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Mapping Traditional Games as Ethnopedagogical Resources for Cultural Sustainability in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Traditional games represent an important repository of local wisdom and serve as ethnopedagogical resources that transmit cultural values, social norms, and indigenous knowledge across generations. Their decline therefore poses a serious threat not only to cultural continuity but also to culturally grounded learning practices. In Southeast Sulawesi (Bumi Anoa), Indonesia, the increasing dominance of digital play has significantly reduced children's engagement with traditional games, weakening ethnopedagogical transmission. This study addresses this gap by examining: (1) The distribution and currenct status of traditional games in South east Sulawesi, (2) Their embedded ethnopedagogical values and (3) their continuity in children's practices. Employing a qualitative multiple-site case study design, data were collected across 17 regencies and cities through field observation, semi-structured interviews with 20 cultural practitioners and community members, educator, researcher and document analysis. The data were analyzed thematically to reveal cultural meanings, pedagogical values, and transmission patterns embedded in the games. The results show that 38 traditional games were identified across 17 regencies and cities in Southeast Sulawesi, with approximately 90% no longer actively played by children, indicating a significant disruption in ethnopedagogical transmission. While many games share structural similarities with traditional games from other regions, linguistic variations reflect strong localized cultural identities. Only about 10% of the games persist, primarily through adult-led cultural performances or competitions, and institutional documentation remains fragmented and limited. This study contributes a comprehensive regional mapping that bridges cultural documentation and integration of Traditional games into culturally responsive learning to sustain local wisdom in digitalized context.

Keywords: Traditional Games; Ethnopedagogical Approach; Indigenous Learning Resources; Curriculum Application; Southeast Sulawesi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional games constitute an integral component of community life and function as a medium for transmitting local wisdom, social norms, and cultural values across generations. Within the ethnopedagogical paradigm, education is understood as a culturally situated process in which learning emerges from indigenous knowledge systems and everyday cultural practices (Arsih et al., 2024; Selasih & Sudarsana, 2018). Traditional games, therefore, are not merely

recreational activities but serve as culturally embedded learning media that facilitate social interaction, moral education, and identity formation in children (Ashar et al., 2024). However, this cultural function is increasingly challenged in the contemporary digital era, the sustainability of traditional games is increasingly threatened as children's play is dominated by digital and commercial games, leading to weakened cultural transmission and diminished engagement with local heritage (Gay, 2021; Hernández & Pérez, 2023).

In response to this shift, Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasizes culturally sustaining pedagogies as a strategic response to globalization and digital disruption (Gay, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2021; Zhou & Brown, 2022). Moreover, studies over the last decade have affirmed the ethnopedagogical value of traditional games for child development (Rahman et al., 2025; Rakhoveio et al., 2025). Research indicates that traditional games promote prosocial behavior, cooperation, and empathy, aligning with Vygotskian notions of social learning embedded in cultural interaction (Yuliani & Suryadi, 2017). Beyond socio-emotional development, traditional games also contribute to linguistic growth, as they enhance children's language development by expanding vocabulary and communicative competence through contextualized interaction and culturally meaningful discourse (Andriati et al., 2025). From an ethnopedagogical perspective, these findings support Darong et al. (2021) the assertion that local culture functions as both learning content and learning method. Furthermore, Martadi & Sampurno (2025); Mohapatra et al. (2025); Treinta et al. (2025), show that integrating traditional games both in conventional and multimedia-based formats strengthens character education while maintaining cultural relevance, reinforcing Arsih et al. (2024) view of education as a vehicle for cultural continuity.

Nevertheless, Despite these advancement, a critical limitation persists in the existing literature, most studies emphasize classroom implementation and learning outcomes rather than cultural preservation and documentation (Calixto et al., 2024; Kurniawan & Hidayati, 2023; Martadi & Sampurno, 2025). As a result, traditional games are often treated as adaptable instructional tools, detached from their sociocultural origins. This tendency reveals a significant reserach gap in the literature: the absence of systematic cultural mapping and institutional documentation of traditional games as ethnopedagogical assets (Martínez & López, 2024). This gap is particularly evident in Southeast Sulawesi (Bumi Anoa), a culturally and linguistically diverse region where many traditional games are no longer practiced by children and survive only through adult-led cultural performances or informal community memory.

To address this gap, the present study position documentation and mapping as central analytical priorities, focuses on the problem of insufficient documentation and spatial mapping of traditional games as vehicles of ethnopedagogical transmission. Without such documentation, efforts to integrate traditional games into education risk cultural simplification and loss of authenticity. This study employs a qualitative case study approach, combining field observations, semi-structured interviews with cultural practitioners and community elders, and literature analysis to rediscover and contextualize traditional games within their regions of origin. The objective of this research is to rediscover the diversity of traditional games in Southeast Sulawesi and to preserve them through a cultural mapping framework grounded in ethnopedagogical theory. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute a comprehensive cultural reference that supports cultural sustainability, informs culturally responsive pedagogy, and ensures that indigenous play-based learning remains accessible to future generations in the midst of accelerating digitalization.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Approach

This study was conducted through multiple stages using a qualitative research design with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach was selected to enable an in-depth and holistic understanding of traditional games as cultural practices embedded within specific social groups (Risku et al., 2022). This approach is particularly relevant for exploring indigenous knowledge systems, cultural transmission, and ethnopedagogical values inherent in traditional games (Subrahmanyam, 2025). The research was carried out during the first year of a multi-stage study and employed a qualitative ethnographic design. Ethnography allows researchers to interpret cultural phenomena from the perspectives of community members by examining practices, meanings, and social contexts (Subrahmanyam, 2025). In this study, the approach was used to document traditional games, explore their cultural significance, and understand their current conditions of practice and transmission within local communities in Southeast Sulawesi.

2.2 Research Site and Informants

The research was conducted in four administrative areas in Southeast Sulawesi Province, Indonesia: Kendari City, Kolaka District, Bombana District, and Bau-bau City. These locations were selected purposively based on cultural diversity, historical relevance, and the presence of traditional games. The research subjects were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the relevance and richness of the data (Rogo, 2024). A total of 20 informants were involved, selected through purposive sampling with clearly defined criteria: (1) possessing direct knowledge or experience of traditional games, (2) holding institutional authority, and (3) being involved in educational practice. The Informants included 2 representatives from the Provincial and District Education Departments, 4 indigenous leaders, and 18 elementary and secondary school teachers. Indigenous leaders were involved due to their cultural authority and knowledge of traditional practices, while educators were included to provide perspectives on the educational relevance and transmission of traditional games.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in two main stages: field observations and interviews, supported by document analysis. The first stage involved field observations in the four selected regions. Observations aimed to identify existing traditional games, locate potential informants, and assess the availability of institutional documentation. During this stage, variations in data availability were encountered. For example, the Education, Youth, and Sports Department of Bombana District did not possess adequate documentation related to traditional games; consequently, researchers were referred to the Moronene Indigenous Council, which provided culturally authoritative information. In contrast, observations in Kolaka District and Kendari City relied on archival sources, particularly the book *Kumpulan Permainan Tradisional Anak* published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1984, which served as an initial reference. Bau-bau City was identified as the only location with official documentation on traditional games, although these games are currently performed mainly by adults during cultural events rather than by children.

The second stage consisted of offline, semi-structured interviews conducted after preliminary data had been gathered from observations. Interviews were conducted with officials

from local education departments and indigenous leaders at each research site to validate observational findings and obtain detailed information on game types, rules, origins, and cultural meanings. And document analysis was employed to corroborate field data, including government archives, cultural records, and published references. This multi-source strategy ensured a comprehensive understanding of both documented and undocumented traditional games.

2.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying relevant information from observations, interviews, and documents. Data display was conducted by organizing the findings into visual forms, primarily maps and photographic documentation, to enhance interpretability. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency and analytical rigor. To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation was applied. Data triangulation was implemented by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis. This strategy enhanced the credibility, validity, and reliability of the findings by reducing potential bias and strengthening interpretative accuracy.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study based on data obtained from interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The results are organized into thematic categories and supported by visualization to enhance clarity and analytical precision.

3.1 Distribution and Origin of Traditional Games in Southeast Sulawesi

The total of 38 traditional games were identified across 17 regencies and cities in Southeast Sulawesi. The spatial distribution of traditional games id presented in Figure 1, which visualizes their regional origins using color-coded cultural map.

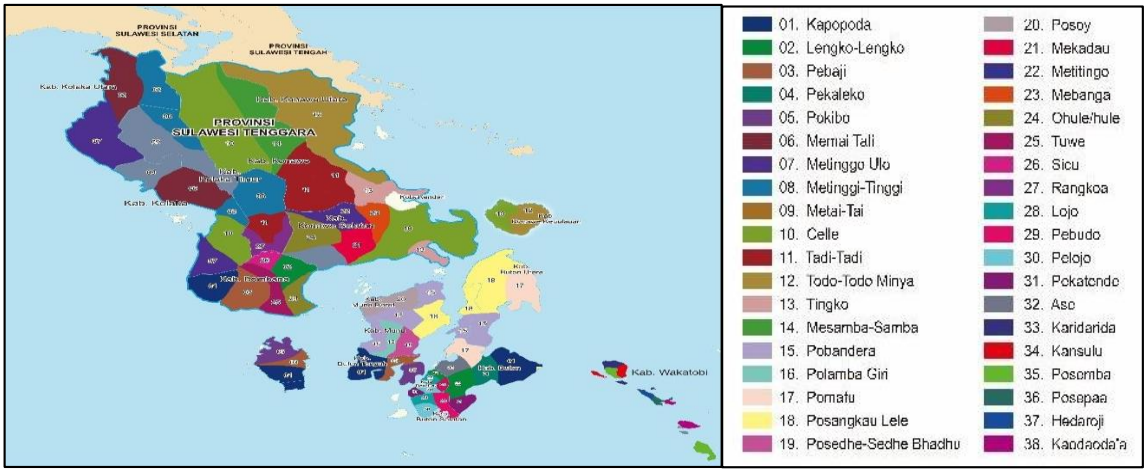

Figure 1. Map of Traditional Game originate from Southeast Sulawesi

Figire 1 demonstrate the distribution of traditional game is uneven across regions. Region such as Buton, Kendari and Kolaka shows relatively higher concentration of document game supported by archieval sourches and institusional references, in contrast, region such as Bombana

rely predominantly on oral transmission through indigineous communities, indicating weaker formal documentation. This disparity suggests that preservation of traditionlla games is strongly influences by local Institutional support and community continuity.

3.2 Current Level of Use and Intergenerational Transmission

Empirical data indicate that approximately 34 out of 38 games (=90%) ar no longer actively played by children, while only 4 games (=10%) remain in use. as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. A traditional game played in the Cultural Festival by older people

Figure 2, these remaining games are not part of children's daily play but are primarily performed in adult-mediated contexts, such as cultural festivals and competitions. The findings highlight a significant shift in transmission patterns, from informal, child-centred play to formalized and symbolic cultural performance. Interview data further reveal that children increasingly prefer digital and commercial games, reducing opportunities for direct engagement with traditional play.

3.3 Transformation of Materials and Game Practices

The study also identifies changes in the material composition of traditional games. Originally, most games utilized natural and locally sourced material (e.g., wood, sheel, and plant fiber). However, field observations (see figure 3) show a growing replacement with industrial material, spinning tops are now mass-produced with plastic or metal materials, and rope-based games use factory-made ropes instead of handwoven rubber bands. These transformations reflect a broader detachment from ecological and cultural contexts, altering both the practice and meaning of the games.



Figure 3. Natural tools for playing traditional games

3.4 Structural Similarities and Linguistic Variation

Across the dataset, many traditional games exhibit similar rules, mechanics, and objectives to games found in other regions of Indonesia. However, the analysis shows that local linguistic variations, including naming conventions and terminology, remain highly distinctive. The results also reveal that many traditional games in Southeast Sulawesi share similar rules and game structures with traditional games from other regions of Indonesia. The primary distinction lies in the local naming conventions, which are derived from regional languages and reflect localized cultural identity.

3.5 Institutional Documentation and Policy Support

The findings reveal limited institutional documentation of traditional games. Only two archival publication (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1984) and one localized cultural report (Bau-bau city) were identified as formal references. In most regions, data are fragmented and dependent on community memory. Moroever, no sustained policy framework or educational program specifically addressing the preservation of traditional games were found. This indicates a structural gap between cultural preservation discourse and implementation at the institutional level.

3.6 Discussion

The findings demonstate a systematic decline in the practice of traditional games among children in Southeast Sulawesi, with approximately 90% no longer actively transmitted to younger generations. From an ethnopedagogical perspective, this condition represents a breakdown in culturally situated learning processes. As argued by Selasih & Sudarsana (2018) conceptualize ethnopedagogy as an educational approach in which local culture functions simultaneously as learning content, method, and context. The disappearance of traditional games therefore signifies not only the loss of recreational practices but also the erosion of indigenous pedagogical systems through which social values, cooperation, and character were traditionally transmitted (Paris & Alim, 2021).

Furthermore, the shift indetify in Fugyre 2, from everyday play to adult cultural performance indicates a transformation from “living culture” to “symbolic culture”. Moreover, Education is inherently a cultural process and the disconnection between schooling and local culture contributes to identity disorientation among younger generations. The results of this study support Rahman et al. (2025) argument, as traditional games in Southeast Sulawesi are no longer integrated into children’s daily lives or educational experiences. Instead, these games persist mainly through adult-led performances at cultural events, indicating a shift from living culture to

symbolic culture. Such a transformation limits the ethnopedagogical function of traditional games as experiential learning media.

The findings further reveal that traditional games increasingly utilize industrial and synthetic materials rather than natural resources. This shift contradicts the principles of local wisdom emphasized in ethnopedagogical theory, which views learning as rooted in ecological and cultural contexts. The transformation of material (Figure 3) further reinforces this decline. According to Alwasilah, the detachment of cultural practices from their original environments weakens their educational meaning and authenticity. Similar concerns are raised by UNESCO (2003) Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which underscores that cultural heritage must be continuously recreated and transmitted within communities to remain sustainable. The replacement of natural materials and the decline in children's participation indicate that traditional games in Southeast Sulawesi are no longer being transmitted in accordance with UNESCO's criteria for living heritage. Cultural mapping has been recognized as a strategic safeguarding mechanism that bridges documentation and educational revitalization (Martínez & López, 2024).

The similarity of traditional game structures across regions, coupled with differences in local naming conventions, reinforces the ethnopedagogical notion that cultural practices are simultaneously universal and localized. This finding aligns with UNESCO's recognition of cultural diversity as a dynamic process shaped by local languages and identities. From Tilaar's perspective, such localized adaptations are critical for fostering cultural pride and contextual learning; however, without systematic documentation, these distinctive elements risk being homogenized or lost.

Institutional limitations identified in this study, including the lack of comprehensive documentation and minimal policy support, further exacerbate the vulnerability of traditional games. UNESCO highlights the role of formal institutions in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through documentation, education, and policy integration. The absence of sustained initiatives from educational and cultural authorities in Southeast Sulawesi suggests a structural gap between cultural preservation discourse and implementation. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that insufficient governmental support accelerates the marginalization of traditional games (Purwaningsih, 2020).

Theoretically, this study contributes to ethnopedagogical scholarship by demonstrating that cultural mapping can function as a strategic bridge between cultural preservation and education. By documenting traditional games according to their regions of origin, this research extends Alwasilah's ethnopedagogical framework into a preservation-oriented methodology. Practically, the findings highlight the urgent need to reintegrate traditional games into educational contexts as culturally responsive learning media. Aligning with Tilaar's vision of culture-based education and UNESCO's safeguarding principles, such integration can support character education, strengthen cultural identity, and address the contemporary cultural crisis faced by younger generations in increasingly digitalized societies.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the decline of Traditional games in Southeast Sulawesi reflects abroader disruption of the ethnopedagogical process, where cultural practices no longer function as an active learning system for the young generation. Theoretically, this research contributes to ethnopedagogical scholarship by demonstrating that cultural mapping can serve as a methodological bridge between cultural preservation and educational application. It extend

exsisting frameworks by positioning traditional games not only as cultural artifacts but spatially grounded pedagogical resources that connect local identity, language, and learning practice.

Practically, the findings underscore the need for systematic documentation, curriculum integration, and institutional support to revitalize traditional games as culturally responsive learning media. Integrating these games into educational settings can strengthen character education, promote social interaction, and reinforce cultural identity in increasingly digitalized contexts. This study is limited by its geographical scope (Four region) and reliance on Qualitative data, which may not fully capture variations across the entire province or quantify patterns of decline. Future research should expand to broader regional coverage, incorporate mixed method approaches, and explore a digital adaptation model of traditional games to support sustainable transmission among the younger generation.

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