

Play and its role in improving the psychological, social, and educational aspects of children during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract:

This research highlights the fundamental importance of play and its role in enhancing the psychological, social, and educational aspects of children, especially in light of the exceptional circumstances the world has witnessed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic imposed unprecedented preventative measures, including full and partial home quarantine, creating a complex experience that has impacted children's lives and their normal development. Therefore, this research aims to identify the negative effects of this isolation and present an educational approach that relies on play as an effective tool for regulating and guiding behavior and alleviating psychological stress. To achieve this objective, the research addresses the following themes:

- The psychological, social, and educational effects of quarantine on children.
- The technical and educational concept of play.
- The general objectives that play achieves for children.
- The importance of play and its numerous benefits in a child's life.
- The psychological, social, and educational foundations of play.
- Factors influencing play.
- An analytical reading of the most important theories explaining play.
- Classification of types of play.
- Practical guidelines for parents on how to guide and assist their children in play.
- Educational guidelines for organizing a child's daily routine during exceptional times.

Keywords: Play, psychological, social, and educational aspects, childhood, COVID-19 pandemic.

1.Introduction:

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been experiencing a global pandemic, designated COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. This pandemic has impacted the daily lives of individuals of all ages, forcing them to adopt social distancing as a preventative measure to curb its spread. It has compelled countries to implement strict measures to protect their citizens due to the rapid transmission of the disease. These measures include imposing lockdowns, prohibiting all

gatherings of any kind, and bringing the movement of people and transportation to a near standstill, as well as closing schools and universities, among others.

These measures have had a significant psychological, social, and educational impact on children, particularly due to fear, anxiety, boredom, depression, the loss of physical interaction with friends and teachers, and the inability to complete the curriculum due to school closures. Faced with this new situation, parents are deeply concerned about how to navigate this period and emerge from it with minimal harm. Psychologists believe that the best remedy for behavioral problems in children during this time is play, given that children spend a considerable amount of their lives playing. Through play, children express their desires and experiences.

Play is a fundamental need of children and a significant aspect of their behavior. It is an innate predisposition and a necessity of their lives. Through play, children learn much about their surrounding environment and communicate with it. They also develop physically, mentally, linguistically, emotionally, and socially, acquiring numerous skills and knowledge that aid in their psychological and social adaptation. (Al-Anani, 2014, p. 15)

Based on the above, the study's central question is: What role does play play play in improving the psychological, social, and educational aspects of children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer this crucial question, the current research adopts a theoretical and analytical approach aimed at investigating the essential role of play in light of the exceptional changes imposed by the pandemic. This topic will be addressed through a series of interconnected themes, beginning with highlighting the psychological, social, and educational effects of quarantine, and then moving towards a conceptual and theoretical foundation for play (its definition, theories, and types). The research also explores the functional dimensions of play by analyzing its objectives, importance, and psychological and educational foundations, while considering the factors influencing a child's activity. The study concludes by offering guidance to parents, including practical advice on organizing a child's home life and activating the role of play as a tool for adaptation and navigating this critical period. A detailed presentation of these themes follows:

2- Defining Terms:

- Play: Good defines play as directed or free (undirected) activity that a child engages in for their own enjoyment. He also indicates that play plays a significant role in personality development. (Al-Hamahmi, 2005, p. 14)
- Childhood: Childhood is the period extending from birth to puberty; it is characterized by rapid growth in all physical, mental, and emotional dimensions. During this time, the essential features of personality take shape, and a remarkable capacity for learning and acquiring skills with great flexibility emerges.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic: The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a rapidly spreading disease from the coronavirus family. It was first identified in a number of people with pneumonia-like symptoms in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. (Abdel-Aal, 2020, p. 5)

3- The Psychological, Social, and Educational Effects of Home Quarantine on Children:

In an article by David Robson, a BBC journalist, published on June 12, 2020, about how the pandemic is affecting children's lives and futures, he referred to a study conducted by Louise Dalton and Elizabeth Raba from the Department of Psychiatry at Oxford University. The study found that children have a remarkable ability to quickly perceive signs of anxiety and fear in the faces of their parents or caregivers, and they may become anxious because of their parents' anxiety, whether due to fear of illness, job loss, or the stress of home isolation.

The researchers also mentioned another study on children whose parents suffer from HIV or cancer. These young children may believe that this illness is a result of They may blame themselves for their behavior or thoughts.

Children and adolescents may struggle to understand the restriction of their freedom, which could lead to long-term behavioral problems.

The researchers noted that parents lack sufficient information about children's mental health and how to address it. Raba says that children's psychological needs are currently being completely neglected. While there is a wealth of information on the physical effects of the disease and how to avoid infection, government health campaigns have offered little guidance on coping with psychological stress.

Although there is still no evidence on the impact of isolation and social distancing on children's social skills, such as emotional regulation, resilience, and conflict resolution with peers, it is well-established that the amount of time children spend in school plays a crucial role in their development.

One study indicated that children with siblings acquire social skills more quickly than their only peers.

Golberstein says, "Children are generally aware of and react to what is happening in their environment, and this will have an impact." The psychological pressures they experience in the early stages of their lives affect their growth, mental health, and the development of their personal and social skills. In an article on Al Jazeera News, the writer, Watalia, addressed an important point: academic delays and a lack of socialization. She pointed out that not completing the final semester will have repercussions for children. There is content they will not learn, topics that will remain unresolved, competencies that will not be solidified, and unique experiences that children only have in the classroom. For many students, not attending class is like a vacation. One aspect that most students miss is socialization, in addition to the classroom routine, friends, and other feelings that can foster social and emotional development. In an article on masanté.re, she pointed to the daily effects on children: Anxiety affects children, especially when they see that their symbol of stability (often their parents) has been compromised. The parents' stance may not be reassuring at all. We observe various manifestations in children, signs that their well-being has been affected:

- Irritability. - A tendency to be sullen, slightly "eccentric," and clingy (demanding). (For reassurance).
- Sleep disturbances.
- Nightmares.

- A regression (recurrence of bedwetting in young children).
- Changes in appetite.
- Constipation.
- Moments of anger and withdrawal.
- Difficulty accepting tasks (such as schoolwork), feeling tired.

4- The Terminological and Educational Concept of Play:

There are many definitions of play, varying in wording and concept, but all linked by a common thread of characteristics: movement, activity, realism, and enjoyment.

Below is a selection of these definitions provided by several researchers (Al-Haliyah, 2003; Al-Hindawi, 2001; Abdul-Jabir and Al-Nababta, 1983; Balqis and Mar'i, 1982; Jabrin, 1980) in their research and publications in this field. We hope these definitions will be sufficient to give a clear idea of the play that children practice as an educational medium for developing their personalities in various aspects:

- Free, directed, or undirected activity that children engage in for amusement and enjoyment, and which adults often utilize to contribute to the development of children's personalities in their various dimensions: intellectual, physical, emotional, and social.
- The process by which an individual assimilates information, transforming incoming information to suit their needs. Play, imitation, and mimicry are considered integral parts of the individual's intellectual and cognitive development.
- An activity practiced by individuals or groups for enjoyment and entertainment, and not for any other motive.
- A movement or series of movements intended for amusement and pleasure.
- Speed and agility in handling, using, or manipulating objects.
- What we do by choice during leisure time. What we do by choice simply for enjoyment may be more strenuous for the body and mind than any ordinary activity. However, play is usually free from any disturbance; it is intended solely for the sake of activity itself, and nothing is expected from it but listening.
- A child's breath; it is their life, not merely a way to pass the time and occupy themselves.
- Behavior performed by an individual without a specific goal, and it is considered one of the important ways a child expresses themselves.

Utilizing the body's kinetic energy to bring psychological pleasure to the individual, and this is not achieved without also using mental energy. (Sawaleha, 2014, p. 15)

5- General Objectives Achieved by Play for the Child:

Al-Anani clarified the general objectives that the child seeks to achieve through playing. These objectives are:

- To make the child feel enjoyment, delight, and pleasure.

Physical conditioning and muscle training.

Exciting the child and fostering their readiness to learn.

Building the child's character in all aspects.

Helping the child understand themselves, accept others, and learn about the world around them.

Preparing the child for future life.

Contributing to the child's development of social skills.

Assisting the child in learning school subjects.

Relieving stress, harmful emotions, and excess energy.

Satisfying the child's needs in a socially acceptable manner. (Al-Anani, 2014, pp. 22-23)

6-The Importance and Numerous Benefits of Play in a Child's Life:

Scientists have extensively studied the effects of play on children's lives. The German psychologist Karl Bühler emphasized the importance of play in a child's mental development, while the Russian psychologist Makarenko highlighted its profound influence on shaping a child's personality. Play undoubtedly offers numerous benefits, which we will outline below from physical, mental, social, moral, and educational perspectives.

- From a Physical Perspective: Play is a vital physical activity for children. It develops muscles, strengthens the body, and provides an outlet for excess energy. Some scientists believe that declining physical fitness, emaciation, and physical deformities are consequences of restricted movement in children. Modern multi-story homes have limited children's activity and movement. Children need to run, jump, and climb, opportunities that are limited in small, confined spaces. Through play, children achieve integration of their physical, emotional, and mental functions, including thinking and reasoning. They also learn to appreciate objects, recognize their colors and sizes, and understand how to use them.

- From a cognitive perspective: Play helps children understand their external world. As children grow older, they develop many skills while playing specific games and activities. It's observed that games involving exploration, collecting, and other forms of play, even into late childhood, enrich their mental lives with a wealth of knowledge about the world around them. This is further enhanced by the new knowledge gained through reading, travel, music, films, and television programs. A study conducted on kindergarten and primary school children in Britain, aged 4-7, showed that children who showed particular interest in playing with ships, building them, and understanding their workings had a greater vocabulary. In conclusion, play activities should be organized based on the principles of problem-solving learning and fostering innovation and creativity in children.

- From a social perspective: Play helps the child develop socially. In group games, the child learns order, believes in the spirit of the group and respects it, and realizes the value of teamwork and the common good. If the child does not play with other children, he becomes selfish, tends towards aggression, and hates others. But through play, he can establish good and balanced relationships with them, solve problems that he encounters (within the group framework), and be free from the tendency to be self-centered. (Al-Khatatna, p. 23)

- From an educational perspective: Play only acquires educational value if we can guide it accordingly, because we cannot leave children's development to chance. The "laissez-faire" approach adopted by Rousseau does not guarantee the constructive value of play. Rather, the child's healthy development is achieved through conscious education that places the characteristics of child development and the components of personality formation within the framework of purposeful educational activity. An experimental study was conducted on children aged 5-8 years in 18 primary schools and kindergartens, including 6 experimental schools that relied on play as a primary activity and method of teaching. The time spent on this activity ranged from one to one and a half hours daily. The remaining 12 schools formed the control group, where play was almost entirely not used as a learning activity.

The results of the experimental schools revealed advanced levels of development in all aspects of the child's personality compared to the lower levels observed in the control group. These can be summarized as follows: - The development of the child's skill in carefully and politely collecting

materials to create something expressive that arouses their interest and passion. - Free drawing with pencils and expressing the child's ideas through their drawings.

- Developing the skill of answering questions, forming meaningful sentences, and freely expressing their thoughts.
- Developing the skill of building friendly and cordial relationships with children and adults they don't know.
- Demonstrating mature social behavior in their interactions with other children.
- Mastering writing skills quickly, neatly, and accurately.
- The ability to focus attention on tasks, completing them accurately and on time.
- Regularly completing assigned tasks and duties.
- Expanding vocabulary and the ability to express themselves on specific topics.
- Acquiring physical and motor skills and benefiting from sports and physical activities. (Al-Khatatna, pp. 22-25)

• From a psychological perspective: Melanie Klein is one of the most prominent psychotherapists who adopted play as an approach to treating children and diagnosing their problems. She stated that to access a child's inner thoughts and unconscious mind, play techniques must be used. Through play, children express their desires and lived experiences, using the same language we encounter in dreams.

Irwin and Barbara Sarason are among the therapists who used play to encourage children to express themselves, as it is their means of expression since they are unable to express themselves verbally like adults.

Play is of great importance because it contributes to the child's emotional development in the following ways:

- 1- Developing and fulfilling psychological needs.
- 2- Alleviating harmful emotions. Play compensates for the deprivation a child experiences in reality and cleanses them of anger and aggression.
- 3- Developing self-confidence and boosting morale.
- 4- Developing inclinations and attitudes.
5. A feeling of pleasure and joy.
6. Contributing to the treatment of several emotional disorders, such as fear. (Al-Anani, 2014, pp. 25-26)

7- The Psychological, Social, and Educational Foundations of Play:

Play is based on several foundations and principles, including psychological, educational, and social foundations. These foundations are explained below:

7-1- The Psychological Foundations of Play:

Play is based on a set of psychological foundations, including:

□ Play is a psychological need, one of the most important needs of humans at all stages of life. Every individual has a drive to play that must be satisfied; otherwise, the result will be anxiety, distress, and numerous psychological problems. Therefore, play is a fundamental need for children, and this need should be met. Play should also be utilized in the fields of education, diagnosis, and therapy.

□ Satisfying these needs requires providing free time for play, creating dedicated spaces for it, selecting appropriate and varied play materials for children, choosing constructive activities, and providing psychological and educational guidance during play.

Because play is a fundamental human need and a natural right, children should be granted freedom in play, including the freedom to choose the type of activity, games, and participants, in accordance with the principles and objectives of play. Play is a developmental process that unfolds in stages. It

develops alongside individuals, regardless of their environment. It begins randomly and disorganized, then becomes more structured, progressing from sensory-motor and exploratory to abstract and collective.

Each stage of play development has specific characteristics that are more prominent than others. For example, the sensory-motor stage is characterized by exploratory play and material manipulation, while play in early childhood, or the phlegmatic stage, involves playing with dolls and puppets.

Like any developmental aspect, play is linked to factors such as maturity, readiness, motivation, and training. The presence of these factors leads to child development, ultimately contributing to the holistic development of the child's personality.

There are individual differences in play: individuals vary in the speed and nature of their play development. Consequently, children differ in the time it takes to transition through a stage and the duration of the next stage of play development. Play includes normal behavioral patterns that some may consider abnormal: There are behavioral patterns that appear during play in many children that some consider undesirable, but they are normal for a particular stage of development and abnormal if they persist into another stage. For example, children in early childhood engage in imaginative play and tell fairy tales, which is normal for a child at this stage, but some people who are unaware of the characteristics of this stage consider it lying.

Play decreases with age: This is due to several reasons, including the length of school, increased homework, less playtime, and children's growing awareness of their interests and inclinations towards their studies, which require more time and focus.

Play increases qualitatively with age: Children abandon many games and focus on a specific game that suits their interests and abilities, and they distance themselves from many playmates to play with specific friends. Some manifestations of the qualitative shift in children's play activity include: The physical activity expended in play decreases as the child gets older. Children's inclination towards intellectually stimulating games increases due to their cognitive development and progression from sensory-motor thinking in infancy to abstract thinking in adolescence.

7.2. Educational Foundations of Play:

Given the educational benefits of play for children, which include its ability to develop their personalities in all aspects—physical, sensory, intellectual, linguistic, emotional, and social—researchers in psychology and education have recommended its use in curriculum development.

Those involved in early childhood programs believe that incorporating play into curriculum development can be achieved as follows:

Utilizing play in the child's upbringing and development in all aspects.

Viewing play as a form of organizing learning.

Viewing play as a method of learning and teaching in early childhood programs.

Furthermore, play can be integrated into various types of curricula, whether in kindergarten or school, as follows:

In the academic curriculum, play can be used in education through creative drama, dramatizing the curriculum, songs, and musical games. The external curriculum refers to activities planned under the supervision of the school. These activities are not necessarily directly related to the academic curriculum, but they ultimately contribute to the child's and student's development in one way or another. This curriculum includes sports, hobbies, dramas, and various group activities.

The hidden curriculum refers to unplanned learning activities that are a natural and spontaneous outcome of school life and children's interaction with the environment. In this curriculum, children should have access to experiences and tools to play freely, without restrictions or planning, in an atmosphere of emotional understanding.

Undoubtedly, these experiences contribute to the child's development and the formation of their personality in all aspects.

7.3. The Social Foundations of Play: Play is not governed solely by psychological and educational principles. Games vary from one society to another, hence the existence of what are called folk games.

The social foundations of play are a set of social forces that influence children's play in a given society. These foundations can be summarized as follows:

□ Socioeconomic status: Some societies suffer from a low standard of living, which affects the quantity and quality of children's play.

□ Societal norms and values: Although play is generally characterized by freedom, each society practices its games within the bounds of agreed-upon values, standards, and prevailing social norms.

□ Modern communication technologies: These technologies have influenced the types of games children play. For example, in the past, children enjoyed shadow puppetry, then radio and television programs, and now they are very happy with computer games.

In fact, the social forces that influence children's play...

8- Factors Affecting Play:

There are several factors that influence play, which Dr. Nabil Abdel-Hadi (2004) identifies as follows:

□ Health and Motor Development: Physically healthy children play more and exert more effort and activity than children with poor health. Children suffering from malnutrition and inadequate healthcare tend to play less and show less interest in toys and games. As for motor development, it plays a role in determining the extent of a child's play activity. A child who cannot throw and catch a ball will naturally not participate with their peers in many games that rely on coordination.

Intelligence is also a factor influencing play. Intelligent children tend to play more and be more active in their games than less intelligent children. Intelligent children quickly transition from sensory to imitative play, and their imagination shines through during play. As for play materials, intelligent children prefer constructive and imaginative games such as playdough, scissors, drawing, and decoration. They also show an interest in books to acquire knowledge and to withdraw from the group. Furthermore, bright children tend towards mental games, enjoy collecting objects, and have more hobbies than other children, while less intelligent children tend towards games that involve vigorous physical activity.

Gender: This is the third factor influencing play. Differences in play between boys and girls are not apparent in the early years of a child's life. If the same environment and toys are available, no differences will appear before adolescence. Different cultural contexts have led to the emergence of these differences at an early age. Children realize at a young age that there are toys suitable for boys and others for girls. Parental influences, the selection of toys, the presence of peer role models, and the presence of older children all play a crucial role in reinforcing cultural influences between the sexes. Generally, girls prefer playing with dolls, toys related to household items, beads, and blocks. They also prefer games like jump rope and hide-and-seek, and play games like family or school. Boys, on the other hand, prefer playing with trains, cars, tanks, airplanes, ships, and guns. Boys also tend to play more roughly than girls.

• Environment: The socioeconomic environment influences play. Children in impoverished environments play less than children in affluent environments. This is because there are fewer toys available in impoverished environments, and they also spend less time playing. This is attributed to

their busy lives and the lack of available play areas. Children are also influenced by location; they may play in the streets, squares, or open spaces near their homes, and only a few play in clubs or playgrounds. Thus, their environment affects how they play and the types of games they participate in.

- **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic status also influences children's play. Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to choose activities that cost money, such as tennis and swimming. Children at lower socioeconomic levels tend to engage in inexpensive activities like hide-and-seek. The amount of time spent playing is also influenced by social class; children from poorer families have less playtime than those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds because they are expected to contribute to their families' daily economic burdens.

Leisure Time: The use of leisure time varies from one group to another. In some African tribes that rely on agriculture and herding, children are trained in obedience, responsibility, and service. They help their mothers with farming and are trained in herding, while girls perform household chores and care for younger children. Children who go herding don't spend all their time on chores; they also climb trees and play in streams. American children, however, have a different approach. Parents often play with their children during leisure time and take them to the zoo, circus, or museums. Preschoolers spend their time playing, while school-aged children have their leisure time organized by a school schedule. During holidays, they spend their time on playgrounds and playing various games. Other groups fall between these two contrasting approaches to leisure time.

□ **Play Materials:** This is an important point regarding the influence of play materials on a child's activity. Construction toys, blocks, sand, and devices that the child takes apart and puts back together are geared towards the intellectual aspect of the child's personality. Small toys, such as dolls, serve multiple purposes; they are supports in imaginative play, allow the child to express their feelings, and can be a source of comfort if the child is afraid. Toys representing animals and cars allow the child to create their own world in their imaginative play, and soft or woolly dolls bring comfort to children and alleviate their anxiety. (Abdul-Hadi, 2004, pp. 81-85)

9- Analytical Reading of the Most Important Theories Explaining Play:

We will address the most important theories explaining play, as mentioned by Akram Khataybeh, as follows:

9-1- **The Suplus Theory:** The English philosopher Herbert Spencer, in his book **Psychology**, published in the mid-19th century, explained play and the inclination towards it in his theory. This theory states that living beings possess excess energy within them, more than what they need for growth when young, or more than what they need for work or earning a living when older. This excess energy accumulates within them, and they seek a way to expend it, which they must do through various forms of play. This theory explains the multiplicity of forms and types of play, but it fails to explain the criticism leveled against it: why do children play when tired, exhausted, or sick, and why do adults, despite their many responsibilities, need to play?

9-2- **The Emancipation Theory:** This theory is based primarily on Darwin's theory of evolution, which considers survival of the fittest and relies on the inheritance of acquired traits. The proponent of this theory, Stanley Hall, states that from birth to maturity, a person tends to relive the stages of human civilization's development from its inception to the present day. This regression is seen as a cumulative process, with each child reenacting the history of humankind through play. Play is considered a summary of the vital instincts, drives, motivations, and motor habits of humankind from its past to its present. Proponents of this theory argue that play begins individually, then evolves into a collective activity, progressing from chasing to hit-and-run games, then to

cooperative games requiring greater cooperation and intense competition. They also point to children swimming, building caves, climbing trees, and crafting tools for self-defense—all of which are recapitulations of their ancestors' activities. This theory explains the similarities in children's games across the globe, such as hunting games, their fondness for this type of play, and their transition to cooperative play, recognizing the importance and power of the group and developing a sense of belonging. Ultimately, these actions are seen as a recapitulation of their ancestors' practices.

This theory also explains the similarities in children's games across the globe, such as hunting games, their fondness for this type of play, and their transition to cooperative play, recognizing the importance and power of the group and developing a sense of belonging. 9-3- The Theory of Recreation: This theory was developed by Lazarus. In summary, play is a means of resting the mind and body after the toil and fatigue of earning a living, and the accompanying psychological and nervous strain of work. It is considered a means of resting the mind and body of children after the unseen exertion they experience during various developmental processes. This play, or recreation, stems from freedom, spontaneity, and independence. It is a way to restore mental energy and escape the worries of life. However, this theory does not explain why children play immediately after waking up, when they have the least need for recreation.

9-4- The Theory of Practice and Preparation for the Future: This theory, developed by Karl Groos, posits that play is preparation for future life. Since childhood is a formative period, children enjoy greater freedom in play. Their games are diverse and varied; in some games, they imitate adults and their parents, in others, they compete with peers, and in still others, they cooperate. Through play, they acquire physical, mental, and cognitive skills, and they learn many of the customs and traditions of their society and environment, which help them prepare for future life.

9-5- The Theory of Balance: This theory, developed by Konrad Lang, states that every person has numerous drives and inclinations. While some of these drives may be satisfied in their daily lives, others remain unfulfilled. Therefore, they turn to play to nourish and satisfy these remaining drives. Lang adds that work involves seriousness and commitment, while play offers freedom and spontaneity. He also notes that play helps children achieve balance by satisfying their needs and motivations. For example, a child might hit their doll because their mother punished them, or a child might play intensely with their toys because they were punished by their parents and cannot retaliate. Similarly, someone punished by their employer or parent, perhaps unable to respond, might resort to play to release pent-up emotions. They might grab a ball and bang it against a wall with their hand or foot, or go to the gym and repeat an exercise several times with vigor and force. In this way, individuals, both young and old, turn to play to release pent-up emotions and achieve psychological equilibrium.

9-6-Self-Expression Theory: Mason indicates that man is an active creature, and his physiological and anatomical makeup and athletic fitness determine his activity and affect the type of activity he practices. His inclinations, tendencies, physiological needs, and habits drive him to practice certain patterns of play that correspond to the nature of his tendencies. The child who tends towards violence and strength, we find that his games reflect his self, so he tends towards violence and aggression in play. (Khataybeh, pp. 22-25)

10- Classification of Play Types:

Peter Smith (2010) categorized play as follows:

- **Socially Conditioned Play:** This type refers to simple games like peek-a-boo, where the enjoyment comes from the responses of others. These games are often conditioned by the player's own behavior or by imitating another person.
- **Sensory-Motor Play:** This type refers to the activities that characterize Piaget's sensory-motor period, up to about two years of age. It refers to activities involving play with objects (or the child's own body) that are based on the sensory properties of the object(s), such as sucking on objects, banging blocks together, or repeatedly closing them.
- **Object Play:** After the sensory-motor period, children engage in many activities with objects, most of which are construction-type games. Examples of object play include assembling Lego bricks, building block towers, using modeling clay, and pouring water from one container to another.
- **Language Play:** Children can play by producing sounds, syllables, words, and phrases. This play could be the kind of babbling Ruth Weir observed in his two-year-old son Anthony as he slept or got out of bed. Or it could be rhyming couplets or repetitive phrases, perhaps appearing in non-literal contexts: "You're Mama!", "No, you're Mama!", "No, I'm Papa and you're Mama!"
- **Physical Activity Play:** This generally refers to gross body movements (not the fine body movements involved, for example, in sensory-motor play or playing with objects). Exercise play is the main form within this category: running, jumping, crawling, climbing, and so on. Rough play, a socially active form of physical play involving grabbing, wrestling, kicking, chasing, and other behaviors that may be aggressive outside of play, deserves separate consideration. This is often called play fighting or play chasing.
- **Imaginative or Role-Playing:** Role-playing is characterized by the non-literal use of objects, actions, or words. Here, a cube becomes a cake, and a piece of paper a bus ticket. Actions can mimic role-playing behaviors such as drinking a cup of tea or turning a car steering wheel, and the "thump-thump" sound imitates the sound of a car. A more complex version of role-playing is socio-dramatic play, which involves role-playing and the participation of more than one person. (Smith, 2010, pp. 26-28)

11. Practical Guidelines for Parents on How to Guide and Help Their Children in Play:

Al-Khatatneh offered some tips for parents to help their children in play, including:

- Providing children with a place to put things and toys, such as a low shelf or their own cupboard.
- Helping them organize and tidy their toys.
- Giving them opportunities to play with other children, as children learn from each other.
- Providing them with a box to store small toys. A variety of play experiences are essential. Children need to play alone and with others, as well as engage in quiet and active play. Balance the play activities chosen by adults with those chosen by children. Children need opportunities to choose what they want to play, and although they benefit from games chosen by adults, they learn independence and self-actualization when they take responsibility for making decisions. (Al-Khatatneh, p. 140)

12- Educational Guidelines for Organizing a Child's Daily Routine During Exceptional Times:

The website masanté.re suggests some tips for organizing this special period in a child's life:

- Psychologists emphasize the importance of giving children ample time during quarantine. They shouldn't be confined to a corner of the house all day, as this will isolate them in their own world. You should organize your child's time and share moments with the family. It's beneficial to take

family games outside the screen. While playing, the child can express their feelings, and we can convey information to them. Seeing us relaxed will reassure them.

□ We should also provide answers at their level and explain things, always emphasizing the positive: "We've been through similar situations before; we'll be okay." □ You should share moments alone and with the family, moments of calm and activity, involve them in educational activities, and respect their sleep by establishing a regular routine: it's not a vacation! This will also make the child feel content and facilitate their return to normalcy.

Dr. Pascaline Guérin, a child psychiatrist at Trousseau AP-HP Hospital (e12), also shared her insights with paris.fr on how to organize this period of home confinement, outlining several key points:

It's crucial to clearly explain to children that this isn't a vacation! A schedule should be established for all family members at home, specifying different time slots for each activity:

- School according to the children's ages (preschool, elementary, middle, high school).
- Remote work for parents who can manage it.
- Games.
- Crafts.
- Naps.
- Screen time (at most once in the morning and again in the afternoon).
- Tasks assigned to all family members, which can be delegated to the children according to their level of independence.
- Maintaining a relatively fast-paced lifestyle is essential to avoid social isolation, which should be resumed later.

13- Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research sought to highlight the vital role of play in shaping the dimensions of a child's personality (psychological, social, and educational), especially in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It became clear that play is no longer merely a secondary activity to fill leisure time, but rather a developmental necessity and a fundamental need, as confirmed by contemporary studies. This is due to its profound impact on shaping a child's behavior, enhancing their psychological and physical health, and developing their cognitive abilities, making it an indispensable educational tool. Therefore, based on the foregoing, we recommend launching awareness programs aimed at parents to familiarize them with guided play techniques and how to utilize them to mitigate the negative psychological effects resulting from social isolation and to strengthen family bonds.

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