

## Enhancing Internal Locus of Control in Young Children through Play Activities: A Case of Model-Preschool, Haramaya University, Ethiopia

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DOI: 10.15294/ijeces.v12i2.69759

Submitted: 11/06/2023 Revised: 14/08/2023 Accepted: 16/10/2023

### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the practice of play activities in enhancing the internal locus of control among young children at Haramaya University's Model preschool. Employing a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with four preschool teachers and one preschool principal and observation of play activities. The data was analyzed through the thematic data analysis technique, from which three major themes emerged: utilization of play activities, teachers' participation in facilitating play activities, and challenges encountered while facilitating play activities. The study's findings indicate that various play activities, such as open-ended play, problem-solving play, and creativity play, promote this crucial developmental skill. The preschool teachers reported employing various strategies to facilitate play activities that foster an internal locus of control, such as providing children with choices and constructive feedback. However, bottlenecks such as an inaccessible school environment, large class sizes, inadequate preschool teacher training, and insufficient resources were also identified as limiting factors in facilitating play activities that encourage an internal locus of control. Ultimately, the research concludes that participation in play activities can effectively aid in developing young children's internal locus of control. This study holds great importance as it furnishes empirical proof to underpin the utilization of play activities as a proficient intervention to amplify the internal locus of control in young children.

**Keywords:** Early Child Hood Education, Locus of Control, Play Activities, Preschool, Preschool Teacher

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of locus of control is a psychological construct that pertains to the degree to which individuals believe they have agency over their own lives (Lenčová et al., 2008; Rotter, 1966; Stephens & Delys, 1973). Extensive research has revealed that locus of control can significantly impact various outcomes, such as academic achievement, social-emotional development, and resilience (Watkins, 1982). Those with an internal locus of control believe they possess control over their destiny, whereas individuals with an external locus maintain that their lives are governed by external factors, such as luck or fate (Hadsell, 2010; Rotter, 1966).

According to Ungar (2013), an internal locus of control denotes the conviction that one's choices and actions hold sway over the outcomes of one's life. Internal locus of control is a crucial determinant of success in numerous facets of life, including education, work, and interpersonal relationships. Those with an internal locus of control are more prone to setting goals, working diligently towards their attainment, and persevering in the face of obstacles. They are also more inclined to experience satisfaction with their lives and maintain a positive outlook. Similarly, children with a robust internal locus of control exhibit greater resilience, motivation, and self-assurance (Coppens, 1985). Additionally, children with internal locus of control are more apt to achieve academic success, possess superior social skills, and display extraordinary fortitude in adversity (Watkins, 1982).

There is a growing body of research that suggests that early childhood experiences possess the potential to influence an individual's locus of control. The formative years of childhood are a pivotal period for cultivating an internal locus of control, given its salience to a child's psychological well-being (Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). Preschool education is a critical determinant for shaping a child's beliefs about themselves and their environment. Specifically, play-based activities that facilitate a sense of control and mastery effectively nurture an internal locus of control. The significance of play in childhood cannot be overstated (Savina, 2014). Play allows children to learn about the world, develop social and emotional skills, and fortify their self-assurance (Burriss & Tsao, 2002; Gagne, 2017; Ginsburg, 2019; Milteer et al., 2012).

As posited by Gagne (2017), the play has the potential to foster the development of an internal locus of control in children. Several modalities exist through which play can facilitate the cultivation of an internal locus of control. Firstly, play allows children to take risks and make mistakes, and upon succeeding in navigating challenges and obstacles, they learn that they can determine their fate (Savina, 2014; Ungar, 2013). Secondly, the play gives children a sense of agency (Ginsburg, 2019), enabling them to make choices and decisions, thereby realizing their ability to shape experiences (Pellegrini, 2006; Pellegrini et al., 2007). Thirdly, play provides children with feedback and reinforcement. As children are praised for their achievements and efforts, they internalize the positive impact of their actions on the world around them (Pellegrini et al., 2007).

On the other hand, engagement in playtime endeavors can facilitate the cultivation of an internal locus of control in young children. Specifically, unstructured play allows youngsters to govern relationships, events, and ideas, augmenting their sense of personal agency and empowerment (Bohg et al., 1986). Another strategy is guided play, which emphasizes the need to keep the activity interesting from the child's perspective while enabling self-directed exploration, enhancing learning, and fostering genuine enjoyment (Weisberg et al., 2016). Additionally, a therapeutic model for parents has been proposed to enhance pre-primary school students' internal locus of control (Da Silva, 2013). Even though early-life home experiences may predispose children towards an external rather

than internal locus of control, which has been linked to unfavorable academic, personality, and social outcomes (Nowicki et al., 2018), play activities that facilitate the development of an internal locus of control can have salutary effects on the growth and well-being of children.

As important constituents, early childhood educators can help children develop an internal locus of control (Pesu et al., 2016). Educators can provide play opportunities, enabling children to acquire the skills and confidence required to manage their lives. According to Finch et al. (2023), early childhood educators can promote the development of an internal locus of control in children by providing a diverse range of play materials and activities that allow children to explore their interests and discover activities in that they excel; this encourages children to take risks and make mistakes. Allowing children to make mistakes can help them learn from their errors and develop confidence in their abilities (Smith, 1997). Conversely, praising children's efforts and accomplishments can help them recognize the positive impact of their actions on the world around them. Similarly, providing children with choices and opportunities to make decisions can foster a sense of agency and self-control (Sabol & Pianta, 2015).

However, not all preschool environments similarly facilitate the development of an internal locus of control in children. Additionally, not all children are born with an internal locus of control, and some may develop an external locus of control if they grow up in environments where they feel powerless over their lives. Unfortunately, early childhood education in developing countries like Ethiopia prioritizes academic achievement over social-emotional learning (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). This approach could be more effective in cultivating children's self-control and agency. Another evidence by Lenčová et al. (2008) and Villa (2017) indicates that young children in developing countries lack an internal locus of control, which means they are unable to accept responsibility for their actions and outcomes, which is true in Ethiopia and specifically in the current study area. Preschoolers' dependence on external sources, such as adults or authority figures, can undermine their self-confidence and self-efficacy. The long-term implications of this problem can be detrimental to the development and success of these young children. As a result, it is critical to investigate ways to promote an internal locus of control among preschoolers at the model preschool of Haramaya University in order to promote their overall well-being and future success.

Moreover, the study has identified a research gap, which pertains to the need for more empirical proof regarding the efficacy of play activities in fostering an internal locus of control among young children. Prior investigations have indicated that an internal locus of control is linked to favorable outcomes, including academic success, social adeptness, and emotional welfare. Nevertheless, additional research is imperative to ascertain the precise forms of play activities that are particularly efficacious in promoting an internal locus of control in young children.

Taking into account the considerable benefits associated with possessing an internal locus of control, it is evident that play activities have the potential to serve as a potent mechanism for cultivating such a disposition in young children. Through play, children can actively engage with their surroundings, experiment with novel skills, and exercise their decision-making abilities. Facilitating these activities is a vital role played by early childhood educators, who are instrumental in nurturing the development of an internal locus of control within children. In light of those above, the primary objective of this investigation is to scrutinize the efficacy and implementation of play activities in fostering an internal locus of control amongst young children at Model-preschool, Haramaya University, Ethiopia. Additionally, the study seeks to evaluate the extent to which the

preschool environment is conducive to cultivating an internal locus of control in young children. Specifically, the research will delve into how play activities and preschool educators contribute to the development of children's self-regulation capabilities.

The researchers behind this study maintain that the implications of this finding hold significant weight for early childhood education. By demonstrating the efficacy of play activities in nurturing an internal locus of control in young children, the study can inform the design and implementation of play-based intervention programs that can empower children with the skill set necessary to succeed academically and in life.

To this end, the study was guided by three primary research questions. Firstly, how do study participants describe the different play activities that promote internal locus of control in young children? Secondly, how do teachers facilitate play activities that promote internal locus of control in young children? Moreover, finally, what challenges, if any, do study participants describe in facilitating play activities that promote internal locus of control?

## 2. METHOD

### *Design*

The study was carried out by the constructivist philosophical paradigm, which employs a qualitative research approach. An intrinsic case study research design addressed the study's objectives. According to Yin (2009), the case study design is preferred in general social science and educational settings. Likewise, an intrinsic case study is an appropriate design when the researcher is interested in the case itself, wants to understand it in its own right, and is not interested in using the case to learn about something else (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2013). In light of this, Preschool is a case that could be studied using an intrinsic case study to explore the enhancement of internal locus of control through play activities facilitated by preschool educators. The researcher would be interested in understanding how the Preschool's play activities are designed and implemented to promote internal locus of control in young children. The researcher would also want to understand the impact of the play activities on the children's sense of control over their learning and development.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

Multiple data collection instruments, including an interview guide and observation of play activities, were used to investigate the phenomenon of interest, as suggested by Schramm (1971). Besides, respondents from various categories, including preschool teachers, caregivers, and preschool principals, shared their perspectives on the practice of the play activities being utilized in the study area. Furthermore, the instruments used assisted the researchers in identifying the facilitators and inhibitors of instructional adaptation.

### *Study Participants*

Considering the saturation point of data collection, the primary data source for this study involved three preschool teachers, one Caregiver, and one preschool principal from Model-preschool. The selection of study participants was made according to Creswell's (2012) recommendation that the selected study participants must meet the study criteria and have the ability and willingness to provide information. Accordingly, the selection of preschool teachers was based on the work experience they had in educating at Model-preschool education.

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the study participants**

No.	Pseudonyms	Sex	Experience in Year	Role	Educational Qualification	Status of Training
1	PsP	F	15	Principal	Degree	It is not related to ECE
2	PsT1	F	14	teacher	Degree	It is not related to ECE
3	PsT2	F	11	teacher	Diploma	Related with ECE
4	PsT3	F	7	teacher	Degree	It is not related to ECE
5	Caregiver	F	5	Caregiver	Degree	It is not related to ECE

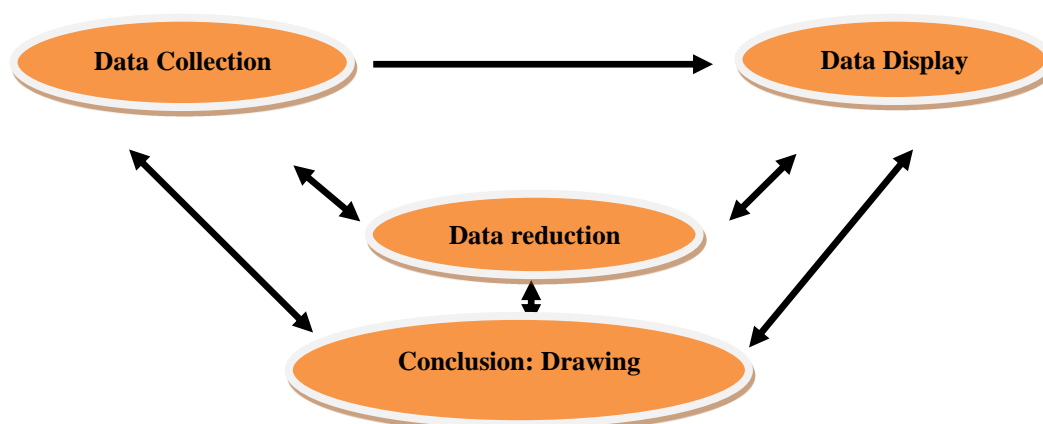
**ECE: Early Childhood Education**

**Pseudonyms: - Preschool Principal (PsP), Preschool teacher 1 (PsT1), Preschool teacher 2 (PsT2), Preschool teacher 3 (PsT3), Caregiver.**

#### *Data Analysis*

The researcher used an interview guide and observation to collect data on preschool learners' play activities and the educators' play designing, implementing, and managing skills. This data was used to identify which activities positively or negatively impacted promoting internal locus of control. The researcher in this study used verbatim transcription to facilitate data analysis (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The transcriptions were then grouped under predetermined themes based on the research questions and categorized according to specific subthemes. Framework editing (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to categorize the data under predetermined themes before in-depth data analysis. Finally, Play activities being utilized in Preschool, teachers' involvement in facilitating play activities, and the challenges encountered in facilitating play activities that promote internal locus of control were the major themes identified based on the research questions.

After the data had been collected, the next step was to reduce it. This involved selecting, focusing, abstracting, and transforming the data. Data reduction is a necessary step in the data analysis process (Hashimov, 2015). The next step was to design the data display. This involved arranging the data in a way that was relevant to the research questions and made it easy to see patterns and trends. The final step was to reach conclusions and validate the data. This involved getting agreement among the researcher, experts, and study participants. The themes and subthemes derived from the study data were reviewed and validated by two SNIE educators from Haramaya University. The summaries, conclusions, and reports were created using data verified by experts. Figure 1 shows the process described above.



**Figure 1. Framework editing was adapted from Miles and Huberman(1994).**

#### Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

The researcher in this study took several steps to ensure the credibility of the study findings. These steps included obtaining ethical approval, obtaining consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, using member checking (Erlandson et al., 1993), and re-coding the data. These steps helped ensure that the study's findings were accurate and reliable.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study findings obtained from the interview guide with five study participants and observations conducted at various times. The study findings were divided into three major themes: Play activities in model preschool, teachers' involvement in facilitating play activities, and the challenges encountered in facilitating activities that promote internal locus of control. The following is the analysis and discussion of the study results.

**Table 2. The central theme and subthemes**

Main theme	Subthemes
Play activities being utilized in model preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Open-ended play</li> <li>❑ Problem-solving play</li> <li>❑ Creativity play</li> </ul>
Teachers' involvement in facilitating play activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Provide children with a choice</li> <li>❑ Provide children with feedback.</li> </ul>
Challenges encountered in facilitating play activities that promote internal locus of control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Inaccessible school environment</li> <li>❑ Large class size</li> <li>❑ Lack training</li> <li>❑ Lack of resource</li> </ul>

#### *Play Activities that are being utilized in model preschool*

##### **Open-ended play**

Open-ended play helps youngsters explore their surroundings and develop their imaginations. It can be done with various materials, including bricks, sand, and water. In various ways, open-ended play can help young children develop an internal locus of control. The study findings revealed that although open-ended play activities are being utilized in the study area and pushed to be used by

school management, their practice varied across the preschool teachers. The following participant statement exemplifies this: “Many kids in our school participate in the play activities of their choice. Some teachers occasionally put pressure on kids, but the majority respect their decisions” (PsT3).

Likewise, PsP stated:

*As school administrators, we instruct all educators to respect students' preferences when selecting and participating in play activities. This is not to say that all teachers handle it the same way. Teachers differ in their performance. (PSP)*

According to another study participant,

*As you can see, these children here are playing different games. Some students experiment with scissors; others play with sand; here is another game in the group. We encourage youngsters to participate in their preferred form of play. However, one major issue for us is that only a few types of games are played at this school. Children engage in playing the same game over and over again. (PsT1).*

On the other hand, data from long-term school observation demonstrated that allowing children's choice of play activities in and out of the classroom varied from teacher to teacher. While some teachers respect their students' choices, others continuously arrange the same play activities for all kids. These data suggest that not all teachers utilize the same technique to increase internal locus of control through play activities and that performance disparities exist.

Previous research has demonstrated that open-ended types of play contribute significantly to the development of the internal locus of control. For example, according to Deen et al. (2015), open-ended play encourages youngsters to make choices. Children can pick what they want to play with, how they want to play with it, and who they want to play with. This provides individuals with a sense of control over their lives. Besides, open-ended play allows youngsters to address difficulties. Youngsters frequently face difficulties when playing (Bekker et al., 2008). They may need to figure out how to construct a structure that does not collapse or a sandcastle that does not wash away. Solving these difficulties teaches youngsters problem-solving abilities and resilience.

Furthermore, open-ended play allows youngsters to express themselves (Bekker et al., 2008; de Valk et al., 2015). Children's imaginations can be used to construct their worlds and characters. This fosters their creativity and self-expression.

In general, open-ended play is a beneficial activity for young children. It can help individuals develop an internal locus of control, problem-solving abilities, resilience, creativity, and self-expression (Bekker et al., 2008; de Valk et al., 2015; Deen et al., 2015). Consequently, preschool teachers can encourage children to establish an internal locus of control by giving them opportunities for open-ended play, which can improve their academic success, work performance, and mental and physical health.

### **Problem-solving play type**

Problem-solving play is another sort of school-based play activity identified. During the observation, it was discovered that the school where this study was carried out has some equipment for problem-solving play, such as puzzles, computer games, music materials, and construction kits. It is, however, incompatible with the number of students in a class. In this regard, one of the study's participants stated:

*Tools for gaming and encouraging problem-solving play activities need to be more robust. As you can see, children often fight over it. While eager to play, they are prevented from doing so because of the lack of play materials.(PsT1)*

Similarly, another study participant said:

*"Because these play materials do not all fit together at once, we take children outdoors and instruct them to play other socially reinforcing games," says another study participant. (PsT3)*

The data obtained through the interviews and observations revealed that, while some problem-solving play activities have been established and contribute to fostering an internal locus of control, they must be adequately implemented due to a lack of play materials. Previous research has found that problem-solving play activity styles help promote an internal locus of control. A study by Starnes and Zinser (1983) found that problem-solving play can help children develop an internal locus of control. The study involved a group of children randomly assigned to either a problem-solving playgroup or a control group. The problem-solving play group participated in weekly sessions of problem-solving play for eight weeks. The control group did not participate in any problem-solving play. At the end of the eight weeks, the children in the problem-solving play group showed significantly more significant gains in internal locus of control than those in the control group. The children in the problem-solving play group were also more likely to take risks, persevere in facing challenges, and attribute their successes to their efforts.

On the other hand, there is other evidence by Medvin et al. (2003) and Smith (2009) that problem-solving play can help children develop their internal locus of control by allowing them to direct their learning. Children actively participate in the learning process when they engage in problem-solving play. They must identify the problem, devise solutions, and put those solutions to the test. This gives them ownership of their learning and helps them persevere in adversity. Playing problem-solving games can help children acquire the ability to endure in the face of challenges (Gonzalez & Sellers, 2002). When children face a challenge, they must be able to focus and persevere until they find a solution. This helps kids acquire the resilience required for success and attribute their accomplishments to their efforts. Kids who succeed at problem-solving games are likelier to ascribe their achievement to their efforts. This aids in developing an internal locus of control, which is beneficial in all aspects of life.

The study findings show that problem-solving play can help children develop an internal locus of control, which needs to be revised in the current study area. It can help children improve their problem-solving abilities, confidence, and perseverance. Numerous approaches to problem-solving play activities, including puzzles, games, construction kits, and even everyday objects, can be used (Medvin et al., 2003; Smith, 2009). The most important thing is to provide a safe environment for youngsters to take risks and try new things.

### **Creative Play Activities**

Young children's internal locus of control can be strengthened in a variety of ways through creative play activities like pretend play, art, music, dance, painting, play dough, drawing, back-and-forth drawing games, sidewalk drawing, and painting, the garden or outdoor spaces, etc. (Hunter et al., 2014; Schleisman, 2018; Tee, 2022; Wilson, 2018). According to Piscitelli and Penfold (2015), activities that promote creative play enable kids to take charge of their learning and development. Children can explore their interests and ideas when participating in creative play. They can



experiment with various materials and techniques to discover their unique way of expressing themselves, and this sense of control can help children develop the conviction that they can conquer new obstacles and achieve their goals. Another study by Garaigordobil et al. (2022) indicated that creative play can assist children in developing problem-solving skills. When youngsters are engaged in creative play, they figure out how to overcome obstacles. This can include trial and error, experimentation, and working with others. Children learn that they can overcome problems and attain their goals through their efforts as they develop these problem-solving skills.

Creative play, on the other hand, can assist youngsters in building self-efficacy (Garaigordobil et al., 2022; Hunter et al., 2014). Self-efficacy is the belief that one can complete a task successfully. When children engage in creative play, they frequently achieve success, which can help them build a belief in their skills, leading to enhanced self-efficacy. Creative play can be a valuable strategy for improving young children's internal locus of control. It can help kids grow the confidence that they can reach their goals independently by giving them chances to take charge of their learning, improve problem-solving abilities, and experience achievement.

In the current study area, some creative play activity is being practiced. For instance, play activities, including pretend play, art, and music, have been used and noticed through observational play activities. It has been noticed that pretend play allows children to take on different roles and experiment with different outcomes, helping them learn they are in control of their actions and can make things happen. For example, a child might pretend to be a doctor and give a toy patient a shot. If the child successfully "cures" the patient, they will learn they can make a difference in the world. Besides, play activities related to art were identified in the current study area. It is noticed that this type of play activity allows children to express themselves and feel in control of their own experiences, allowing them to make choices about what they want to create and how they want to create it. This can help them develop a sense of agency and self-efficacy. One thing the current study researcher was attracted to was a child drawing a picture of his family, and the child was happy with the way the picture turned out. He will learn that he can create something he is proud of.

Furthermore, another play activity used in the study area to promote children's ability to express themselves and feel in control of their own experiences was playing with music materials. When children make up music, they can choose which instruments to use and which songs to sing. This can aid in the development of their sense of agency and self-efficacy. A child, for example, might sing a song about their favorite animal. If the child enjoys singing the song, they will realize they can create something they enjoy.

However, many limits were discovered in organizing, planning, and practicing creative play activities. As evidenced by the following data obtained through an interview guide, these include a limited number of creative play activities, a lack of proper skill in planning for creative play activities, a lack of participation by children in play activities due to socio-cultural impacts, a lack of play materials, and an inconvenient play environment.

*There needs to be more play activities that foster student creativity and support the internal locus of control. As a result, we only allow children to participate in specific activities that foster children's creativity, such as pretend play, art, and music. Furthermore, many teachers must gain the necessary skills to conduct and supervise these activities. Except for a short training period, many teachers in this school still need training in preschool education or children's play facilitation. Furthermore, because of the overcrowded and*

*uncomfortable school grounds, students are prohibited from playing games that promote creativity outside the classroom. (PSP)*

Another preschool teacher participant stated that:

*I typically plan academic activities, but I have never planned children's play activities based on different purposes. I encourage students to play during breaks and use the school's play materials. Aside from that, I need to find out which game was utilized to boost students' creativity and internal locus of control. (PsT2)*

Despite some creative play activities being practiced in the study area, the data gathered through the interview guide and observation demonstrated numerous constraints in organizing, planning, and carrying out creative play activities. These constraints include a restricted amount of creative play activities, a need for sufficient competence in creative play activity design, a need for more engagement by children in play activities owing to socio-cultural influences, a shortage of play material, and an uncomfortable play setting. These constraints must be addressed to ensure that all children can engage in creative play activities vital for their internal locus of control.

*Teachers' involvement in facilitating play activities*

**Provide children with choices:**

During the researcher's observation, some preschool teachers noticed that the preschool students in the study area were given choices for play activities in which they were interested. Not all preschool teachers in the study area are committed to allowing students to participate in their preferred play activities. This finding is supported by data collected from study participants through an interview guide.

*Teachers planned the play activities based on the direction given to them by the school administration. Some teachers are very committed to doing so, while others are less committed to respecting children's preferences for play activities and forcing them to participate in what they like. This is because most teachers in this school need more preschool education training and updated knowledge and skills about the role of play in child development. (PSP)*

*As much as possible, to the best of my knowledge and skill, and as far as available play materials and play activities in this school, I have attempted to respect the preferences of each child in participating in play activities. Which play activity is appropriate for different developmental aspects and stages? However, I am delighted when the kids engage in and enjoy their play activities. (PsT2)*

*I have some training in the significance of play in child development, and I do my best to facilitate play activities that children have fun with. However, the play activities I am familiar with are limited, and the preschool students in my class are limited to certain play activities that I need to familiarize myself with. (PsT3)*

The data presented above revealed that teachers' involvement in facilitating preschool play activities varied from teacher to teacher. The data also showed that preschool teachers' involvement in facilitating play activities was influenced by their knowledge and skills in the field. This clearly shows that preschool teachers with preschool education training attempted to facilitate play activities following children's preferences to the extent that the school system allowed them to do so. Previous research found that when children are given choices, they feel more in control of their lives (Dyment & O'Connell, 2013; Hjelmér, 2020; King & Howard, 2016). This can be accomplished by giving

them options for what to play, how, and with whom to play. Giving children options is an excellent way to help them develop an internal locus of control. Children who have choices feel more in control of their lives, which can lead to increased confidence, motivation, and self-esteem (Wood, 2014).

According to Dymont and O'Connell (2013), the following are some specific ways that teachers can provide children with choices in their play: Provide various materials and activities for children to choose from, such as blocks, dress-up clothes, art supplies, and musical instruments. Allow children to choose what to play with and how to use the materials. Let youngsters decide how they want to play with their materials after selecting them. This might entail undertaking tasks like constructing a tower, developing a character, or producing a work of art. Do not instruct kids on how they "should" interact with the toys. Let them experiment and explore instead. The researcher makes additional recommendations to let kids pick their playmates if possible. This could include interacting with classmates, siblings, or even the teacher. Giving kids a say in who they play with can help them develop social skills and learn how to work together. It is critical to understand that not all options are created equal, and when providing options to children, keep their age and developmental level in mind. Teachers can help children develop an internal locus of control, a valuable skill that will benefit them throughout their lives, by giving them options.

#### **Provide children with feedback.**

Positive feedback is a robust tool for improving children's internal locus of control. Children feel more confident and capable of achieving their goals when they receive positive feedback. It is critical to emphasize effort, development, and character traits more than results (Nowicki et al., 2018).

In the current study, preschool teachers' feedback for students' play activities was identified as another involvement the researcher could support in enhancing internal locus of control in his observation and data obtained through interviews. Although preschool teachers provided various feedback during children's play activities, some of the feedback was inappropriate for enhancing the internal locus of control in young children. The narration that follows is data obtained through observation and directly transcribed into one paragraph:

*While the children were playing, one collided with the house party and felt pain. The baby let out a loud cry at that point. At the time, the teacher was hitting the wall in an attempt to seduce the child, claiming that the house party was at fault. She now encourages the child to avoid responsibility, assuming the house party is at fault.*

Data demonstrated that some teachers give unfavorable feedback for preschool play activities, which can hinder young children's development of their internal locus of control.

According to research by Umanski and Avni (2017) and Ostrosky and Meadan (2010), when children receive positive feedback, they feel better about themselves and their abilities. This can be accomplished by recognizing their efforts, even if they fail. It makes them feel good about themselves and their achievements and encourages them to keep trying. When providing positive feedback, be specific and focus on the child's efforts rather than their natural abilities (Ostrosky & Meadan, 2010). They further suggested that instead of saying, "You are so smart!" a teacher might say, "I like how you figured out how to solve that puzzle." It is also critical to be genuine and to provide constructive feedback (Ostrosky & Meadan, 2010; Umanski & Avni, 2017).

*Challenges encountered in facilitating play activities that promote Internal Locus of Control*

*Inaccessible School Environment:* The school grounds are highly congested and mountainous, making them unsuitable for children's various play activities, mainly outdoor play activities. The school was found to be unsettling and a barrier to children roaming and playing at their leisure. It is supported further by data obtained through interviews with the teachers and school principals who participated in this study. The school's teacher and principal made the following remarks:

*The uncomfortable environment of the school is one barrier that prevents children from participating in the play activities they choose for themselves. We prevent children from running because we are afraid of falling. We allow them to play small games that do not put them in danger of physical harm. (PsT2)*

The principal of the school approved the idea by stating:

*The school environment is very congested. It accepts and accommodates a large number of children who are difficult to accommodate. We have asked the responsible bodies to make improvements but have not received a response. (PSP)*

In general, the data obtained through observation and the interview guide revealed that the school environment is inaccessible and highly tied, making it difficult for children to move around and participate in preferred play activities, thereby impeding attempts to facilitate play activities that are suitable for enhancing children's internal locus of control.

**Large class size:** On the other hand, there is the problem of a large number of students in a class that takes more work to manage. A class, for example, has at least 35 to 50 students. It is extremely difficult for all these students to plan and implement play activities that meet their needs. It can be challenging to organize play activities in a large class size. Teachers may need more time to give each child individual attention, and keeping track of the children's activities can be difficult. Furthermore, creating a sense of community and belonging, essential in promoting internal locus of control, can be difficult in large class sizes.

**Lack of resources:** Most teachers in the studied Preschool need more resources to facilitate play activities. Giving kids chances to explore and learn can be challenging if teachers need access to the tools to facilitate play activities. Children might only be able to participate in activities encouraging creativity and problem-solving if teachers can access blocks, art supplies, or musical instruments. This finding is supported by the data presented below, obtained through observation.

*The variety of play materials available in the Preschool understudy needs to meet the needs of the students. A few play materials are available for a few different types of play activities. We sometimes forbid them from playing with the toys because they are inadequate, so they do not fight over the children.(PsT1)*

**Lack of training:** On the other hand, planning and carrying out child-friendly play activities that can support the children's internal locus of control calls for a teacher who has received preschool teacher training in education and has developed strong skills and knowledge. However, many teachers in the school where this study was conducted had received short training; they had yet to acquire skills through formal education in Preschool. Of the 12 preschool teachers and 11 caregivers, only two teachers (one with a certificate and one with a diploma) have preschool education training. Overall, the study found that a lack of adequate training for preschool teachers impedes teachers' efforts to encourage children's internal locus of control. Teachers can only successfully implement play activities that encourage internal locus of control in their classrooms if they have the training necessary to facilitate such activities. For instance, teachers might need to learn how to give kids options, promote problem-solving, or recognize accomplishments.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study on enhancing the internal locus of control in young children through play activities at Haramaya University's Model Preschool in Ethiopia discovered that various play activities, including open-ended play, problem-solving play, and creativity play, are being used to promote this critical developmental skill. Teachers at the Preschool reported using various strategies to facilitate play activities that promote internal locus of control, such as giving children options and providing feedback, even though their involvement varied from teacher to teacher. The study also discovered that facilitating play activities that encourage internal locus of control can present some difficulties, such as an inaccessible school environment, a large class size, a lack of training, and a lack of resources guaranteeing that all kids have an equal chance to participate.

The study discovered that engaging in play can help young children develop their internal locus of control. Children can develop a sense of self-efficacy and the belief that they have control over their outcomes if teachers are purposeful about giving them opportunities to make decisions, solve problems, and receive positive feedback.

##### *Limitations of the study*

The current study uses Haramaya University Model-Preschool as a bounded case. This exposes the study to the limitation of using a small number of study participants; this limits the findings' applicability to other preschool settings. Other factors that could influence the internal locus of control, such as parenting style or socioeconomic status, were not controlled for in the study. This makes determining the specific impact of play activities on the internal locus of control difficult. Despite these limitations, the study sheds some light on the role of play activities in promoting internal locus of control in young children. More research is required to replicate the findings of this study with a larger sample size and to account for other potential factors that may influence the internal locus of control.

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