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# Reclaiming Play in the Digital Age: Developing a Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) Framework for Holistic Child Development in Nigeria

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The rapid proliferation of digital technologies has reconfigured childhood experiences globally, with particularly profound implications in developing contexts such as Nigeria. While digital platforms enhance access to information, communication, and learning opportunities, their increasing dominance has progressively eroded traditional, play-based practices that are fundamental to children's holistic development. This study uses a conceptual research design based on critical and interdisciplinary literature synthesis to develop the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework for children in early childhood and basic education settings, especially those aged 3–12 years. Drawing on constructivist learning theory, play theory, African indigenous knowledge systems, and contemporary scholarship on digital childhoods, the paper critically examines the developmental, social, and cultural consequences of digitally mediated childhoods. It argues that the displacement of culturally embedded play practices undermines key developmental domains, including cognitive growth, social competence, emotional regulation, physical development, and cultural identity formation. In response, the TDPL framework is advanced as an integrative and context-sensitive model that promotes a balanced alignment between digital engagement and traditional play. The framework emphasises complementarity, developmental balance, cultural integration, and guided engagement as core principles for fostering holistic child development. This study contributes to theoretical and policy debates by offering a culturally grounded approach to reconciling technological advancement with children's developmental rights and well-being in Nigeria.

**Keywords***:* Digital childhood, Play-based learning, Constructivist learning theory, Trado-Digital framework, Child development

## 1.0 Introduction

Childhood, as a dynamic social and developmental construct, is undergoing significant transformation in the contemporary digital era. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has reshaped how children learn, interact, and engage with their environment, particularly in developing contexts such as Nigeria. Increasing access to mobile devices, internet connectivity, and digital platforms has expanded opportunities for learning and participation, positioning children within a globally connected knowledge environment (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024). While these developments offer substantial benefits, they also introduce complex challenges with implications for children's developmental outcomes and cultural continuity.

A growing body of research indicates that the increasing centrality of digital engagement is associated with a gradual displacement of traditional, play-based childhood experiences (Twenge, 2023; Haidt, 2024). Historically, childhood in Nigeria has been characterised by communal and culturally embedded forms of play that occur within shared social environments. These practices are not merely recreational but serve as essential mechanisms for cognitive development, socialisation, creativity, and the transmission of cultural knowledge (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020; Ibiam, 2010). Examples include moonlight storytelling, clapping games, skipping, hide-and-seek, local counting games, wrestling, dance, folk songs, and role-play activities through which children learn cooperation, language, memory, rhythm, leadership, and community values. Through participation in indigenous play activities, children develop problem-solving skills, social competence, and an understanding of cultural values that shape identity and social cohesion (Uduchukwu, 2011; Keseina & Okooboh, 2010).

The centrality of play in child development is well established across multiple theoretical traditions. From a constructivist perspective, Piaget (1962) posits that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, while Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the role of social interaction and guided participation in cognitive development. Complementary perspectives highlight the role of play in fostering social-emotional competence, self-regulation, and creativity (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990; Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Berk, 2005). Furthermore, unstructured and self-directed play has been shown to promote autonomy, resilience, and adaptive problem-solving skills in children (Gray, 2013; Lester & Russell, 2008).

Despite these well-established benefits, the increasing dominance of digital technologies has altered the nature of

children's play experiences. Digital environments provide new forms of engagement and learning; however, they often differ significantly from traditional play in their structure, level of physical activity, and cultural grounding (Marsh et al., 2019; Maureen, 2003). Emerging evidence suggests that excessive engagement with digital media may be associated with reduced physical activity, limited face-to-face social interaction, and fewer opportunities for experiential learning (World Health Organization, 2022; Twenge, 2023). In addition, the widespread consumption of globalised digital content raises concerns regarding the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems and culturally specific play practices (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023).

The implications of these shifts extend beyond individual development to broader questions of children's well-being and societal values. Play is not only a developmental necessity but also a critical component of a meaningful and balanced childhood, enabling children to engage actively with their physical and social environments (Kane, 2004; Perry, n.d.). As Livingstone et al. (2023) argue, the impact of digital technologies on children's well-being is not inherently positive or negative but depends on how these technologies are integrated into everyday life. This underscores the need for approaches that move beyond simplistic dichotomies between traditional and digital experiences.

Against this backdrop, there is a growing need for integrative frameworks that reconcile technological advancement with developmentally appropriate and culturally grounded practices. Such frameworks must recognise the multidimensional nature of child development and the importance of balancing cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and cultural dimensions (Bryman, 2021). The aim of this study is to develop a conceptual framework—the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework—that integrates traditional play and digital engagement to support holistic child development in Nigeria. The guiding research question is: How can traditional Nigerian play practices and digital learning tools be conceptually integrated to promote holistic child development without weakening cultural identity and developmental balance?

## 2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Digital Childhood and the Changing Nature of Play

The concept of childhood has undergone substantial transformation in the digital era, driven by the rapid proliferation of digital technologies and their integration into everyday life. Children are increasingly engaging with digital devices for learning, communication, and entertainment, thereby redefining traditional patterns of play and social interaction. Contemporary scholarship highlights that digital environments offer new opportunities for cognitive engagement and access to knowledge; however, they also introduce concerns regarding developmental balance and well-being (Livingstone et al., 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024).

Emerging evidence suggests that increased digital engagement is associated with a shift away from physically active, socially interactive, and unstructured forms of play that have historically characterised childhood (Twenge, 2023; Haidt, 2024). In many cases, screen-based activities replace outdoor play and peer interaction, thereby limiting opportunities for experiential learning and social development. While digital play can support certain forms of learning, its structured and often individualised nature differs fundamentally from traditional play practices, which are typically communal, spontaneous, and culturally embedded (Marsh et al., 2019).

In African contexts, including Nigeria, traditional play remains an important medium through which children acquire social norms, cultural values, and practical life skills. Indigenous games and communal activities foster cooperation, creativity, and identity formation, reflecting the socio-cultural environment in which children are raised (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020; Ibiam, 2010). However, the increasing dominance of globalised digital content raises concerns about the marginalisation of these practices and the potential erosion of cultural heritage (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023).

### 2.2 The Developmental Significance of Play

Play is widely recognised as a fundamental component of child development, influencing cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. Theoretical and empirical studies consistently demonstrate that play provides a context for exploration, experimentation, and meaning-making, enabling children to develop critical skills necessary for lifelong learning.

From a developmental perspective, play facilitates cognitive growth by allowing children to engage actively with their environment and construct knowledge through experience. It also supports social competence by providing opportunities for interaction, negotiation, and collaboration with peers. Emotional development is similarly enhanced through play, as children learn to regulate emotions, cope with challenges, and build resilience (Berk, 2005; Lester & Russell, 2008).

Scholars have also emphasised the role of play in promoting self-regulation and higher-order thinking skills. Smilansky and Shefatya (1990) argue that structured and imaginative play supports the development of abstract thinking and problem-solving abilities, while Bodrova and Leong (2003) highlight its importance in fostering executive functioning and behavioural control. Furthermore, unstructured and self-directed play has been shown to enhance creativity, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation, all of which are essential for adaptive functioning in complex environments (Gray, 2013).

Within the Nigerian context, play serves not only developmental purposes but also socio-cultural functions. Traditional play activities are embedded within community life and contribute to the transmission of cultural knowledge and values across generations (Uduchukwu, 2011; Keseina & Okooboh, 2010). These practices reinforce social cohesion and cultural identity, underscoring the broader significance of play beyond individual development.

### 2.3 Digital Play, Learning, and Developmental Concerns

The integration of digital technologies into children's play has generated considerable debate regarding its developmental implications. On one hand, digital tools can enhance learning by providing interactive , engaging, and multimodal

experiences that support cognitive development. Digital play environments can facilitate problem-solving, creativity, and access to diverse forms of information (Marsh et al., 2019; Maureen, 2003).

On the other hand, concerns have been raised about the potential negative effects of excessive digital engagement. Studies indicate that prolonged screen time may be associated with reduced physical activity, limited social interaction, and increased risks of behavioural and emotional challenges (World Health Organization, 2022; Twenge, 2023). Haidt (2024) further argues that the pervasive use of digital technologies has contributed to rising levels of anxiety and social disconnection among young people.

Importantly, the impact of digital play is not inherently negative or positive but depends on the context, content, and level of engagement. Livingstone et al. (2023) emphasise that children's well-being is influenced by how digital technologies are integrated into their daily lives, including the presence of adult guidance and the balance between online and offline activities. This highlights the need for frameworks that support responsible and developmentally appropriate use of digital technologies.

### 2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in an integrative theoretical framework that draws on constructivist learning theory, socio-cultural theory, and play theory to explain the role of play in child development and to inform the development of the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework.

Constructivist learning theory, as articulated by Jean Piaget, posits that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Play serves as a critical mechanism for this process, enabling children to explore, experiment, and internalise new information. Complementing this perspective, socio-cultural theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural context in shaping cognitive development. According to this view, learning occurs through guided participation and collaboration, highlighting the importance of socially embedded play.

Play theory further reinforces the centrality of play in development. Scholars such as Gray (2013) argue that play promotes autonomy, creativity, and emotional well-being, while Kane (2004) conceptualises play as an essential aspect of human experience that fosters engagement and meaning. These perspectives collectively underscore the multifaceted role of play in supporting holistic development.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a foundation for understanding the limitations of purely digital or purely traditional approaches to play. While digital technologies offer new avenues for learning, they cannot fully replicate the social, physical, and cultural dimensions of traditional play. Conversely, exclusive reliance on traditional play may limit children's exposure to digital competencies required in contemporary society.

The literature synthesis proceeded in three stages. First, key concepts were identified, including digital childhood, traditional play, developmental balance, cultural integration, and guided engagement. Second, theoretical insights from Piaget, Vygotsky, play theorists, and African/Nigerian scholarship on childhood and indigenous learning were compared to identify convergences and gaps. Third, the TDPL framework was developed by aligning the strengths and limitations of digital and traditional play with four organising principles: complementarity, developmental balance, cultural integration, and guided engagement. The resulting framework is therefore a conceptually derived model intended to guide policy, curriculum design, parental practice, and further empirical research.

Literature was selected from scholarship on child development, play theory, constructivist learning, socio-cultural theory, digital childhoods, African indigenous knowledge systems, and educational policy. Inclusion criteria focused on sources that addressed at least one of the following: children's play and development, digital media and learning, indigenous or African/Nigerian play practices, cultural transmission, early childhood education, or child well-being. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, reports from recognised international organisations, and publications with clear relevance to early childhood and basic education. Sources were excluded where they were unrelated to child development, lacked relevance to play or digital learning, were not conceptually useful for the Nigerian context, or duplicated ideas already represented by stronger and more authoritative sources.

This study adopted a conceptual research design, using critical and interdisciplinary literature synthesis to develop the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework. The design was appropriate because the purpose of the paper was not to test hypotheses empirically but to integrate existing theoretical, empirical, and policy-based evidence into a coherent model for understanding play, digital engagement, and holistic child development in Nigeria.

## 3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a conceptual and interdisciplinary research design grounded in critical literature synthesis to develop the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework. The conceptual approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to integrate existing theoretical, empirical, and policy-based insights on childhood development, digital engagement, and traditional play practices within the Nigerian context rather than generate primary empirical data.

The study relied on extensive review and synthesis of scholarly literature drawn from child development studies, educational psychology, socio-cultural theory, digital childhood research, African indigenous knowledge systems, and play-based learning scholarship. Relevant materials were sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy documents, institutional reports, and international publications from organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, OECD, and WHO.

The literature selection process was guided by relevance to the core themes of the study, including digital childhoods,

traditional play practices, holistic child development, culturally responsive learning, and play-based pedagogies. Priority was given to contemporary and foundational scholarly works that provided theoretical, empirical, and contextual insights into the developmental implications of digital technologies and the educational significance of play. Sources that lacked direct relevance to child development, digital learning, or culturally grounded play practices were excluded from the synthesis.

The development of the TDPL framework followed a thematic and integrative analytical process. Key concepts, recurring arguments, and theoretical positions identified within the reviewed literature were critically examined and synthesised into four interrelated principles: complementarity, developmental balance, cultural integration, and guided engagement. These principles emerged from the convergence of constructivist learning theory, socio-cultural theory, and play theory, alongside contemporary concerns regarding the erosion of indigenous play practices in digitally mediated childhood environments.

The methodological orientation of the study was further informed by interdisciplinary perspectives that recognise childhood as a multidimensional social, cultural, and developmental phenomenon.

## 4.0 The Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) Framework

The Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework is proposed as a conceptual model for addressing the developmental and cultural complexities associated with digitally mediated childhoods. It is premised on the understanding that contemporary childhood is increasingly shaped by the convergence of digital technologies and traditional socio-cultural practices, and that neither domain, when considered in isolation, is sufficient to support holistic child development. The framework therefore advances an integrative approach that seeks to harmonise the cognitive benefits of digital engagement with the social, physical, and cultural richness of traditional play (Livingstone et al., 2023; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024).

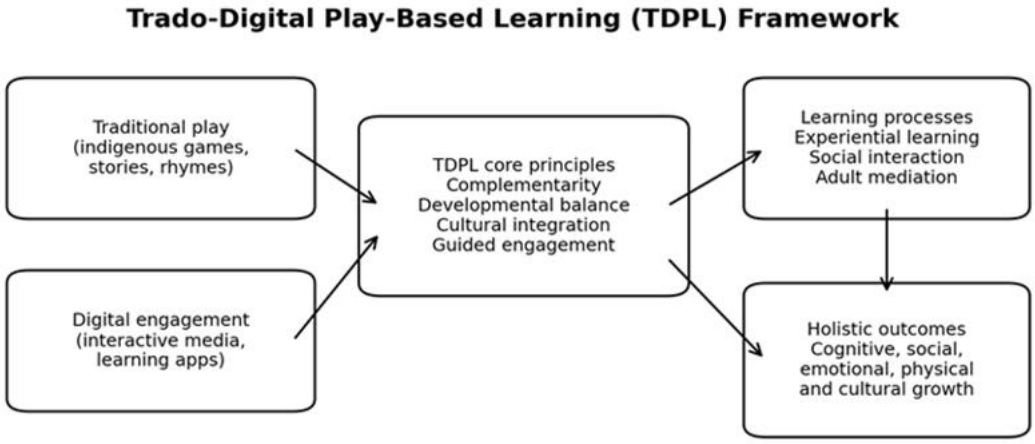



**Figure 1. Conceptual map of the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework.**

The conceptual foundation of the TDPL framework is rooted in an interdisciplinary synthesis of constructivist learning theory, socio-cultural theory, and play theory. Constructivist perspectives emphasise that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, making experiential and play-based engagement central to learning processes (Piaget, 1962). Socio-cultural theory extends this understanding by situating learning within social interaction and cultural context, thereby underscoring the importance of communal and culturally embedded forms of play (Vygotsky, 1978). Play theory further reinforces the developmental significance of play as a medium through which children cultivate creativity, autonomy, emotional regulation, and resilience (Gray, 2013; Bodrova & Leong, 2003). Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust basis for understanding the limitations of exclusively digital or exclusively traditional approaches to childhood learning and development.

Within this framework, digital and traditional play are conceptualised as complementary rather than competing domains. Digital technologies provide opportunities for interactive learning, access to diverse information sources, and the development of digital literacy skills necessary for participation in contemporary society (Marsh et al., 2019; Maureen, 2003). However, these benefits are often accompanied by reduced opportunities for physical activity, face-to-face interaction, and engagement with culturally grounded practices (World Health Organization, 2022; Twenge, 2023). Traditional play, on the other hand, offers rich opportunities for socialisation, experiential learning, and the transmission of cultural knowledge, but may not adequately equip children with the technological competencies required in a digital world (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020; Ibiam, 2010). The TDPL framework therefore emphasises the need to integrate these domains in a manner that maximises their respective strengths while mitigating their limitations.

A central feature of the framework is the emphasis on developmental balance. It recognises that excessive reliance on screen-based activities can disrupt the natural processes through which children develop cognitive, social, emotional, and physical competencies (World Health Organization, 2022; Haidt, 2024). By promoting a balanced engagement with both digital and traditional play, the framework seeks to ensure that children are exposed to diverse learning experiences that collectively support their overall development. This balance is not conceived as a rigid allocation of time but as a dynamic process that responds to the developmental needs of the child and the contextual realities of their environment.

Equally important is the principle of cultural integration, which situates the TDPL framework within the socio-cultural context of child development. Traditional play practices are deeply embedded within community life and serve as critical

mechanisms for the transmission of values, norms, and identity (Uduchukwu, 2011; Keseina & Okooboh, 2010). In the face of increasing globalisation and the dominance of digital content, the preservation and integration of these practices within modern learning environments become essential (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023). The framework therefore advocates for the intentional incorporation of indigenous play activities into both formal and informal learning settings, ensuring that technological advancement does not come at the expense of cultural continuity.

The role of guided engagement is also central to the operationalisation of the TDPL framework. Drawing on socio-cultural perspectives, the framework emphasises the importance of adult mediation in shaping children's play experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Parents, educators, and caregivers are positioned as facilitators who structure, monitor, and enrich children's interactions with both digital and traditional play environments. Through guided engagement, digital tools can be used in developmentally appropriate ways, while traditional play can be sustained and adapted to contemporary contexts. This mediation is critical in ensuring that children derive meaningful learning experiences from both domains (Livingstone et al., 2023).

Structurally, the TDPL framework conceptualises child development as a process influenced by the interaction of multiple contextual inputs, including digital resources, traditional play materials, social relationships, and cultural norms. These inputs interact through processes of experiential learning, social interaction, and guided facilitation to produce outcomes across cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and cultural domains (Berk, 2005; Lester & Russell, 2008). The framework thus provides a holistic model that captures the complexity of childhood development in the digital age.

In practical terms, the TDPL framework can be applied across educational, home, and community contexts. In schools, it informs the design of curricula that integrate digital tools with play-based pedagogies grounded in local cultural practices (Ibiam, 2010). In the home, it guides parents in establishing balanced routines that combine screen-based learning with unstructured and socially interactive play (World Health Organization, 2022). At the community level, it supports initiatives aimed at revitalising traditional play and creating environments that foster children's social interaction and cultural engagement (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020).

The framework also recognises differences in access to technology across urban and rural Nigerian contexts. In urban schools, implementation may involve tablets, projectors, learning applications, and supervised online resources. In rural or low-resource settings, the model can operate through low-cost or shared technologies, teacher-owned devices, offline audio-visual materials, radio-supported learning, printed play cards, and community-based play sessions. This flexibility ensures that TDPL is not limited to technology-rich environments but remains adaptable to local realities.

For example, a lesson on counting may combine a local counting rhyme, clapping game, or stone-arrangement activity with a simple digital numeracy application. A storytelling session may begin with indigenous folktales narrated by parents, elders, or teachers and then extend into child-created digital drawings or audio recordings. Similarly, games such as skipping, role-play, dance, hide-and-seek, and local team games may be linked with digital storytelling, video reflection, or teacher-guided multimedia resources so that technology enriches rather than replaces embodied and communal play.

Overall, the TDPL framework represents a theoretically grounded and contextually responsive approach to rethinking childhood in the digital era.

## 5.0 Analytical Discussion

The transformation of childhood in the digital age presents a complex and multidimensional challenge that cannot be adequately addressed through binary distinctions between "traditional" and "digital" experiences. Rather, the evidence suggests the emergence of a hybrid childhood environment in which digital technologies coexist with, and often displace, culturally embedded forms of play. This section critically analyses these dynamics and situates the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework as a necessary integrative response.

A central issue arising from the literature is the growing imbalance between digitally mediated engagement and developmentally rich, experiential forms of play. Studies indicate that while digital environments provide cognitive stimulation and access to information, they tend to limit opportunities for embodied interaction, peer negotiation, and environmental exploration (Marsh et al., 2019; Twenge, 2023). This shift is particularly significant when examined through the lens of constructivist and socio-cultural theories. According to Piaget (1962), learning is grounded in active engagement with the physical environment, while Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Excessive reliance on screen-based activities, therefore, risks constraining the very processes through which children construct knowledge and develop higher-order thinking skills.

Moreover, the displacement of traditional play has implications that extend beyond cognitive development to include social and emotional well-being. Research highlights that unstructured, peer-driven play fosters essential competencies such as self-regulation, empathy, and resilience (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Berk, 2005). In contrast, digitally mediated interactions are often structured, individualised, and less conducive to spontaneous social engagement. Haidt (2024) and Twenge (2023) further argue that increased digital exposure is associated with rising levels of anxiety, reduced face-to-face interaction, and diminished social connectedness among children and adolescents. These findings underscore the need to critically evaluate not only the quantity but also the quality of children's digital engagement.

From a cultural perspective, the implications of this shift are equally profound. In many African societies, traditional play serves as a conduit for the transmission of cultural values, norms, and identities (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020; Uduchukwu, 2011). The increasing dominance of globalised digital content, as noted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2023), risks marginalising these indigenous knowledge systems and weakening children's connection to their cultural heritage. This erosion of culturally grounded play practices represents a critical gap in current approaches to digital education, which often prioritise technological competence over cultural relevance.

However, it is important to recognise that digital technologies are not inherently detrimental to child development. When

appropriately integrated, digital tools can enhance learning by providing interactive, multimodal, and engaging experiences that support cognitive growth and creativity (Livingstone et al., 2023; Maureen, 2003). The challenge, therefore, lies not in rejecting digital engagement but in structuring it in ways that complement, rather than replace, traditional forms of play. This perspective aligns with global policy recommendations that advocate for balanced and context-sensitive approaches to digital learning (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024; United Nations Children's Fund, 2023).

The TDPL framework addresses this challenge by proposing a model of integration based on four core principles: complementarity, developmental balance, cultural integration, and guided engagement. Complementarity emphasises the need to leverage the strengths of both digital and traditional play, recognising that each contributes uniquely to different domains of development. Developmental balance highlights the importance of ensuring that digital engagement does not overshadow opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and experiential learning, in line with guidelines from the World Health Organization (2022). Cultural integration underscores the necessity of embedding indigenous play practices within modern learning environments to preserve cultural identity and relevance.

Guided engagement represents a critical component of the framework, drawing on socio-cultural theory to emphasise the role of adults in mediating children's interactions with both digital and traditional play environments. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, learning is most effective when supported by scaffolding and social guidance. In the context of digital childhoods, this implies that parents, educators, and caregivers must actively shape children's play experiences, ensuring that digital tools are used in developmentally appropriate and culturally meaningful ways.

Nevertheless, the TDPL framework has limitations that must be acknowledged. Its effective implementation may be constrained by inadequate digital infrastructure, limited electricity and internet access, insufficient teacher training, uneven parental digital literacy, and socioeconomic disparities between urban and rural communities. These challenges mean that the framework should be implemented gradually and contextually, with emphasis on locally available resources, teacher capacity-building, child safety, and culturally responsive adaptation. Greater engagement with African and Nigerian scholarship on childhood, indigenous pedagogy, and community-based learning is also necessary to strengthen the cultural authenticity of future applications of the framework.

Furthermore, the TDPL framework responds to the broader methodological and conceptual insights of Bryman (2021), which emphasise the importance of integrating multiple perspectives when examining complex social phenomena. By combining theoretical, cultural, developmental, and policy-oriented perspectives, the framework provides a more holistic basis for understanding how Nigerian children can benefit from digital innovation while sustaining indigenous play practices and culturally meaningful development.

## 6.0 Implications for Policy and Practice

The development of the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework carries significant implications for educational policy, curriculum development, and child-centred practices in Nigeria and similar contexts. As digital technologies continue to reshape childhood experiences, there is an urgent need for policy frameworks that move beyond technology integration as an end in itself and instead prioritise balanced, developmentally appropriate, and culturally grounded learning environments.

At the policy level, educational authorities should recognise play—both traditional and digital—as a fundamental component of early childhood and basic education. This requires the incorporation of structured play-based learning approaches within national curricula, ensuring that indigenous games and culturally embedded practices are not marginalised in favour of exclusively digital learning models. Policies should mandate the inclusion of locally relevant play materials and culturally responsive teaching strategies that reflect children's lived experiences. In line with recommendations from UNICEF (2023) and OECD (2024), digital learning policies must be adapted to local contexts to avoid widening developmental and cultural disparities.

For educational practice, teachers and caregivers play a central role in operationalising the TDPL framework. Educators should be trained to design learning environments that integrate digital tools with traditional play activities in a complementary manner. This includes facilitating guided digital engagement while maintaining opportunities for unstructured, peer-driven, and outdoor play. Teacher training programmes should therefore emphasise pedagogical strategies that balance screen-based learning with experiential and socially interactive activities. Such an approach aligns with constructivist principles that emphasise active, social, and contextually meaningful learning processes.

Furthermore, the TDPL framework highlights the need for parental involvement and community engagement in shaping children's play experiences. Parents and caregivers should be sensitised to the developmental risks associated with excessive screen exposure and the importance of preserving culturally relevant play practices within the home environment. Community-based initiatives can support this process by revitalising traditional games and creating safe, inclusive spaces for children's social interaction and play.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This study has examined the transformative impact of digital technologies on childhood experiences and the resulting implications for play, learning, and development. While digital environments offer unprecedented opportunities for access to information and innovation in learning, their increasing dominance has progressively eroded of traditional, culturally embedded play practices that are essential for holistic child development. The analysis highlights a critical tension between technological advancement and the preservation of developmentally appropriate and culturally meaningful childhood experiences.

In response to this challenge, the study developed the Trado-Digital Play-Based Learning (TDPL) framework as a

conceptual model for integrating traditional play with digital engagement. The TDPL framework contributes to existing scholarship by offering a context-sensitive and theoretically grounded approach to rethinking childhood in the digital age, particularly within the Nigerian context.

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