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REVIVING TRADITIONAL GAMES: AN EFFECTIVE MEDIUM FOR ENHANCING PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CREATIVITY A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

In the current digital era, traditional games are increasingly being marginalized and regarded as obsolete. Nevertheless, a closer examination reveals that traditional games possess distinctive features that not only make them engaging but also offer valuable educational benefits. This study aims to explore the potential of traditional games in fostering creativity among primary school students. The primary objective is to investigate how these culturally rooted games can contribute to the development of students' creative abilities. This research adopts a systematic literature review approach, involving the identification, selection, and analysis of relevant scholarly sources. A total of six peer-reviewed articles were examined based on the following keywords: creativity, traditional games, and student development. The findings suggest that traditional games can effectively enhance students' creativity through the use of strategic thinking, problem-solving, and the manipulation of game tools to achieve success. Furthermore, when traditional games are adapted or modified by educators, they become more engaging and serve as innovative tools for creative learning in the primary education context.

Keyword : Student creativity, traditional games, primary school students, literature review

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity and challenges of the 21st century require learners to develop a range of essential skills, including creativity, communication, character, adaptability, problem-solving abilities, and collaboration within their social environments (Kusuma et al., 2022; Suriansyah & Amelia, 2021). Among these, creativity has gained particular prominence, especially since it was designated as a key domain in the 2021 cycle of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the increasing complexity and challenges of the 21st century require learners to develop a variety of essential skills, including creativity, communication, character, adaptability, problem-solving skills, and collaboration in their social environment (Kusuma et al., 2022; Suriansyah & Amelia, 2021). The rapid transformation of digital technology, globalization, and social dynamics have made the world increasingly uncertain and complex, so that the demands on the younger generation to become flexible, innovative, and resilient individuals are increasing. In the modern educational landscape, these skills are known as 21st-century skills which are the foundation for producing graduates who not only have academic competence but are also ready to actively participate in a changing global society. Among all these skills, creativity has received special attention. This is inseparable from its very vital role in encouraging innovation, alternative thinking, and the ability to produce original solutions to complex problems. Creativity is no longer considered a special talent possessed by only a few people, but rather a general competence that can and must be developed from an early age through education. Awareness

of the importance of creativity is also reflected in global education policies and assessments. Since creativity was designated as one of the main domains in the 2021 cycle of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), more and more countries have begun to review their national curricula to place greater emphasis on developing creative thinking skills.

In the PISA 2021 framework, creativity is not only understood as artistic expression, but also as the capacity of students to generate new ideas, form unusual connections between concepts, and create innovative solutions in a variety of contexts—whether in science, mathematics, social problem solving, or written communication. The OECD emphasizes that creativity is a cross-disciplinary competence that can be measured systematically and developed through appropriate learning approaches. This means that creativity is now not just an additional goal in education, but has become a primary indicator of the quality and readiness of students to face real-life learning. Attention to creativity also reflects a shift in the educational paradigm, from an approach that reproduces knowledge to education that facilitates exploration, discovery, and construction of meaning by students. Education is no longer just about filling students with information, but equipping them with flexible, critical, and innovative ways of thinking. In this context, teachers have a great responsibility in creating a learning environment that stimulates imagination and provides space for students to try, experiment, and even fail as part of a meaningful learning process. Curriculum and pedagogy that support creativity cannot be separated from active, integrative, and collaborative learning that encourages students to participate authentically in constructing their own knowledge.

Furthermore, the development of creativity also has a significant impact on other skills. When students are trained to think creatively, they also strengthen their problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication skills. The creative process that students go through often requires them to work in groups, listen to the ideas of others, provide constructive feedback, and negotiate the most appropriate solutions. In this case, creativity does not develop in isolation, but rather thrives in an environment that encourages collaboration and open dialogue. Therefore, placing creativity as a focus in education will not only increase individual capacity, but also contribute to strengthening social cohesion and the will of society more broadly (Nugrahanto & Zuchdi, 2019). In the context of Indonesian education, creativity is also explicitly recognized as a fundamental goal in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of nurturing creative individuals (Inawati et al., 2020; Wibawa et al., 2018; Winarni et al., 2020). Psychological research has consistently emphasized that primary school years represent a crucial period for the development of imagination and creativity, often exceeding the creative capacities observed in other age groups (Amelia et al., 2024; Fitria et al., 2023). During this formative stage, children's minds are especially receptive to new ideas, allowing for rapid growth in their ability to think imaginatively and creatively. Recognizing this, educators play a pivotal role in nurturing these capacities, requiring a deep understanding of the complexities and fluid nature of creativity (Ali et al., 2020; Arici & Uysal, 2022; Rasheed et al., 2020). Without intentional support, however, students' creative potential risks are being stifled by rigid or uninspiring educational approaches. Therefore, schools must prioritize strategies that actively engage students' inventive thinking rather than merely encouraging rote memorization or passive learning (Chan, 2013; Sarioglan & Özkaya, 2023).

Creating effective learning environments that foster creativity involves providing students with ample opportunities to construct their own understanding and develop higher- order thinking skills (Suswandari et al., 2020). Such environments encourage exploration, inquiry, and the integration of new knowledge in meaningful ways, thereby helping students to internalize concepts deeply and innovatively (Amelia et al., 2023). The challenge for educators is not simply to spark initial creative thinking but to sustain it over time, avoiding the gradual decline in creativity that often results from unimaginative or overly structured curricula. It is essential to design curricula and activities that promote ongoing creative engagement, allowing students to generate original ideas and apply them in diverse contexts (Behnamnia et al., 2020a; Pasani, 2018). The intrinsic connection between play and creativity has been extensively documented in educational psychology. Play, in its many forms, serves as a natural catalyst for stimulating curiosity, adaptability, improvisation, and problem-solving—the very skills that underpin creative development (Rahnang et al., 2023; Shinta et al., 2019). Through play, children experiment with ideas, test boundaries, and learn to navigate uncertainty, all of which foster flexible thinking and innovation. Vygotsky's theory further highlights the importance of play in early childhood as the foundation for creative processes, observing that “in play, we can trace the beginning

of creative processes in children from a very young age" (Asrial et al., 2021; Shinta et al., 2019). This perspective situation plays as more than just leisure; it is a vital developmental activity with long-term implications for creativity.

Given these insights, the preschool and early primary years emerge as especially critical for laying the groundwork for lifelong creative potential (Widiasavitri et al., 2020). Children's natural tendency to engage in imaginative play serves as a precursor to more sophisticated creative skills that will manifest later in life (Suhra et al., 2020). Early creative education, therefore, is essential to reinforce and expand these tendencies, ensuring that students develop not only cognitive skills but also the confidence and motivation to innovate. Educators and curriculum developers must prioritize creative play and open-ended learning experiences during these early years, recognizing their foundational role in shaping a generation of creative thinkers and problem solvers. Play-based activities, especially those deeply rooted in cultural traditions, are highly effective in nurturing creativity among children. Traditional games, as a form of culturally embedded play, carry the wisdom and values of local communities, offering more than just entertainment—they serve as educational tools that connect students to their heritage. Unfortunately, these traditional forms of play are becoming less popular with younger generations, who often view them as outdated or irrelevant to modern life. A study by Li et al. highlighted this trend, revealing that 63% of surveyed students rarely or never engage in traditional games, showing a significant decline in their practice and appreciation among youth (Li et al., 2024). The rise of modern digital games, primarily accessed through smartphones, has further marginalized traditional play activities. While digital games offer quick gratification and immersive experiences, they tend to limit opportunities for tactile and physical interaction, which are crucial for developing kinesthetic learning and social skills. Traditional games naturally encourage cooperation, communication, and physical coordination, fostering social competencies that digital platforms cannot easily replicate (Plump & Meisel, 2020). As a result, students lose out on valuable developmental experiences that support creativity and interpersonal growth when traditional games are replaced by screen-based activities.

Despite the clear benefits of traditional games, their incorporation into primary school curriculum remains minimal. Traditional games like fortification across various educational stages, and focused on kindergarten teachers' perspectives (Suhaebah, n.d.). However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature specifically addressing the integration and impact of traditional games within primary education settings. This gap suggests an urgent need for educational stakeholders to explore how traditional games can be effectively used to enrich learning experiences and support creativity at this critical stage of child development (Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019). Integrating local cultural elements, including traditional games, into classroom activities not only fosters creativity but also encourages students to engage with and reinterpret their cultural heritage. This approach enables learners to innovate by expressing ancestral values through diverse forms such as art, dance, music, and environmental stewardship (Ribas et al., 2023).

By embedding these cultural practices into education, schools can foster students' creative potential while preserving and revitalizing local traditions. The educational process is not only aimed at transferring academic knowledge, but also becomes a vehicle for shaping the identity of students who are educated through meaningful interactions with their social and cultural environment. In this context, the integration of local culture with formal education is not a romanticism of the past, but rather a contemporary educational strategy that is able to answer the challenges of globalization without losing cultural roots. Such integration fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural identity and encourages creative innovation based on the history and rich wisdom of the community. Students are not only trained to introduce their cultural heritage, but are also encouraged to process and reconstruct these cultural elements into something new, fresh, and relevant to the times.

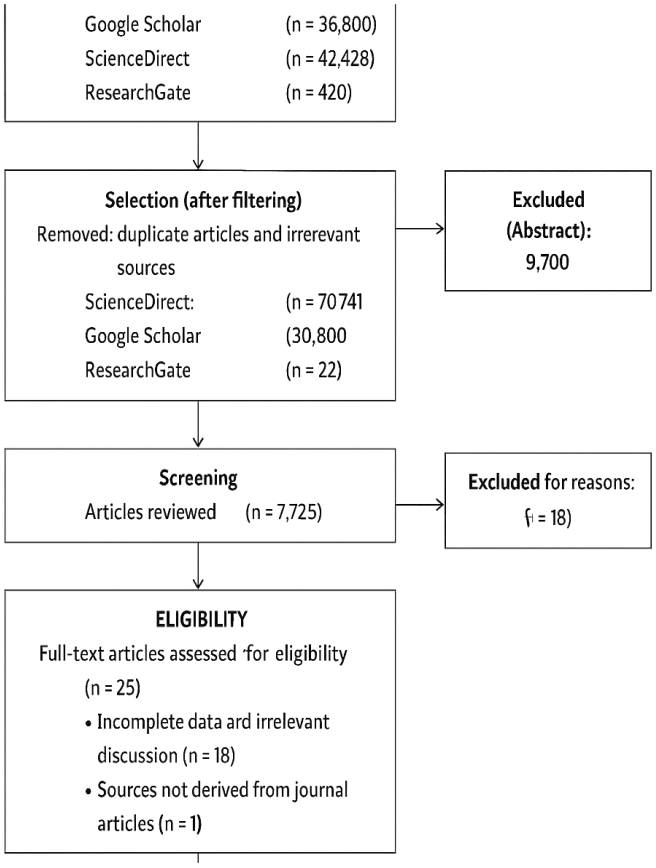
2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively explore, identify, evaluate, and interpret existing literature relevant to the research focus. The review process involved an extensive search across reputable academic databases, with Google Scholar serving as the primary search engine. The scope of the search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2022 , written in English and Indonesian . To guide the selection process, several key search terms were employed, including: *"creativity," "traditional games,"* and *"primary school students."* The inclusion criteria applied in this review were as follows:

1. Studies exploring the influence of traditional games on creativity,
2. Studies specifically assessing the impact of traditional games on students' creative development,
3. Research employing diverse methodologies but still aligned with the overarching theme, and
4. For Indonesian publications, only those indexed in **SINTA** were included.

The selection process began with an initial screening of the titles and abstracts of all articles identified through the literature search. This step was crucial to quickly assess the potential relevance of each study to the research topic, allowing the researchers to filter out studies that clearly did not meet the inclusion criteria. By carefully examining these summaries, the team ensured that only articles closely aligned with the focus of the review were considered for further analysis, thereby optimizing the efficiency and accuracy of the selection process. Once the preliminary screening was completed, the articles that passed the initial phase underwent a more detailed full-text review. During this stage, the researchers thoroughly examined the entire content of each article to confirm its suitability and relevance. Key information was extracted, including the research design, the size and characteristics of the sample population, the specific type of intervention employed—such as the particular traditional game used—the outcome measures, and the main findings reported by the authors. This comprehensive data extraction allowed for a nuanced comparison and synthesis of the studies included in the review. To maintain the rigor and credibility of the systematic review, the entire process adhered strictly to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as recommended by Boonroungrut et al. (2022). Following these established standards ensured transparency in how studies were identified, selected, and analyzed, reducing the risk of bias and enhancing the reproducibility of the review. This methodological framework supported a thorough and reliable synthesis of the existing literature, ultimately strengthening the validity of the conclusions drawn from the review.The systematic process consists of the following steps:

1. Comprehensive literature search across selected databases,
2. Initial screening and relevance assessment based on article abstracts,
3. Application of inclusion and exclusion criteria,
4. Full-text retrieval and in-depth evaluation of selected studies, and
5. Detailed data analysis of the extracted literature.



Picture 1. Prisma Diagram

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Creativity in Primary Schools

Creativity is a multifaceted concept that involves both internal cognitive functions and external, observable results. It encompasses processes such as divergent thinking, where individuals generate multiple, unique ideas in response to a given prompt or challenge (Fazli Taib Saearani et al., 2024). These cognitive processes are often interlinked with emotional, social, and environmental influences that shape how creative outputs emerge. Creativity can also be understood as a material, mental, and/or social activity that results in novel and useful outcomes, including ideas, strategies, or solutions to problems. Through this lens, creativity becomes not only a product of intelligence but also of experience, context, and opportunity. As such, educational settings—especially primary schools—play a pivotal role in shaping children's creative potential (Mercier & Lubart, 2023). At its core, the creative process involves both experimentation and evaluation, allowing students to explore ideas freely while also refining and selecting the most effective ones (Supena et al., 2021). This dual nature of creativity encourages children to oscillate between imaginative thinking and analytical judgment. In a broader perspective, creativity can be characterized as the capacity to "think outside the box"—a phrase that captures the essence of solving problems in novel and unconventional ways (Ehtıyar & Baser, 2019). This definition includes not only artistic expression but also innovation in science, communication, and daily problem-solving. By emphasizing both originality and relevance, creativity becomes a skill that supports lifelong learning and adaptability. Therefore, fostering this ability from a young age equips children with the tools to thrive in complex, dynamic environments.

Creativity is not an innate trait that manifests without effort; it requires intentional cultivation and sustained development. It is a capacity that can grow through exposure to diverse ideas, structured learning experiences, and encouragement from supportive adults. Developing creativity entails a learning process grounded in deep conceptual understanding and intrinsic motivation (Tang et al., 2022). Students need a meaningful foundation of knowledge to draw upon when generating and refining ideas. At the same time, they must possess the motivation to explore and take intellectual risks, which often comes from feeling safe and encouraged in their learning environment. Hence, schools and educators must create conditions that both challenge and support students in their creative endeavors. Creative thinking involves a deliberate and reflective process of confronting and solving problems in thoughtful and innovative ways (Henriksen et al., 2020). Creative thinking as a series of structured cognitive steps. These steps may include identifying a problem, brainstorming possible solutions, testing those ideas, and evaluating outcomes. Such a process is not hazardous but requires metacognitive awareness and discipline. When students learn to engage with problems in this manner, they not only generate original ideas but also learn how to assess and refine their thoughts. Over time, this practice cultivates a mindset that embraces challenges and values of continuous improvement. Research has consistently shown that early childhood represents a critical period for nurturing creativity, as cognitive and emotional development are especially malleable during this stage (Maharani et al., 2022).

Early experiences lay the groundwork for later creative capacities, which can be further developed through intentional educational practices. One such practice is the integration of play-based learning, which has been shown to effectively stimulate creativity in primary school students. Play is inherently flexible, multisensory, and exploratory, making it an ideal medium for creative development. It also aligns with children's natural learning styles, which often involve curiosity, imagination, and physical engagement with their surroundings. When children are encouraged to learn through play, they are more likely to develop the confidence and cognitive agility needed for creative expression (Yildiz & Guler Yildiz, 2021). Numerous studies support the notion that play provides an ideal context for fostering creativity in young learners (Behnamnia et al., 2020b). Through play, children learn to manipulate ideas, experiment with new possibilities, and express themselves in original ways. The use of imaginative scenarios and flexible rules during play allows students to develop divergent thinking and test creative strategies in a low-risk setting. As they engage in different forms of play—such as symbolic, constructive, or cooperative play—they strengthen not only their creative thinking but also their social and emotional skills. These experiences contribute to the holistic development of the child and lay the foundation for more advanced creative thinking in later stages of education (Dere, 2019; Kupers et al., 2019).

Creativity is an essential aspect in children's cognitive and emotional development, especially during elementary school, which is the main foundation in forming mindsets and characters. In the context of elementary education, creativity is not only seen as a natural talent, but also as a potential that can be developed and developed through a supportive learning environment. This ability includes original, imaginative thinking processes, and the ability to find unusual solutions to a problem (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Creativity is one of the important indicators in preparing a future generation that is adaptive, innovative, and able to think critically. In 21st century education, creativity is even considered one of the four main competencies that must be developed, in addition to critical thinking, communication, and collaboration (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). This means that the development of creativity must be an integral part of the learning process in elementary schools. At this level, students are in a phase of cognitive development that allows them to think concretely-operationally as stated by Piaget (1964), where children begin to understand cause-and-effect relationships and can solve problems through direct experience. Creativity at this stage is usually manifested through imaginative play, art activities, and exploration of new things that attract their attention. The importance of developing creativity in elementary schools is also supported by Vygotsky's (1978) view which emphasizes that children's creativity grows through social and cultural processes. Interaction with teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment is key to forming creative thinking skills. Therefore, the role of teachers is very strategic in creating a classroom atmosphere that provides space for free thinking, asking questions, trying, and even failing. When students feel psychologically safe and free from the fear of being wrong, they tend to be more courageous in expressing original ideas and unusual solutions (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2009). The development of creativity cannot be separated from the learning strategies used in the classroom. Open learning that provides students with the opportunity to explore real problems, create projects, and discover learning concepts themselves will further encourage the birth of creative ideas. Models such as project-based learning and discovery learning allow students to actively participate in the learning process and become subjects of learning, not just recipients of information (Bell, 2010). In this process, teachers must act as facilitators who do not limit students' thinking with rigid rules, but rather provide flexible and supportive guidance.

Creativity is also greatly influenced by the learning environment. A classroom environment that supports creativity is one that stimulates curiosity, provides various exploration media, and provides appreciation for differences in students' ways of thinking. Amabile (1996) explains that a supportive social environment plays a major role in activating intrinsic motivation which is the basis for the emergence of creativity. Appreciation of students' thinking processes, not just the end result, is a form of recognition that can foster their courage in developing ideas. Thus, creativity is not just a result, but rather a thinking process that allows children to explore new possibilities. Emotionally, children who are in a stressful or uncomfortable environment tend to have difficulty showing their creative side. On the other hand, a positive, supportive, and open environment towards differences allows children to feel accepted and appreciated. Isen (2000) stated that a positive emotional atmosphere can increase flexibility of thinking and openness to new ideas. Therefore, schools as educational institutions must be able to provide a pleasant atmosphere and encourage children to experiment with their ideas without fear of being judged.

Curriculum that focuses too much on mastery of material and excessive standardized testing also has the potential to inhibit students' space for expression. A curriculum that balances knowledge, skills, and creative expression will be more effective in stimulating students' thinking and imagination. Robinson (2011) emphasized that creativity will not develop if the education system only values one type of intelligence and ignores the importance of variations in learning and thinking styles. Therefore, it is important for education policy makers to design a curriculum that opens up space for artistic activities, experiments, and alternative forms of learning that give students freedom of thought and expression. Various studies have shown that creativity can be fostered through targeted educational interventions. Lubart (2001) in his study stated that student involvement in reflective activities such as free writing, role playing, and art activities contributed positively to increasing the dimensions of originality and flexibility of thinking. This shows that creativity is an ability that can be trained through a continuous process, not just an innate ability. Thus, supporting creative play in primary schools is both a developmental imperative and a strategic investment in the future of innovation and problem-solving.

Creativity and Play

Smolucha and Smolucha identified four key components in Vygotsky's theory of creative imagination. First, they emphasize that imagination originates through the internalization of children's play activities. What begins as external physical play gradually transforms into internal mental activity as children grow cognitively and emotionally. This process highlights that play is not only a form of entertainment but also a foundational mechanism for developing more complex mental functions (Oboeuf et al., 2020). The internalization of play experiences forms the basis for structured and meaningful imaginative thinking in creativity. Therefore, children's play directly contributes to the growth of higher-order cognitive abilities. Second, imagination is regarded as a higher mental function because it involves deliberate, goal-directed thinking. Imaginative activity is not random or spontaneous but rather the product of conscious cognitive effort. During play, children make decisions, create narratives, and organize roles, all of which require focus and planning. This perspective suggests that imagination is not merely innate but a skill that can be developed through experience and learning. Providing children with meaningful play opportunities enables them to strengthen their cognitive control and intentional thought. Hence, play plays a critical role in nurturing advanced thinking skills (Anggraini, 2025).

Third, creative thinking is understood as a collaborative product of both imaginative and conceptual thought processes. Creativity does not simply emerge from free-floating ideas but results from integrating imaginative ideas with logical frameworks. In educational contexts, this means it is essential to combine exploratory activities with concept-based learning. When children play and simultaneously understand the structure and meaning of their play, they connect abstract ideas to real experiences. This integration forms the foundation for mature, purposeful creative thinking. Thus, play not only offers freedom but also provides the structure necessary for directed creativity. Fourth, according to Maleki, major achievements in art and science are made possible through the synergy between imagination and deep conceptual understanding (Maleki & Mousavi, 2015). Imagination supplies raw ideas and possibilities, while conceptual thought organizes and refines these ideas into meaningful products. This allows interaction for the creation of groundbreaking work, whether scientific discoveries or artistic expressions. In primary education, these skills are critical as they form the basis for multidisciplinary creativity. Children accustomed to thinking both imaginatively and logically are better prepared for complex challenges in the future. Therefore, foundational education must nurture both aspects equally.

Likewise, creativity is often defined as the ability to produce something new, either in the form of ideas, processes, or products. Guilford (1950) was one of the early figures who formulated the structure of creative thinking with several dimensions, namely: fluency (fluency of ideas), flexibility (flexibility of thinking), originality (uniqueness), and elaboration (details of ideas). Creativity is not an ability that is exclusive to artists or scientists, but is a general potential that can be developed early on, especially through play activities. Torrance (1966), through the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT), developed a way to measure children's creativity by assessing their ability to think divergently, namely the ability to produce many solutions to one problem. This emphasizes that creativity is not only about intelligence, but also openness to experience and cognitive cognition. Play can be divided into various types based on its function, including symbolic play, constructive play, role play, social play, and competitive play. According to Piaget (1962), playing is a form of children's adaptation to their environment, which allows them to assimilate and accommodate new experiences into existing thought structures. Meanwhile, Vygotsky (1978) views play as a social context in which children develop thinking skills through interactions with the environment and others. He emphasized the importance of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the distance between what children can do on their own and what can be achieved with help. In this context, playing can push children beyond their actual abilities towards their development potential.

Playing inherently contains elements of creativity. Play activities, especially free play (free play without direction), allow children to explore various possibilities without fear of being wrong. They imagine new worlds, create their own rules, and ultimately solve conflicts or problems that arise during the game. Research by Whitebread et al. (2012) shows that free play plays a very important role in supporting executive functions, including planning and problem solving related to creative thinking. Activities such as role-playing or pretending allow children to develop alternative perspectives and foster empathy, which are also important foundations for creative thinking. In the context of education, Russ and Fiorelli (2010) emphasized that play contributes to divergent thinking, namely the ability to generate multiple solutions in a single situation. They concluded that play can be a very effective natural intervention in developing children's creativity from an

early age. An environment that supports creativity is one that is safe, free to express, and open to exploration. Children who are given a variety of play spaces—both in the form of physical space, materials, and freedom of time—have a greater opportunity to foster creativity. A study by Ginsburg (2007) stated that excessive academic pressure and lack of playtime can reduce children's ability to think creatively and flexibly. In practice, traditional games and open games such as building blocks, playing with sand, or drawing freely provide sensory and cognitive stimulation that is very important for developing new ideas. When children use various objects symbolically or create their own imaginative worlds, they are developing creative fluency and originality. Early childhood education that focuses on developing creativity needs to provide sufficient play space in daily activities. Play-based learning approaches that combine elements of play and learning have been shown to increase motivation, engagement, and the development of higher-order thinking skills (Craft, 2005). Teachers also play an important role as facilitators who are able to provide challenging but non-coercive play experiences, and observe children's thinking processes reflectively. Integrating play into the curriculum does not mean reducing the quality of education, but rather strengthening children's ability to learn through experience. As explained by Bodrova and Leong (2007), play is not just an activity, but a form of work for children in understanding the world.

In this framework, imagination not only generates novel ideas but also works in tandem with logical and analytical reasoning to produce meaningful creative outcomes. Open-ended or heuristic thinking processes, which are essential for creativity, are clearly demonstrated in the nature of play (Arga et al., 2020). During play, children explore multiple possibilities without rigid constraints, designing strategies, developing scenarios, and solving problems in a safe and enjoyable environment. This context is ideal for fostering cognitive flexibility and alternative thinking. Play, therefore, creates a learning ecosystem that is highly conducive to creativity development. Consequently, play offers an unparalleled opportunity to cultivate creative thinking skills. Finally, the connection between play and creativity is supported by empirical research. For example, a study (Jeffries, 2011)found that children aged 3–4 demonstrated high levels of imaginative and cognitive engagement during play. This evidence supports the view that early childhood is a critical period for creativity development. At this stage, children are less constrained by formal rules and more free to explore and imagine. As a result, younger primary school children often show more significant gains in creativity compared to older peers. These findings provide an important foundation for designing play-based curricula that emphasize imagination as a core element of learning.

Traditional Games and Creative Thinking

Children's creativity flourishes most when they are exposed to novel ideas and engaging, stimulating experiences that challenge their thinking. When students are encouraged to explore, acquire new knowledge, and actively participate in meaningful experiences—especially through play—their creative potential grows significantly. One traditional game that exemplifies this creative engagement is Gobak Sodor, which combines physical activity with strategic thinking. Gobak Sodor goes beyond exercise by fostering creativity and teamwork, requiring players to communicate and collaborate closely (Susanto, 2022). Defenders in the game must stay alert and think strategically to block opponents, while attackers need perseverance and inventive tactics to find gaps in the defense. This dynamic interaction highlights how traditional games can provide fertile ground for cultivating creative problem-solving and cooperation. Strategic thinking is a crucial element in such traditional games, often involving subtle communication techniques understood only by team members to mislead opponents (Oboeuf et al., 2020). This coded teamwork encourages players to think flexibly and innovatively, using language and signals as tools to outsmart the opposition. Additionally, the materials used in these games further contribute to creative development, as players often repurpose natural and readily available items like stones, banana leaves, twigs, and palm fronds. Fazli found a significant increase in students' creativity through engagement in these games, with creativity scores rising from 33% in the initial phase to 83% after sustained involvement (Fazli Taib Saearani et al., 2024). Such findings demonstrate that traditional games are not only enjoyable but also effective in nurturing creative skills. The use of everyday materials also encourages resourcefulness and imagination.

Beyond creativity and motor skills, traditional games support holistic development in children, encompassing moral and religious values, language abilities, socio-emotional skills, cognitive growth, and artistic expression (Mercier & Lubart, 2023). These games serve as multifaceted learning environments where students develop important life skills through interaction and play. For traditional games to effectively

enhance creativity, the involvement of educators is essential. Teachers who understand children's learning styles and motivations can adapt these games to be more diverse and engaging, ensuring they meet educational goals. By applying thoughtful pedagogical approaches, educators can transform traditional games into powerful tools that enrich the learning experience. This approach also supports the development of creativity in a structured and intentional manner (Čábelková et al., 2020). Educators play a pivotal role in mediating the connection between traditional games and student creativity. They must be knowledgeable about child development and skilled at modifying games to fit various learning objectives and contexts (Chung, 2013). For example, they can introduce variations or combine games to keep them fresh and challenging, thus maintaining students' interest and motivation. Through guided play, teachers help students reflect on their strategies and outcomes, deepening their understanding and encouraging creative thinking. Moreover, educators can foster an inclusive environment where all students feel safe to experiment and express their ideas. This supportive atmosphere is crucial for unlocking students' creative potential through play.

Research supports the positive impact of traditional games on creativity, not only among primary school students but also in teacher training programs. Arga et al. (2020) found that prospective primary school teachers who used traditional games in their learning processes showed improvements in their creative thinking skills. This suggests that incorporating traditional games into teacher education could enhance future educators' ability to foster creativity in their classrooms (Čábelková et al., 2020). Furthermore, these findings highlight the cultural relevance and educational value of traditional games as pedagogical tools. Integrating such games in teacher preparation programs may lead to more creative, culturally aware teaching practices. This strengthens the overall educational ecosystem by promoting creativity at multiple levels (Mercier & Lubart, 2023). Traditional games are a form of play activity that is passed down from generation to generation and is closely related to the social and cultural environment of the community. This activity not only acts as entertainment, but also as a learning medium that shapes various aspects of child development, from motoric, social, emotional to cognitive (Isjoni, 2013). In the context of modern education, the existence of traditional games is increasingly recognized in supporting the development of creative thinking.

Traditional games are generally simple, use tools and materials from the surrounding environment, and are played in groups. The characteristics of this game are the cessation of rules, social involvement, and dominance of imagination. Games such as hopscotch, spinning tops, hide and seek, and gobak sodor do not have a digital scoring system like modern games, but rely on strategy, social roles, and improvisation. This game also has a strong educational dimension. According to Suparno (2014), traditional games can be a contextual learning medium that bridges children's real experiences with abstract concepts. Traditional games provide space for children to imagine, experiment, and create variations in game rules. According to Vygotsky (1978), symbolic or real-pretend play in traditional games helps children build meaning and expand their zone of proximal development (ZPD). An empirical study by Prasetyo and Nugraheni (2020) showed that students who regularly engage in traditional games showed increased creativity scores in the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT). These children tend to be more flexible in thinking and able to find alternative solutions in complex situations. Runco and Jaeger (2012) emphasized that creativity cannot be separated from the social and cultural context. Traditional games teach the values of cooperation, tolerance, and collective strategies that enrich the social dimension of creativity. In the local Indonesian context, games such as stilts, clogs, or marbles encourage cooperation in solving challenges. These activities form creativity that is oriented towards collective values and not solely individualistic (Suyanto, 2016).

Research in neuropsychology shows that play activities, especially those involving physical, social, and cognitive such as traditional games, can activate various areas of the brain, including the prefrontal cortex which is related to reflective thinking and decision-making (Pellis & Pellis, 2009). Stimulation of these brain areas supports the development of executive functions that are important in creative thinking, such as planning, cognitive cognition, and impulse control. Free play activities, which are common in traditional games, are also closely related to increased divergent thinking, an important aspect of creativity (Whitebread et al., 2012). This shows that traditional games are not only culturally relevant, but also make scientific contributions to children's cognitive growth. In addition to creativity, traditional games also contain educational character values such as honesty, sportsmanship, cooperation, and responsibility. These values are an important foundation in building ethical and responsible creativity. According to Lickona (1991), character education must integrate aspects of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions, all three of

which can be found in the dynamics of traditional games. Games such as Bentengan or Galah Asin often require children to work together in time, strategize, and admit defeat with a sporty attitude. In this case, creativity is not only interpreted as a cognitive process, but also as an expression of ethics in a social context. In the framework of 21st century competencies, creativity is classified as part of the "4C" (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity) which is very much needed in facing a dynamic global world (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Traditional games that are open, collaborative, and problem-solving based have characteristics that support the development of these four skills. While digital games are often individual and based on imagination determined by software, traditional games require children to create their own imagination, negotiate with rules, and resolve conflicts directly. This is closer to active learning practices and real-life experiences (experiential learning). In conclusion, traditional games offer rich opportunities for nurturing creativity among children by combining physical activity, strategic thinking, and social collaboration. Their use of natural materials and coded communication stimulates imagination and problem-solving skills in dynamic ways. The holistic benefits of these games extend beyond creativity, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and moral development. The effective role of educators in adapting and facilitating these games is vital to maximizing their potential as learning tools. Empirical studies further confirm the effectiveness of traditional games in enhancing creative thinking in both students and teachers. Therefore, embracing traditional games in educational settings provides a valuable pathway to cultivating creativity and comprehensive development in young learners.

4. CONCLUSION

Various research results show that games are effective in fostering creativity, especially creative thinking, from the tactics used in the game to the strategies applied to win. Games are not only a means of entertainment, but also a natural place to experiment, experiment, and imagine. Children, when involved in games, use their cognitive abilities to make plans, make decisions, and adapt to changes in the rules flexibly. In this context, traditional games play an important role because they not only allow students to learn about local cultural and historical values, but also because the simple materials, tools, and rules in the game encourage improvisation and innovation. Traditional game materials are often sourced from the surrounding environment that is familiar to students' daily lives, such as seeds, small stones, wood, or patchwork, all of which open up opportunities for children to develop visual, tactical, and narrative creativity. Traditional games also tend to be open, allowing flexible variations in rules and roles, which give students room to actively contribute to regulating the dynamics of the game. Situations like this are ideal for stimulating divergent thinking skills, namely the ability to generate various solutions to a problem, which is one of the main indicators of creativity. Furthermore, when games are played in groups, children learn to negotiate ideas, resolve conflicts, and combine perspectives, which indirectly develop social empathy and creative communication skills.

This entire process is closely related to the role of teachers as the main foundation in designing and directing the implementation of traditional games in the school environment. Teachers act not just as observers, but as active facilitators who guide students in developing forms of traditional games that are adapted to learning media, curriculum objectives, and students' contextual needs. Through modification of rules, integration of learning themes, and adaptation of game tools with easily found materials, teachers can make traditional games into educational tools that are not only fun but also meaningful. This innovation allows students to experience a holistic learning process, touching the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously. With a clear understanding of the importance of traditional games in fostering creativity, teachers can integrate cultural values into the curriculum more comprehensively. Learning materials that were previously considered abstract or boring can be delivered in a more interesting, contextual, and interactive way through games. Moreover, students get the opportunity to recognize, appreciate, and actively preserve cultural heritage that is starting to be displaced by the development of technology and global culture. Through educational content delivered by teachers in the form of creatively modified traditional games, students are not only invited to think critically and creatively, but also instilled with a sense of pride in their own cultural identity. Thus, traditional games are not just learning tools, but also an important bridge between creativity, active learning, and sustainable preservation of local culture.

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