

Traditional Games as Ethnopedagogy in the Deep Learning Approach to Strengthening the Character of Elementary School Students

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article history Received : Febr 10, 2026 Accepted March 29, 2026 Published : Marc 30, 2026 Keywords character education, ethnopedagogy, deep learning, elementary school, traditional games Corresponding Author Hasrul Hasrul Institut Sains dan Kependidikan Kie Raha Maluku Utara, Ternate, Indonesia *E-mail: hasrul.tte87@gmail.com	<i>Strengthening the character of elementary school students has become a crucial issue in 21st-century education amidst technological developments and the declining internalization of local cultural values. However, learning in elementary schools still tends to be oriented towards cognitive aspects, thus not optimally shaping students' character holistically. This study aims to review the literature on traditional games as a source of ethnopedagogy in a deep learning approach to strengthening the character of elementary school students. The research method uses a literature review to analyze various scientific articles, proceedings, and relevant documents sourced from the Google Scholar and Garuda search engines. The study results show that traditional games contain cultural, social, moral, and collaborative values, which are sources of ethnopedagogy that can support deep learning. Integrating traditional games into learning as ethnopedagogy can strengthen elementary school students' character traits, such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, social awareness, tolerance, creativity, and empathy. Furthermore, the deep learning approach makes the learning process more contextual, reflective, and centered on student experience.</i>



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INTRODUCTION

Primary education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and personality. Elementary schools serve not only as a place to transfer knowledge but also as a vehicle for the formation of students' moral, social, and cultural values (Kedeikoto et al., 2026; Nurfurqon, 2020). However, current developments in modern education tend to place greater emphasis on academic aspects and cognitive achievement than on character development (Hasrul, 2025b). This condition has led to a decline in the internalization of local cultural values and social character in elementary school students (Kalkautsar & Ndona, 2025). The phenomenon of character degradation in elementary school students is evident in increased individualistic behavior, low tolerance, lack of responsibility, and a weakening of the culture of mutual cooperation in the educational environment (Rahayu et al., 2020).

This situation is exacerbated by the influence of globalization and the development of digital technology, which has led children to become more familiar with digital games than traditional games based on local culture (Nurazizah et al., 2025). This is despite the fact that traditional games contain educational and social values that are important for children's character development (Susanti et al., 2022; Nevitaningrum et al., 2023). Traditional games are part of local wisdom passed down through generations within the community. Traditional games serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium for social and cultural education for Indonesian children (Khodari & Nurhidayah, 2025). Through traditional games, children learn about cooperation, sportsmanship, discipline, communication, leadership, and social responsibility (Ali et al., 2025a).

In the context of modern education, the ethnopedagogical approach is a crucial strategy for integrating local culture into the learning process. Ethnopedagogy is an educational approach based on local wisdom that utilizes culture as a learning resource (Hasrul, 2025a). This approach helps students understand cultural values contextually and relevantly to everyday life. The implementation of ethnopedagogy in primary education has been shown to increase student engagement, cultural awareness, and social character development.

Furthermore, the emergence of the deep learning paradigm in education has become a new approach that emphasizes meaningful, reflective, and contextual learning. The deep learning approach is oriented towards meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning, enabling students to not only memorize material but also understand the meaning of deep learning (Andayanie et al., 2025; Nafi'ah & Faruq, 2025). Deep learning encourages students to actively think critically, creatively, collaboratively, and connect learning to real-life experiences (Fauziah et al., 2025).

Thus, traditional games are strongly linked to deep learning approaches because they provide enjoyable and meaningful hands-on learning experiences. Through play, students are actively engaged physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively, enhancing the learning process. Integrating ethnopedagogy-based traditional games into deep learning approaches can be an innovative solution for strengthening character education in elementary school students. Based on this description, this study aims to examine traditional games as a source of ethnopedagogy in a deep learning approach to strengthening the character of elementary school students through literature studies.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a literature review. The literature review method was used to examine, analyze, and synthesize various conceptual and research findings related to traditional games, ethnopedagogy, deep learning, and character building in elementary school students. The research data sources were *Google Scholar* and *Garuda* search engines for national journal articles, proceedings, and relevant educational documents.

The literature reviewed was published between 2020-2025 to ensure the study was up-to-date and relevant to current educational developments. The data collection technique was carried out through several stages, namely literature identification, article selection based on topic relevance, data classification, and documentation of library sources. Keywords used included “traditional games,” “deep learning,” “character education,” and “elementary school.” Data analysis used in-depth synthesis analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, content interpretation, and conclusion drawing (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; Rozali, 2022). The analysis was conducted to find the conceptual relationship between traditional games, ethnopedagogy, deep learning, and character strengthening of elementary school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Based on the analysis of several key topics, it can be described that traditional games, as a source and medium for ethnopedagogy, are relevant for integration into modern learning, including a deep learning approach to strengthening student character in elementary schools. Recent research has shown that traditional games can be a medium for strengthening character and transmitting cultural heritage in elementary school students (Susanti et al., 2022). Research by Nugroho & Taufik, (2025) shows that the traditional game of engklek contains ethnopedagogical values that can strengthen the character of elementary school students, such as discipline, cooperation, responsibility, sportsmanship, and tolerance. This research confirms that traditional games function not only as play activities but also as a medium for internalizing cultural values and character education. Furthermore, research by Nevitaningrum et al., (2023) showed that traditional game-based physical education learning effectively shaped positive character in elementary school students, particularly in the areas of cooperation, leadership, empathy, discipline, and sportsmanship. Traditional games foster healthy social interactions and train students to respect rules and others.

Furthermore, research by Lumbantobing et al., (2025) on deep learning in elementary education also shows that this approach contributes to more meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. Deep learning significantly helps students understand material in depth through direct experience, reflection, and active engagement in the learning process. Research by Nurkanti et al. (2026) also shows that deep learning based on ethnopedagogy and local wisdom can increase students’ social awareness, environmental awareness, and responsibility for the social and cultural life around them. This approach supports students’ holistic character development through culture-based contextual learning.

In general, the results of the analysis in this study describe that: (1) traditional games are effective as a medium for character education for elementary school students; (2) ethnopedagogy helps internalize students’ cultural values and local identity; (3) deep learning creates meaningful learning through direct experience and reflection; (4) the integration of traditional games, ethnopedagogy, and deep learning contributes to strengthening character such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, creativity, empathy, and social skills for elementary school students.

B. Discussion

Based on the description of the research results above, this discussion focuses on four topics: (1) local games as a medium for ethnopedagogy, (2) the implementation of a deep learning approach in traditional game-based learning, (3) the contribution of traditional games to strengthening the character of elementary school students, and (4) the implications of integrating traditional games into local culture-based elementary education. The results of this study are expected to provide a conceptual understanding of the importance of revitalizing traditional games as an innovation in character learning in elementary schools.

1. Traditional Games as a Medium for Ethnopedagogy

Traditional games are a form of cultural heritage that contain educational and social values. From an ethnopedagogical perspective, local games can be used as a culture-based learning medium that helps students understand life values contextually (Ali et al., 2026; Muzakkir, 2021). Games such as engklek, Curik-Curik, gobak sodor, Benteng, and congklak embody the values of cooperation, sportsmanship, discipline, communication, and tolerance (Nevitaningrum et al., 2023; Nugroho & Taufik, 2025) ethnopedagogy places local culture as a primary learning resource in education (Ali et al., 2025b).

As Hasrul (2025a) points out, this approach emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural values into the learning process so that students do not lose their cultural identity amidst globalization. Implementing ethnopedagogy based on local games can help students understand regional culture while developing positive social character. Furthermore, local games can also foster healthy social interactions among students. Children learn to respect rules, work together in groups, resolve conflicts, and develop social communication skills. Thus, traditional games serve both an educational and cultural function in elementary school learning.

2. The Deep Learning Approach in Elementary School Learning

The deep learning approach in education emphasizes in depth, meaningful, and experiential learning. Deep learning focuses not only on mastering material but also on developing critical, reflective, creative, and collaborative thinking skills (Fauziah et al., 2025). The main characteristics of deep learning include meaningful learning, mindful learning, and joyful learning. Meaningful learning occurs when students are able to connect material to real-life experiences. Mindful learning emphasizes awareness and reflection in learning, while joyful learning creates a fun and active learning environment. In the elementary school context, deep learning is highly relevant because students learn more effectively through hands-on experiences and concrete activities. Local games can be a medium for implementing deep learning because they simultaneously involve physical, emotional, social, and cognitive experiences. Research shows that a deep learning approach based on local wisdom can increase student engagement, conceptual understanding, and strengthen student character (Andayani, 2025; Nurkanti et al., 2026; Mawaddah et al., 2026).

3. Strengthening Character through Traditional Games

Traditional games play a significant role in shaping the character of elementary school students. Traditional game activities teach the values of sportsmanship, cooperation, leadership, responsibility, discipline, and social empathy (Nevitaningrum et al., 2023). Through interactions within games, students learn to respect their peers, obey rules, and develop tolerance. Traditional games also support the strengthening of the Pancasila student profile by instilling the values of mutual cooperation, creativity, critical thinking, and global diversity. Research on the internalization of ethnopedagogical values in hopscotch games shows that traditional games are effective in strengthening the character of elementary school students (Nugroho & Taufik, 2025). Furthermore, traditional game-based learning can create a fun learning atmosphere, making students more active and motivated in participating. This aligns with the principle of joyful learning in the deep learning approach (Lumbantobing et al., 2025; Nurkanti et al., 2026).

4. The Conceptual Relationship between Traditional Games, Ethnopedagogy, and Deep Learning

The integration of traditional games with ethnopedagogy and deep learning results in contextual and meaningful learning. Traditional games serve as cultural media that provide students with hands-on experiences, thus preventing abstract learning. Conceptually, this relationship can be described as follows: The integration of traditional games with ethnopedagogy and deep learning results in contextual and meaningful learning. Traditional

games serve as cultural media that provide students with hands-on experiences, thus enhancing the learning process. Conceptually, this relationship can be illustrated as follows:

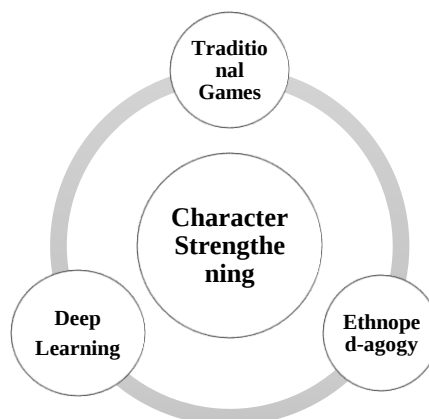


Figure 1. Relationship patterns between traditional games, ethnopedagogy, and deep learning towards strengthening students' character

Through this integration, students not only gain academic knowledge but also understand cultural values and internalize positive character traits in their daily lives. This approach is highly relevant for the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes contextual learning and character building.

5. Research Contributions and Implications

The results of this study present a conceptual synthesis of the relationship between traditional games, deep learning, and character building in elementary school students. This study shows that traditional games not only function as recreational activities, but also as a means of internalizing cultural, social, moral, and collaborative values that support the holistic formation of students' character. Furthermore, the results of this study have important implications for the development of elementary education practices in Indonesia. Therefore, it offers several contributions: First, this study demonstrates that local games can be integrated into the learning process as part of an ethnopedagogical approach to create more meaningful and contextual learning.

This indicates that local culture has great potential as a learning resource relevant to students' lives today. Second, the implementation of traditional games based on deep learning can help teachers develop learning that is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also towards strengthening students' character and social competence. Direct, experiential learning through local games enables students to learn actively, reflectively, and collaboratively, thus supporting the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

6. Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are available for further research. First, this research is still a literature review, so empirical research is needed to test the effectiveness of ethnopedagogy-based traditional games within a deep learning approach on strengthening the character of elementary school students. Experimental or quasi-experimental research can be conducted to obtain more comprehensive data on the impact of implementing traditional games in learning. Second, future research can develop local game-based learning models or designs integrated with deep learning approaches and the Independent Curriculum through Research and Development (R&D) or *Classroom Action Research* (CAR) designs. The development of learning tools such as teaching modules, interactive media, and local culture-based learning models could be the focus of further

research. Third, further research is suggested to explore traditional games from various regions in Indonesia as a source of ethnopedagogy that have different cultural characteristics. This cross-cultural study is crucial for enriching the treasury of local wisdom-based education and supporting the preservation of regional culture.

CONCLUSION

Traditional games have great potential as ethnopedagogical media in a deep learning approach to strengthening the character of elementary school students. Local or traditional games contain cultural, social, and moral values that can support meaningful and contextual learning. The deep learning approach helps students understand learning experiences in depth through meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning. Integrating traditional games into elementary school learning can strengthen student character traits such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, creativity, and social empathy. Therefore, traditional games need to be systematically integrated into local culture-based learning to support the strengthening of character education in elementary schools.

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