

International Journal for Science Review

Integrating Traditional Games to Enhance Creativity and Social Skills in Early Childhood Education Institutions

Kristin Anggraini

Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, Jl. Kalisari Selatan No.1 Kalisari, Pakuwon City, Mulyorejo District, Surabaya, East Java 60112, Indonesia.

Corresponding author: kristinanggraini@ukwms.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in shaping children's social skills and creativity. Various approaches have been applied to improve this aspect, one of which is through the integration of traditional games in the learning process. This research aims to explore the role of traditional games in developing children's creativity and social skills in early childhood education institutions. Using literature study methods and library research approaches, this study analyzes various academic sources, journals, and previous research that discuss the relationship between traditional games and child development. The results of the study show that traditional games contribute significantly to improving children's social interaction, cooperation, and communication skills. In addition, the game also encourages imaginative exploration as well as problem-solving, which is an important aspect of the development of creativity. Traditional games based on local culture also strengthen children's cultural identity from an early age. However, challenges such as lack of support from educators and limited open space are obstacles in the implementation of traditional games in formal education settings. Therefore, policies that support the integration of traditional games in the curriculum and training for educators to make optimal use of them are needed. The findings of this study are

KEYWORDS

*Traditional games,
Creativity,
Social skills,
Early childhood
education,
Literature studies.*

expected to be a reference for educators and policymakers in improving the quality of early childhood learning through a culture-based approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) plays an important role in shaping children's social skills and creativity from an early age (Gopnik, 2020). Creativity is a fundamental aspect in children's cognitive development, while social skills contribute to communication, cooperation, and empathy (Vygotsky, 1978). Traditional games have long been known as one of the effective media in developing these aspects because of their interactive nature and local culture-based nature (Sutton-Smith, 2017). However, in recent decades, traditional games have been increasingly displaced by digital games that tend to reduce children's direct social interaction and creative exploration (Chiong & Shuler, 2010).

Traditional games have an important role in supporting early childhood development, especially in improving creativity and social skills. These games are generally based on direct interaction and involve elements of spontaneity, strategy, and cooperation between individuals. Through traditional games, children are invited to think creatively in solving challenges, adjusting strategies, and exploring various possibilities in the game. In addition, traditional games often do not have rigid rules, allowing children to develop imagination as well as divergent thinking skills. The creativity developed through these games will have a positive impact on the cognitive and emotional aspects of the child, which is crucial in facing future challenges.

In addition to increasing creativity, traditional games also contribute significantly to the development of children's social skills. The interactions that occur in games teach children to cooperate, communicate, and understand other people's perspectives. In games like gobak sodor or engklek, for example, children must learn to follow the rules, share roles, and manage emotions when winning or losing. This ability is an important basis in their social life, both in the school environment and in the community. With intensive social interaction, traditional games help children develop empathy, confidence, and the ability to resolve conflicts in a constructive way.

However, in this modern era, traditional games are increasingly displaced by technology-based games that are more individualistic and passive. Many children are more interested in digital games which tend to limit social interaction and reduce opportunities to develop creativity in person. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to integrate traditional games in the learning process in early childhood education institutions. With the right approach, traditional games can not only be preserved, but can also be used as an effective means of developing children's creativity and social skills from an early age.

Although many studies have highlighted the importance of play in early childhood education, most focus on modern or technology-based play (Plowman et al., 2010). Studies on traditional games are still limited and have not studied much about their impact on children's social development and creativity in the context of formal education (Roopnarine et al., 2019). In addition, there is a gap in research related to the implementation strategy of traditional games in the early childhood education curriculum that is in accordance with the current needs of children's development (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009).

Traditional games have great potential in improving children's social skills and creativity because they involve cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects simultaneously (Pellegrini, 2009). However, a lack of attention to traditional games in modern education systems can lead to the loss of important benefits that children can gain (Zosh et al., 2018). Therefore, this study is important to examine how traditional games can be effectively integrated in early childhood education.

Several previous studies have discussed the role of play in children's development. Sutton-Smith (2017) highlights the benefits of games in improving social skills and creativity. A study by Roopnarine et al. (2019) shows that traditional games contribute to children's social development across different cultures. However, the study has not specifically examined the strategy of integrating traditional games in early childhood education institutions. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing a new perspective on the integration of traditional games in the early childhood education system.

This research offers a new contribution by comprehensively examining how traditional games can be implemented in the ECCE curriculum to improve children's creativity and social skills. The approach used in this study provides insight into how implementation strategies can be adapted to the needs of modern education, which has not been widely discussed in previous studies (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009; Zosh et al., 2018).

This study aims to explore the role of traditional games in improving early childhood creativity and social skills as well as identify effective implementation strategies in formal education institutions. The expected benefits of this study include providing evidence-based recommendations for educators in adopting traditional games as an effective learning method, as well as providing insights for policymakers in designing curricula that support the integration of traditional games. In addition, this research is also expected to contribute to preserving local cultural values through the use of traditional games in early childhood education.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a type of literature study (library research) which aims to explore the role of traditional games in improving creativity and social skills in early childhood in educational institutions. Literature study is a method that relies on secondary data sources to understand certain phenomena based on the study of previous studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, this study does not involve collecting primary data through observation or interviews, but rather analyzes various relevant sources, such as scientific journals, academic books, research reports, and educational policy documents related to traditional games and their development in the context of early childhood learning.

The data sources in this study come from various literature that has relevance to the topic being studied. Data were obtained from scientific journals indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as from academic books that discuss aspects of traditional games, creativity, social skills, and early childhood education (Boote & Beile, 2005). In addition, the study also refers to education policy documents published by international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, which highlight the importance of play in children's development. The criteria for selecting data sources are based on the recency, relevance, and credibility of references to ensure that the findings of the study have a strong basis.

The data collection technique is carried out through literature review by identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing information from various academic sources (Bowen, 2009). After the data were collected, the analysis was carried out using the content analysis method, where the data were classified based on the main themes related to the integration of traditional games in early childhood education, the enhancement of creativity, and the strengthening of children's social skills (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This analysis involves the process of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Miles et al., 2014). The results of the study are expected to provide theoretical and practical insights into the importance of traditional games in early childhood education as well as provide recommendations for educators and policymakers in integrating traditional games effectively in the curriculum.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is a table of literature data that is the result of the findings in this study. The data displayed is the result of a selection of various related scientific articles, with 10 articles selected based on relevance, recency, and credibility of the source. These articles examine the relationship between traditional games and creativity and social skills in early childhood in various educational contexts.

Penulis & Tahun	Judul Artikel	Temuan Utama
Pilgrims (2009)	The Role of Play in Human Development	Play contributes to a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development.
Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2009)	A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool	Play-based learning improves children's social skills and creativity.
Roopnarine et al. (2019)	International Perspectives on Children's Play	Traditional games have a significant role in shaping children's social interactions in different cultures.
Sutton-Smith (2017)	The Ambiguity of Play	Traditional games support the development of children's creativity by encouraging imaginative exploration.
Zosh et al. (2018)	Redefining Play as a Spectrum	Local culture-based games can increase children's involvement in social learning.
Confidential (2020)	Childhood as a Solution to Explore-Exploit Tensions	Children who engage in games have better creative thinking skills.

Chiong & Shuler (2010)	Learning: Is There an App for That?	Digital games reduce direct social interaction, in contrast to traditional games that encourage cooperation.
Pellegrini & Smith (1998)	Physical Activity Play: The Nature and Function of a Neglected Aspect of Play	Active games such as traditional games can improve children's motor and social skills.
Gray (2013)	Free to Learn	Free play, including traditional games, plays a role in shaping problem-solving and creativity skills.
Broadhead (2009)	Play and Social Inclusion in Early Childhood Education	Collaborative play in the early childhood education environment strengthens children's social skills.

This table shows that traditional games have a positive impact on improving early childhood creativity and social skills. With these findings, the research is expected to contribute to the development of traditional game implementation strategies in early childhood education institutions.

Based on the findings of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that traditional games have a very significant role in improving creativity and social skills in early childhood. Studies conducted by Pellegrini (2009) and Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2009) confirm that play, especially those based on direct interaction, contributes to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Traditional games allow children to explore the world around them through hands-on experience, which ultimately helps them develop the imagination as well as social skills necessary for daily life.

In addition, research conducted by Roopnarine et al. (2019) and Sutton-Smith (2017) shows that traditional games are not just entertainment activities, but also part of a culture that is inherited from generation to generation and functions in shaping children's character and social interactions. Games such as gobak sodor or engklek, for example, require children to understand the rules, work together in a team, and manage strategies in order to achieve the goals of the game. This activity directly trains creative thinking skills and social skills such as communication, cooperation, and constructive conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the findings from Zosh et al. (2018) and Gopnik (2020) show that games based on local culture can increase children's involvement in social learning. Children who often play traditional games are more likely to have a higher level of creativity compared to those who are more exposed to technology-based games. This is because traditional games involve spontaneous problem-solving, which indirectly trains divergent thinking skills and cognitive flexibility in various situations.

However, a study conducted by Chiong & Shuler (2010) highlights the negative impact of digital games that are increasingly dominating children's lives in the modern era. In contrast to traditional games that encourage cooperation and social interaction, digital games tend to

be more individualistic and involve less direct communication between children. As a result, children who play technology-based games too often tend to have difficulties in building healthy social relationships and experience limitations in developing creativity based on direct experience. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to ensure a balance between traditional play and technology in children's lives.

In addition to cognitive and social aspects, research conducted by Pellegrini & Smith (1998) also highlighted that traditional games can improve children's motor skills. Games that involve physical activity, such as jumping rope or hide and seek, can help children develop body coordination, balance, and fine and gross motor skills. These skills are not only important in the physical aspect, but also contribute to the neurological development of children, which has an impact on improving concentration and learning ability in school.

Overall, the findings from this study confirm that traditional games have many benefits for early childhood development. In addition to practicing creativity and social skills, traditional games also play a role in preserving local cultural values that are increasingly marginalized by modernization. Therefore, it is important for early childhood education institutions to integrate traditional games in their curriculum so that the benefits can be felt by future generations. Thus, traditional games can not only function as an effective learning tool, but also as a means of building children's character and cultural identity from an early age.

Discussion

The results of this study show that traditional games have a significant role in improving creativity and social skills in early childhood. Findings from various studies that have been reviewed indicate that children's involvement in social interaction-based play directly contributes to their cognitive, emotional, and social development (Pellegrini, 2009; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). In the context of early childhood education, traditional games allow children to explore new ideas, strategize, and adapt to dynamic game rules. The creativity honed through this process is an important capital for children in facing various challenges in the future.

However, the phenomenon that is happening today shows a shift in children's play patterns due to the rapid development of digital technology. Children spend more time with gadgets and digital games compared to traditional games that rely on physical and social interaction. Chiong & Shuler (2010) found that although digital games can provide certain benefits, the interactions that occur in technology-based games tend to be more individualistic and passive. This condition has the potential to reduce children's opportunities to develop social skills optimally, such as the ability to communicate, negotiate, and work together in groups.

The findings of this study are also in line with the cognitive development theory of Piaget (1962) which emphasizes that children learn through direct experience and social interaction. Traditional games provide a stimulating environment for children's cognitive and social development, as they must adapt to the rules of the game, understand the perspective of their playmates, and strategize to achieve their goals. In addition, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the proximal developmental zone affirms that children can learn better through interaction with peers and more experienced adults, which strongly supports traditional play-based learning.

In addition, traditional games also play a role in building children's cultural values and local identity. The study of Roopnarine et al. (2019) shows that local culture-based games have a positive impact on strengthening children's attachment to their cultural heritage. In the Indonesian context, games such as engklek, gobak sodor, and congklak are not just playing activities, but also a means to internalize the values of cooperation, sportsmanship, and resilience in facing challenges. Therefore, if traditional games are increasingly abandoned, then not only the development of children is affected, but also the preservation of cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Despite the many benefits offered by traditional games, the main challenge in implementing them in a formal educational setting is the lack of integration in the curriculum. Schools today focus more on textbook-based academic learning and digital technology, so traditional games are often considered secondary activities or even not taken into account in the learning process. Zosh et al. (2018) emphasized that a more flexible and innovative educational approach is needed to accommodate play-based learning in the formal education system.

The author argues that there needs to be a policy that more supports the integration of traditional games in early childhood education. The Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as other relevant institutions, can design programs that accommodate traditional games as part of the learning strategy in schools. In addition, educators and parents also need to be given an understanding of the importance of traditional games in children's development so that they are more active in encouraging children to be involved in this activity.

In addition to policies, infrastructure factors and the playing environment must also be considered. Many schools and playgrounds today lack the space that supports traditional gaming activities. In fact, research by Pellegrini & Smith (1998) shows that physical games, including traditional games, can improve children's motor skills that contribute to their cognitive and social development. Therefore, a traditional game-friendly learning environment needs to be created so that children can more freely explore creativity and build healthy social interactions.

Apart from the aspect of formal education, media and technology can also be used to support the preservation of traditional games. For example, the creation of interactive apps that introduce traditional games in an engaging way can be a solution to appeal to children who are familiar with technology. This can be a bridge between traditional play culture and the digital world that currently dominates children's lives.

Overall, the findings from this study provide strong evidence that traditional games have far-reaching benefits in improving early childhood creativity and social skills. However, without any concrete efforts to maintain and integrate it into the lives of today's children, traditional games are at risk of being displaced by modern technology. Therefore, synergy is needed between educators, parents, policymakers, and the community in ensuring that traditional games remain an important part of children's development.

The author concludes that traditional games are not just entertainment, but also a learning tool rich in benefits. By integrating traditional games into the education system and daily life, children can grow up with a balance between intellectual intelligence, creativity, as well as strong social skills. Therefore, it is important for all parties to be more concerned in preserving traditional games as part of an effective and fun learning strategy for early childhood.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that traditional games have an important role in improving creativity and social skills in early childhood. Literature studies have shown that traditional games provide hands-on experiences that allow children to develop imagination, critical thinking skills, and adaptability to a variety of social situations. In addition, traditional games also contribute to the formation of children's character by instilling the values of cooperation, sportsmanship, and effective communication skills. Thus, the integration of traditional games in early childhood education is a potential strategy to support children's holistic development.

However, the findings of this study also reveal challenges in maintaining traditional games amid the dominance of digital technology. Children today are more exposed to technology-based games that are individualistic, so social interaction and hands-on experience-based cognitive skills are reduced. Therefore, a more inclusive education policy is needed to accommodate traditional games as part of a systematic learning method. In addition, the role of educators, parents, and the community is indispensable to create an environment that supports children in actively playing traditional games, both at school and outside the academic environment.

As a recommendation for further research, a more in-depth empirical study is needed on the effectiveness of the implementation of traditional games in various learning models in early childhood education. Further research can also explore how adapting traditional games in digital formats can still retain the social values and creativity contained in them. In addition, more contextual research that takes into account children's cultural differences and socio-economic backgrounds can provide broader insights into the impact of traditional games in various educational settings. Thus, the results of future research are expected to make a more concrete contribution in efforts to integrate traditional games into the modern education system.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank all parties who have contributed to the completion of this research, especially academics, educators, and communities who are working to preserve traditional games in early childhood education. The support and insights provided are invaluable in enriching the analysis of this research. The author also hopes that this research can provide benefits for the world of education and become a reference for future studies. Constructive criticism and suggestions are highly expected for future research development.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

7. REFERENCES

- Boote, D. N., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 3–15.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.

- Chiong, C., & Shuler, C. (2010). Learning: Is there an app for that? Investigations of young children's usage and learning with mobile devices and apps. The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107–115.
- Gopnik, A. (2020). Childhood as a solution to explore-exploit tensions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 375(1803), 20190502.
- Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Berk, L. E., & Singer, D. G. (2009). A mandate for playful learning in preschool: Presenting the evidence. Oxford University Press.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook. SAGE Publications.
- Pellegrini, A. D. (2009). The role of play in human development. Oxford University Press.
- Plowman, L., McPake, J., & Stephen, C. (2010). The technoliterate child: Understanding children's relationships with technology at home and school. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 41(3), 365–385.
- Roopnarine, J. L., Patte, M. M., Johnson, J. E., & Kushner, D. (2019). International perspectives on children's play. Open University Press.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (2017). The ambiguity of play. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.
- Zosh, J. M., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Hopkins, E. J., Jensen, H., Liu, C., Neale, D., Solis, S. L., & Whitebread, D. (2018). Accessing the inaccessible: Redefining play as a spectrum. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1124.