

**PRELIMINARY ON DEVELOPING A TOOL MEASURING PROXIMAL
PLAY INTERACTION TOWARD CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**

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ABSTRACT

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Scope and Coverage: This study focused on determining the proximal play interaction of typical children toward children with Autism. This is a preliminary on developing a tool through Parten's theory on play, using

cooperative play as the construct. There are 150 respondents who participated on this research who came from the two public schools in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

Methodology:

This research explored the construction of a tool measuring proximal play interaction among typical children toward children with Autism. Proximal play interaction involves cooperative play that helps the children to develop social interaction. Studies show that children with disabilities who are placed in inclusive early childhood settings tend to be rejected or neglected more than their developing peers and are involved more with adults in the classroom than with peers. This study used a descriptive survey method for its design. The respondents are grades one to three, 7 to 9 years old, male and female students enrolled at schools that facilitate inclusion

in Dasmariñas, Cavite. The number of respondents in the study is 150 and the researchers used purposive random sampling. The test obtained a high alpha of $\alpha=.9085$ which proves that the test has a strong index of internal consistency of the items. The researchers formulated a peculiar 5-item test that correspond the general behavioral indicators of cooperative play, using a 5-point Likert scale in determining the degree of the child's predisposition in doing the act. The statistic is preferred to be used for attaining an estimate of internal consistency reliability since it requires only one administration of the test. The result was the 5-item Proximal Play Interaction Test (PPIT).

Findings:

There is a significant gap on the social development between normal and

exceptional children. The difference on the developmental rate may account for this matter. Compared with typical children who undergo a predictable and ongoing process of acquisition of a range of complex skills, atypical children constitute either developmental delay or disability that present ongoing problems inferring their growth (Allen & Cowdery, 2005).

Non-disabled children, unless otherwise influenced; seldom have trouble accepting children who are developmentally different. Still, differences are still evident from the notion that children who are nondisabled play in a more organized and mature way compared with exceptional children (Allen & Cowdery, 2005). This explains why the researchers opted to give the spotlight on the play interaction of typical and atypical children.

For the researchers to measure the intended variable, they utilized descriptive survey method for design. The researchers formulated their peculiar 5-item test that correspond the general behavioral indicators of cooperative play, using a 5-point Likert scale in determining the degree of the child's predisposition in doing the act. Pictures illustrating each item's situations are also provided through and illustrator. Included in the tool is the Filipino translation for the convenience of the respondents. The test is entitled Proximal Play Interaction Test (PPIT), aimed to measure the type of play interaction toward children with autism whose ages range from seven to nine.

General behavioral indicators conceptualized for cooperative play include (1) assuming roles that he will do

during play, (2) planning with his peer about the activity they will do, (3) asking for his peer's suggestions, (4) consistent inviting of peers to play with him and (5) sharing the toys with peers freely. The five indicators are expected in predictable social development among children. Support on the consistency of the indicators was also expounded. Using the data gathered from the literature, the test was finalized and prepared for try-out.

Through the use of purposive sampling procedure, researchers obtained the respondents' item results. All of them were grades one to three, students from Dasmarinas, Cavite with ages ranging from seven to nine. They came from the public schools in Cavite, San Miguel Elementary School and Dr. Jose P. Rizal Elementary School.

After the test try-out, scores were recorded and subjected to analysis. The scores obtained from the non-participants during the test try-out were encoded and subjected to statistical analysis. Data are reported as aggregate or group scores and individual scores are not highlighted. Measures of reliability were obtained using Cronbach's alpha.

All items that comprised the test have a computed alpha of $\alpha=.9085$. Compared with the standardized item alpha of $\alpha=.9087$, this proves that the test has a strong index of internal consistency of the items. The inter item of item 1 and item 5 ($\alpha=.8280$) obtained the highest alpha among the five items while inter item of item 3 and item 4 ($\alpha=.7845$) obtained the lowest alpha.

Conclusions:

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers' intend to produce a reliable tool measuring proximal play interaction towards children with autism. It was attained through the detailed process of test development.

As predicted by sequential social development, school-age children move from nonsymbolic to symbolic play and from parallel to cooperative play at about the same rates especially when given equal opportunities (Kostelnik, Whiren, Solderman & Gregory, 2009). Therefore, children ages seven to nine, whether the child is typical or exceptional, are expected to achieve this developmental milestone at this age.

Unless otherwise influenced, typical children seldom have trouble accepting a peer who are developmentally different.

Therefore, the differences in the alpha may be caused by the different attitude of the children toward their play interaction with their classmate with autism. Behavior characteristics and play behavior influences their attributes since they prefer those who have characteristics that complement their own personality and capacities. Attitudes explain the need of children that they should feel more positive about one another (Kostelnik, Whiren, Solderman & Gregory, 2009).

With this, a preliminary on developing a psychological tool was established. The behavioral indicators were checked through the literature and its reliability was tested through test-try-out. All the items consisted were merged into tryout output as presented in the Appendix B.

Recommendations:

The researchers recommend the following:

Regular and Special Education

Teachers. The validation of the tool will help the teacher determine the present conditions of social play interactions of typical children toward children with autism as reference in structuring child to child relations among diverse students. The use of PPIT together with other assessment methods could be facilitated among typical children in inclusion setting to point out and resolve possible social needs.

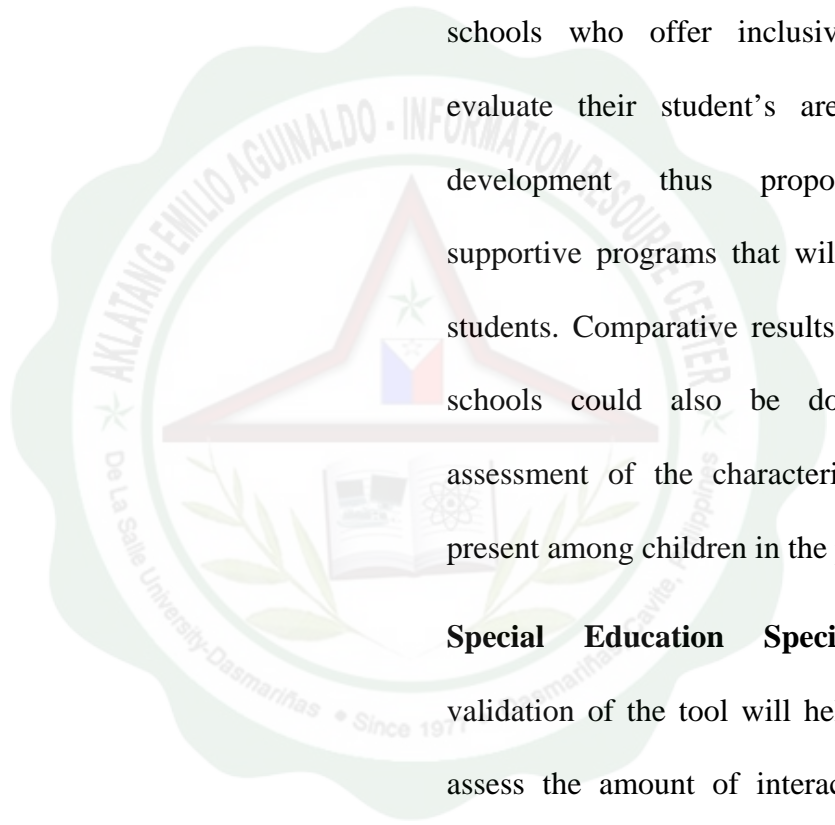
School Administrators. The validation of the tool will help school administrators for planning and implementing appropriate enhancement programs in relation to the social development students in inclusive settings. In cooperation with the regular and special education teachers,

administrators may provide support for the intervention plans made by the teachers.

Other Schools with Inclusive Education.

The validation of the tool will help the schools who offer inclusive education evaluate their student's area of social development thus propose various supportive programs that will equip their students. Comparative results on different schools could also be done for the assessment of the characteristic of play present among children in the population.

Special Education Specialists. The validation of the tool will help specialists assess the amount of interaction present among students in inclusive setting that may lead to broaden knowledge and deeper understanding of the matter. Specialist could employ the test as a co-assessment



method measuring play interaction among children.

Guidance Counselors. The validation of the tool will facilitate guidance counselors in intensively studying student's peer interaction and provide counseling services that will serve their needs. Upon pointing out the social needs, effective guidance programs could be planned for the children.

Future Researchers. This instrument will help future researchers who would study a similar topic serving as future reference regarding the issue. Future researchers could subject the instrument for validation considering the limitations acknowledged by the researchers.

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