

*Karen Sagun-Ongtangco, Crismae Olay, Angeli Bernardez, Elisha Macabuag,
Beatrice Rey-Matias, Gideon Young*

Socioeconomic disparity in play and playground preference of Filipino children

INTRODUCTION

Play is defined as any spontaneous or organized activity that provides enjoyment, entertainment, amusement, or diversion (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2002). Play, aside from being an enjoyable activity, is also a process through which children can learn. Play can enhance different skills and contribute to a range of developmental virtues, including personal responsibility, problem-solving and imagination and creativity. Children play in different ways depending on the age group (Play England, 2011). Through play, children learn some of the skills necessary for maturation such as social competence, problem-solving, creative thinking and safety skills. They can grow emotionally and academically as well by interacting with the environment and participating in imaginative play and exploring the surroundings that could aid in acquiring an understanding of basic concepts such as the different properties and use of objects (Thigpen, 2007).

In 2011, the World Health Organization emphasized that vigorous movements and physical activities could aid in the development of muscle groups and support the growth of heart, lungs and other vital organs essential for physical development. Outdoor play, for it to be nourishing, should provide opportunities of exploration, sensory stimulation, which is mostly exemplified when children play with dirt, water, sand and mud, opportunities for physical activity and development of cognitive skills and the central nervous system. The indoor play also has provided several benefits such as improvement of creativity and imagination, problem-solving skills, and strategies that are crucial to adaptation to a specific environment (World Health Organization, 2011). In line with these benefits and advantages of indoor, outdoor and active play, there are already concerns that have resurfaced regarding the diminishing number of children who still engage in these types of play, with the technology and increased risk factors in

the recent times (Clements, 2004).

In 2009, a study by Charles and Louv (2009) suggest that significant changes in childhood have occurred over the past several decades and that there are multiple indicators of the absence of the children's direct experience with the natural world. There are also lesser free and unstructured outdoor playtime in nature by children of the recent years compared to those experienced by previous generations; reduced mobility and less range for exploration, growing fear of strangers, traffic and nature itself, and a dramatic rise in obesity and severe overweight, as well as vitamin D deficiency and other health issues that may in part be related to low levels of outdoor activity and a sedentary lifestyle.

Parents' fears keep children indoors due to safety issues that may arise when unsupervised. The study conducted by Veitch et. al. (2007), on which a survey on play space of 800 children aged 4 to 16 years found out that 61% of them were not allowed to play outside since birth because of fear of being bullied or knocked over by car, and by parents' concerns about strangers. Of the aforementioned children, 25% have been identified to have social interaction problems and Autism-like features while 17% have been identified to be more aloof and fearful of other people. The study emphasized creating and improving play spaces and more wardens to ensure safety. It also called on authorities to create safer routes to playgrounds and to consult children when designing new play spaces (Veitch et al, 2007). Another study by Hess (2009) looked into how limited engagement in age-appropriate play could somehow lead to various clinical conditions that are becoming more prevalent. With these conditions, problems such as difficulty in social interaction and restricted patterns of behavior or interest could benefit from appropriate play activities in proper environments, to improve the possible problems associated. The aforementioned study also stressed the importance of earliest possible screening, parent involvement, as well as activities and routines that are flexible yet predictable, provided in multiple settings and appropriate play activities. Early interventions for children provided with appropriate home space are proven to have benefits especially in the creation and modeling of infants and children as well as the family (Pierce et al, 2009).

Children's right to play

To further support the importance of play in children's lives, these issues have already reached the legislatures and world organizations. Some aspects included in these laws are the child's right to play, accessibility of playgrounds, anti-children trafficking and the obligation of everyone to support the child's right to play.

All children have the right to play (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). This has been implemented for years in Article 31. It states that: '*States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*' Article 31 highlights three separate but interrelated roles for the States Parties: Recognizing, respecting and promoting the child's right to play.

Recognizing the child's right to play is the building block of respecting and promoting it. One should understand the nature and benefits of play. To respect, it simply means to not deny or limit the access of enjoyment of the right. It is important to see play as an essential need for the development of the children, and the adults should be sensitive to this need and consider this when planning play environments. Lastly, promoting the child's right to play, is very crucial because the fundamental importance of it is often viewed as a luxury instead of a basic necessity. The promotion also involves ensuring that the environment is in good condition for play engagement and that children are given the freedom to play.

Philippine Setting

In the Philippines, children, especially in industrialized places such as Metro Manila, live in overcrowded, unsafe and polluted environments that provide little opportunity for learning, play, and even leisure. These children may be vulnerable to the environment and social degradation, in terms of both the likelihood of personal harm and the constraints this places on their capacity to reach their full potential. They are trapped in an environment that provides little opportunity for self-discovery and environmental exploration (Lachica, 2011). There is a big change in forms of play of children today as compared to children in the past generations. The play activities before are more traditional and physically-

oriented, which could have contributed to the production of healthy and well children; while the increase in various diagnoses in children today could have attributed to the lack of appropriate play and environmental exposure (Delos Reyes, 2010).

A lot of factors can influence the play and play space use of a child. Parents hardly initiate and provide opportunities for children's participation in outdoor and active play because of their desire for their children to focus on their studies and of the increased risk factors such as fears about traffic danger, bullying and "*Stranger danger*" entailed by this. Thus, it leaves the children no other alternative but to engage in structured and regulated play in their homes, friend's homes and commercial play or recreation or recreation facilities, whatever space is available for them. They have lost access to traditional play environments, including streets and wild spaces. This type of regulatory play may be good in terms of protection of children from being exposed to environmental hazards but has long-term, if not a lifetime, consequences on their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and competence. Conflicts are expected to occur because children are exposed in a crowded environment with limited play equipment and materials (Lachica, 2011).

Criteria for Appropriate Play Environment

A study by Veitch et. al. (2007), was conducted on how children find opportunities to be active and engage in play despite having poor access to public open spaces and to their neighborhoods and how this varies in different age groups. It was suggested that to some children, opportunities to engage in active free play in the neighborhood may be due to lack of parks in close proximity to home as well as to other play spaces. The study emphasizes the importance of collaboration with local governments, urban planners and community groups to improve access to play areas, neighborhood parks, and to promote a sense of neighborhood safety.

As a result of studies like this, growing numbers of criteria for the appropriate environment of early childhood play are being implemented and published in order to ensure good environments for children to play with to achieve well-developed skills and capacities. In 1991, The National Association for the Education of Young Children has come up with 4 goals indicating the appropriate details that should be included in the play environment. The first goal emphasizes the quality of the play environment, be it indoor or

outdoor. Safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, and space were required, as well as a minimum of 35 square feet of playroom floor space indoors or 75 square feet of play space outdoors. The second and third goals discuss the spatial arrangement of the area, the clear pathways towards the area and the organization of the area should facilitate positive interaction between people and active involvement with materials. The fourth goal highlights the placement of appropriate materials and equipment of sufficient quantity, variety, and durability on low, open shelves and others that could stimulate the senses, construction materials, manipulative toys, dramatic play equipment, art materials, books, and records (The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991). The journals and previous researches are helpful but it is lacking in cultural conformity since the studies are from western countries. Given the criteria for play environment, this study further explores the play space use of children in the local setting.

OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study primarily intends to describe the play activities and space preference of Filipino children in high and low socioeconomic status. Limited studies regarding space use and how Filipino children utilize the space available have been conducted in the Philippines. Filipino children's engagement in play despite the limitations of safe public areas, neighborhoods and even house structures and other factors that influence the type of activities they engage in should be determined.

This study attempts to depict the local scenario of children's play and provide preliminary information about how children utilize the spaces available. In line with this, the data gathered can assist allied professionals in introducing more play activities that are at par with the resources and environment without compromising the benefits that could be gained through it while at the same time, letting the child experience a fun and enjoyable play. Ultimately, this study advocate for improving the engagement of Filipino children in meaningful play that will be an avenue for optimum development and health.

METHODS

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual. Phenomenological approaches are based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and

interpretation. As such, they are powerful for understanding the subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions (Lester, 1999). This study follows a phenomenological qualitative research design, through photo elicitation, drawing and interview. Using these methods in data gathering, this research is able to analyze and determine the space use and play preference of the two social groups, to know the common places that a child would usually play and the preference of play activities. Through the child-friendly methods, the perspective of the children about their play activities can be elucidated.

Ethical approval was sought from the UST-CRS Ethics Committee. After which, purposive selection of the participants was made, based on the data collected from the Barangay office about the socioeconomic statuses of the families residing in these areas. The researchers then sought for the ethical approval of the Barangay officials of the two communities, one from high socioeconomic and one from low socioeconomic status. A brief survey form was also given to the children's parents to describe their socioeconomic status in terms of income, educational attainment, and employment.

Participants of the study consisted of 20 Filipino children, aged 12 years old, 10 living with families in low socioeconomic status, and 10 children with families in high socioeconomic status. They are all 12-year-old children, with 5 boys and 5 girls for each group. Consent and assent forms were solicited after the screening.

The participants were given an orientation on the activities to be conducted. They were taught how to use the camera, what to draw, and the process of interview was described to them. To ensure that they understood the instructions. The participants were asked to repeat the instructions to check for understanding.

For the photo elicitation, the participants were asked to bring the researchers to their play areas and the children were instructed to take pictures of the area they preferred to play and describe the area. They were allowed to be accompanied by their caregiver. After which, they were interviewed about the pictures of their play areas. Some of the questions asked are the following:

1. What do you like most about your play areas? (*Ano ang pinaka gusto mo sa lugar kung saan ka naglalaro?*)

2. What do you dislike about your play areas? (*Ano ang pinakaayaw mo rito?*)
3. Why did you choose this/these play area/s? (*Bakit mo napili ito/mga itong lugar na ito?*)

For the doodling or drawing method, the participants were asked to draw their usual play activities in their play areas with pencil, crayons and paper. The participants were asked questions via interview after the drawing about their play activities. The questions included the following questions:

1. What games do you play in your play area? (*Ano-ano ang mga madalas mong nilalaro sa lugar na ito?*)
2. Do you usually play in groups or by yourself? Why? (*Naglalaro ka ba mag-isa o may kasama ka? Sino?*)
3. Why did you choose this/these play activity/ies? (*Bakit ito ang mga napili mong laruin?*)

RESULTS

This study looks into space and play preference of 20 children, 10 from the high socioeconomic status and 10 from low socioeconomic status. Content analysis was done with the photos that the children captured, their drawings and the transcript of the interviews. Constant comparison analysis was done across the three methods.

Play and Playground of Children from Families with Low Socioeconomic Status

Codes were gleaned from the photographs, drawings and the interview of the children. As relevant to the space preference, contents of the photos include street, the presence of cars, the presence of other children, and if it is indoors or outdoors. To complement this, the codes for the drawings that depict their preferred space include: street, presence of playmates and the games that they play such as Chinese garter, volleyball and playing tag. Through interview of the children in the low socioeconomic status, common themes generated as relevant to the play space are proximity to home, the presence of friends and the presence of other people. Table 1 depicts how these codes were seen in each child.

| PARTICIPANT | PHOTO ANALYSIS | | | | DRAWING ANALYSIS | | | TEXT BASED ANALYSIS | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|------|----------------------------|---------|------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| | STREET | CARS | PRESENCE OF OTHER CHILDREN | OUTDOOR | INDOOR | STREET | PRESENCE OF OTHER CHILDREN | GAMES | PROXIMITY TO HOMES | PRESENCE OF FRIENDS | PRESENCE OF OTHER PEOPLE | WELL VENTILATED AND SPACIOUS | SAFETY ISSUE |
| 1 | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 4 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 5 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 6 | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| 7 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 8 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 9 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 10 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| TOTAL | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 6 |

Table 1. Comparative analysis of play space for children in low SES

On the other hand, the 2 common content seen in the photos taken by the children in terms of the nature of play that they engage in are either street games or electronic games. In their drawings, the common content are games done either with friends, electronic gadget or on their own. The themes gleaned from the interview depicting the types of games that they do (games with rules involving other children, online games in solitary) and environmental factors that affect their preferred play (friends, space, safety).

| PARTICIPANT | PHOTO ANALYSIS | | DRAWING ANALYSIS | | | | TEXT BASED ANALYSIS | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------|--------|-------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | STREET GAMES WITH RULES | ELECTRONIC GAMES WITH RULES | PRESENCE OF FRIENDS | GAMES | GADGET | ALONE | GAMES WITH FRIENDS | ROLE PLAY | ONLINE GAMES IN SOLITARY | PLAY INFLUENCED BY FRIENDS |
| 1 | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 2 | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 3 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 4 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 5 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 6 | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 7 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 9 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| 10 | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ |
| TOTAL | 7 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 7 |

Table 2. Play activities of children in low SES

Outdoor Play along the Streets

Most of the children from families of low socioeconomic status prefer outdoor play. In fact, 7 out of 10 children took pictures of areas outside of their house that involve large area in the street, with some cars parked nearby or passing along the street because their friends are also playing in the same area. They also stated that the space is much bigger and well ventilated as compared to their homes. Most children stated that they prefer playing in the area where they took the picture because it is near their homes, as they just walk to go to these play spaces. Notably, there are many

other children in the area playing predominant in 7 out of 10 photos, 5 out of 10 drawings and 7 out of 10 statements in the interview. It was noted that these spaces are not necessarily designated playgrounds, but just a nearby place where children can meet. Hence, the safety issue is expressed by 6 out of 10 children.



Photo 1 and 2. Photos captured by children with Low Socioeconomic status illustrating streets as their play spaces

Group games with gross motor activities

Seven out of 10 children drew games that they play in common street grounds. The children engage more in outdoor play as seen in their preference for street games, like volleyball, playing tag, *patintero*, *piko*, and *Chinese garter*. Street games also involve running, jumping, and climbing. For those who play in the streets, activities are done with their friends or in the presence of other people, like neighbors or even some people that they do not know. This is brought about by the fact that the play spaces that they describe are often in public areas. All the 10 drawings depicted games, with 5 of the children illustrating street games with other children, while 3 depicted gadgets, and 2 playing sports alone.

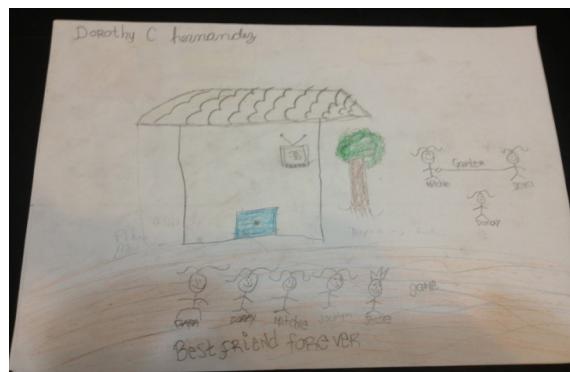
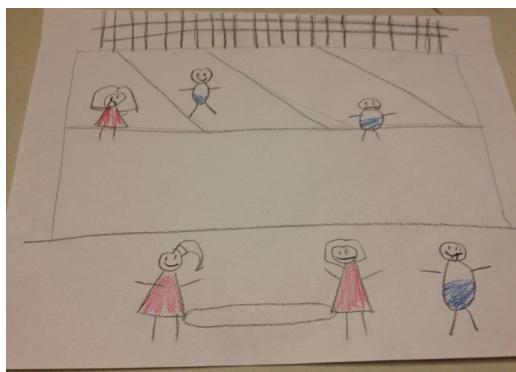


Photo 3 and 4. Drawings of children in low socioeconomic status depicting group games with other children

The 3 children who engage in games in the computer shop accompanied by their friends who also rent computers. The participants usually play with the company of their friends because they find it more fun and enjoyable.

"Lagi akong may kasamang maglaro, malungkot mag isa", Participant 7

Factors that influence their preferences

There are 2 factors that influence their choice of play. First, the children are influenced by their peers in terms of their preferred type of games to play because their activities are done in agreement with their friends. Second is the play space available either in its size and safety. As mentioned in the spacious and well-ventilated play area of the streets, that they are able to run around, or play with other children. However, they are somehow restricted in terms of safety, where their play areas are streets with the cars passing by, or where there are too many children in the area who might get hit either by the materials they use for play (such as balls) or their rough movements.

"Nandyan yung mga sasakyan, tinitignan po nila mabuti kung may masa sagasaan" Participant 10

"Kasi masaya tapos ito rin ang laro ng kaibigan ko/nila." Participant 8 and 9

"Malaki tapos maraming pwedeng gawin, tapos katabi lang ng bahay ko", Participant 7

Play and Playground of Children from Families with High Socioeconomic Status

Analysis of the photos taken by children from high socioeconomic status revealed that the common content in relation to the space they prefer to play are: indoors or outdoors, the absence of people, presence of electronic gadgets. Two of the participants were not allowed to take pictures of their play area due to confidentiality issues. For the drawings, the common content depicted includes indoor or outdoor, and minimal space requirement. The common themes from the interview of the children include safety concern, the presence of other people, availability of electronic gadgets and cool temperature. Table 3 shows a summary of comparative analysis.

| PARTICIPANT | PHOTO ANALYSIS | | | | DRAWING ANALYSIS | | | TEXT BASED ANALYSIS | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|--------|--------|------------------|--------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| | ABSENCE OF PEOPLE | OUTDOOR | INDOOR | GADGET | OUTDOOR | INDOOR | MINIMAL SPACE REQUIRED FOR ELEC GADGET | AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES | NOT ALLOWED TO GO OUT | COOL TEMP/VENT | SPACIOUS | QUIET |
| 1 | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| 2 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 3 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | |
| 4 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 5 | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| 6 | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| 7 | | | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | |
| 8 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 9 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| 10 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| TOTAL | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 |

Table 3. Playspace of children in high SES

Analysis of play activities of children supports the space that they depicted. The photos taken by children from the high socioeconomic status portray either physical activity through sports and free play and electronic games. The content of their drawings is similar, with electronic gadgets, other toys, and sports. Interview with the children to probe on their photographs and drawings suggest the following themes: preference for solitude, games with rules and use of gadgets.

| PARTICIPANT | PHOTO ANALYSIS | | | DRAWING ANALYSIS | | | | TEXT-BASED ANALYSIS | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------|--------------------|------------|--------|----------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| | PHYSICAL ACTIVITY | ELECTRONIC GAMES WITH RULES | SOLITARY | ELECTRONIC GADGETS | OTHER TOYS | SPORTS | SOLITARY | GAMES WITH RULES | PLAY WITH PEERS | PLAY WITH FAMILY | CHOICE INFLUENCED BY GADGET | SOLITARY | PHYSICAL DEMAND | ROLE PLAY |
| 1 | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| 2 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 4 | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 5 | No photo | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 6 | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| 7 | No photo | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 8 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| 9 | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | |
| 10 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| TOTAL | 2 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 4 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |

Table 4. Play activities of children in high SES

Safe and Cool Indoor Space to access electronic gadgets

Drawings depicted a minimal space requirement influenced by the type of play that the children do. Both photos and drawings depicted that 6 out of 10 prefers to play indoors, either in the bedroom or living room. Notably, only 2 photos and 2 drawings from the same 2 children illustrated outdoor space. As seen in the table, 9 out of 10 children took photos of areas isolated from people, with only one child taking a photo of space with peers. Children stated that they prefer playing indoors because of the availability of

electronic gadgets (TV, computers, tablet, gaming consoles). This was seen in 4 out of 8 photos and 5 out of 10 drawings.

"I like it here because all my gadgets are here", Participant 8.

All the participants in this group stated that they play with their electronic devices available inside their own homes. Electronic games need to be played in a quiet room where no one can disturb the child while playing. Gadgets such as television, computer, and game consoles are contained in one room that is easily accessible to the child.



Photos 5 and 6. Photos of a bedroom as play space captured by Children with high socioeconomic status

Some participants are engaged in indoor play because their parents do not allow them to play outside. In addition, children prefer the cool temperature of their homes. This is illustrated by the following:

"Because I'm not allowed to go outside and I like it here because it is aircon"

Participant 2

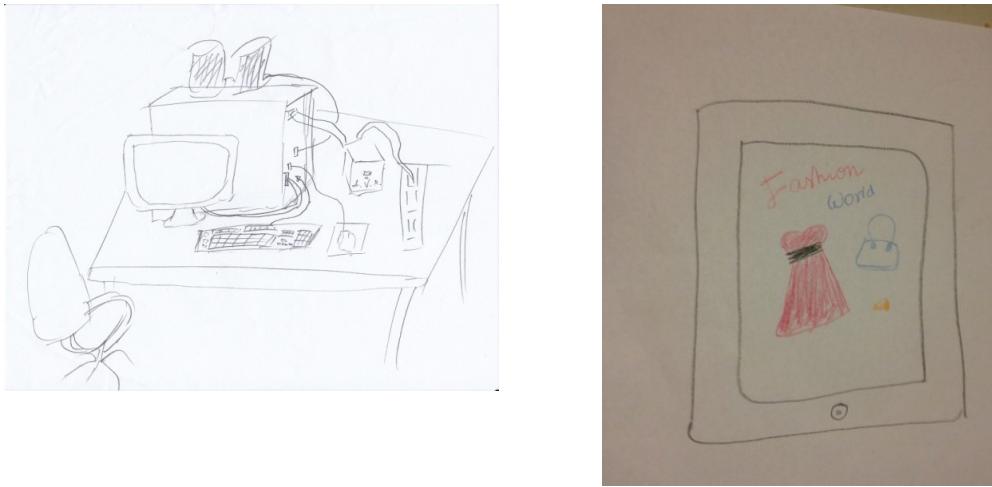
"Because I don't have to get out, it's hot outside" Participant 5

"Dahil madulas yung sahig sa labas kaya hindi pwede" Participant 1

Use of Electronic Gadgets

Participants from the high socioeconomic status engage more in electronic games as seen in 5 out of 8 photos and 6 out of 10 drawings depicted in table 4. Photos and drawings illustrated tablets, computer, and game consoles. Only 2 out of 8 children had photos that had physical activity requiring larger movements of the lower extremities. Similarly, only 3 out of 10 participants included sports in their drawing, while only 2 children played with toys other than electronic gadgets. This is connected with the play interaction that they have, which is more in solitary. As stated by one of the children:

"I play on my own when I use my computer". Participant 8



Photos 7 and 8. Drawings of children with high economic status depicting electronic games as their preferred play activities

Solitary Play Activities

All the 10 drawings, and 7 out of 8 photos depicted play in the absence of other children. In lieu of the children as the content of their drawing, what they drew were objects or themselves while engaging in the play activity. Participants who engage in computer games play alone with an online opponent. When children do play with others using gadgets, as stated in the interviews, they usually play with their siblings or their friends come over to play. Most of the participants play alone because they usually do not have anyone to play with, as Participant 10 says

"I usually play alone since I don't have any siblings but minsan pag nandianyan mga pinsan ko naglalaro din kami", Participant 10

"Alone, sometimes my brother plays with me", Participant 4

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the photos, drawings, and transcript of individual interviews with the children revealed the play activities and space preference of Filipino children in the high and low socioeconomic status. Children in low socioeconomic status prefer streets as outdoor spaces where they can play with other children in groups. Games with rules played with other children commonly include gross motor activities like playing tag, Filipino games (*patintero, piko*) that require running, jumping, and climbing. The type of play that they prefer is affected by their peers as they mainly do these activities with other children.

Likewise, the nature of play activities is affected by the size and safety of the built environment of play space. On the other hand, children in high socioeconomic status prefer a safe and cool indoor home space for easy access to electronic gadgets such as tablets, computers, television and game consoles. Play activities that they prefer are also games with rules in nature, but commonly revolve around the aforementioned gadgets that are often done in solitary.

Benefits of indoor games include cognitive stimulation, widening of imagination and improvement of creativity. Outdoor games' benefits, on the other hand, include environmental exploration, sensory stimulation, and opportunities for physical activity (World Health Organization, 2011). The results suggest that children with high socioeconomic status may be missing out the benefits of outdoor play. There are possible long-term impacts of indoor play and solitary play with the use of electronic gadgets such as compromised health due to lack of physical activity, lack of social interaction, and increased risk for aggression due to exposure to violent video games (Charles and Louv, 2009).

Results have also shown that Filipino children who utilize greater space and environment outside their homes and engage in group play have more opportunities for social interaction and are more commonly seen with their friends, are more flexible and adventurous in their play activities as compared to Filipino children that prefer to play inside their homes and engage more in solitary play and have less opportunities for social interaction. They are also found to be more rigid in terms of play activities and prefer to engage in familiar, repetitive and those at par with their interests. Based on the literature, children who have been denied from opportunities to play outside and interact with other kids in the neighborhood were later on described to increased aloofness and fear of other people (Pierce et al (2009)).

Playspaces of the children across socioeconomic status have been perceived with safety issues, but the illustration of impending danger was more imminent for children in low socioeconomic status who play in the streets that are not designated play areas. In the absence of a playground, these children manage to find their own space for play and interaction. This study suggests the need to look into accessibility and adequacy of playground for children. The importance of enriching and age-appropriate play in the development of the child is influenced by the available space utilized for play. This

suggests a need to advocate for minimal specifications for playgrounds in the country that includes the size, distance from each district, safety considerations, and playground facilities promoting a variety of inclusive play activities that could enrich the play experience of every child, regardless of socioeconomic status. Collective action is called for the improvement of play areas to provide a safe and holistic play experience for Filipino children. There is a definite need to advocate for the development of legislation, focusing on the improvement of playgrounds in the country.

The results of this study also show that the majority of children specifically in the high socioeconomic status engage in play with gadgets leading to solitary play within the confinements of their homes. This could lead to concerns in health, behavior, and cognitive and physical development, which can possibly have an impact on the different areas of occupations such as limitations in social interaction, Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, leisure and education participation. Literature has also related the significance of stimulating and flexible play to well-developed children and the lack of which may lead to problems with social interaction, and restricted patterns of interests (World Health Organization, 2011). Play, as the main occupation of children, is an important tool in occupational therapy which could be used for teaching and acquisition of skills. This can be used to provide stimulating, enriching and flexible play as much as possible with regards to the available resource to facilitate healthy development.

Lastly, while the developmentally appropriate built environment has an imperative role in facilitating play, this study also highlights the role of the child and parent behaviors that influence the choice of play activities and space. This is an opportunity to educate families about the benefits of play interaction with the safe outdoor environment that equip children with skills to navigate both their social and physical environments.

CONCLUSION

Play, as the main occupation of children, may facilitate health and development. This study illustrates the preference in play activities and space of Filipino children. In using three qualitative methods, through photo elicitation, drawing, and interviews of 20 children, the qualities of the space and play activities of these children were elucidated. Based on the themes gleaned from these methods, this study suggests that Filipino

children with low socioeconomic status prefer to engage in outdoor play along the streets through group play with rules. They utilize the available spaces outside their homes such as cemented public streets as their play spaces. On the other hand, Filipino children with high socioeconomic status prefer to play indoors, while engaging in games with rules, but in solitary using electronic devices. They are restricted to the use of their gadgets most commonly without playmates thus utilizing less space in their homes and are confined indoors because of the convenience of having all the materials in one area and for safety reasons.

This study calls for developmentally appropriate, accessible, adequate and safe playspaces for all children regardless of socioeconomic status. As the built environment of playspaces influence play activities, so does the child and family behaviors and motivation, to develop skills necessary to explore, navigate and master a variety of physical and social environment of children.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND BIASES

This study is limited to the number of participants who are all aged 12 years living in urban communities. Other characteristics of the family and the children that may influence preference in play activities and play space is not described in the study, such as family size and educational background of the children.

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