

# The Utilization of Traditional Games for Early Childhood Development

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this research was to understand and describe the roles of traditional games in facilitating children's development. In this modern era, many parents and teachers as early childhood educators are not aware of the importance of traditional games to optimize the growth and development of early childhood. In fact, traditional games are a good and affordable means for children to grow and develop. In this paper, the researchers attempted to discuss the roles of traditional Bugis games as a medium for early childhood growth and development. This research was qualitative in nature because the researchers wanted to produce descriptive data (written or spoken) about people and observable behaviors during the play that can help the growth and development of children. To collect the data, the researchers used several instruments, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Data multiplication was carried out based on the characteristics of the instrument. The results showed that traditional South Sulawesi Bugis games, with or without equipment, act as media for children's physical, social-emotional, language and cognitive development. The games become an important means for children to socialize, learn to become a society member, and learn to respect the society's rules. In the game-and-play situations, children can also develop mathematical abilities and reasoning.*

**Keywords:** Traditional Bugis Games, Development, Early Childhood

## 1. Introduction

The world of children is the world of play (Supriadi, 2004). This means that play activities are inseparable from children. Play has an important meaning for the growth and development of children. Various studies have proven that children will grow and develop well when they are surrounded by an environment that allows them to investigate, discover, and play. Such environment will help to develop the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical behaviors of children. Kostelnik et al. (1999), in this case, highlights the importance of playing by stating that play is a child's territory from time to time. All areas of development will be enhanced through play activities. Isenberg and Jalongoin Musfiroh (2004) mention that institutions, such as the National Association for The Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), emphasize the opportunities that play can provide for children, such as the opportunity to explore their world, develop social understanding and cultural, express what they feel and think, find, and solve problems. Through play activities, all aspects of children development can improve, including physical, motor, psychosocial, emotional, language, and cognitive development. Some experts state the benefits of playing for a child's development, as follows:

“There is convincing evidence that children general social, communicative, and cognitive functioning in play tends to exceed the level expected of the same children in academic subjects in school. Play enables children to extend their physical skills, language and literacy capabilities and creative imagination”(Fromberg, 1987; Kostelnik et al., 1999).

Every country has many different cultures, and children's games exist in every culture. Every culture has special characteristics and norms that have been agreed upon by the members of the culture. The norms are also reflected in the traditional games for children, including in the games of Bugis children in South Sulawesi. At the practical level, the norms and behavioral demands are disseminated to individuals in various settings, such as home and community. There will always be a common thread relationship between every cultural value, including in this case the socio-cultural values of Bugis as a universal cultural point. Traditional games are part of cultural value dissemination and media for the children to grow and develop.

Unfortunately, in this modern era, parents and teachers as early childhood educators do not introduce traditional games to children. The games, in fact, are a useful and affordable way to accelerate the growth and development of children. This paper, therefore, will discuss the role of traditional Bugis games as a medium for early childhood growth and development.

Based on the description above, the research problem to be addressed is as follows: “*How do the traditional Bugis games help the growth and development of the local children?*”

## 2. Method

This is a Field Research where all data come from the research findings in the field. The researchers used a qualitative data analysis to produce descriptive data (written or spoken) about people and observable behaviors. Qualitative descriptive research attempts to describe a specific phenomenon to find answers to a specific problem.

The researchers collected the data using several instruments, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Data multiplication was carried out according to the characteristics of the instrument. In analyzing the data, the researchers used Huberman's analysis procedure, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Bugis Traditional Games and Their Roles in Child Development

#### a. PuaPua Dede

*PuaPua Dede* is a game with a simple method. Parents lie down with the legs bent to the stomach while the child sits on the toes. Then, the parents' feet are moved up and down. This game can usually be played with children under the age of one. This game can train children's motor skills, stimulate their language development through the song that accompanies the game, and develop social emotional aspects where children will find it easy to interact with parents. In addition, children can feel parental love with hugs while singing. This game is included in the type of sensorimotor play (sensorimotor play). According to Wolfgang et al. (1981), sensorimotor play involves free movement of large and small muscles as well as exploration of the body by using all five senses as an exercise with its sensorimotor functions.

### b. *Ulaa Naga*



**Figure 1. *Ulaa Naga* played by Bugis children**

*Ulaa Naga* (Dragon Snake) is a group game played by a minimum of 4-5 people, with 2 people acting as gate makers (left-right) while the others line up in the gate made. The child who is right in the middle of the gate will be caught by the gate makers at the end of the song and given a choice to join the left-gate or right-gate group. The group with the most followers will win while the group with fewest group members will lose and must catch the person who is behind their opponent. In the *Ulaa Naga* game, children learn to socialize. They also learn about tolerance, attention, sportsmanship, and joy with friends. The game does not only help to develop children's socio-emotional aspects by making them wait for their turn, but also facilitates language and music development among children through singing. Children's motor skills are also trained with movements in the game. *Ulaa Naga* is a symbolic play because children imagine or replace an object by lining up and walking around like a dragon snake.

### c. *Maggalaceng*



**Figure 2. *Maggalaceng* Instrument**

*Maggalaceng* is another traditional game of Bugis. This game was once considered sacred because it was only played at a funeral. In other words, this game should not be played at any time because it is believed to bring death to the player's family members. Bugis parents forbid anyone who plays this game at an inopportune time (not when there is death). The organizers of this game are usually the bereaved family.

#### d. *Mallonggak*



**Figure 3. *Mallonggak***

*Mallonggak* is made of bamboo or wood with a length of approximately 2.5 meters. About 50cm from the bottom, a flat footrest is made with a width of approximately 20cm. The way to play it is by walking using the *Longak* from one side of the field to the other. The child who can walk the fastest and does not fall is the winner. This game is often played in certain events and by girls aged 12 years and above. The game can develop the physical development of children because it involves physical movement while maintaining the balance to avoid falling. A strategy to walk fast with a stick is much needed in this game. Children's problem-solving skills can develop through this game, which is in accordance with the statement of Hoorn (1993). Play can be a medium for children to realize their ideas and develop flexibility and creative thinking. In playing, children will find obstacles and conflicts, which will encourage them to find a possible solution.

#### e. *Mangasing*



**Figure 4. *Mangasing***

This game is usually played by two groups, with 3-5 people in each team. The players are expected to block their opponent to prevent them from passing through the line to the last line back and forth. To win, all group members must complete the back and forth process in a predetermined field area. This game is usually played on a 9 x 4 m field divided into 6 sections. The boundaries of each section are usually marked with chalk. Group members who have a turn to guard the field are divided into two, namely group members who guard the horizontal and vertical boundaries. Through this *Mangasing* game, children's physical aspects can be developed because they have to run and dodge to avoid opponents and reach the finish line. According to Lwin (2008), an important basis for building good psychomotor abilities in a person is the improvement of one's movement skills. Researchers have theorized that brain development actually occurs when children play. It is likely that brain function and motor skills development go hand in hand at a very early age. Someone with good motor skills will find it easier to learn to drive, swim, climb, and even play computer games than someone



with poor motor skills. In particular, gross motor skills, which refer to all-body coordination, can be honed through basic activities such as running, jumping and catching. This Mangasing game can also develop children's socio-emotional aspects because this game is carried out by more than one person which allows them to socialize. Children also have to obey the rules that have been mutually agreed upon by the players themselves.

f. *Malllebbak*



**Figure 5. *Malllebbak***

*Mallebbakor Sidenreng Rappangin* Bugis language is a common traditional folk game in Indonesia. This game is usually played by 5-10 participants because a player has to look for his/her friends who are hiding. Before playing, all the players will play *hompipa* until there are only two people left. After that, the two will play rock-paper-scissor and the loser will become the seeker for friends who are hiding. The seeker closes his eyes or sticks to one of the media (walls, trees, polishes, etc.) as a means of fortification. Through this game, the socio-emotional aspect of children can be developed because they can socialize with other players. Sportsmanship is also trained when they have to be the seeker. This reflects the benefits of games stated by Kohnstamm (in Kamtini, 2007), namely allowing children to socialize, preparing them to become members of a society, teaching them to recognize and appreciate human society. Through games, a sense of harmony will grow, which is very meaningful for social formation as a cultural human being. In the game situations, children can test and measure their own abilities and potential. Their physical aspects will also develop because this game requires them to search for friends who are hiding in different places and to move quickly to guard his fort.

g. *Maccongkak*



**Figure 5. *Maccongkak***

*Maccongkak* is a game that uses two pieces of woody sticks; one has length of 30 cm while the other is shorter. The first small piece of wood is placed on a hole in the ground or

between two stones hit by a longer wooden stick. By hitting the small wood towards an opponent who is ready to catch, the opponent will hit a shot directed to the hole with a long stick installed. Through this game, children's mathematical logic can develop because they will learn to measure the distance to hit the small stick. Children's social aspect will also develop because they interact with other friends. In addition, their moral aspects will also advance because they have to make judgment when taking measurements.

#### h. *Gasing*

*Gasing* is a toy that can rotate on an axis and balance at a point. The top is the oldest toy found at various archaeological sites and is still recognizable. Besides being a toy for children and adults, the top is also used for gambling and fortune-telling. Most tops are made of wood although they can also be made of plastic or other materials. The wood is carved and shaped to become part of the top body. The top rope is generally made of nylon, while the traditional top rope is made from tree barks. The top usually spins unsteadily for a while until the interaction of the leg (axis) with the ground makes it stand upright. After the top spins upright for a while, the angular momentum and gyroscopic effects decrease little by little until finally the body part falls roughly to the ground.

#### i. *Mallambaru*

*Mallambaru* is derived from the word *Lambaru*, which means "stingray". This naming is based on the shape of the main equipment of this game, which resembles a stingray. Currently, it is more popular as "kite game". The shape and variety of kite decorations vary, but the traditional Bugis society generally uses animal shapes and patterns. Historically, the material used was originally a wide type of leaves that had dried and were then given a rope. After the use of paper was known, it began to be used as the main material for making kites. This game is usually done in an open field or on the street in front of the house that is not crowded with traffic vehicles. In this *Mallambaru* game, several aspects of children are developed, such as the socio-emotional aspect where the child cannot play with another friend to help fly the lamb or the kite. A good cooperation between players is needed here. Cognitive aspects are also developed because children learn how to measure the length of the thread and the geometric shapes of the kite. Physical development will also advance because children have to pull and stretch the kite string and chase the kite when the kite string breaks. This is related to the Cognitive-Developmental theory of Jean Piaget, which reveals that playing can activate a child's brain left in a balanced way and form a neural structure, and develop neural pillars of understanding that are useful for the future. In this regard, an active brain is a very good condition for receiving lessons.

#### j. *Mattojang*

*Mattojang* is the name of the game in the Bugis area, derived from the word *Tojang*. In other Bugis languages, it is called *Mappare*, derived from the word *Pere*. The words *Tojang* and *Pere* have the same meaning, namely "swing". In general, *Mattojang* is a swing game held in order to enliven certain occasions, such as harvest parties, weddings and the birth of a baby. In traditional Bugis society, this game is held by nobles/kings or customary rulers. This game is originated from the beliefs of the ancient Bugis people. It aims to remind people of the procession of the descent of the first human, namely *Batara Guru* from BotingLangiq or heaven to earth. He was lowered to earth with a *tojangpulaweng* or golden swing. *Batara Guru* is considered the ancestor of humans and the grandmother of Sawerigading, a legendary figure in Bugis folk myth. Then, it develops in the form of a game

as a sign of gratitude for the success of the harvest. This game can develop the physical and mental aspects of children because they should not fear height and should be able to swing in the air to maintain the balance.

#### 4. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that traditional games have meanings and benefits for children. Through some traditional Bugis games described earlier, the physical, social-emotional, language and cognitive aspects of children can develop. Children can socialize, become members of a society, recognize and appreciate human society. Sense of harmony will also grow, which is very meaningful for social formation as a cultural human being. In the play situations, children can test and measure their own abilities and potential. They will also learn to recognize various objects and events that take place in their surroundings. In the middle of the game, each child can experience various emotions, such as excitement, satisfaction, and happiness. Pre-practice opportunities are also available for children to become familiar with the game rules, comply with norms and prohibitions, and act honestly and loyally.

This research can be a reference for education practitioners, early childhood teachers (PAUD), parents, and caretakers who are aware of children's development. It is also useful for future researchers in area of early childhood development.

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