

Traditional Games “Boy-Boyan” and “Bebentengan” in Facilitating Social Skills in Elementary School: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Traditional games are one of the cultural heritages that contain educational and social values for children’s development. However, technological advancement has caused traditional games to gradually be abandoned and replaced by digital games that tend to reduce direct social interaction. This study aimed to describe the role of traditional games *boy-boyan* and *bebentengan* in facilitating the social skills of elementary school students. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive ethnographic design to examine the phenomenon of students’ cultural interactions. The research subjects were fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Kebonpedes. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature studies. The findings revealed that the *boy-boyan* game was highly effective in facilitating children’s social skills. Children were required to demonstrate cooperation and effective communication when determining tasks, arranging roof tiles, and throwing the ball. Meanwhile, the *bebentengan* game also effectively facilitated children’s social skills because the players were encouraged to cooperate and communicate while guarding the fortress, capturing opponents, and avoiding enemy attacks. Traditional games help students learn to resolve conflicts fairly and develop positive social relationships with peers, which can serve as an adaptive alternative for character education in elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings who cannot live independently without the assistance of others in carrying out the cycle of life. Human beings constantly require intensive social

interaction to fulfill their daily needs. The ability to interact with the surrounding environment is one of the fundamental competencies that must be instilled and developed in every individual from an early age. During childhood, social skills become a

crucial aspect of personal development. These skills directly influence children's ability to adapt, cooperate, establish positive relationships, and resolve conflicts within their social environment.

Social skills refer to an individual's ability to interact and communicate effectively with others in accordance with the social norms prevailing in society. Lynch and Simpson [1] explain that social skills include the ability to cooperate, demonstrate empathy, participate in groups, help others, communicate effectively, and solve social problems. These skills also represent the cognitive capacity to understand others' feelings and recognize the emotional dynamics experienced by other individuals. Essential social skills encompass dimensions such as communication, cooperation, sharing, participation, and harmonious adaptation, as stated by Wahyuni et al. [2]. According to Seefeldt et al. [3], social skills include the fundamental aspects of communication, sharing, cooperation, and active participation within social groups. These social competencies serve as fundamental capital for children to socialize and position themselves proportionally within community structures.

Social skills constitute a comprehensive capacity that enables individuals to establish positive social relationships through communication, cooperation, empathy, participation, problem-solving abilities, and adaptation to social norms. Social skills are particularly important for elementary school students because, at this developmental stage, children begin to expand the intensity of their interactions with peers in the school environment. Children's success in mastering these skills determines the quality of their future academic and social adaptation. Schools function as the first social laboratory where children practice compromise, negotiation, and tolerance.

The objective reality in the field indicates that many elementary school children still lack mature social skills. Various social problems frequently emerge within school environments, such as bullying, student fights, individualistic attitudes, lack

of empathy, and low teamwork abilities. Cases of violence against children remain a serious concern in the national education sector. The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (*Kemen PPPA*) [4] reported data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*KPAI*), which recorded 141 reports of violence against children at the beginning of the year, with 35% occurring in school environments. These empirical facts confirm that educational institutions remain highly vulnerable to various social problems among children. Bullying behavior in educational settings has systemic and multiplicative negative impacts. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia [5] explains that bullying behavior can lead to numerous adverse effects on children's mental health, including feelings of insecurity, depression, social isolation, and severe stress. The destructive impacts of poor socio-emotional skills are also correlated with children's communication barriers. Children with low socio-emotional skills tend to display passive attitudes, lack self-confidence, and require additional support to develop interaction initiatives, as found by Aurelia et al. [6]. These limitations reduce children's efficiency and productivity when working within groups.

The lack of social skills among children is influenced by various external factors, one of which is the shift in children's play patterns in the modern era. Contemporary children tend to spend more time playing gadget-based digital games rather than engaging in physical games with peers. The presence of gadgets and online games has caused children to play individually within virtual isolation spaces. Excessive gadget usage causes children to neglect direct interaction and communication with their surrounding environment, as explained by Devindah et al. [7]. This contemporary condition gradually erodes children's communication skills, cooperation abilities, and spontaneous empathy toward their real social environments. Although digital games provide instant entertainment, uncontrolled usage creates concerning psychosocial effects. Violent digital games

have been proven to increase aggressive behavior in children's real-life interactions according to Luca [8]. Online game addiction causes children to become rebellious, easily anxious, and less attentive to people around them, based on the analysis by Fitriana et al. [9]. In addition to causing addiction, online games negatively impact children through chronic social isolation and sleep disturbances that reduce learning concentration, as described by Ramadhoni et al. [10]. Sutantri et al. [11] demonstrated a highly significant relationship between online gaming and the decline in children's social interaction quality in elementary schools.

Uncontrolled intensity of online gaming mechanically reduces the quality of children's real social interactions within their surrounding ecosystem. Educators and parents must formulate alternative recreational activities capable of balancing children's psychomotor and social development. One cultural solution that can be optimized is revitalizing traditional games within school environments. Traditional games are forms of local cultural heritage rich in educational values, cooperation, sportsmanship, and social solidarity. These games rely on direct physical interaction, thereby forcing children to dismantle their individualistic barriers.

Traditional games offer abundant benefits for children's holistic development across physical, emotional, and social domains. Kurniati [12] emphasized that traditional games are forms of play activities that develop within particular communities, containing cultural values transmitted from generation to generation. Traditional games act as stimulation media for developing children's social skills because they train self-adjustment, positive interaction, self-control, empathy, and obedience to group regulations, as explained by Wijayanti [13]. Through collective physical activities, children gain a natural laboratory to test their social abilities without rigid pressure.

Traditional games do not merely function as entertainment from the past but have transformed into effective socio-cultural learning media. In West Java, Sundanese

culture possesses a rich variety of traditional games, including *boy-boyan* (*bebencaran*) and *bebentengan*. The *boy-boyan* game is a group game involving gross motor activities such as throwing balls and arranging stacks of broken roof tiles. Meanwhile, *bebentengan* is a tactical team game requiring running speed and defensive strategy to capture the opponent's fortress. Both traditional games possess a high density of social interaction because all players are required to communicate verbally and nonverbally. In the *boy-boyan* game, children negotiate role distribution as throwers, defenders, and tile arrangers under the threat of enemy attacks. In *bebentengan*, children learn to maintain team formations, protect vulnerable teammates, and develop collective offensive strategies. The sociocultural dynamics within these games cultivate social connectedness (*high touch*) to balance the individualistic impacts of modern technology (*high tech*), as proposed by Kurniati [12].

Numerous previous studies have discussed the utilization of traditional games. However, most prior research focused primarily on gross motor development, physical fitness, or cultural preservation documentation. Comparative-descriptive studies specifically examining the role of *boy-boyan* and *bebentengan* in stimulating elementary school students' social skills remain limited. Therefore, this study is essential to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of local wisdom-based learning (*ethnopedagogy*).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditional Games

Traditional games are cultural crystallizations that are transmitted orally and through practice from one generation to another. These games generally utilize simple, environmentally friendly, low-cost materials that are easily found in children's surroundings. Kurniati [12] states that traditional games represent play activities that exist within specific communities and contain moral values as well as collective cultural perspectives. Traditional games teach children about

rights limitation, responsibility recognition, and the logical consequences of rule violations. The use of traditional games in school settings has been proven to significantly improve children's social skills, as shown in the findings of Perdani [14].

2.2 Social Skills

Social skills are defined as an individual's ability to solve interpersonal problems adaptively so that they can integrate harmoniously into society, as explained by Cartledge et al. [15]. Jarolimek [16] categorizes social skills into three main areas: (1) living and working together skills, (2) self-control and social control skills, and (3) skills in exchanging ideas and experiences. Cooperative learning methods have been empirically proven to gradually improve children's social skills across learning cycles, as shown by Wahyuni et al. [2]. A cooperative learning environment encourages children to reduce personal ego for the benefit of group harmony.

2.3 Boy-boyan Game

The *boy-boyan* game, also known as broken tile throwing, is a traditional game from West Java played in teams using a small plastic ball, as described by Gandana et al. [17]. This game integrates locomotor and non-locomotor basic movement skills that can stimulate children's overall developmental aspects, as found by Yuningsih et al. [18]. The implementation of *boy-boyan*, combined with instructional approaches such as the Socratic method, has been shown to significantly improve elementary students' cooperation skills, as reported by Nuraliefah [19].

The *boy-boyan* game is a traditional Sundanese game played in groups. It is also known in different regions of Indonesia under various names. In Central Java, it is called *geprek kampung* or *gebokan*. The game is played by at least five players per team. The tools used are simple, consisting of broken roof tiles stacked together and a plastic ball.

Players are divided into two teams: the throwing team and the defending team. The game begins when the throwing team attempts to knock down the stack of tiles using a ball. After the stack falls, the throwing team must rearrange the tiles while the defending team tries to hit opposing players with the ball before the reconstruction is completed. The throwing team wins if they successfully rebuild the stack, while the defending team wins if all opposing players are hit before completion.

2.4 Bebentengan Game

The *bebentengan* game is a competitive traditional game involving two opposing teams attempting to capture the opponent's fortress pole or base. This game not only trains psychological aspects but also improves physiological capacity such as aerobic endurance (VO_2 max) and agility, as stated by Zubaida et al. [20]. The combination of *bebentengan* and *boy-boyan* has been shown to positively influence students' physical fitness when combined with high learning motivation, according to Putra et al. [21].

The *bebentengan* game, also known as *rerebonan* or *baren*, is a traditional Sundanese game. In other regions, it has different names, such as *bentengan* in East Java and *rok benteng* in Central Java. The game is played by two teams with at least three players each.

The main objective is to capture the opponent's fortress while freeing captured teammates. Each team determines a base as their fortress. Players move out of the base to lure opponents and capture enemy members. Teams also attempt to collect as many prisoners as possible to facilitate attacks on the opponent's fortress. The game continues until one team successfully captures the opposing fortress.

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design using a

sociocultural ethnographic method. This approach was chosen to understand social phenomena naturally, deeply, and contextually regarding children’s adaptive behavior, as suggested by Creswell et al. [22]. The ethnographic method was used to record, analyze, and interpret behavioral patterns, communication, and social habits produced by students during traditional game activities. The researcher acted as the key instrument, directly engaging in the field to capture sociological realities comprehensively. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria relevant to the study objectives, as stated by Sugiyono [23]. The participants were fifth-grade students of SDN 1 Kebonpedes. This grade level was chosen because students are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, enabling them to perform complex reciprocal communication and demonstrate moral awareness of group rules.

Data collection techniques were designed through triangulation to ensure depth and richness of data. Primary data were collected through passive participatory observation during *boy-boy* and *bebentengan* gameplay in the school field. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the homeroom teacher and selected students to explore motivations, feelings, and interpretations of cooperation values. Documentation included photographs of

activities, audio recordings of interviews, and field notes. Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, as proposed by Miles and Huberman and cited by Sugiyono [23]. Data reduction involved selecting and filtering irrelevant information. Data display was organized in descriptive matrices and narrative forms. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation to reduce researcher bias.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on field observations and in-depth interviews, the findings indicate that the traditional games *boy-boy* and *bebentengan* effectively facilitate students’ social skills. Students showed a positive behavioral shift from being passive and individualistic to becoming more communicative and socially engaged. These games stimulated essential indicators of social skills within the elementary school learning environment.

4.1 Social Skills in *Boy-boy*

The *boy-boy* game places students into two contrasting yet interdependent roles: the tile arrangers/throwers and the ball defenders. This dynamic creates intensive social interaction among group members.

Table 1. Social Skills Analysis in *Boy-boy*

Aspect	Explanation
Cooperation	The increase occurred during the precarious arrangement process, the children were arranging and at the same time watching the direction of the ball towards their body. Likewise, the guard team tried to pass the ball to each other to make it easier to throw the opposing team.
Care	The emergence of an attitude of wanting to win the team makes teammates care about the condition of other friends, because by keeping fellow team members in order to arrange quickly, on the other hand avoiding throwing the opponent's ball makes the child care about the condition of colleagues, how can teammates not get thrown or at least minimize losses with only a few members being hit.
Communication	This communication is very dominant in the game process, because every movement of teammates will tell each other the direction of the ball or the arrangement of tiles.
Respect	When the game starts, all the children try their best to win the game, all energy and the best game technique will be used to win the game. On the other hand, all team members have their respective duties, some are distracting the

Aspect	Explanation
	opposing team, some are trying to build a pile of tiles, all work according to their duties.

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

The findings show that *boy-boyan* forces students to suppress egocentric behavior for group survival. The need to rebuild tile stacks under pressure creates positive tension that fosters solidarity.

4.2 Social Skills in *Bebentengan*

The *bebentengan* game places students in a territorial competition requiring speed, strategy, and teamwork.

Table 1. Social Skills Analysis in *Boy-boyan*

Aspect	Explanation
Cooperation	In this game of fortunes, cooperation is essential to win the game. Collaboration occurs especially when the team tries to break into the opponent's fortress, on the other hand, they also have to think about getting as many prisoners as possible to make it easier to break into the opponent's fort, then there is a division of tasks, among others, to outwit or divert the opponent's attention, on the other hand there is also a team trying to break into the opponent's fortress.
Mutual help	In this game, there is a sense of help, when teammate A is captured by team B and teammate A will try to free friends and other teammates A tries to distract the opposing team so that team B's attention is distracted and can free the prisoners smoothly.
Empathy	This empathy attitude arises when a teammate is held captive for a long time and cannot yet be freed from which a feeling of wanting to liberate appears. Empathy also appears when one of the teams can captivate the opposing team, then a feeling of joy will arise over the achievements of teammates.

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

These findings indicate strong social heroism within the game. Acts of rescuing teammates reflect emotional sensitivity and social awareness.

4.3 Discussion

The findings confirm that traditional games such as *boy-boyan* and *bebentengan* effectively facilitate elementary students' social skills. When children are removed from gadget dependency and engaged in traditional games, passive and low-confidence behaviors naturally decrease. This occurs because traditional games require direct dialogue, eye contact, negotiation, and physical interaction, which are absent in digital gaming environments. From a sociocultural perspective, the strength of *boy-boyan* lies in tactical cooperation development. This supports Kurniati [12], who emphasizes that cooperation values in traditional games are formed through understanding individual roles in

achieving group success. Similarly, *bebentengan* strengthens emotional dimensions such as empathy and solidarity, as students risk capture to save teammates.

Furthermore, traditional games serve as preventive tools against bullying behavior in schools. According to Nurrohmah et al. [24], social values embedded in play activities help create a safe school climate. Students trained in sportsmanship and communication tend to resolve conflicts through dialogue rather than aggression. Overall, traditional games function as multidimensional learning tools that stimulate emotional, motoric, and social development simultaneously, as supported by Yusup et al. [25].

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that traditional games *boy-boyan* and *bebentengan*

effectively facilitate and improve elementary students' social skills. These games stimulate cooperation, communication, empathy, mutual help, and sportsmanship among fifth-grade students of SDN 1 Kebonpedes. Traditional games successfully transform students' individualistic and gadget-dependent behavior into more adaptive, socially engaged, and norm-sensitive behavior.

Schools and educators are encouraged to reintegrate traditional games into extracurricular activities, especially within Physical Education (PJOK) and character education programs. Parents should

also be educated to limit children's gadget usage at home. Future research is recommended to apply mixed-method approaches to examine broader psychological variables in larger populations.

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