STRATEGIES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL GAMES INTO PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The integration of traditional games into Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) learning can strengthen student engagement, develop motor skills, and instill cultural values. However, the success of integration is largely determined by the teacher's strategy in planning, implementing, and contextually evaluating learning. This study aims to describe PJOK teachers' strategies in integrating traditional games into PJOK learning in elementary schools. The study uses a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with PJOK teachers, participatory observation of the implementation of learning, and a study of teaching materials. Data analysis followed an interactive analysis model combined with thematic analysis to produce the main strategy themes. The results of the study show that teachers' strategies are grouped into six themes: (1) mapping movement objectives and time allocation; (2) selecting games based on competence and environmental context; (3) modifying rules, tools, and space for safety and inclusiveness; (4) classroom management based on small groups, stations, and control signals; (5) internalization of cultural values through reflection and value language; and (6) process-outcome evaluation using rubrics, checklists, journals, and video-based reflection. The findings confirm that traditional games are effective vehicles for holistic learning when structured activities are aligned with learning outcomes and student needs.

Keywords: Traditional games, teacher strategies, elementary school, physical literacy

INTRODUCTION

Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) learning in elementary schools plays an important role in building the foundations of motor skills, fitness, and active lifestyle habits from an early age. From a physical literacy perspective, meaningful movement experiences not only target motor skills but also foster motivation, self-confidence, and knowledge and understanding of physical activity. (Cairney et al., 2019; Cale & Harris, 2018). Therefore, PJOK learning needs to be designed as a series of holistic experiences: students do not just "move," but also understand the purpose of the activity, experience success through gradual challenges, and have the space to try again without fear of failure. Teachers are key to creating a lively learning atmosphere through a variety of activities, pacing, and classroom management that ensures all students have fair opportunities to move. At the same time, the reality in elementary schools, such as differences in abilities, large numbers of students, limited equipment, and field conditions, requires adaptive and contextual learning strategies to ensure that learning objectives are achieved. (Quennerstedt, 2019).

In today's context, exposure to gadgets and sedentary play patterns can reduce active play, making schools a strategic space for structured, enjoyable physical activities. Traditional games offer advantages because they are familiar to children, rich in social interaction, and easily adaptable into group activities that minimize waiting time and maximize movement time. Traditional games can also generate enthusiasm for learning by offering elements of challenge, cooperation, and healthy competition. On the other hand, traditional games are highly flexible: teachers can adjust the intensity, complexity, and duration of the game according to age and

targeted movement goals, so that the game can serve as an introduction to the material, a core activity, or reinforcement of specific skills. Within the school-based learning framework, traditional games can also elicit appropriate levels of physical activity and enrich students' movement engagement (Adnan et al., 2020). When designed with age and safety in mind, traditional games can support the development of motor skills and children's movement engagement (Hussain & Cheong, 2022).

However, traditional games do not automatically become directed learning. The main challenge lies in teachers' ability to transform games originally recreational into learning activities with a clear structure, indicators of success, and implementation procedures. Teachers need to ensure that games align with the movement goals to be achieved, set rules that are easy to understand, and prepare modifications to tools, space, and game consequences to keep students safe and inclusive, including those with different abilities. In addition, games must be managed as a learning process, not just entertainment activities, so strategies are needed to provide brief instructions, effective demonstrations, appropriate group divisions, and classroom control that maintains the rhythm of learning. At this point, the teacher's strategy determines whether traditional games truly produce meaningful learning experiences, while also enabling measurable evaluation of the process and results. (Aarskog, 2021). Furthermore, PJOK is also a space for teaching values; sportsmanship, discipline, honesty, cooperation, and responsibility can be instilled through regular, fair, and reflective play experiences. (Febriza et al., 2024; lubis et al., 2025). Given this urgency, this study aims to describe the strategies PJOK teachers use to integrate traditional games into PJOK learning in elementary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Physical education in elementary schools helps build the foundations of motor skills, fitness, and active lifestyle habits. From a physical literacy perspective, ideal PE learning should not only focus on motor skills but also develop motivation, self-confidence, and children's knowledge and understanding of physical activity, so that movement experiences must be designed to be meaningful across the psychomotor-cognitive-affective domains. (Cairney et al., 2019; Cale & Harris, 2018; E. J. Durden-Myers et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers are required to provide relevant, interesting learning experiences and sufficient opportunities for practice, while also being able to adapt to limitations in facilities, weather, large classes, and student ability heterogeneity. (Quennerstedt, 2019).

Traditional games are seen as a potential pedagogical resource to address these challenges because they are fun, rich in social interaction, easily adaptable, and closely aligned with students' culture. Empirically, traditional games can generate measurable physical activity for school-based interventions. (Adnan et al., 2020) and contribute to improving children's gross motor skills when designed according to age and safety (Hussain & Cheong, 2022). In addition, traditional games can also enrich students' emotional and social experiences; experiences of "joy in movement" and learning motivation tend to emerge strongly when a clear classroom climate and rules guide games. (Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2020; Fitri et al., 2020; Trajkovik et al., 2018).

However, traditional games do not automatically become directed learning. Pedagogical literature emphasizes that the success of game-based learning is largely determined by the teacher's strategy for transforming games originally recreational into learning activities that are aligned with objectives, safe, inclusive, and structured and evaluated clearly. Various pedagogical approaches in PJOK (e.g., TGfU, Sport Education, and variations in teaching styles) show different impacts on competence, engagement, and dimensions of physical literacy, so that teachers' instructional decisions, including lesson structure, student roles, and assessment, become determining factors in learning outcomes (Bessa, 2021; Farias et al., 2020; Invernizzi et al., 2019; Mandigo et al., 2019). Thus, the focus of the study needs to shift from simply "what games" to "how teachers strategize" in planning, implementing, and evaluating the integration of traditional games.

The assessment aspect is also crucial because game-based learning requires assessment that captures both the process and the results, including participation, cooperation, decision-making, and motor development. Student participation in assessment and reflection is seen as strengthening the quality of learning. At the same time, the need for practical instruments (rubrics, checklists, observation notes) is important for realistically monitoring elements of physical literacy in schools. (Aarskog, 2021; Edwards et al., 2018; Essiet et al., 2021; Liu & Chen, 2021). In the context of diverse elementary schools, including inclusive schools, the literature also emphasizes the importance of adapting rules and the learning environment to ensure that all students can participate safely and meaningfully. (Barratt et al., 2024).

Based on this review, micro studies are still needed to highlight the actual practices of PJOK teachers' operational strategies when integrating traditional games in the local context: mapping movement objectives and time allocation, selecting games according to competence and environment, modifying rules, equipment, and space for safety and inclusivity, classroom management to increase active movement time, explicit internalization of cultural/character values, and measurable process and outcome evaluation. This space lays the foundation and establishes the relevance of research on PE teachers' strategies for integrating traditional games into PE learning in elementary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study design to explore in depth the strategies physical education teachers use to integrate traditional games into elementary school lessons. A case study design was chosen because it allows for a holistic understanding of teachers' practices in real school contexts, including situational factors that influence learning decisions. The research was conducted in the Geragai District, Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, with the main locus at SDN 219/X Pandan Lagan and several other elementary schools in the surrounding area.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their teaching experience and experience implementing game-based PJOK learning. The informants in this article consisted of five PJOK teachers (codes I-01 to I-05) who represented a variety of school contexts, namely suburban public schools, private schools with large classes, schools in river areas, inclusive schools, and downtown schools with limited land. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies, supplemented by participatory observation of traditional game-based PJOK learning and by document studies, including teaching tools/lesson plans, assessment records, and teacher journals, to examine the consistency of planning and implementation.

Data analysis followed an interactive model that cycled through data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, then deepened with thematic analysis through the stages of data familiarization, initial coding, theme search, theme review, theme definition/naming, and compilation of findings reports. Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods (interviews, observations, documents), member checking, audit trails, and researcher reflexivity. The study also upholds ethical principles through licensing, participant consent (informed consent), and anonymization of informants.
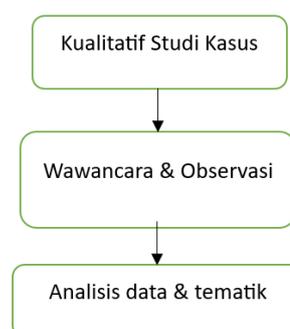
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Analisis data & tematik

Figure 1. Research Design

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis yielded six main themes regarding PJOK teachers' strategies for integrating traditional games into PJOK learning in elementary schools.

The findings show that PJOK teachers' strategy for integrating traditional games follows the logic of "pedagogical transformation": mapping goals, selecting appropriate games, modifying the context, managing the class, instilling values, and assessing the process and results in an integrated manner.

Movement-based planning and time allocation

Teachers design the integration of traditional games by mapping out movement objectives (e.g., agility, reaction, balance, cooperation) and then adapting them into the learning flow and time allocation. Informant I-01 emphasized traditional games as the "answer" to the boredom of conventional warm-ups and incorporated them routinely:

> *"At first, it was because the children quickly got bored with the 'run around the field' warm-up. I tried incorporating galah asin and engklek... Now... at least twice a month."* (I-01)

This pattern aligns with the idea of a physical literacy-enriched pedagogy, which emphasizes active, meaningful learning experiences oriented toward students' overall development. (E. Durden-Myers & Bartle, 2023; Houser & Kriellaars, 2023; Stoddart et al., 2023). Within the framework of physical literacy, good learning provides sufficient practice opportunities, fosters a sense of competence, and develops knowledge about why and how to move. (Cale & Harris, 2018; E. J. Durden-Myers et al., 2018; Fortnum et al., 2025). When teachers allocate time for "rule practice" before the main game (as shown in I-01), this practice can be understood as an effort to improve movement competence and confidence, two important components of physical literacy. (Cairney et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2018).

In planning, teachers arrange the sequence of activities: a brief introduction to the game's origin, a demonstration, practice of rules/techniques, the core game, and reflection on values. I-01 even divides the time per phase (warm-up, practice of rules, game, reflection, cool-down) so that activities are controlled, and learning objectives are achieved. This pattern shows the teacher's strategy of turning the game into a structured lesson rather than just "playing at the end of the lesson."

Selection of competency-based games and environmental context

The selection of games is based on their suitability for the students' motor skills and environmental context. I-03 considers the characteristics of students in river areas and their need for coordination:

> *"The children here live near the river; they are good at running, but sometimes lack coordination. Hadang is suitable."* (I-03)

In private schools with large classes, I-02 chooses games that are safe, age-appropriate, and can involve many children, while modifying the equipment to make it safer:

Context-based game selection strategies (e.g., considering river environments, narrow land, and large class sizes) indicate that the implementation of traditional games is situational and requires adaptive pedagogical decisions. These findings are consistent with the view that teaching PJOK is an "art" that requires teachers to negotiate learning objectives in real-world contexts. (Quennerstedt, 2019).

> *"For marbles, I modified it to use small plastic balls... I changed the rules..."* (I-02)

The games that appeared in the data included galah asin/hadang, engklek, tarik tambang, tarik upih (modified), and coordination games.

Modifying rules, tools, and spaces for safety and inclusivity

Modification is a key strategy for adapting traditional games to diverse school conditions. In schools with limited space, I-05 modified the game into a mini version using simple tools:

"I made the hopscotch court out of duct tape on the terrace floor. I made only three lanes so that it would fit." (I-05)

The issue of inclusivity is a prominent practical contribution. Strategies such as rule differentiation, sensory stimulus reduction, hand gestures, and the buddy system in inclusive schools demonstrate that traditional games can be adapted to the needs of diverse learners. This aligns with the development of effective pedagogical models in early childhood and primary education contexts that emphasize adaptation, supportive learning environments, and enhanced participation. (Barratt et al., 2024). Modifications to equipment and spaces (duct tape, mini versions, track adjustments) reinforce evidence that traditional games can remain effective within limited resources, as long as teachers maintain the principles of safety, rule clarity, and engagement. Empirically, traditional games can even meet the needs of school-based physical activity programs because they generate measurable activity loads. (Adnan et al., 2020) and contribute to the improvement of motor skills (Hussain & Cheong, 2022).

In inclusive schools, I-04 applies differentiated rules and access support so that students with special needs can participate:

"For children with disabilities who have difficulty jumping on one foot, they can use two feet... For children who are sensory sensitive, I reduce the use of whistles and use hand signals instead." (I-04)

Modifications were also made to the game's consequences to keep it fun and non-intimidating. I-01 changed the "death" rule to a light, fun punishment (e.g., five jumping jacks) so that the learning rhythm would not be interrupted and the atmosphere would remain positive.

Implementation and classroom management strategies

The implementation of traditional games is supported by practical classroom management strategies, including brief instructions, quick demonstrations, small-group divisions, station systems, and control signals. I-02 uses stations to reduce waiting time:

"I use the station method... So the children do not have to wait long." (I-02)

I-05 uses a timer and a "stop code" to maintain the pace of learning:

Another important aspect is classroom management. The use of small groups, stations, timers, and stop signals is a strategy to increase active learning time and reduce waiting time, which is often a problem in PE lessons. The station practice demonstrated by I-02 reinforces the importance of organizing learning so that all students have sufficient opportunities to move. From a pedagogical perspective, findings regarding student involvement as "co-teachers" and "rule keepers" reflect more participatory learning. Student involvement in rules and reflection can be seen as aligned with the principles of formative assessment and student participation in assessment, which have been reported to influence learning quality and ownership of the learning process (Aarskog, 2021; Pérez-Pueyo et al., 2020). Furthermore, short reflection exercises (e.g., "What values did you learn today?") can help develop dimensions of knowledge and understanding often overlooked in PE (Cale & Harris, 2018). From a learning model perspective, teacher strategies incorporate elements of game approaches (e.g., TGfU, Sport Education) without being "locked in" to a single model. Mandigo et al.'s (2019) findings suggest that the TGfU approach can support physical literacy development when used with appropriate assessment. Meanwhile, Sport Education has been reported to have transformative potential for students' physical literacy through roles, responsibilities, and team experiences (Farias et al., 2020). At the overview level, the differences in outcomes between traditional teaching and Sport Education also confirm that teachers' pedagogical decisions (lesson structure, student roles, evaluation) influence learning outcomes (Bessa et al., 2021). In this study, teachers appeared to pragmatically adopt these elements: stations, rotating group leaders, the buddy system, value reflection, and timer-based round rotation. Finally, findings regarding supports and constraints (weather, field, parental concerns, noise, minor conflicts between students) suggest that the integration of traditional games is a negotiated practice. Teachers developed communication solutions (inviting parents to observe the lesson), adjusted round durations, moved to different

locations, and implemented conflict-resolution procedures (a 10-second limit on protests). These practices reinforce the argument that integrating traditional games is not merely a methodological innovation but also a shift in learning management and classroom culture.

"I use a timer on my cell phone. I have a code: if I raise my hand, everyone stops." (I-05)

Meanwhile, I-03 involves students as "co-teachers" based on their playing experience:

"I ask first who has played this game at home. They become co-teachers, and I clarify the rules." (I-03)

Participatory observation notes during the *"Mini Galah Asin"* session show consistent classroom management practices: teachers prepare field line tape, divide the area into three guard lanes, organize small groups, implement a "quiet zone" for waiting groups, and use three-minute rounds for rotation. When there were differences of opinion about "hit/no hit," the teacher briefly stopped the game and directed a resolution that kept the game conducive.

Internalization of cultural values and character through the language of values and reflection

Cultural values and character are not left to "emerge on their own," but are instilled through simple language, social rules, and reflection. I-01 instills sportsmanship and honesty through reflective questions:

"After the game, I ask, 'Who was honest enough to admit they were fouled?'" (I-01). I-03 emphasizes social relations ethics:

"I say, you can play hard, but do not be harsh." (I-03)

The strong integration of cultural and character values, such as honesty, sportsmanship, cooperation, discipline, and tolerance, emphasizes traditional games as a context for values education. The emotional experiences and social interactions in traditional games can serve as a "practice space" for managing minor conflicts, accepting defeat, and building empathy. These findings align with studies that position traditional games as rich social-emotional experiences when properly guided. (Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2020; Fitri et al., 2020). Furthermore, traditional game experiences in elementary schools have also been reported to be associated with motivation and certain learning outcomes. (Trajkovik et al., 2018). In this study, the value-language strategies ("playing hard is okay, but do not be hard on your heart"; "fair is not always equal") demonstrate that internalization of values requires explicit pedagogical intervention, not assumptions.

In inclusive schools, the values emphasized are tolerance and understanding of justice:

"If your friend is slow, we wait... the concept of justice is not always the same." (I-04)

Observations reinforce the strategy of internalizing values through teachers' words:

"We play without a referee, so our mouths and hearts must be honest." (Observation notes, Session I-05)

Thus, traditional games are positioned as a medium for character building (honesty, discipline, teamwork, patience in waiting for one's turn, respect for differences), not merely as physical activities.

On the assessment side, the use of rubrics/checklists and brief progress observations demonstrates teachers' efforts to measure achievement realistically. The literature also emphasizes the importance of assessment and reporting tools that teachers can use to monitor physical literacy. (Essiet et al., 2021; Liu & Chen, 2021). Therefore, the evaluation strategy in this study can be viewed as a school-level practice of "evidence-based teaching," although it still requires strengthening the instrument to increase reliability.

Process-outcome evaluation and learning reflection

Teachers conduct evaluations by simultaneously assessing movement and attitude indicators. The instruments used include rubrics, checklists, teacher journals, and video-based reflections. I-04 uses rubrics for participation and social interaction and assesses small motor progress:

"I use a rubric: participation, following instructions, social interaction... from not wanting to jump to wanting to try." (I-04)

I-05 uses short video documentation for reflection:

"I record a short video for reflection: I play it briefly and then ask what was good..." (I-05)

I-02 writes notes in the teacher's journal when there is a change in attitude (for example, students are better able to accept defeat). This evaluation strategy demonstrates an assessment orientation that emphasizes process, involvement, and social values, in line with the objectives of traditional games as holistic learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that physical education teachers' strategies for integrating traditional games into physical education lessons in elementary schools include: (1) goal-based planning and time management; (2) selection of games according to competency and context; (3) modifying rules, equipment, and space for safety and inclusivity; (4) classroom management through small groups, stations, timers, and control signals; (5) internalization of cultural/character values through value language and reflection; and (6) process-outcome evaluation using rubrics, checklists, journals, and video reflection. The integration of traditional games is effective when they are structured and meaningful learning activities. Practical implications: (a) schools and MGMP/KKG PJOK need to encourage the development of a bank of traditional games per competency (e.g., "Melayu Jambi") that includes options for modifying spaces, tools, and rules; (b) teacher training can focus on designing process assessments (rubrics for participation, sportsmanship, cooperation) so that game-based learning has evidence of achievement; (c) schools can initiate traditional game festivals to strengthen culture and the sustainability of practices outside the physical education classroom.

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