

# Understanding A Child's World of Play Transition from Board to Screen Play

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## ABSTRACT

India has always been a nation where children learn through games and play. From birth until adulthood, when a child engages in a task, that helps them learn something or the other. Traditional games, such as “Chupan Chupai”, “Ankh Micholi”, or “Gilli Danda” etc. helps children develop basic abilities such as hand-eye coordination, balance, strength, reflexes, problem-solving, teamwork, spatial awareness, social interaction and quick reflexes while having enjoyment. Play and playing games is seen as an extremely vital component of a child's existence. Due to modernisation and advancements in technology, games and play have also modernized like now board games have been developed in online mode as well. One can see video games in 3D format as well. Whereas, academic resources are also available online these days. This has resulted in children spending the majority of their time in front of the screen. Spending time on the internet is not regarded harmful, but if it becomes excessive, it can interfere with a child's physical and mental development. Balancing the importance of conventional games with playing games online aids in the development of core abilities. To help children develop these skills, any barriers to play must be removed (Muteti, 2011). In regard to this, the purpose of the paper is to determine how play influences a child's development.

**Keywords:** play, skills, video games Play is the foundation of learning, creativity, self-expression, and constructive problem-solving. It's how children wrestle with life to make it meaningful. Susan Linn

## PLAY IN INDIAN CULTURE

Play and playing games is a universal language that people from all around the world understands and enjoy. They have been an integral element of all societies, constituting one of the most ancient forms of human social interaction. It is a genuine manifestation of humans' playful nature, allowing them to use their imaginations, think outside the box, and participate in enjoyable physical activities (Seda A, 2024). Through play is how children connect with their surroundings and with themselves. It is the process of observing, testing, trying, mimicking, and enjoying their surroundings and the people they are with (Play Scotland, 2022). Play is considered to be important for development since it improves children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being.

India, a place considered rich in its culture and heritage, has a plethora of traditional games that provide intellectual stimulation and cultural teachings. The games were created to enhance the abilities essential for the survival of communities, with the design incorporating craftsman skills and the materials reflecting the resources at hand (Bhargavi & India, 2024). Many popular games are said to have originated in here including gillidanda, Teerandaji, kabaddi, kho-kho, martial arts, and more (Pathak & Chaudhary, 2024).

Games like these provide a window into historical times, demonstrating how communities learnt, enjoyed themselves, and socialised throughout generations. Particularly, talking of the times during the period of the Kings, several games were there, such as Talwar baaji, shatranj, and many others, which not only benefited in the development of abilities but were also regarded forms of play. Hunting was also popular during their day, as it was thought to be fun and improved qualities such as concentration and attention, thinking strategically, planning etc. Furthermore, gender roles and standards affect play a lot, with men and women frequently participating in various types of games and sports based on societal conventions. Males participated in pursuits that represented their anticipated adult responsibilities, such as sports, strategy games, to hunt, the art of archery and many others, while females involved in pursuits that emphasised their expected domestic roles, such as skill games, storytelling, cooking, and so on.

## THEORIES OF PLAY

As we dive into the world of play, how it has evolved from ancient times to modern times, we discover that a range of perspectives exist, each of which has affected our knowledge of child play. The theories and research findings presented are more than simply abstract notions; they are based on the findings and understandings of development psychologists and other scholars who have committed their lives to uncovering the secrets of early childhood progress. However, when people became more aware of the complexity of child development, their opinions on play shifted dramatically (Admin & Admin, 2025).

When it comes to play theories, they have been discussed in accordance with early classical theories, which are relatively old and view play from an ancient standpoint, as well as current theories of play, which perceive play from a modern world standpoint.

These theories help us understand how play has evolved over the years. The theories have been adapted from a paper by (V, 2021) and are mentioned in Table 1: Theories of Play

**Table 1: THEORIES OF PLAY**

EARLY CLASSICAL THEORIES	CURRENT THEORIES
<b>Surplus Energy (Schiller 1873-Spencer 1875):</b> Here, the child is considered as a source of surplus energy which needs to be released. So, here play is seen to provide a pathway for releasing this energy. While play is a way to release energy, it's also necessary for self-care. The energy is directed into suitable play activities for each age group.	<b>Infantile Dynamics Theory (Lewin):</b> A child's cognitive space is faulty as they build images based on real or imagined experiences. Children from unrealistic worlds around them and may eventually learn about reality through recreational encounters. Early childhood beliefs like that of 'boogy man' this will shift when cognitive space develops.
<b>Relaxation Theory (Lazarus 1883-Patrick 1916):</b> Engaging in play is primarily motivated by the enjoyment it brings, as it allows for self-recreation. The technique releases an individual's accumulated weariness.	<b>Cathartic Theory- (Freud 1908):</b> Children use play to resolve disagreements when other options are limited. For example, hitting a bag or acting out an adult's role on a younger sibling, which they are unable to perform on the adult figure.
<b>Pre- Exercise Theory- (Groos-1898):</b> Play allows a child to exercise and learn survival	<b>Psychoanalytic theory – (Buhler-1930 Anna Freud 1937):</b> A child learns a specific skill

skills. While playing, one cannot yell at a teammate for their performance. To foster a strong team spirit, players must devise a strategy to cover each other's weaknesses. It is a win-win situation for all parties, and life coping skills are taught here.	through repetitions. For example, a three-year-old may jump from a foot-high stool. As he jumps, he feels accomplished, having completed a difficult task. This boosts his confidence. Play allows one to defend and cope with a variety of anxiety-inducing circumstances in life.
<b>Recapitulation Theory (G' Stanley Hall - 1906 Wundt- 1913):</b> Play is a continuation of behaviours that were necessary for survival in the evolutionary past but are no longer vital. In other words, each human being's growth is consistent with the evolutionary history of the whole human race. Thus, children's play progresses through the developmental phases of the human race in an evolutionary order. According to this theory, no new skills or abilities may arise in play because it is made up of remains from evolution (Parham, 2008).	<b>Cognitive Theory (Piaget - 1962):</b> Play encourages individuals to assimilate experiences and achieve homeostasis. He combines new experiences into the relatively limited amount of physical and cognitive skills available at his age. During infancy, children will assimilate information based on their experience. For instance, they may throw the ball with great effort using their entire body, but with time and practice, they will develop the skill of throwing the ball effectively.
<b>Growth Theories (Appleton 1919):</b> Play is a generic behaviour that promotes individual progress. As a child develops the ability to adapt to their surroundings through sensory interpretation, they start mastering survival behaviours. A prime instance of a basic act is using a spoon.	
<b>Ego Expanding Theories (Lange-1902 Claprade-1911):</b> Play enhances ego communication and prepare individuals for future personality development by virtually setting the foundation for becoming a leader, follower, and problem solver. Children learn to embrace and successfully play each of these roles, allowing one to expand one's modified ego.	

## TRADITIONAL GAMES AND ONLINE GAMES

Until now, we have discussed play and games, its theories, importance, and how they have been a vital part of Indian culture from the beginning. However, as we go into the 21st century, play has altered significantly. Conventional games were highly valued in Ancient India and aided in the growth of essential skills. There were also internet-based games in the form of CDs or consoles, but as we move into the modern era, this has improved with online games accessible via smart phones, tablets, play-stations and

in 3D form, offering a realistic experience in a virtual setting with the help of VR Headsets.

Now a days, an increasing proportion of young children spend more time playing electronic games than conventional ones. This transition concerns parents and educators, who believe that traditional childhood games promote more valuable skills than modern electronic game play. Conventional games promote a broad range of early childhood development, including physical, socio-emotional, moral, cognitive, and linguistic aspects (IJCP Editorial Team, 2023). This can be seen in a study conducted by Marlina & Pransiska (2017) who found that using traditional games in the experimental class improves children's social abilities more than using contemporary games in the control class. Another study conducted by Rombot (2017), found that using traditional games boosted children's social and gross motor skills since they are engaging and stimulating tasks.

Talking about the culture of play, India has distinct play cultures in both rural and urban places. However, the desire to "play" is something that both regions have in common. In rural India playing culture is distinct. Their children are adaptable and use whatever is available for play (Narayan, 1995). For instance, talking about the ponds in the villages, they are not only the means of washing clothes but children there use them as a part of their play be it be swimming or making paper boat and sailing in the pond (Narayan, 1995, P.27). On the other hand, in metropolitan cities children play with high tech and expensive gadgets such as smartphones, iPad and play stations.

Traditional games serve as learning tools for an individual. While playing, they teach an individual many things, such as how to win and lose, develop sensory abilities, count and add, improve motor skills, distinguish between colours, improve hand-eye coordination, and to have fun. These games hold cultural value, develops a feeling of belonging, pass down customs and history, and create memories that connect families and friends (Murray, 2006). Furthermore, traditional games often call for cooperation, negotiation, and problem-solving abilities that transfer well into real-world circumstances (Barreteau, 2003). An individual gain more values from playing traditional games than they do from playing modern games such as being environmentally sustainable, learning about the culture and history, and, most importantly, increases intergenerational connection (Gulia & Rajesh, 2019). These games are considered to be important and more beneficial for children in numerous ways, including enhancing their ability to learn, increasing their motor skills and expanding how they communicate with their family at home, which is even more important than playing modern games, particularly in today's society.

In modern times, modernisation and growing importance of technology, traditional game playing has taken over by social media, online games etc. which has hampered the development and growth of children both physically and mentally. Games such as Cricket, football, badminton etc. that children used to play outside on the grounds are now available online, which has increased children's screen time usage. Furthermore, increased academic competition has caused children to focus more on schoolwork, assignments and projects reducing the amount of time they used to spend playing outside.

This evolution of play has raised questions about the utility of conventional games against the immersive worlds provided by electronic gaming (Nandal, 2024). As we all know, devices play a significant role in children's life, including games. Marsh & Mannari (2015) reported that children aged 0-5 years focused on usage of iPads at home for playing games as the most prevalent activity. Now a days, most educational games are available online and focuses on developing thinking skills and creativity. They cover topics such as animals, children's songs, rhymes, cheerful streaks, colouring, and alphabets, with user-friendly interfaces for early childhood ageing between 3 to 6 years (Putra, Nugroho & Puspitarini, 2016). Despite the abundance of technology, electronic devices, and diverse online games, the current generation is

constantly on the lookout for more. In short, they believe that the grass is always greener on the other side, regardless of what they have. The abundance of options and accessibility always leaves the children confused, unhappy, and eager for more. Increase in screen time usage has resulted in children's current sedentary lifestyles impacting not only their mental health, but also on how they grow and develop physically (Solanki, 2024).

A study by Wack & Tantleff-Dunn (2009), video games deliver rapid enjoyment through dynamic images and engaging soundtracks, transporting players to imaginative worlds with unique tales. Electronic games encourage social interactions and teamwork. Through online multiplayer activities, players can connect beyond geographical barriers (Alshehri & Mohamed, 2019). It is true that video games can be more advantageous to children because they can improve their abilities on the computer, which will be useful to them later in life, as well as keep them informed and up to date with their surroundings and what is going on around them, whether it is in the technology, gaming, or news fields. They assist in teaching children how to develop and collaborate as a team, and many games are developed to help children improve their comprehension of language and math skills. Additionally, some video games encourage decision making by teaching children how to make their own decisions without the assistance of their parents (Cram.com, 2020). A study conducted by Wan et al., (2020) found that playing video games improves basic mental activities like making decisions, memory, perception, and concentration. Video games sharpen children's thinking abilities; in terms of cognitive development, video games promote social development and help children avoid problems such as stress and depression. In a nutshell, video games have been shown to promote children's growth and development by instilling virtues such as resilience and healthy competition. These games have also taught children the importance of cooperation and collaboration, both of which are essential abilities for child development. At the same time, video games promote aggression, diminish professional social behaviour, and can lead to poor academic performance.

However, playing digitally should never be considered a disadvantage as it offers a wide range of benefits such as problem solving and critical thinking, hand-eye coordination, decision making and planning, spatial reasoning and perception, creativity and innovation, memory and attention, multitasking and information processing and other skills. However, a balance between playing outside and online should be addressed.

Table 2: depicts the comparison between traditional and online gaming adapted from a study (Nandal, 2024).

**Table 2: Comparison Between Traditional Games & Online Games**

FEATURES	TRADITIONAL GAMING	ONLINE GAMING
<b>PHYSICAL INTERACTION</b>	Requires bodily manipulation of elements and movements around the playing space.	Depending on digital input and is generally sedentary.
<b>SOCIAL INTERACTION</b>	Includes face-to-face engagement, communication, and physical contact as well.	Provides online multiplayer, social networks, and synchronous/asynchronous interaction.



<b>LEARNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT</b>	Enhances strategic thinking, problem-solving abilities, social skills, eye-hand coordination, and spatial reasoning.	Encourages critical thinking, solving problems, eye-hand coordination, digital literacy, processing information, collaboration, and leadership.
<b>CREATIVITY &amp; IMAGINATION</b>	Promotes creativity through role-playing, open-ended gameplay and building mechanics	Provides creative tools, open-world landscapes, storyline options, and modding capabilities.
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	Some games provide physical activity, others require minimal movement.	Less physically active, yet some games include controls for motion or fitness features.
<b>EMOTIONAL REGULATION</b>	Relaxing and stress-relieving owing to interactions with others and emphasis on gameplay	Stimulating and possibly stressful owing to intensive games, competition, and the possibility of online bullying.
<b>EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL</b>	Education through imbedded knowledge, physical manipulation, and social engagement.	Highly instructive via interactive learning experiences, simulations, and instructional games.

## BENEFITS OF PLAY

Why is it vital to engage in playing? or what positive effects does play bring to a person's life in general? It is claimed that play is children's work, and this is true! Play is just as important for a healthy growth as eating veggies, engaging in reading, and getting enough sleep. Following are a few benefits of playing (Morgan, 2018).

- 1. It's fun:** One of the most obvious explanations why children participate in it is that it is enjoyable to play games. All work and no play makes for an unhealthy way of life. Playing games helps children to challenge themselves, develop specific abilities, or simply relax from the stresses of contemporary life.
- 2. Improve Social Skills:** In an age dominated by digital devices, human interaction in person may appear to be a thing of the past. Group games provide a unique platform for direct socialisation in a pressure-free environment. This is an excellent opportunity to reconnect with family and friends while building bonds.
- 3. Reduced stress:** Aside from having fun, playing a game might help you divert your attention away from the stressful occasion. Playing games with relatives or close friends is even more enjoyable.
- 4. Promote critical thinking:** Many games are designed to test players. The possibilities for strategy games are practically unlimited, and they are an excellent way to challenge oneself in a fun and controlled atmosphere.
- 5. Improves Communication:** Through play, children can acquire the art of communication. They can interpret the facial expressions and body language of others, as well as convey and understand their own opinions, views and understand others as well.
- 6. Enhance Creativity:** Play allows children to develop their imagination, think outside the box, and find novel solutions to problems they confront.
- 7. Improves Emotional Stability:** Play helps children develop empathy and understanding. It enables

children to deal with their fear, aggressiveness, and emotions in a more constructive and effective manner.

## CONCLUSION

We all understand what is meant when individuals talk about play. Everyone believes themselves an expert in play due to their childhood experiences. We understand the various sorts of play and the associated emotions, such as joy, suspension of reality, and utter lightness (Besio, 2018).

When it comes to Indian culture, the emphasis is usually on playing conventional games that are rich in culture, but as technology has advanced and modernised, digital games have taken over. Both conventional and digital games have certain learning benefits. Many of these benefits are shared, but some are unique to one or the other. As a result, it is critical to identify strategies to encourage individuals to play a variety of games while also maintaining a healthy balance. There are some things one cannot learn if they stick to one road, so one should not be afraid to step outside of their comfort zone and try something new that can benefit in their healthy development and growth (G2A.COM Editorial Team, 2024).

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