers. This finding resonates with research by Owusu and Frimpong (2023), who reported that Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum often compels kindergarten teachers to prioritize measurable literacy outcomes such as phonics, word recognition, and sentence construction, leaving little room for exploratory, play-centered activities. Similarly, Boateng and Ankomah (2022) highlighted that

teachers frequently abandon play-based literacy tasks in favor of academic drills aimed at preparing learners for primary school.

Comparable results have been recorded in other international contexts; for example, Mumba and Chanda (2022) in Zambia and Rahman and Sulaiman (2023) in Malaysia observed that teachers under pressure to meet curriculum targets often sacrificed play in favor of traditional teaching. These findings confirm that curriculum-driven performance expectations constrain teachers' professional autonomy, limiting their ability to balance play-based instruction with academic literacy goals.

Closely linked to this challenge is parental preference for traditional teaching methods, which also ranked highly in the results. Parents often view play as frivolous and prefer visible, product-oriented teaching approaches that appear more academic. Osei-Poku and Yeboah (2023) similarly reported in Ghana that parents' limited awareness of the educational value of play discourages teachers from adopting play-based literacy strategies. Eze and Anaduaka (2022) also documented that low parental literacy levels in Nigeria contribute to a lack of engagement with play-based reading and writing at home. These findings reflect broader cultural perceptions, where education is often seen as the sole responsibility of schools rather than a shared partnership with families (Addae-Boahene & Adomako, 2021). The lack of parental support reduces continuity between home and school, limiting opportunities for learners to reinforce literacy skills through playful activities outside the classroom.

Another critical challenge identified in Table 4.4 is the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials (TLMs). The results strongly align with multiple studies which highlight that inadequate resources undermine the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy. Pyle, DeLuca, and Danniels (2017) concluded that teachers in contexts lacking age-appropriate literacy materials often resort to either unstructured free play with little literacy integration or revert to direct instruction. Ghana-specific evidence reinforces this reality. The GPE KIX Teacher Capacity

Project (2022–2024) found that classrooms with well-stocked literacy play resources facilitated more meaningful literacy play than those with severe shortages. Likewise, Haile and Ghirmai (2024) in Eritrea and Oppong Frimpong and Wood-Eshun (2023) in Ghana identified inadequate resources as a key factor pushing teachers toward didactic methods. Classen et al. (2025) added that teachers often spend extensive time crafting makeshift materials, which reduces instructional time. Collectively, these findings highlight that the absence of TLMs not only constrains classroom practice but also magnifies inequities, as children from resource-poor schools are denied access to stimulating, literacy-rich environments.

The findings also pointed to large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms as substantial impediments to play-based literacy instruction. This observation is supported by Akyeampong et al. (2021), who revealed that many Ghanaian kindergarten classes far exceed recommended ratios, with enrolments averaging 40 learners per class. Similarly, Boateng (2023) found that overcrowded classrooms in Accra reduced meaningful teacher–child interactions and made it difficult to scaffold emergent literacy through play. International evidence corroborates these patterns. Pyle et al. (2017) in Canada and the UK found that large class sizes limited teachers’ capacity to monitor play, often leading to a reversion to teacher-led methods. The Project STAR study in the United States (Mosteller, 1995; Finn & Achilles, 1999) also provided strong empirical evidence that children in smaller classes demonstrated significantly greater literacy gains than those in larger groups. Moreover, Brown and Green (2020) demonstrated that overcrowding elevated stress among children, impairing executive functions such as attention and self-regulation, which are critical for literacy. These converging findings confirm that overcrowded classrooms undermine both the pedagogical intent and cognitive benefits of play-based literacy instruction.

Another recurring issue in both the findings and literature is insufficient training in play-based pedagogy. Teachers in Adentan expressed that limited professional preparation constrained

their ability to integrate play meaningfully with reading and writing. Osei and Boateng (2022) similarly observed that many Ghanaian kindergarten teachers had not received formal training in child centered pedagogies. Asiedu and Mensah (2021) added that while teachers valued play, they lacked the skills to align it with literacy outcomes. Globally, studies confirm that without hands-on training, teachers often default either to free play or rote methods (Smith & Perez, 2020; Khumalo et al., 2023). Nguyen, Patel, and Lee (2024) emphasized that the more sophisticated elements of guided play such as scaffolding emergent literacy require practical coaching and continuous professional development. Programs that included in-class mentoring (Diaz et al., 2022; Ofori & Agyemang, 2023) proved more effective than one-off workshops. These findings highlight that sustainable adoption of play-based pedagogy requires ongoing, context-sensitive teacher training.

The study also revealed that administrative and institutional support was limited, echoing patterns documented elsewhere. Mensah and Addo (2023) reported that Ghanaian teachers often receive little leadership backing to implement play-based literacy activities. Tetteh and Aidoo (2022) further argued that headteachers' lack of prioritization of play undermines resource allocation and pedagogical innovation. Similar observations were made by Nambalirwa and Kato (2022) in Uganda, who found that teachers reverted to traditional methods when school leaders were unsupportive. Parker and Daniels (2023) in the UK also documented that strong administrative support correlated with the presence of literacy-rich, play-based environments. These findings underscore that without institutional endorsement, teachers are left to navigate systemic barriers on their own, thereby limiting the sustainability of play-centered literacy practices.

Finally, although classroom space and infrastructure were rated as less critical challenges, the literature demonstrates that they remain important. Asare and Adom (2023) noted that Ghanaian kindergartens often lack well-equipped literacy play corners, outdoor play areas, or

sufficient space for group activities. Mwoma and Pillay (2022) in Kenya and Dlamini and Mkhize (2023) in South Africa similarly observed that infrastructural inadequacies forced teachers to revert to formal methods. Agyeman and Oppong (2022) emphasized that adequate infrastructure is a necessary foundation for organizing literacy play stations such as storytelling corners and letter manipulation centers.

Taken together, the findings of this study, supported by a wide body of literature, confirm that challenges to implementing play-based literacy pedagogy in the Adentan Municipality are systemic and multifaceted. Pressures from academic performance expectations, parental attitudes, resource shortages, overcrowding, limited training, weak administrative support, and infrastructural constraints collectively hinder teachers from fully realizing the potential of play based approaches. Addressing these barriers requires a holistic response that includes curriculum reforms allowing flexibility, targeted teacher professional development, provision of adequate resources, infrastructural investment, manageable class sizes, and stronger school-home partnerships. Only through such comprehensive interventions can play-based pedagogy fulfill its promise of improving literacy outcomes for Ghanaian kindergarten learners.

**Research Question 4: What strategies would enhance teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in teaching kindergarteners' reading and writing in the Adentan Municipality?**

**Table 5: Strategies to Enhance Teachers' Use of Play-Based Pedagogy in Teaching Reading and Writing**

ITEMS	Mean	STD
Providing regular training and professional development on play-based pedagogy would improve its use in teaching reading and writing.	3.69	.290
Adequate provision of teaching and learning materials would enhance the effective implementation of play-based literacy activities.	3.49	.659
Reducing class sizes would make it easier to use play-based strategies in literacy instruction.	3.82	.120
Establishing well-equipped literacy play centers in classrooms would support children's reading and writing development.	3.62	.355
Curriculum guidelines should give more flexibility for integrating playbased methods into literacy teaching.	3.28	.912
Increased administrative and policy support would encourage teachers to adopt play-based pedagogy more effectively.	3.81	.861
Parental sensitization programs would help parents appreciate the role of play in literacy learning.	3.72	.386
Collaboration among teachers through the sharing of ideas and best practices would improve the use of play-based literacy strategies.	3.19	.888
Access to ongoing mentoring or coaching would strengthen teachers' confidence in using play to teach reading and writing.	3.69	.359
<b>Mean of Means</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>.483</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2025**

Table 5 outlines teachers' views on strategies that could strengthen the implementation of play based pedagogy in literacy instruction. The overall mean of means ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 0.483$ ) suggests that teachers generally agree on the importance of several strategies, though the relatively modest average indicates varying emphasis placed on different interventions.

The highest-rated strategy was *reducing class sizes* ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 0.120$ ). The extremely small standard deviation indicates strong consensus among teachers that large class sizes are a major barrier, and addressing this would significantly enhance their ability to use play-based literacy approaches. Closely following this, *increased administrative and policy support* ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 0.861$ ) and *parental sensitization programs* ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.386$ ) were also highly endorsed. These findings emphasize the critical role of systemic and community-level support in sustaining play-based pedagogy.

Teachers also rated *providing regular training and professional development* ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.290$ ) and *ongoing mentoring or coaching* ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.359$ ) highly, with relatively low variability. This suggests a strong recognition of the need for capacity building and continuous professional guidance to enhance confidence and competence in implementing play-based literacy strategies.

Other strategies viewed as important included *establishing well-equipped literacy play centers in classrooms* ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.355$ ) and *adequate provision of teaching and learning materials* ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 0.659$ ). These highlight the necessity of material and infrastructural resources in making play-based pedagogy practical and sustainable.

On the other hand, strategies such as *curriculum flexibility for integrating play-based methods* ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.912$ ) and *collaboration among teachers through sharing ideas and best practices* ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 0.888$ ) recorded the lowest mean scores. While still relevant, the relatively higher standard deviations suggest mixed opinions, possibly due to varying experiences with curriculum demands or differing levels of teacher collaboration across schools.

Overall, the findings in Table 4.5 indicate that teachers see class size reduction, administrative and parental support, and targeted professional development as the most critical strategies for

strengthening play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction. Resource provision and infrastructure also remain essential, while collaborative and curriculum-related adjustments, though valuable, appear less consistently emphasized by teachers.

The findings from Table 5 indicate that kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality identified several strategies that could strengthen the use of play-based pedagogy in literacy instruction. A recurring concern among teachers was the challenge of large class sizes, which they saw as one of the greatest barriers to implementing play effectively. This aligns with Allen and Lewis (2021) and McGill and Thornhill (2023), who observed that oversized classrooms limit teacher–child interaction and reduce fidelity to play-based literacy practices. Ghanaian studies echo these findings, with Oppong and Yeboah (2022) and Adomako and Ofori (2023) demonstrating that behavior management challenges intensify in large groups, making it difficult for teachers to facilitate meaningful literacy play. Teachers in the Adentan study thus stressed the need to reduce class sizes or adopt group management techniques that make play workable even in crowded contexts.

Another central strategy highlighted was the need for stronger administrative and policy support.

Teachers noted that when leadership champions play-based methods, classrooms are better equipped and teachers are more motivated. This reflects Parker and Daniels' (2023) findings from the UK and Boateng and Akoto's (2022) study in Ghana, both of which linked headteacher support to successful integration of literacy corners and play-based practices. Similarly, Tetteh and Akyeampong (2023) found that teachers without administrative backing often reverted to traditional, teacher-centered approaches.

Parental sensitization also emerged as a crucial factor. Teachers recognized that parents' attitudes toward literacy play strongly shape its sustainability. This mirrors the evidence from Singh and Rajan (2022) in India and Mahlathi et al. (2021) in South Africa, who documented

significant literacy gains when parents were actively involved. Ghanaian research by Osei-Poku and Annor (2022) further supports this, showing that workshops and home-based literacy kits improved children's reading outcomes and increased parental appreciation of play's role in learning.

Professional development was another widely endorsed strategy. Teachers emphasized the importance of ongoing training, workshops, and mentoring to build competence and confidence in applying play-based pedagogy. This is consistent with Smith and Perez (2020) in Australia, Diaz, Hansen, and Patel (2021) in the U.S., and Asante and Nkansah (2022) in Ghana, all of whom found that professional learning interventions enhanced teacher capacity and improved literacy outcomes through play. Continuous support and classroom-based coaching, as highlighted in the literature, were seen as more effective than one-off workshops.

Teachers also emphasized the need for adequate resources and infrastructure, such as literacy play centers and print-rich materials, to make play-based pedagogy both practical and engaging. This finding resonates with Anamuah and Ofori (2021), who found that many Ghanaian kindergartens lacked the materials necessary for interactive play, and with Akosua and Boateng (2023), who demonstrated that establishing themed reading corners increased teacher-child interaction in literacy tasks.

Other strategies, such as curriculum flexibility and collaboration among teachers, were considered useful but received less emphasis. This reflects Yeboah and Asiedu's (2021) critique of Ghana's Standard-Based Curriculum for not providing sufficient guidance on linking play to literacy, as well as Owusu and Baffour's (2023) pilot in Kumasi, which showed that teacher buy-in to curriculum adjustments was inconsistent. Similarly, while teacher collaboration has proven valuable in some contexts, responses suggest that its impact varies across schools depending on leadership support and school culture.

Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers in Adentan view systemic reforms such as reducing class sizes, strengthening administrative and parental support, and providing continuous professional development as the most urgent strategies for improving play-based pedagogy. At the same time, adequate material resources and supportive curricular frameworks are also necessary to sustain practice. These findings align with global and local evidence, while also highlighting context-specific priorities for Ghana's early childhood education system.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This final chapter provides a summary of the study, highlighting the key findings. It discusses the conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

#### 5.1 Summary of the findings of the Study

The findings from the study revealed that kindergarten teachers in the Adentan Municipality perceive play-based pedagogy as highly effective for enhancing vocabulary, communication, engagement, and creativity in literacy learning, though systematic implementation in classroom practice remains inconsistent despite positive perceptions.

The findings reveal that Adentan kindergarten teachers employ diverse play-based strategies for literacy, prioritizing storytelling, print-rich environments, and creative arts, while collaborative play, phonemic games, and dramatization remain underutilized due to constraints in resources, class size, and scaffolding.

The findings reveal that teachers in Adentan face systemic challenges, such as academic performance pressures, parental resistance, inadequate resources, overcrowding, limited training, weak institutional support, and infrastructural gaps, which collectively constrain effective implementation of play-based literacy pedagogy.

The findings show that Adentan teachers emphasized reducing class sizes, strengthening administrative and parental support, and continuous professional development as key strategies for enhancing play-based pedagogy, alongside adequate resources and supportive curricular frameworks.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study;

The study concluded that while teachers in Adentan recognize the educational potential of play in fostering early literacy, deliberate interventions are required to bridge the gap between their positive perceptions and consistent classroom practice.

The evidence suggests that although teachers integrate a range of play-based literacy strategies, targeted capacity-building and supportive conditions are essential to broaden their repertoire and optimize the impact of less-utilized but equally valuable approaches.

Again, the study concludes that the effectiveness of play-based pedagogy in literacy development is shaped less by teacher attitudes and more by systemic barriers, underscoring the need for comprehensive reforms at institutional and policy levels.

Furthermore, the study concluded that sustainable improvement in literacy outcomes depends on implementing practical, system-wide strategies that empower teachers, enhance support structures, and create enabling environments for play-centered learning to thrive.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

The following recommendations were drawn from the study findings that;

1. Teachers in Adentan highly value play-based pedagogy but struggle with systematic implementation, it is recommended that policymakers and education directors provide structured capacity-building programs. These should focus on bridging the gap between positive perceptions and consistent classroom practice by offering hands-on training, ongoing mentoring, and reflective practice sessions.
2. Teachers rely heavily on storytelling, print-rich environments, and creative arts while underutilizing collaborative play, phonemic games, and dramatization, it is

recommended that the Adentan Municipal Education Directorate should design targeted professional development workshops.

3. Since systemic challenges such as overcrowding, limited resources, parental resistance, and weak institutional support constrain play-based pedagogy, it is recommended that school authorities in the municipality should invest in reducing class sizes, providing adequate materials, sensitizing parents, and strengthening administrative support. This holistic response will create enabling conditions for effective literacy instruction through play.
4. Also, Policies should promote sustainable professional learning communities, equip classrooms with literacy play centers, and establish strong school-home partnerships to ensure play-based pedagogy is fully integrated into kindergarten literacy instruction.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further Suggestions Studies**

1. Future research should track children over several years to determine the long-term effects of play-based pedagogy on reading and writing development beyond kindergarten into the lower primary grades.
2. Studies using control and experimental groups can provide stronger evidence on the direct impact of guided play strategies on specific literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and emergent writing.
3. Similar studies should be conducted in other municipalities and rural districts in Ghana to compare how context, resources, and teacher preparation influence the implementation of play-based literacy instruction.

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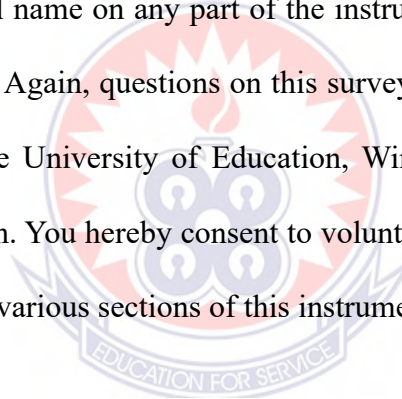
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**APPENDIX A**  
**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**  
**FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

**Dear Respondent**

The study was to investigate the effectiveness of play-based pedagogical approaches in enhancing reading and writing skills among kindergarten learners in the Adentan Municipality. It would therefore be appreciated if you could provide responses to all items on the questionnaire, and do it honestly. You are assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity of all information provided. Nothing will ever be published or reported that will associate your name and/or school with your responses to the survey questions. Therefore, you should not write your name and/or school name on any part of the instrument. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Again, questions on this survey have gone through a thorough review by professionals at the University of Education, Winneba, and have been declared ethical for educational research. You hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study by responding to the items of the various sections of this instrument.



**Thank You.**

## SECTION A

### DEMOGRAPHIC

#### CHARACTERISTICS 1. Gender:

- a) Male [ ]
- b) Female [ ]

#### 2. Age bracket

- a) Below 30 [ ]
- b) 31-35 [ ]
- c) 35-40 [ ]
- d) 41 – 50 [ ]
- e) 51 – 60 [ ]

#### 3. Level of Qualification

- a) Diploma [ ]
- b) Degree [ ]
- c) Masters [ ]
- d) Others [ ]



#### 4. Years of Teaching Experience

- a) 0-5years [ ]
- b) 6-10years [ ]
- c) 11 years and above [ ]

## SECTION B

### **Research Question One: What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions about the use of play based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality?**

Please respond to the following statements on kindergarten teachers perception regarding the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality. Indicate the extent to which you Strongly Agree-SA, Agree-A, Disagree-D, and Strongly Disagree-SD to the statements below

What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions about the use of play-based pedagogy in supporting reading and writing development in the Adentan Municipality?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
5	I believe play-based pedagogy is an effective approach for developing children's reading skills in kindergarten.				
6	Play-based activities are important in promoting children's early writing development.				
7	I consider storytelling, role play, and games as essential strategies for fostering literacy in young learners.				
8	Play-based pedagogy helps children to develop the vocabulary and communication skills necessary for reading and writing.				
9	Incorporating play into literacy instruction makes learning more meaningful and enjoyable for children.				
10	I perceive play-based pedagogy as more effective than traditional teacher-centered methods in supporting early literacy.				
11	Play-based activities encourage children's creativity, which contributes to their ability to express themselves in writing.				
12	Play-based pedagogy provides opportunities for children to practice reading and writing in natural, interactive contexts.				
13	I believe that integrating play into literacy lessons improves children's motivation to learn to read and write.				

## SECTION C

**What types of play-based activities do kindergarten teachers incorporate into reading and writing instruction in the Adentan Municipality?**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
14	I use storytelling activities to develop children's reading comprehension and vocabulary.				
15	I incorporate role play or dramatization to encourage children to practice reading and writing in context.				
16	I use songs and rhymes to introduce letter sounds and phonemic awareness.				
17	I integrate drawing and coloring activities to support children's emergent writing skills.				
18	I create opportunities for children to engage in pretend play that involves reading signs, menus, or labels.				
19	I use games (e.g., letter-matching, word puzzles) to reinforce reading and writing concepts.				
20	I provide opportunities for children to use sand trays, clay, or other tactile materials for letter formation practice.				
21	I incorporate storytelling with picture cards to support sequencing and sentence construction.				
22	I use pair or group play activities to encourage collaborative reading and writing.				
23	I establish literacy corners or play centers with books, charts, and print-rich materials to promote reading and writing.				

**SECTION D**

**What challenges do kindergarten teachers encounter in using play-based pedagogy in reading and writing instruction?**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
24	Large class sizes make it difficult to effectively implement play-based activities in literacy instruction.				
25	Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials hinders my ability to use play to teach reading and writing.				
26	Time constraints due to curriculum demands limit the use of play-based pedagogy in literacy lessons.				
27	Overcrowded classrooms make organizing play-based literacy activities challenging.				
28	Limited training in play-based pedagogy affects my confidence in using it for reading and writing instruction.				
29	Pressure to focus on academic performance discourages the integration of play in literacy teaching.				
30	Lack of administrative or institutional support makes it difficult to sustain play-based practices.				
31	Insufficient physical space in classrooms prevents effective organization of literacy play centers.				
32	Parents' preference for traditional teaching methods discourages the use of play in reading and writing instruction.				
33	Limited assessment tools make it difficult to evaluate children's literacy development through play-based activities.				

## SECTION E

**What strategies would enhance teachers' use of play-based pedagogy in teaching kindergarteners' reading and writing in the Adentan Municipality?**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
34	Providing regular training and professional development on play-based pedagogy would improve its use in teaching reading and writing.				
35	Adequate provision of teaching and learning materials would enhance the effective implementation of play-based literacy activities.				
36	Reducing class sizes would make it easier to use play-based strategies in literacy instruction.				
37	Establishing well-equipped literacy play centers in classrooms would support children's reading and writing development.				
38	Curriculum guidelines should give more flexibility for integrating play-based methods into literacy teaching.				
39	Increased administrative and policy support would encourage teachers to adopt play-based pedagogy more effectively.				
40	Parental sensitization programs would help parents appreciate the role of play in literacy learning.				
41	Collaboration among teachers through sharing of ideas and best practices would improve the use of play-based literacy strategies.				
42	Access to ongoing mentoring or coaching would strengthen teachers' confidence in using play to teach reading and writing.				
43	Providing regular training and professional development on play-based pedagogy would improve its use in teaching reading and writing.				