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Teaching Through Play and Its Relationship to the Acquisition of Academic Skills among Children with Special Needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province

التدريس باللعب وعلاقته باكتساب المهارات الأكاديمية لأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة بالمركز الصم البكم بولاية باتنة

L'enseignement par le jeu et sa relation avec l'acquisition de compétences académiques chez les enfants aux besoins spécifiques au centre des sourds-muets de la wilaya de Batna.

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ملخص:

هدف البحث الى كشف علاقة التدريس باللعب باكتساب المهارات الأكاديمية لدى الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة بمركز الصم البكم بولاية باتنة، ومعرفة الفروق بين استجابات أفراد العينة في التدريس باللعب تعزى لمتغير الجنس والخبرة، وقد تم اعتماد المنهج الوصفي، وقدرت عينته بـ: 58 أستاذا واستاذة بمركز الصم البكم بولاية باتنة تم اختيارهم بطريقة عشوائية، واستخدام أداة بحثية تمثلت في استبيان التدريس باللعب، ولتحليل النتائج تم حساب اختبار (ت)، ومعامل الارتباط.

توصل البحث الى وجود علاقة ارتباطية موجبة بين التدريس باللعب وتنمية المهارات الأكاديمية لدى أطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة، وعدم وجود فروق بين درجات أفراد عينة البحث في التدريس باللعب تعزى الى متغير الجنس، ووجود فروق بين درجات افراد العينة في التدريس باللعب تعزى لمتغير الخبرة

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدريس باللعب؛ المهارات الأكاديمية؛ ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة.

Abstract:

The study aimed to examine the relationship between teaching through play and the acquisition of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province. It also sought to identify differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play attributable to the variables of gender and teaching experience

The descriptive method was adopted, and the sample consisted of 58 male and female teachers from the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province, selected randomly. The research instrument was a Teaching through Play Questionnaire. For data analysis, the t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient were calculated

The findings revealed a positive correlational relationship between teaching through play and the development of academic skills among children with special needs. The results also indicated no statistically significant differences in participants' scores in teaching through play attributable to

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gender, while statistically significant differences were found attributable to the variable of teaching experience.

Keywords Teaching through play ; academic ; children with special needs.

Résumé :

Cette étude vise à révéler a relation entre l'apprentissage par le jeu et l'acquisition de compétences académiques chez les enfants aux besoins spécifiques au centre des sourds-muets de la wilaya de Batna**.** Elle examine également les différences de réponses des participants selon les variables du sexe et de **l'**expérience

En adoptant une approche descriptive, l'étude a porté sur un échantillon de 58 utilisé est un questionnaire sur l'enseignement par le jeu. Pour l'analyse des données, le test **(**t-test**)** et le coefficient de corrélation ont été appliqués

Les résultats ont révélé l'existence d'une corrélation positive entre l'apprentissage par le jeu et le développement des compétences académiques. Ils ont également montré l'absence de différences statistiquement significatives selon la variable du sexe, tandis que des différences significatives ont été constatées en fonction de la variable de l'expérience.

Mots clés: Apprentissage par le jeu; Compétences académiques; Enfants aux besoins spécifiques.

Introduction

As is well known, children with special needs differ markedly from typical children in continuous or recurrent ways that may limit their ability to succeed in performing social, educational, and personal activities. Since play represents the life, work, language, and closest tool of children with special needs, bringing them joy and pleasure, it is considered one of the most effective means of learning for them and for the development of their personalities.

Many people assume that children with special needs can simply play with regular toys or engage in the same games as typical children. While this assumption may seem valid theoretically, from a scientific perspective it requires careful study, particularly because some children with special needs have distinct play requirements that differ from those of other children.

Teaching through play is regarded as a strategy that contributes to investing the human mind through engagement in various educational tasks. In addition, it helps learners acquire cognitive skills and sound thinking principles through play-based activities that promote enjoyment and flexibility. It stimulates learners' motivation and activity, enabling them to acquire knowledge, facts, scientific concepts, and higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation.

Teaching through play is an activity practiced by children to achieve enjoyment and entertainment. This approach emphasizes interaction between the teacher and students during the educational process through carefully organized educational games and activities. Through these games, pupils learn shapes, colors, sizes, letters, numbers, and various other concepts.

2. Research Problem

Teaching through play is considered one of the fundamental strategies for children with special needs, as it represents their language and their most accessible and preferred tool. Play is among the most effective learning methods for them, contributing to their overall development and personality formation. These children often show noticeable deviations from the average in cognitive, physical, emotional, or social abilities. Therefore, they are in urgent need of supportive services that enable them to interact with others and express their inner feelings.

Through simple recreational games integrated with educational activities, children with special needs can acquire essential daily skills that help them adapt, at least partially, to their lives. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching through play in developing skills among children with special needs. For example, Silverain (1992) found improvements in various social skills, along with increased interaction and communication with others. Similarly, Mac Cabe et al. (2006) reported statistically significant differences between integration and isolation groups in the linguistic performance of children with intellectual disabilities, favoring the integration group in functional play.

Teaching through play is used to support individuals with special needs in improving and developing their abilities and enhancing their academic skills. Play-based learning fosters enjoyment, excitement, and motivation among this group. Its importance lies in promoting communication and integration with different components of the educational environment, thereby facilitating learning and supporting personality and behavioral development. Play also helps clarify concepts and enhance understanding of meanings, as emphasized by Al-Amri Khaled (2004) in his study on the importance of play for children with special needs.

Based on the above, the main question of this study is:

- Is there a relationship between teaching through play and the acquisition of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province from the teachers' perspective?
- Are there statistically significant differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play attributable to the variables of gender and teaching experience at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province?

Accordingly, the research problem is defined by the following questions :

- Is there a correlational relationship between teaching through play and the development of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province?
- Are there statistically significant differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play attributable to the variable of gender ?
- Are there statistically significant differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play attributable to the variable of teaching experience ?

3. Hypotheses

- There is a correlational relationship between teaching through play and the development of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province.
- There are statistically significant differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play according to the variable of gender.
- There are statistically significant differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play according to the variable of teaching experience.

4. Research Objectives

This study primarily aims to :

- Identify the relationship between teaching through play and the development of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province.

- Examine differences in participants' responses regarding teaching through play attributable to the variables of gender and teaching experience.

5. Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable importance due to the significance of teaching through play in relation to the development of academic skills among children with special needs.
Additionally, this research represents an attempt to open avenues for further studies exploring alternative strategies beyond play and examining their suitability for children with special needs, as well as their effectiveness in helping them acquire various academic and social skills.

6. Definition of Concepts

6.1. Definition of Play

Play is defined as any free or guided activity performed by children for the purpose of enjoyment and entertainment. Adults often utilize play as a means to develop children's behavior and personalities (Zakri, 2016, p. 94)

6.2. Definition of Teaching through Play

Teaching through play is defined as an activity (guided or unguided) practiced by children individually or collectively to achieve enjoyment and entertainment. Adults typically employ it to contribute to the development of children's behavior and personality across various dimensions : cognitive (mental), psychomotor (physical/skill-based), and affective (emotional) (Al-Baz, 2016, p. 29)

6.3. Definition of Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are individuals who deviate from the average or normal level in one or more characteristics or aspects of personality to a degree that necessitates special services different from those provided to their typically developing peers, in order to help them achieve their maximum potential for growth and adjustment. (Abdelmajid, 2002)
Laila Karam El-Din also indicated that children with special needs are those who clearly deviate from the average in intellectual, educational, social, emotional, or physical abilities, thereby requiring specific services and care to enable them to reach the highest level their abilities allow. (Bouziane, 2016, p. 12)

6.4. Definition of Skill (Linguistically and Terminologically)

Linguistically, skill refers to mastering something, performing it proficiently and competently. The Arabic term implies excellence and precision in performance. When linked to language (i.e., linguistic skill), it refers to language performance characterized by accuracy, efficiency, speed, and comprehension. This performance may be oral, such as reading, oral expression, and literary appreciation of poetry and prose, or non-oral, such as listening, writing, and aesthetic appreciation. In all cases, linguistic performance must demonstrate accuracy and efficiency. (EIsayed, 1989)
Terminologically, Rahab Abdel Shafi defines skill as something that can be learned, acquired, or developed in the learner through imitation and training. What is learned varies depending on the type, nature, characteristics, and objectives of the subject matter . (Sayed, 1997, p. 213)

6.7. Academic Skills

Academic skills are among the highest educational skills and consist of two main aspects:
An abstract aspect, represented in educational skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

An applied aspect, represented in their essential role in written and reading communication, as well as in understanding concepts of time, measurement, weights, money, and other practical skills learned by children according to their abilities. (Hussein, 2018, p. 72)

6.8. Academic Skills of Children with Special Needs (Operational Definition)

In this study, academic skills of children with special needs are operationally defined as a set of core educational skills, primarily reading and writing, that should be taught to children with special needs during early developmental stages. These children are characterized by having the استعداد (readiness) and capacity to learn and practice these skills throughout their schooling.

7. Previous Studies and Commentary

7.1. Study by Maryam Simaan (2010)

This study aimed to investigate the problem of social withdrawal among children with intellectual disabilities and its relationship to changes in inappropriate parental treatment styles, the degree of intellectual disability, and gender.

Two instruments were used :

- A scale measuring social withdrawal among children with intellectual disabilities.
- A scale measuring inappropriate parental treatment styles.
- The sample consisted of educable and trainable children with intellectual disabilities from rehabilitation centers in Damascus. After statistical analysis using correlation coefficients and tests of statistical differences, the study found the following results :
- The correlation coefficient between social withdrawal and inappropriate parental treatment styles was 0.58.
- The correlation coefficient between social withdrawal and degree of intellectual disability was –0.72, indicating that withdrawal decreases as intelligence level increases.
- The correlation coefficient between social withdrawal and gender was 0.15, indicating a weak effect of gender on social withdrawal.

Statistically significant differences were found at the 0.01 level between trainable and educable children regarding social withdrawal, according to parental treatment styles, degree of intellectual disability, and gender. (Samaan, 2010)

7.2. Study by Silverain (1992)

The study titled “Symbolic Shelf Play for Teaching and Training Communication Skills among Children with Multiple Disabilities” aimed to develop communication skills among children with multiple disabilities.

The sample consisted of ten children with intellectual disabilities and deaf children. Intelligence measures and a verbal communication scale were used.

The results showed clear improvement in various social skills and a noticeable increase in communication with others. (Abderahim, 2011)

7.3. Study by Piril (1996)

This study, titled “Play for Children with Disabilities in Early Developmental Stages,” aimed to examine the effectiveness of play with children with special needs.

The sample included 61 boys and girls with intellectual disabilities. A social skills scale was used as the research instrument.

The results indicated noticeable variation in response levels and improvement, which was attributed to differences in the level of parental care provided. This finding emphasized the importance of parents’ role alongside specialists in care and intervention (Abderahim, 2011, p. 116)

7.4. Study by Mac Cabe et al. (2006)

This study, titled "The Effectiveness of Group Play among Children with Intellectual Disabilities at the Cognitive and Linguistic Levels in Inclusive and Isolated Settings," aimed to examine the effectiveness of a program in improving linguistic performance and cognitive growth among children with intellectual disabilities.

The sample consisted of 24 children with intellectual disabilities divided into two groups:

One group practiced collective play in a segregated setting.

The other practiced play in an inclusive setting.

Observation and an adaptive behavior scale were used.

The results showed statistically significant differences between the inclusion and segregation groups in linguistic performance, language use, and interaction with others. The inclusion group demonstrated greater effectiveness in functional play (Abderahim, 2011, p. 116)

Commentary on Previous Studies and Extent of Benefit

In terms of objectives

All previous studies emphasized the importance of developing academic and social skills among children with special needs and highlighted the importance of play-based strategies in educational settings.

In terms of methodology

The methodologies varied :

The descriptive method was used in the studies of Maryam Simaan (2010), Silverain (1992), and Piril (1996).

Mac Cabe et al. (2006) adopted a quasi-experimental approach.

In terms of benefit:

The current study benefited from previous research in the following ways:

-Understanding teaching through play and how it can be utilized to develop academic skills among children with special needs, including its methods and application strategies.

-Identifying the psychological and educational needs of children with special needs, which represent a fundamental basis for effective teaching and learning processes.

Assisting in preparing children with special needs by equipping the research sample with specific academic skills according to the study procedures.

8. Methodological Procedures

8.1. Research Method

Given the nature of the present study, which falls under descriptive studies in psychology and educational sciences, the descriptive method was considered the most appropriate approach.

8.2. Research Population and Sample

The study targeted teachers working with children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province, with varying years of experience ranging from five years and above.

After reviewing and validating the returned questionnaires and ensuring adherence to instructions, the final sample consisted of 58 male and female teachers, distributed according to gender and years of experience as follows:

Table 01. Distribution of the Sample According to Experience and Gender

Experience	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
5–10 years	12	11	23	39.66%
10–15 years	11	7	18	31.03%

15 years and above	9	8	17	29.31%
Total	32	26	58	100%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

8.3. Statistical Methods Used

The study employed the arithmetic mean and the independent samples T-test to determine the significance of differences between two independent groups. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between play-based teaching and the academic skills of children with special needs.

8.4. Research Instruments

The research instrument consisted of the Play-Based Teaching Questionnaire (Appendix No. 1), as detailed below:

8.4.1. Development of the Play-Based Teaching Questionnaire Items

The questionnaire was developed based on responses obtained through an open-ended question addressed to teachers at the Center for the Deaf and Mute in Batna. The question was:

Can play-based teaching be relied upon with children with special needs? Can play-based teaching contribute to the development of their academic skills?

The participants consisted of (20) male and female teachers selected through purposive sampling. The development of the questionnaire was also informed by previous studies, such as the study conducted by Samman Mariam, with necessary modifications and adaptations to suit the current study sample.

Initially, (30) items were formulated to describe play-based teaching practices among students with special needs. The items were organized into three main dimensions:

- The linguistic dimension
- The behavioral dimension
- The social dimension

Some items were positively worded, while others were negatively worded. Each item included three response options: (Agree – Neutral – Disagree). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the statements applied to them and reflected their use of play-based teaching.

Face Validity

To establish face validity, the preliminary version of the questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts in psychology and educational sciences from the University of Batna 1. The experts were requested to review the items and suggest modifications or deletions for any statements deemed inappropriate or unsuitable for measuring the intended construct.

An agreement rate of (85%) was adopted as the minimum criterion for item acceptance. Based on the experts' feedback:

Items (11, 17, 20, 27, 30) were deleted.

Items (2, 12, 15) were modified.

(See Appendix 1.)

After incorporating the suggested modifications, the final version of the questionnaire consisted of (22) items distributed across the three dimensions as follows:

Linguistic Development: 7 items (5, 9, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20)

Behavioral Development: 7 items (2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 18, 22)

Social Development: 8 items (1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 21)

8.4.2. Psychometric Properties of the Play-Based Teaching Questionnaire

To determine the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, it was administered to a pilot sample consisting of (20) male and female teachers from the Center for the Deaf and Mute in Batna, selected through random sampling.

Validity was calculated as follows:

-Discriminant Validity (Extreme Group Comparison):

The researcher calculated discriminant validity using the pilot study sample. The results are presented in Table No. (2) below.

Table 02. The discriminant validity of Teaching through Play Strategy Questionnaire.

Teaching through Play Strategy Questionnaire	Upper Group=5		Lower Group=5		T-value	Statistical Significance
	M1	A1	M2	A2	4.8	Significant at 0.01
	78.4	121.84	51	8.4		

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

Table (2) indicates that the calculated t-value reached 4.8, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This means that the test has a high discrimination index.

Construct Validity:

To calculate this type of validity, the researcher extracted the matrix of intercorrelation coefficients among the scores of the three questionnaire dimensions. Table (3) below illustrates these results.

Table03. It shows the results of the correlation coefficients between the total score of the Teaching through Play questionnaire and its dimensions.

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	Total Score
1	Linguistic	-	0.72*	0.59*	0.76*
2	Behavioral	-	-	0.50*	0.73*
3	Social	-	-	-	0.77*

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

They all indicate the internal consistency of the questionnaire dimensions, which confirms its validity.

Reliability:

Reliability was calculated using the split-half method. The Pearson correlation coefficient. (Moqaddam, 1978, p. 21) was computed between the scores of the pilot sample participants on one half of the scale (consisting of the odd-numbered items) and their scores on the other half (consisting of the even-numbered items). The result represented the correlation coefficient between the two halves of the test, which was estimated at 0.59.

The reliability coefficient for the entire test was then calculated using the Spearman–Brown formula. (Al-tayeb, 1999, p. 226), yielding a value of 0.74. This value indicates that the questionnaire has acceptable reliability.

It is worth noting that, in this questionnaire, scoring was conducted according to the positive wording of the items. That is, for positively worded items, scores of (1, 2, 3) were assigned respectively, whereas for negatively worded items, scores of (3, 2, 1) were assigned respectively. According to this scoring system, the maximum possible score a respondent could obtain on the questionnaire is 66, while the minimum possible score is 22.

9. Presentation and Analysis of the Research Results

9.1. Presentation of the results related to answering the first hypothesis:

The first research hypothesis stated that: There is a correlational relationship between teaching through play and the development of academic skills among children with special needs at the Deaf and Mute Center in Batna Province.

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between the teachers' total scores on the Teaching through Play questionnaire and their scores on its different dimensions. The results are presented in Table (4) as follows:

Table 04. It illustrates the correlational relationship between the Teaching through Play questionnaire and its dimensions among the research sample members.

Type of Relationship	Correlation Coefficient	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Linguistic Dimension and Teaching through Play Strategy	-0.78	64	0.01
Behavioral Dimension and Teaching through Play Strategy	-0.63	64	0.01
Social Dimension and Teaching through Play Strategy	-0.72	64	0.01

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

The results presented in Table (4) indicate that the correlation coefficient equals -0.78 for the linguistic dimension in its relationship with teaching through play, -0.63 for the behavioral dimension in relation to the teaching-through-play strategy, and -0.72 for the social dimension in relation to teaching through play. All coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

These findings demonstrate the existence of a positive correlational relationship between teaching through play and each of its three dimensions (linguistic, behavioral, and social). In other words, the more teaching through play is implemented with children with special needs, the more it contributes to the development of their academic skills in the linguistic, behavioral, and social domains.

9.2. Presentation of the results related to answering the second hypothesis:

The second research hypothesis stated that: There are statistically significant differences between the responses of the sample members regarding the use of teaching through play attributable to the gender variable.

To test this hypothesis, a t-test was used to compare the mean responses of the research sample on the Teaching through Play Strategy questionnaire, as well as on each of its dimensions separately. The results are presented in Table (5) below:

Table 05. It shows the t-values and their statistical significance for the differences between the mean scores of the sample members on the Teaching through Play questionnaire and its three dimensions.

Dimension / Questionnaire	Males = 32		Females = 26		t-value
	M1	A1	M2	A2	
Linguistic Dimension	19.31	2.61	19.38	3.15	0.05
Behavioral Dimension	18.55	4.5	18.75	3.19	0.23

Social Dimension	21.1	5.52	19.55	2.85	1.61
Total Questionnaire	59.34	9.58	58.72	6.64	0.33

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

The results presented in Table (5) indicate that the values of the t-test for the Teaching through Play questionnaire, as well as for each of its dimensions separately, are not statistically significant. These findings suggest that there are no statistically significant differences among the research sample members in their use of teaching through play attributable to the gender variable.

9.3. Presentation of the results related to answering the third hypothesis:

The third research hypothesis stated: Are there statistically significant differences between the responses of the sample members regarding the use of teaching through play attributable to the experience variable?

To answer this hypothesis, a t-test was used to compare the mean responses of the research sample on the Teaching through Play questionnaire, as well as on each of its dimensions separately. The results are presented in Table (6) below:

Table06. It shows the t-test values and their statistical significance for the differences between the mean scores of the sample members on the Teaching through Play questionnaire according to years of experience.

Experience	Males		Female		t-value	Statistical Significance
	Mean M1	A1	Mean 2 M2	A2		
5-10 years	24.1	6.62	20.16	3.37	6.79	Significant at 0.01
10-15 years	39.9	4.29	36.5	2.05	4.09	Significant at 0.01
15 years and above	8.46	1.31	6.8	1.22	5.62	Significant at 0.01
Total Questionnaire	8.4	1.1	6.56	1.5	6.14	Significant at 0.01

Source. Prepared by the researcher based on the responses of the study sample.

Table (6) shows the existence of significant differences between the mean scores of the sample members according to years of experience, whether those with 5–10 years of experience, 10–15 years, or 15 years and above, as well as in the questionnaire as a whole. This result indicates that there are substantial differences related to teachers' experience in their adoption of the teaching-through-play method.

10. Discussion of the Study Results in Light of the Hypotheses and Their Interpretation

10.1. Discussion of the Results Related to the First Hypothesis and Their Interpretation

The findings related to the first hypothesis revealed a positive correlational relationship between the teaching-through-play strategy and each of its three dimensions (linguistic, behavioral,

and social). In other words, the more the teaching-through-play strategy is implemented with children with special needs, the greater their development in linguistic, behavioral, and social skills.

This result is consistent with the findings of Silverain (1992), who reported significant improvement in social skills among children with special needs, as well as clearer interaction between them and other children.

This suggests that teaching through play has a clear and positive impact on the development of various linguistic, social, and behavioral skills among children with special needs. Through careful and structured planning of activities and games aimed at achieving educational objectives aligned with the child's abilities and capacities, play-based teaching can be adapted to different age groups and developmental levels. It helps children develop observation, reflection, comparison, and logical reasoning skills.

Children with special needs often share characteristics such as feelings of marginalization, limited freedom, and reduced interaction, which may hinder their classroom participation. Teaching through play, with its activities, games, and educational and social situations, helps enhance cognitive, linguistic, social, and behavioral aspects through its structured rules and systems. Games also assist teachers in identifying the time required for learners' development, the experiences they need to acquire, and areas of weakness in their academic achievement. Consequently, appropriate experiences can be provided to address these gaps. Through play, children naturally discover their abilities and skills. Educational research also indicates that children often communicate their ideas more effectively through play, as it provides them with a sense of freedom and independence.

10.2. Discussion of the Results Related to the Second Hypothesis and Their Interpretation

The results related to the second hypothesis indicated that there are no statistically significant differences between the sample members' scores in the use of teaching through play attributable to the gender variable.

This finding may be interpreted as evidence that the teacher's gender does not influence the implementation of play-based instructional activities. Regardless of gender, teachers strive to design appropriate educational plans for children with special needs, emphasizing activities that develop various skills. They use play to enhance children's awareness, knowledge, and direct engagement with the targeted skills. The effectiveness of play-based teaching depends on professional competence and instructional planning rather than on the teacher's gender. Both male and female teachers can contribute equally to the development of children's cognitive, social, behavioral, and linguistic skills.

10.3. Discussion of the Results Related to the Third Hypothesis and Their Interpretation

The findings related to the third hypothesis revealed significant differences among teachers in their use of teaching through play attributable to the experience variable.

This result may be explained by the fact that teachers with limited experience are relatively new to teaching and to working with children, especially children with special needs. Their limited professional experience may not yet enable them to effectively adapt instructional strategies to learners' needs. They may rely on presenting information in a rigid or traditional manner without sufficiently linking it to real-life contexts or providing practical examples that reinforce skills and concepts.

Moreover, the teaching-through-play strategy requires practical and pedagogical skills that novice teachers may not yet have fully developed. In contrast, more experienced teachers, through sustained professional practice, are better able to identify weaknesses in instructional approaches and refine them according to clear and structured criteria. Therefore, experience plays a crucial role in mastering and effectively implementing play-based teaching strategies.

Conclusion:

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that play is considered a therapeutic approach used by educators to help address some of the specific problems faced by children with special needs. It provides them with meaningful opportunities and helps compensate for areas of deficit they may experience. The teaching-through-play strategy plays a positive role in developing the academic skills of children with special needs when it is implemented through proper planning and the optimal use of purposeful activities and games designed to achieve educational objectives aligned with their abilities, capacities, and needs.

Recommendations and Suggestions of the Study:

-Activating the role of specialized institutions in promoting and monitoring the use of the teaching-through-play strategy by increasing attention to seminars, activities, and encouraging student participation in them.

-Encouraging teachers to strengthen the positive role of teaching through play by allocating part of the lesson time to discussion, dialogue, and allowing students to express their opinions on issues or topics that concern them.

-Enhancing teachers' attention to individual students by helping them confront and overcome learning difficulties, while fostering encouragement and self-confidence.

-Encouraging families to provide children with special needs opportunities to express their opinions freely and to participate in family discussions.

-Appointing psychologists in primary education settings and encouraging them to support teachers in using teaching through play to develop various educational skills and abilities, particularly for children with special needs.

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Appendix 1

No.	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Teaching through play does not enable him to form relationships with others.			
2	Teaching through play enables him to change his negative behaviors.			
3	Teaching through play makes him unable to accept spending time with his peers.			
4	Using play as a process in teaching enables him to accept invitations from classmates to play with them.			
5	Teaching through play does not allow him to express himself clearly.			
6	Teaching through play enables him to learn the values of others.			
7	Teaching through play does not give him confidence in his behavioral competencies.			
8	Teaching through play enables him to feel pride when asked to participate in a social activity.			
9	Teaching through play does not allow him to talk about what harms him.			
10	Teaching through play enables him to sit with others for learning purposes.			
11	Teaching through play does not allow him to take the initiative in conversation.			
12	Teaching through play helps him diversify his behaviors during play.			
13	Following teaching through play makes his answers limited to yes or no only.			
14	He avoids forming relationships with peers when following teaching through play.			
15	He answers questions fluently based on the teaching through play method.			
16	Teaching through play enables him to socialize with younger peers.			
17	Using teaching through play helped him acquire language skills easily.			
18	He takes a spectator position in activities when teaching through play is used.			
19	Teaching through play enables him to use diverse phrases in dialogue with his peers.			
20	Teaching through play negatively affects his ability to express himself orally.			
21	Teaching through play enables him to gain confidence in his social competencies.			
22	Teaching through play allows him to avoid merely observing without participating.			