

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL GAMES IN SUPPORTING THE HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** This research examines the application of traditional games in supporting holistic early childhood development at Al Azhar Medan Model Kindergarten. Early childhood development is essential to shape physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects. With the rapid development of digital technology, traditional games are often forgotten, even though they have proven benefits in child development. This research aims to explore how games such as jump rope, gobak sodor and congklak can improve motor, cognitive and social skills in early childhood. Using a qualitative approach and phenomenological method, data was obtained through interviews with teachers, parents, and children, as well as classroom observations. The results showed that traditional games have a positive impact on children's motor coordination, cognitive ability and social interaction. However, challenges such as limited time in the curriculum, lack of parental understanding, and limited resources were also found. This study suggests that traditional games should be further integrated in early childhood education to support more holistic development.

**Keywords:** Traditional Games, Holistic Abilities, Creativity

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan permainan tradisional dalam mendukung perkembangan holistik anak usia dini di TK Model Al Azhar Medan. Perkembangan anak usia dini sangat penting untuk membentuk aspek fisik, kognitif, sosial, dan emosional. Dengan pesatnya perkembangan teknologi digital, permainan tradisional sering kali terlupakan, padahal permainan tersebut memiliki manfaat yang terbukti dalam perkembangan anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana permainan seperti lompat tali, gobak sodor, dan congklak dapat meningkatkan keterampilan motorik, kognitif, dan sosial pada anak usia dini. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode fenomenologi, data diperoleh melalui wawancara dengan guru, orang tua, dan anak-anak, serta observasi di kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan tradisional memberikan dampak positif pada koordinasi motorik, kemampuan kognitif, dan interaksi sosial anak-anak. Namun, tantangan seperti keterbatasan waktu dalam kurikulum, kurangnya pemahaman orang tua, dan sumber daya yang terbatas juga ditemukan. Penelitian ini menyarankan agar permainan tradisional diintegrasikan lebih lanjut dalam pendidikan anak usia dini untuk mendukung perkembangan yang lebih menyeluruh.

**Kata Kunci:** Permainan Tradisional, Kemampuan Holistik, Kreativitas

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood development is a crucial stage in a child's life. At this age, various aspects of development, such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional, develop rapidly, and the experiences a child has will affect the quality of their future life (Agustyaningrum et al., 2022; Angga Saputra & Lalu Suryandi, 2021). Therefore, it is important to provide an environment that supports children's holistic development. One means that has been proven effective in supporting this development is play. Play is not just a fun activity, but also an important medium that helps children learn and develop skills that will be useful throughout their lives.

Traditional games, which have long existed in Indonesian culture, are a form of play that embodies high cultural and educational values (D. Aulia & Sudaryanti, 2023; Khadijah & Wahyuni, 2024). However, with the rapid development of technology, many traditional games are beginning to be forgotten. Many children now prefer to play with electronic devices, which, although fun, cannot provide the same benefits in terms of physical, cognitive, and social development as traditional games. This is a major concern for educators and parents, as traditional games have been proven to provide more holistic benefits for early childhood.

On the other hand, early childhood education in Indonesia is growing, with various approaches and curricula aimed at supporting children's overall development

(H. Aulia & Desmita, 2024; Devi, 2020; Dewey, 1990). However, in practice, many educational institutions still prioritize academic-based learning and fail to allocate sufficient space for activities that support children's social, emotional, and physical development. This makes the application of traditional games in schools, especially in kindergartens, very relevant to study, given the important role of games in shaping children's character (Ariawan et al., 2019; Pahrul & Amalia, 2020).

Al Azhar Medan Model Kindergarten, as an early childhood education institution, has a vision to produce a generation that is intelligent, well-mannered, and has good social skills. In order to realize this vision, it is important to explore how traditional games can be implemented to support the holistic development of children in this educational environment. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the implementation of traditional games in supporting the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of early childhood at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study method, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of applying traditional games in supporting the holistic development of early childhood. This study also aims to analyze how traditional games can function as effective learning tools in improving the motor,

cognitive, and social skills of children at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan. Through interviews with educators, classroom observations, and documentation of traditional game activities carried out at the school, this study is expected to provide a clearer picture of the benefits and challenges faced in implementing traditional games in early childhood education.

One of the things this study seeks to determine is how traditional games can facilitate children's gross and fine motor development. Games such as jump rope, gobak sodor, and congklak, for example, can stimulate children to move actively, which in turn will support their physical development. In addition, traditional games can also stimulate children's cognitive development, such as problem-solving, communication, and creative thinking. By participating in group games, children also learn to interact, collaborate, and manage their emotions in social situations.

One of the distinguishing features of this study is that it was conducted at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan, which takes a holistic approach and incorporates religious values into all of its learning activities. This study differs from many previous studies that focused more on cognitive or academic aspects in early childhood education, while this study attempts to comprehensively examine how traditional games can contribute to the simultaneous physical, social, and emotional development of children.

The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the world of early childhood education, particularly in terms of utilizing traditional games as learning tools that support holistic development. In addition, this study is also expected to provide insight for educators and parents about the importance of preserving traditional games as part of a culture that can enrich children's learning experiences. The findings of this study are also expected to form the basis for the development of a more balanced early childhood education curriculum, which focuses not only on academic aspects, but also on children's physical, social, and emotional development.

Furthermore, this study is expected to serve as a reference for other educational institutions in designing holistic and culture-based learning programs. By utilizing traditional games in the educational process, it is hoped that the younger generation will not only have good academic skills, but also the social and emotional skills necessary to grow into well-rounded individuals who are ready to face the challenges of the future.

The references used in this study include various relevant sources, ranging from books on early childhood education to articles and journals discussing traditional games and their benefits for child development. With a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth and useful insights for

the world of early childhood education in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design to gain an in-depth understanding of how the implementation of traditional games at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan can support the holistic development of early childhood (Creswell, 2012). The phenomenological approach was chosen because the purpose of this study is to explore the subjective experiences of teachers, parents, and children regarding the application of traditional games in early childhood education. Through this approach, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the meaning given by informants to the phenomenon being studied, namely traditional games in the context of early childhood education.

This research was conducted at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan, North Sumatra. This location was chosen based on the unique characteristics of Al Azhar Model Kindergarten, which integrates religious-based education and holistic learning. This kindergarten is committed to developing children's full potential, including cognitive, physical, social, and emotional aspects. In addition, this kindergarten has adopted a curriculum that supports the implementation of game-based activities, including traditional games. The existence of traditional games implemented in this school provides an opportunity to explore how their application contributes to child

development. This location is considered ideal because it is representative of how traditional games can be applied in the context of formal and non-formal education in early childhood.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from informants consisting of three teachers who were directly involved in learning activities at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan. They provided insights into the implementation of traditional games in the classroom and their views on their impact on child development. In addition, three parents of children at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten who had experience observing changes in their children's development as a result of the application of traditional games at school also became informants. Ten early childhood children involved in traditional games were also a major source of data. Direct observations of their interactions in the games and their impact on their physical and social development were conducted. Secondary data was obtained through relevant documentation and literature, such as reports on learning activities at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten, the curriculum implemented, and previous research results discussing the application of traditional games in early childhood education.

Data collection was carried out using several techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to explore their experiences related to the implementation of traditional games in

learning at kindergarten. These interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility in exploring more in-depth information. Interviews with children were conducted through participatory observation, where researchers interacted directly with children in the traditional games they played. The researcher also observed firsthand the traditional play activities carried out by children at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan. The purpose of this observation was to see directly how traditional games were applied in learning activities and their impact on children's social interaction and motor development. Documentation was also collected as additional data providing information about the curriculum, learning activity reports, and previous observation notes that could provide an overview of the application of traditional games at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten.

The data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques. The data analysis process involves several steps, namely data reduction, which is filtering relevant data from the results of interviews and observations to find the main themes related to the implementation of traditional games and their impact on child development. After that, the researcher will code the data, which is to give codes or labels to data segments related to specific themes, such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects in traditional games. The final step is to draw conclusions, which

is to identify patterns or key findings that emerge from the analyzed data and compare the experiences of various informants.

To ensure data validity, researchers will use several data validity assurance techniques. One of them is triangulation, which is comparing data obtained from various informant sources, such as teachers, parents, and children, as well as secondary data such as curriculum documentation and activity reports. This technique is used to ensure the consistency of findings and the validity of the data. In addition, the researcher will also involve peers in the data analysis process to provide additional perspectives and ensure that the interpretation of the data is in line with reality. After the initial data analysis is done, the researchers will re-examine the findings with the informants to ensure that the interpretation of the collected data is in line with their understanding. By using this approach, it is hoped that the research can provide an in-depth picture of the implementation of traditional games in supporting the holistic development of early childhood at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Application of Traditional Games in Supporting the Holistic Development of Early Childhood**

Based on observations and interviews conducted with teachers, parents, and children, the main findings of this study indicate that the application of traditional games at Al Azhar Model

Kindergarten in has a positive impact on developing various aspects of children's development, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Traditional games, such as *jump rope*, *gobak sodor*, and *congklak*, which are implemented in this school, not only serve as a means of entertainment but also as a learning tool that supports the formation of basic skills that are very important for early childhood development.

In terms of physical development, traditional games such as *jump rope* and *gobak sodor* contribute to improving children's gross motor skills. These activities involve a lot of body movements, such as running, jumping, and moving quickly, which help children strengthen their muscles and improve motor coordination. This is in line with the theory of motor development proposed by Ginsburg et al., (2007), which emphasizes that physical activities involving gross movements are very important in supporting children's muscle and motor skill development. Activities involving physical movement not only improve body balance, but also hone fine motor skills, such as holding objects and writing, which are easier to develop once children have a good foundation in gross motor skills.

From a cognitive development perspective, traditional games also play a significant role. For example, in the game of *congklak*, children learn to think strategically, plan their moves, and solve

problems. This activity hones children's logical thinking and develops their numerical skills, as the game involves counting and calculating moves. Piaget (1952) in his theory of cognitive development explains that at an early age, children are in the concrete operational stage, where they begin to learn about logical concepts and cause-and-effect relationships. Games such as *congklak* provide children with the opportunity to develop these abilities directly through fun and unstructured activities.

On the social side, traditional games at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten also serve to strengthen children's social skills. In group games such as *gobak sodor*, children learn to cooperate, take turns, and communicate with their friends. This develops their ability to interact socially and understand the importance of working in a team. These traditional games also help children build empathy, appreciate their friends, and practice resolving conflicts in less serious situations. According to Vygotsky, social interaction is a key element in children's cognitive and emotional development. Games that involve social interaction allow children to learn from their peers, practice communication skills, and develop their social abilities (Agustyaningrum et al., 2022; Azizah & Purwaningrum, 2021).

Emotionally, traditional games also provide a space for children to express themselves, face challenges, and learn to manage their emotions. When children

play and engage in competitive situations, they learn how to win and lose in a healthy way. These games teach children to control their emotions, both when experiencing joy and disappointment. For example, in *jump rope* games, when children fail to jump well, they learn not to give up easily and to try again. This is in line with Erikson's theory of social-emotional development (Bredekamp, 1993; Worrell, 1992) which states that in early childhood, children are in the stage of initiative versus shame, where they learn to develop self-confidence and the courage to take risks in social situations.

Although the implementation of traditional games at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan provides many benefits, there are several challenges faced in its implementation. One of the main challenges found is the limited time available for traditional games in daily activities. Most of the learning time in kindergarten is focused on academic material, such as recognizing letters and numbers, so the time for traditional games is limited. Teachers at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan recognize the importance of traditional games, but they also find it difficult to integrate them regularly into their busy learning schedules. This is in line with the findings in a study by Ngawan et al., (2025), which states that although traditional games are very beneficial, they are often not implemented to their full potential due to limited time and an inadequate understanding of their application.

In addition, there are also challenges related to parents' lack of understanding about the importance of traditional games for child development. Many parents are more focused on academic or technological activities, which are considered more relevant to children's needs in this modern era. Therefore, one of the steps that needs to be taken is to raise parents' awareness of the importance of traditional games as part of early childhood development. This is also in line with the opinion of Ginsburg (2007), which states that the role of parents in supporting play activities is very important, because they can reinforce learning that takes place at school by providing opportunities to play at home.

Overall, the implementation of traditional games at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan has proven to be effective in supporting the holistic development of early childhood. These games contribute greatly to the development of children's motor, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. However, there are challenges in terms of time and parental understanding that need to be overcome so that traditional games can be implemented more optimally. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can provide useful insights for educators and parents in introducing and utilizing traditional games as effective learning tools in early childhood education.

## **Traditional Games as Effective Learning Tools in Improving Motor, Cognitive, and Social Skills in Early Childhood**

This study shows that traditional games implemented at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan play an important role as an effective learning tool in supporting the development of children's motor, cognitive, and social skills. Traditional games that involve physical activity and social interaction have been proven to provide significant benefits in forming the foundations of important skills for early childhood.

In terms of motor skills, traditional games such as *jumping rope*, and *gobak sodor* have a direct impact on improving children's gross motor skills. Activities that involve body movements, such as running, jumping, and moving quickly, help children strengthen their muscles and improve their body coordination. This is in line with the motor development theory proposed by Ginsburg (Ginsburg et al., 2007), which explains that physical activities involving gross movements play a significant role in strengthening children's muscles and improving their motor skills. This activity also provides opportunities for children to learn about body balance, which is very important for their physical development (Lestari, 2020; Suyanta & Sedana Suci, 2024; Zaini, 2019).

On the cognitive side, traditional games play an equally important role. For example, the game of *congklak*, which is

played at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten, teaches children to think logically, plan their moves, and solve problems that arise during the game. Children learn to count and develop numerical skills through this activity, which can stimulate their cognitive development. Piaget's (1952) theory of children's cognitive development explains that at an early age, children are in the concrete operational stage, where they begin to learn about logical concepts and cause-and-effect relationships. Games such as *congklak* allow children to hone these skills in a fun and interactive way.

In addition, traditional games also serve to strengthen children's social skills. Group games such as *gobak sodor* provide opportunities for children to interact with their friends, work together, and learn about the importance of taking turns. In this game, children also learn about communication, collaboration, and how to manage social conflicts that may arise between them. The social interaction that occurs during these games is very important in helping children develop social skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and respect for friends. Vygotsky (1984) argues that social interaction that occurs in games can contribute to children's cognitive and emotional development, because children learn through shared experiences with their peers.

The implementation of traditional games at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan not only focuses on academic learning but also provides opportunities



for children to develop basic skills in motor, cognitive, and social aspects. These games not only serve as a means of entertainment but also as an effective medium to support comprehensive learning. In this context, traditional games can be an important part of the holistic educational approach implemented at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan.

Through the implementation of traditional games that involve physical movement, logical thinking, and social interaction, children at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten can develop various skills that will be beneficial for their future development. Therefore, the integration of traditional games into the early childhood education curriculum should continue to be encouraged to enrich children's learning experiences and support their more comprehensive development.

### **Challenges Faced in Implementing Traditional Games in Early Childhood Education**

Although the application of traditional games at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan provides various benefits for the holistic development of early childhood, there are several challenges faced in its implementation. These challenges are related to various factors, both internal factors related to time and resource constraints, as well as external factors related to the perceptions of parents and the community regarding the importance of traditional games in early childhood education.

One of the main challenges faced is the limited time available in an already crowded curriculum. Most of the time at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten is focused on academic learning such as introducing letters, numbers, and other basic skills that are considered important for children's readiness to enter formal education. Traditional games that require time and space to play often do not receive enough attention in the daily schedule. Teachers at this kindergarten acknowledge that although traditional games are very beneficial, the time available for these activities is often limited by the need to complete more academic curriculum material. This is in line with the findings of previous research by Khadijah, which shows that one of the main obstacles to the implementation of traditional games in schools is the limited time available to integrate these games into the learning process (DAulia & Sudaryanti, 2023; Khadijah & Wahyuni, 2024).

The next challenge is the lack of understanding among parents regarding the importance of traditional games in child development. Many parents are more focused on activities that are oriented towards academic achievement and the mastery of more structured skills. In many cases, parents prefer technology-based activities or digital games, which are considered more relevant to the needs of children in this modern era. In fact, traditional games have the potential to develop children's social, emotional, and motor skills more comprehensively.

Parents who do not understand the benefits of traditional games often do not fully support these activities at home, even though teachers have implemented them at school. This shows the need to raise parents' awareness of the values contained in traditional games, which are not only related to entertainment but also to the development of children's character and social skills.

In addition, another challenge faced in the implementation of traditional games is the limited availability of resources. Some traditional games require special tools or facilities, such as balls, ropes, or other equipment that are not always available at school. At Al Azhar Model Kindergarten, even though traditional games are taught regularly, there is still a shortage of the necessary game equipment to support these activities. These facility limitations are an obstacle to the maximum implementation of traditional games. In addition, not all teachers have sufficient skills or understanding in facilitating traditional games, which can reduce the effectiveness of their application in learning.

Another challenge is the paradigm shift in early childhood education, which is increasingly leaning towards the use of technology in learning. Many schools have begun to integrate technology into teaching and learning activities, such as the use of educational applications or computer-based learning. This often makes traditional games seem irrelevant or out of step with the times. However, based on

Piaget's opinion (Elia, 2022; Piaget, 1952; Rochmawati et al., 2018), early childhood children need direct experiences and social interactions that can be obtained through physical games, which are actually more relevant in supporting their cognitive and social development. Therefore, the implementation of traditional games at the Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan needs to consider these challenges and find ways to integrate traditional games with a more technology-based modern learning approach.

Overall, although traditional games have clear benefits in supporting the holistic development of early childhood, these challenges require special attention from various parties. In order for the implementation of traditional games to run more optimally, full support is needed from schools, teachers, parents, and the community. In addition, it is also important to overcome obstacles related to time, resources, and changes in the educational paradigm so that traditional games can be more appreciated as effective learning tools in early childhood education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of traditional games at Al Azhar Model Kindergarten in Medan effectively supports the holistic development of early childhood, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. Games such as jump rope, gobak sodor, and congklak have been proven to strengthen children's motor skills, stimulate logical thinking abilities, and

enhance their social interactions. The physical activity in these games helps children develop body coordination and balance, while strategic games such as congklak hone numerical and problem-solving skills. On the social side, group games encourage children to cooperate, take turns, and communicate effectively. However, this study also found several challenges in its implementation, such as time constraints in a curriculum that focuses more on academic learning, a lack of understanding among parents about the benefits of traditional games, and limited resources needed to play these games. Nevertheless, traditional games have great potential to be effective learning tools and need to be further encouraged with support from schools, teachers, parents, and the community so that they can be maximally applied in early childhood education.

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