

From Play to Spiritual Formation: A Literature Review on *Dolanan Anak* and Its Integration into Early Islamic Education

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Abstract: This study examines traditional Javanese children's games (*dolanan anak*) as cultural artifacts that carry the potential for integrative Islamic pedagogy, particularly in embedding the values of *tauhid* (monotheism) and *tazkiyatun nafs* (spiritual purification) in early childhood education. Utilizing a qualitative library research method with a hermeneutic-thematic and ethnopedagogical approach, the research analyzes six classical Javanese manuscripts—*Serat Centhini* (1814), *Javanische Kinderspelen* (1912), *Serat Rarya Saraya* (1913), *Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes* (1930), *KBG 926–928* (1930), and *Dolanan ing Klaten* (1942). The findings reveal that games such as *sluku-sluku bathok*, *cak ingkling*, *cublak-cublak suweng*, and *gobag sodor* not only develop children's motor, cognitive, emotional, and social skills but also embody spiritual values such as honesty (*amanah*), patience (*sabr*), compassion (*rahmah*), and discipline. From the perspective of Islamic pedagogy, *dolanan* can be reconstructed as a medium for internalizing *tauhid*-based values through the reinforcement of *fitrah* (natural disposition), social ethics, and worship in interpersonal relations (*mu'amalah*). Games that involve self-control, deliberation, and cooperation align with the principles of *tarbiyah Islamiyah* as reflected in *Surah Luqman* [31]:13–19 and *Surah At-Tahrim* [66]:6. Traditional games also function as *ta'dib* (ethical cultivation) and *tazkiyah* when accompanied by Islamic narratives, prophetic exemplars, or short prayers integrated into play contexts. This study affirms that Javanese children's games contain symbolic meanings aligned with Islamic values and can be adapted into early childhood curricula based on the integration of culture and religion. The findings pave the way for developing prophetic learning models that balance local cultural heritage and spiritual education, serving both as educational innovation and cultural preservation. Empirical validation in contemporary early childhood settings is needed to strengthen the contribution of this model to contextually grounded and holistic Islamic education.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji permainan tradisional anak-anak Jawa (*Dolanan Anak*) sebagai artefak budaya yang menyimpan potensi pedagogis Islam integratif, khususnya dalam penanaman nilai "*tauhid*" dan "*tazkiyatun nafs*" pada anak usia dini. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan penelitian pustaka kualitatif dengan metode hermeneutik-tematik dan etnopedagogis terhadap enam manuskrip klasik Jawa—"Serat Centhini" (1814), "Javanische Kinderspelen" (1912), "Serat Rarya Saraya" (1913), "Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes" (1930), "Moens Album KBG 926–928" (1930), dan "Dolanan ing Klaten" (1942). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa permainan seperti "sluku-sluku bathok", "cak ingkling", "cublak-cublak suweng", dan "gobag sodor" tidak hanya mengembangkan kemampuan motorik, kognitif, sosial, dan emosional anak, tetapi juga mengandung nilai spiritual seperti kejujuran (*amanah*), kesabaran (*sabr*), kasih sayang (*rahmah*), dan kedisiplinan. Dalam perspektif pedagogi Islam, *dolanan* dapat direkonstruksi sebagai media internalisasi nilai-nilai *tauhid* melalui penguatan kesadaran *fitrah*, adab bermasyarakat, dan ibadah sosial (*mu'amalah*). Permainan yang melibatkan pengendalian diri, musyawarah, dan kebersamaan menunjukkan keselarasan dengan prinsip-prinsip *tarbiyah Islami* sebagaimana tergambar dalam QS. Luqman [31]:13–19 dan QS. At-Tahrim [66]:6. Permainan tradisional juga berfungsi sebagai "*ta'dib*" dan "*tazkiyah*", yakni proses pendidikan moral dan penyucian jiwa, apabila disertai dengan narasi Islami, teladan Nabi, atau doa-doa

pendek dalam konteks bermain. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa dolanan anak Jawa memiliki makna simbolik yang sejalan dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan dapat diadaptasi dalam kurikulum PAUD berbasis integrasi budaya dan agama. Temuan ini membuka ruang untuk pengembangan model pembelajaran profetik yang menyeimbangkan aspek budaya lokal dan pendidikan spiritual, sekaligus menjadi bentuk inovasi edukatif dan pelestarian warisan budaya. Validasi empiris di lingkungan PAUD kontemporer diperlukan untuk memperkuat kontribusi model ini dalam pendidikan Islam anak usia dini secara kontekstual dan menyeluruh.

1. Introduction

Traditional children's games are not only representations of local cultural expressions but also play a significant role as vehicles for social, emotional, and moral learning for children across global societies.¹ Amidst the currents of modernization and the dominance of digital media in children's lives, the existence of traditional games (*dolanan*) has increasingly been marginalized, despite their continuing relevance in shaping children's cultural identity and character.² In the context of early childhood education (ECE), the integration of culturally based local games can strengthen a holistic educational approach that involves cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions.³ Through repetition and social interaction while singing and playing, values such as mutual respect, patience, and empathy are naturally embedded in children's behavior.⁴ Research shows that traditional Javanese children's songs function not only as entertainment but also as tools for internalizing moral values such as honesty, cooperation, and responsibility from an early age.⁵ Therefore, it is important to re-explore traditional children's games as cultural artifacts with high educational value. One promising approach is through the study of classical manuscripts that historically document various children's games, particularly in Javanese culture.

Within the disciplines of education and cultural studies, traditional children's games have been examined as instruments of character education, local identity reinforcement, and as media for cultural preservation.⁶ Meanwhile, in philology and anthropology, classical manuscripts have been shown to contain valuable documentation of social practices, including children's games, which can be analyzed to trace the cultural values of past societies.⁷ The integration of classical manuscript studies with holistic education approaches in early childhood settings remains limited, thus opening a space for the development of new interdisciplinary perspectives. Combining textual studies with pedagogical approaches can expand the horizon of utilizing cultural artifacts as learning resources for early childhood education. Therefore, research on children's

¹ Agus Utomo and Wahyudi Wahyudi, "Dolanan Anak Tradisional Dan Internalisasi Nilai Karakter Di Sekolah Dasar: Studi Empiris Di Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 10, no. 2 (2020): 123–39.

² Siti Noor and Maftuh Basyuni, "Lagu Dan Permainan Tradisional Dalam Pembentukan Spiritualitas Anak Usia Dini: Studi Kasus Lagu Betawi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini* 6, no. 2 (2018): 121–35.

³ Rafiq Gul, Nadia Bashir, and Anila Ali, "Cultural Pedagogy in Early Childhood: Integrating Traditional Games in Kashmir PAUD Programs," *Journal of Multicultural Education* 18, no. 1 (2024): 89–103, doi:10.1108/JME-11-2023-0176.

⁴ Jodie Lynn Selly, *The Art of Holistic Education through Singing Games in Early Childhood* (New York: Holistic Learning Press, 2014).

⁵ Supeni Supeni, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Moral Dalam Lagu Dolanan Tradisional Jawa Untuk Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak* 9, no. 1 (2020): 45–57, doi:10.32509/jpa.v9i1.2020.

⁶ Elvara Norma Aroyandini and Nur Hamid, "Revitalisasi Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Dolanan Anak Guna Mewujudkan Generasi Sadar Budaya," *Faktor: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 8, no. 1 (2021): 60–72, doi:10.30998/fjik.v8i1.8652.

⁷ Lian Siew Tan, "Symbolic Structures and Cultural Codes in Southeast Asian Children's Games: A Semiotic Approach," *Asian Journal of Folklore Studies* 3, no. 1 (2015): 44–62.

games in ancient Javanese manuscripts can significantly contribute to the development of culturally based curricula in both local and national contexts.

Although various studies have explored traditional games as tools for character education, most remain focused on contemporary practices and field observations, rather than on literary traces found in classical manuscripts.⁸ As a result, the pedagogical potential of traditional written sources—such as “Serat Centhini” or “Javanese Kinderspielen”—has not been optimally utilized in the development of early childhood education. These manuscripts reflect rich cultural heritage and contextual educational values that align with modern educational paradigms for children.⁹ The lack of attention to classical literary sources also implies a weak integration between literary cultural preservation and contemporary educational practices. Therefore, a systematic study of traditional children’s games found in ancient Javanese manuscripts is needed to fill this gap.

Several contemporary studies have emphasized the importance of traditional games as a means for character education and the development of children’s socio-emotional capacities through direct community observations.¹⁰ These studies show that games like “*engklek*”, “*gobak sodor*”, and “*jamuran*” are effective in instilling values of empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. However, the data sources used are still empirical and temporary, without directly connecting to the literary roots of past cultures. Most of these studies also fail to touch upon the aspects of spirituality and cosmology embedded in the symbolic structures of children’s games. Thus, this observation-based approach provides a useful starting point but still leaves room for exploration of the historical and textual dimensions of “*dolanan anak*”.

Studies of classical manuscripts such as “Serat Centhini” have revealed noble values of moral, social, and cultural education within Javanese society that remain relevant in today’s educational context.¹¹ These texts contain representations of children’s activities, including games, as part of the value internalization process in daily life. Previous research has tended to focus on the moral and spiritual narratives contained in the texts, but not specifically on children’s games. Some literature reviews also suggest that this written heritage contains symbolic codes and cultural practices with potential educational functions for early childhood education.¹² Therefore, an in-depth examination of the forms and contexts of children’s games in classical manuscripts is needed to expand the utilization of cultural literacy in education.

Cross-cultural studies show that traditional games from various regions of Asia and the Middle East—including those documented in colonial manuscripts—contain complex symbolic structures closely related to the educational values of their respective societies. Traditional games carry cultural fragments and function as agents of

⁸ Theresia Cintya Widyana and Gregorius Ari Nugrahanta, “Peran Permainan Tradisional Terhadap Karakter Empati Anak Usia 6-8 Tahun,” *Jurnal Basicedu* 5, no. 6 (2021): 5445–55, doi:10.31004/basicedu.v5i6.1585.

⁹ Dyah Ayu Sari, Umi Fauziyah, and Dede Wulandari, “Representasi Nilai Moral Dalam Serat Centhini Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter,” *Jurnal Sastra Dan Budaya* 5, no. 1 (2021): 73–88.

¹⁰ Abdul Ashar, Nia Husna, and Hasan Ramadhan, “Permainan Tradisional Sebagai Media Regulasi Emosi Dan Penguatan Identitas Budaya Anak,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Holistik* 10, no. 2 (2024): 100–116.

¹¹ I. G. N. A. J. Putra, “Pendidikan Nilai Dalam Teks Tradisional Jawa: Studi Konten Serat Centhini,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan* 24, no. 3 (2019): 295–310.

¹² Gul, Bashir, and Ali, “Cultural Pedagogy in Early Childhood: Integrating Traditional Games in Kashmir PAUD Programs.”

enculturation in children's communities.¹³ For example, studies on Indian traditional games reveal their symbolic role in cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as in transmitting cultural values through cognitive and sociocultural theoretical frameworks. Culturally based pedagogical models, such as those developed in Kashmir and Southeast Asia, demonstrate the success of integrating traditional games into holistic early childhood education.¹⁴ Studies highlight values such as honesty, sportsmanship, and respect for rules found in games like "*Hompimpa*", which serve as character education tools.¹⁵ However, most of these studies do not examine the Javanese context or written sources such as local manuscripts that systematically record forms of children's games. Moreover, the implementation of "*dolanan anak*" in Indonesia's ECE curriculum remains limited to informal or incidental activities.

Through qualitative studies in several private kindergartens, it has been found that the inclusion of traditional games largely depends on teacher initiative and lacks a clear pedagogical framework.¹⁶ The limited teacher training and scarcity of teaching materials are the main contributing factors.¹⁷ The absence of formal assessment indicators for "*dolanan*" activities also results in their marginalization in curriculum implementation. Teachers tend to prioritize activities that can be quantitatively assessed and align with institutional supervision formats. Furthermore, most early childhood institutions still treat traditional games as supplemental activities that are not directly linked to achieving basic competencies in learning.¹⁸ Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by offering a philological and ethnopedagogical approach based on ancient Javanese manuscript sources

Despite previous efforts to explore traditional children's games as educational tools, no comprehensive study has yet identified, classified, and analyzed such games based on classical Javanese manuscripts. For example, research on traditional games in Surakarta tends to be empirical—based on interviews and field observations—without referencing written sources such as classical manuscripts.¹⁹ Most prior studies focus only on the values or contemporary contexts without linking the forms of games to authentic literary cultural artifacts. Moreover, there is no specific study examining the contribution of manuscript-based "*dolanan*" to the holistic development of children, including moral-spiritual and socio-emotional aspects simultaneously. Marlina's research is documentary in nature and collects existing "*dolanan*" forms still practiced in Javanese society but does

¹³ Roman Stengelin et al., "Spreading the Game: An Experimental Study on the Link between Children's Overimitation and Their Adoption, Transmission, and Modification of Conventional Information," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 213 (2022): 105271, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2021.105271>.

¹⁴ R. Mehta and S. Kumar, "Revitalizing Traditional Indian Games in Contemporary Education: A Cultural and Holistic Paradigm," *International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation* 20 (2025): 45–61, doi:[10.1016/j.ijeri.2025.01.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijeri.2025.01.004).

¹⁵ Hompimpa Research Team, "Makna Simbolik Permainan Hompimpa Dalam Pendidikan Karakter Anak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter Nusantara* 7, no. 1 (2025): 22–36, doi:[10.31227/jpkh.v7i1.2025](https://doi.org/10.31227/jpkh.v7i1.2025).

¹⁶ R. Mutia, "Implementasi Permainan Tradisional Dalam Pembelajaran Di TK Swasta: Studi Kualitatif Di Kota Bandung," *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 10, no. 2 (2021): 134–47, doi:[10.21009/jpaud.102.2021](https://doi.org/10.21009/jpaud.102.2021).

¹⁷ L. Astuti and T. S. Handayani, "Evaluasi Kurikulum PAUD Dalam Konteks Permainan Tradisional: Analisis Kebijakan Dan Praktik," *Jurnal Kebijakan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 5, no. 1 (2023): 45–58, doi:[10.36709/jkpaud.v5i1.2023](https://doi.org/10.36709/jkpaud.v5i1.2023).

¹⁸ R. Hidayat and S. Wardani, "Pengembangan Model Integrasi Dolanan Anak Ke Dalam Pembelajaran Tematik PAUD," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Anak* 9, no. 2 (2020): 112–26, doi:[10.21009/jipaud.092.2020](https://doi.org/10.21009/jipaud.092.2020).

¹⁹ S. Handayani and N. R. Damayanti, "Eksplorasi Jenis-Jenis Permainan Tradisional Anak Di Wilayah Surakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Lokal* 4, no. 2 (2022): 89–102, doi:[10.31227/jpkl.v4i2.2022](https://doi.org/10.31227/jpkl.v4i2.2022).

not relate them to historical documents such as classical manuscripts.²⁰ The limited exploration of ancient literary sources results in the loss of cultural heritage potential as an alternative educational resource. While works by Moens and Overbeck serve as early documentation of Javanese and Malay children's games, they have rarely been reexamined in the context of modern education. Academic studies using these manuscripts as a basis for pedagogical interpretation remain scarce or nearly nonexistent. Thus, there exists a methodological and substantive gap that must be addressed through a cross-disciplinary approach combining philology, pedagogy, and cultural anthropology.

This study aims to identify and classify the forms of Javanese traditional children's games contained in six classical manuscripts—"Serat Centhini" (1814), "Javanische Kinderspelen" (1912), "Serat Rarya Saraya" (1913), "Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes" (1930), "KBG 926-928" (1930), and "Dolanan ing Klaten" (1942)—and analyze their educational values from the perspective of holistic early childhood education. Using philological and interpretive approaches, the research reconstructs the forms of games based on textual evidence, tools used, and social contexts, and then examines their contributions to children's cognitive, physical, social, moral, and spiritual development. The primary contribution of this study lies in the development of a manuscript-based database of Javanese "*dolanan*" as a reference for local curricula in early childhood education. Furthermore, this research proposes the contextual and applicable integration of literary cultural heritage into modern Islamic educational practice. The results are expected to strengthen cultural preservation efforts and foster the Islamic character formation of Indonesian children from an early age.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative methodology using a library research approach that is hermeneutic-interpretive in nature to analyze classical Javanese manuscripts containing traditional children's games (*dolanan anak*).²¹ The primary focus of this research is to identify and interpret the educational, cultural, and Islamic pedagogical values embedded in the textual representations of these games. Six major manuscripts serve as the primary data sources: Serat Centhini Volume 2,²² Javanische Kinderspelen,²³ Serat Rarya Saraya,²⁴ Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes,²⁵ KBG 926-928,²⁶ and Dolanan ing Klaten.²⁷ The research design is exploratory-analytical, aimed at constructing a theoretical framework for holistic early childhood education (ECE), rooted in local cultural heritage and Islamic values.

Data collection is carried out through systematic textual analysis of the selected manuscripts using a coding strategy adapted from cultural semiotics and Islamic education discourse analysis. The analytical procedure includes close reading, thematic

²⁰ Marlina Marlina, "Inventarisasi Dolanan Anak Tradisional Di Komunitas Jawa: Studi Dokumentatif Di Kabupaten Bantul" (Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2020).

²¹ A. L. George and A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005).

²² Paku Buwana V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II* (Surakarta: Keraton Surakarta Hadiningrat, 1814).

²³ Prawira Winarsa, *Javanische Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen* (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1912).

²⁴ H. Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1930).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ J.L. Moens, *KBG 926-928: Jongenspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen*, 1930.

²⁷ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten* (Klaten: Taman Pustaka Rakyat, 1942).

coding, and intertextual interpretation, with emphasis on linguistic expressions, narrative forms, and symbolic representations in each game. Research tools include digital databases of classical manuscripts, Javanese script transliteration software, and qualitative data analysis software used to classify and triangulate codes across texts. To ensure reliability, a staged coding process was conducted by three researchers using cross-validation techniques, while validity was achieved through referential triangulation with Islamic educational sources such as tafsir, hadith, and classical pedagogical texts.

The final analysis synthesizes the cultural meanings and Islamic ethical values embedded in the games into a conceptual model for developing an integrative ECE curriculum. This model ensures contextual relevance while maintaining spiritual alignment with the foundational principles of *tauhid*, *tazkiyatun nafs*, and *tarbiyah Islamiyah*.



Figure 1. Qualitative Research Methodology: Javanese Classical Manuscripts

3. Results

This section details the findings from each primary manuscript that served as the primary data source for the study. Each manuscript is analyzed individually to highlight its unique contribution to the understanding of ancient Javanese children's games.

3.1. Analysis of Findings Based on Ancient Javanese Manuscripts

Ancient Javanese children's games, as reflected in classical manuscripts, offer profound insights into cultural values and the role of informal education within traditional society.²⁸ Serat Centhini emphasizes these games as a medium for social and spiritual internalization, while Javanische Kinderspelen presents a systematic pedagogical documentation.²⁹ Overbeck adds the musical and symbolic dimensions of girls' lullaby songs (*tembang dolanan*),³⁰ and Moens provides a gendered perspective and social structure analysis through game classification.³¹ Dolanan in Klaten also reflects the cultural resilience of Javanese children during the colonial period.³² This study examines

²⁸ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

²⁹ Winarsa, *Javanische Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

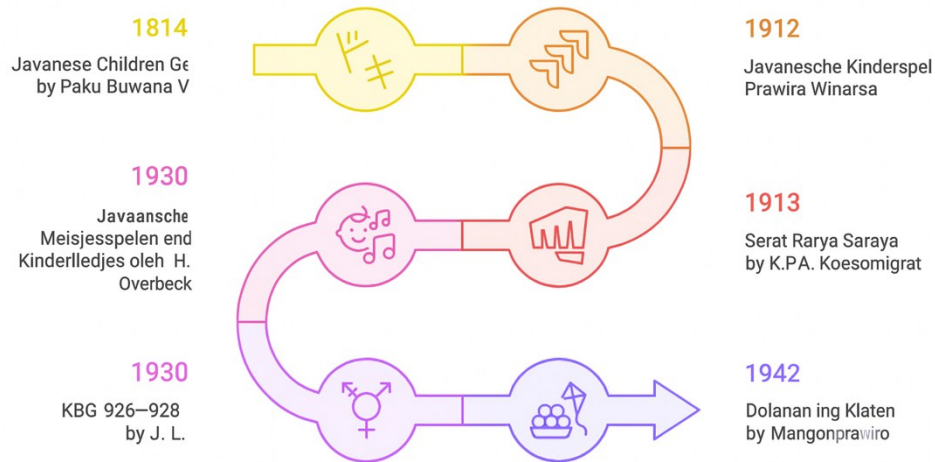
³⁰ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

³¹ Moens, *KBG 926-928: Jongensspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen*.

³² Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

two main objectives: the classification of game forms and the analysis of their holistic educational values in early childhood education, grounded in the manuscripts.

Figure 2. Tracing Ancient Javanese Children's Games through Classical Texts



The findings reveal that ancient Javanese children's games were not merely a form of entertainment, but served as integrated media for the development of gross and fine motor skills, cognition, emotion, social interaction, moral reasoning, and spirituality.^{33,34} For instance, *cak ingkling* and *gobag sodor* enhance motor coordination and cooperative behavior,³⁵ while *dhelikan* and *bekelan* stimulate spatial awareness, concentration, and imagination.³⁶ Overbeck's *Sluku-Sluku Bathok* enriches musical and emotional identity dimensions,³⁷ and Moens adds gender and social structure analysis through his classification of boys' and girls' games.³⁸ Meanwhile, *Dolanan ing Klaten* underscores intergenerational value transfer and community involvement during times of crisis.³⁹ These findings affirm the role of traditional games as instruments of character and cultural education.⁴⁰

3.1.1. Serat Centhini Volume 2

Serat Centhini Vol. 2 stands as a literary masterpiece that preserves extensive narratives about Javanese social life, including children's play. Games such as *cak ingkling*, *gobag sodor*, and *jethungan* are presented not only as recreational activities but also as vehicles for transmitting cultural and social values.⁴¹ *Cak ingkling* emphasizes motor control and balance; *gobag sodor* instills strategy, cooperation, and sportsmanship; while *jethungan* reflects affection and spontaneity in children's social relationships. The communal spaces such as village squares or home yards where these games took place illustrate their deep integration into Javanese communal life, creating a contextual, community-based learning ecosystem. Moreover, Serat Centhini positions traditional games as informal pedagogical media embodying principles of mutual cooperation, egalitarianism, and

³³ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

³⁴ Winarsa, *Javanische Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

³⁵ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

³⁶ Winarsa, *Javanische Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

³⁷ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

³⁸ Moens, *KBG 926–928: Jongenspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen*.

³⁹ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁴⁰ Utomo Utomo and Wahyudi Wahyudi, "Dolanan Anak Sebagai Instrumen Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 10, no. 1 (2020): 15–28.

⁴¹ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

noble values like honesty, patience, and responsibility. In the context of Early Childhood Education (ECE), this manuscript presents rich potential for holistic development across physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive domains. Its uniqueness lies not only in descriptive richness but also in philosophical-symbolic dimensions, making it a foundational source for reconstructing culturally grounded ECE paradigms.

3.1.2. *Javanische Kinderspelen* (Prawira Winarsa, 1912)

This manuscript represents one of the earliest systematic documentations of Javanese children's games, written during the colonial era using an ethnopedagogical approach.⁴² By combining Dutch and Javanese language in its title, it reflects a preservation effort of local traditions within a modern-colonial framework. Winarsa thoroughly described the gameplay, tools, and meanings behind games like *dhelikan*, *bekelan*, *dhakon*, and *sluku-sluku bathok*, while emphasizing their educational and character-building functions. *Bekelan* enhances fine motor coordination; *dhakon* develops logical thinking; and *dhelikan* and *sluku-sluku bathok* foster social-emotional growth. This manuscript highlights children as active cultural agents rather than passive recipients. It aligns with modern experiential learning theories that stress participatory, context-based education. Its methodological structure makes it a strong primary source for developing a culturally integrated ECE model combining cognitive, affective, social, and physical domains.

3.1.3. *Serat Rarya Saraya* (K.P.A. Koesoemadiningrat, 1913)

This ethnographic-literary work reflects the author's cultural sensitivity to daily life, child-rearing practices, and communal games in Javanese society.⁴³ While not solely dedicated to play, it offers narratives showing games as part of value transmission, ethical formation, and social integration. Games like *caklempong*, *engklek*, and riddle-chanting activities serve to develop empathy (*tepa salira*), social bonding (*srawung*), and self-discipline. The narrative and reflective style places children's play within the spiritual and social structures of society. *Caklempong*, for example, promotes collaboration and rhythm; riddle games stimulate linguistic and critical thinking; while *engklek* teaches patience and social responsibility. These portrayals affirm that traditional ECE already embraced integrative-holistic methods before Western experiential learning theories emerged, establishing its epistemological significance.

3.1.4. *Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes* (H. Overbeck, 1930)

This monumental documentation includes over 690 children's songs with lyrics, rhythmic notation, and cultural interpretations.⁴⁴ Overbeck not only recorded them as oral heritage but crafted a pedagogical narrative emphasizing their musical, symbolic, and emotional functions. Songs like *Sluku-Sluku Bathok*, *Jamuran*, and *Cublak-Cublak Suweng* are tools for character formation, gender awareness, and social integration. This manuscript confirms the power of music and narrative in early education. It builds memory, emotion, and social communication. The songs also carry gendered cultural codes, implicitly teaching responsibility, empathy, and even social critique. Overbeck's work strengthens the argument for *dolanan* as an expressive and transformative pedagogical tool for ECE.

3.1.5. KBG 926–928 (J.L. Moens, 1930)

These ethnographic records in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen—KBG 926 (boys' games), KBG 927 (girls' games), and KBG 928 (card/dice games)—document the

⁴² Winarsa, *Javanische Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

⁴³ K. P. A. Koesoemadiningrat, *Serat Rarya Saraya* (Naskah Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Kode: PNRI KJ.123) (Jakarta: PNRI, 1913).

⁴⁴ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

diversity of Javanese children's games by gender and play characteristics.⁴⁵ Boys' games (e.g., *gasingan*, *egrang*) were physical, competitive, and bravery-oriented. Girls' games (e.g., *masak-masakan*, *nina bobok*) focused on nurturing, communication, and aesthetics. Meanwhile, adult-imitative games in KBG 928 show acculturation and cognitive development through strategy and imagination. Moens' documentation reveals traditional games' holistic pedagogical potential, addressing all developmental domains. The gender classification reveals colonial-era parenting patterns while informing inclusive ECE curricula grounded in local values.

3.1.6. Dolanan ing Klaten (Mangonprawiro, 1942)

Compiled during the Japanese occupation, this manuscript documents cultural resilience through children's play in Klaten, Central Java.⁴⁶ Games like *ular naga panjang*, *cak-cakan*, and *jogangan* are described alongside folk narratives and rhymes, enriching their cultural and symbolic dimensions. These games promoted cooperation, rhythm-based communication, agility, and community bonding. *Dolanan ing Klaten* becomes an essential source for holistic, culturally grounded ECE approaches. It affirms play not only as learning activity but as a cultural event engaging children, families, and communities. It advocates for the revitalization of *dolanan* as a medium for character and cultural education in today's ECE practices.

3.2. Analytical Synthesis: Typology, Values, and Holistic Dimensions

This section presents a synthesis of the findings spread across various manuscripts, classifying them into integrated typologies, values, and holistic dimensions.

3.2.1. Game Typology and Value Classification

The typological analysis of games—by type, tool, and social context—produced a comprehensive map of traditional play documented in all manuscripts, including *jethungan*, *engklek*, *caklempong*, and *ular naga panjang*.^{47,48,49} Gender-based classification in KBG 926–928 emphasizes the diverse physical and affective dimensions between boys' and girls' games.⁵⁰ Core values such as discipline, solidarity, and empathy were also identified.^{51,52} Analysis further reveals that girls' songs encode cultural resistance to gender stereotypes.⁵³ These insights expand the empirical base and contribute to value integration frameworks in ECE.

⁴⁵ Moens, KBG 926–928: *Jongensspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen*, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen.

⁴⁶ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁴⁷ Koesoemadinigrat, *Serat Rarya Saraya (Naskah Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Kode: PNRI KJ.123)*.

⁴⁸ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

⁴⁹ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁵⁰ Moens, KBG 926–928: *Jongensspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen*, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen.

⁵¹ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁵² Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

⁵³ Ibid.

3.2.2. Holistic Dimensions in Play

The study demonstrates how holistic domains—physical, cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual—are reintegrated within a single traditional play activity.^{54,55,56} Games such as *dhakon* and *bekelan* foster logic, strategy, and fine motor precision.⁵⁷ Rhythmic games like *sluku-sluku bathok* and *caklempong* encourage emotional regulation and inclusive group dynamics.^{58,59} Significantly, despite colonial and military pressures, cultural continuity persisted, as seen in Mangonprawiro's records,⁶⁰ affirming the relevance of culturally specific pedagogies in ECE.⁶¹

3.2.3. Summary of the Classification of Ancient Javanese Children's Games

The following is a table summarizing the classification of findings from various manuscripts:

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings from Interviews, Observations, and Documentation

Manuscript	Type of Game	Aspects Developed	Cultural and Social Values	Contribution to ECE
Serat Centhini Vol. 2 (Paku Buwana V, 1814)	Cak ingkling, Gobag sodor, Jethungan	Gross motor skills, cooperation, affection, social responsibility	Mutual cooperation, honesty, patience, responsibility	Community-based education model with noble cultural values
Javanesche Kinderspelen (Prawira Winarsa, 1912)	Dhelikan, Bekelan, Dhakon, Sluku-sluku bathok	Logic, fine motor skills, coordination, socio-emotional	Joy, social interaction, participatory learning	Experiential and contextual learning through play
Serat Rarya Saraya (Koesoemadiningrat, 1913)	Caklempong, Engklek, Riddles and chants	Cooperation, rhythm, linguistic, social rules	Empathy, social bonding (srawung), self-discipline	Epistemology of ECE rooted in local values and philosophy
Javaansche Meisjesspelen en Kinderliedjes (Overbeck, 1930)	Sluku-sluku bathok, Jamuran, Cublak-cublak suweng	Musicality, emotion, artistic expression, communication	Gendered cultural codes, empathy, social critique	Integrative thematic media for moral and social expression
KBG 926-928 (J. L. Moens, 1930)	Gasingan, pretend cooking, leaf weaving, card & dice games	Physical, aesthetics, communication, strategy	Social identity, caregiving, bravery, solidarity	Inclusive and experience-based ECE model
Dolanan ing Klaten (Mangonprawiro, 1942)	Ular naga panjang, Cak-cakan, Jogangan	Social negotiation, rhythm of language, balance	Mutual cooperation, honesty, perseverance	Intergenerational space and collective community values

⁵⁴ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

⁵⁵ Winarsa, *Javanesche Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

⁵⁶ Koesoemadiningrat, *Serat Rarya Saraya (Naskah Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Kode: PNRI KJ.123)*.

⁵⁷ Winarsa, *Javanesche Kinderspelen: Volkskundig Onderzoek Naar Het Spel van Javaansche Kinderen*.

⁵⁸ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

⁵⁹ Koesoemadiningrat, *Serat Rarya Saraya (Naskah Koleksi Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Kode: PNRI KJ.123)*.

⁶⁰ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁶¹ Gul, Bashir, and Ali, "Cultural Pedagogy in Early Childhood: Integrating Traditional Games in Kashmir PAUD Programs."

3.3. Integrating Traditional Games with Islamic Educational Values

This section analyzes how the values and concepts in traditional Javanese games can be integrated and contextualized within an Islamic educational framework.

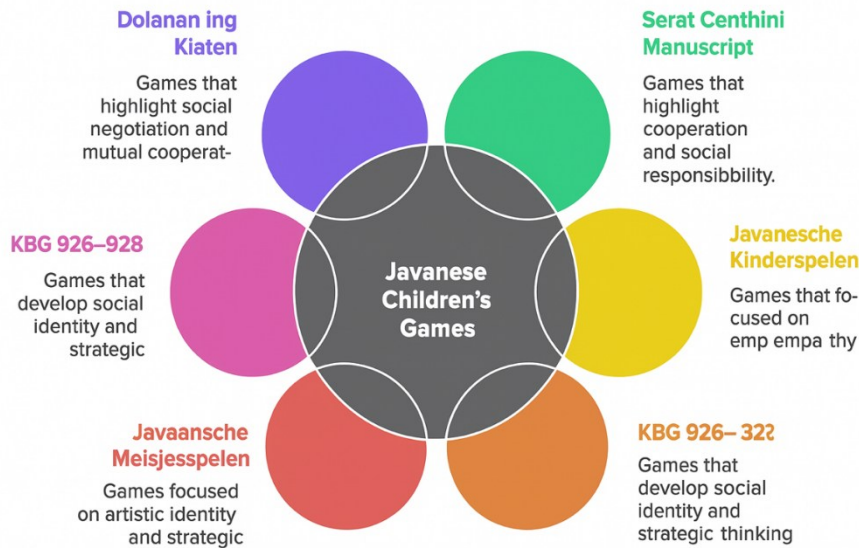


Figure 3. Structure of Javanese Children's Games

3.3.1. Javanese Children's Games as a Medium for Teaching *Tauhid* and *Tazkiyatun Nafs*

In Islamic education, *tauhid* (monotheism) and *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) serve as fundamental foundations. Many traditional Javanese children's games, such as *sluku-sluku bathok*, *cublak-cublak suweng*, and *jamuran*, symbolically embody elements of contemplation, inner peace, and harmony with nature—values aligned with the Islamic concept of *fitrah* (innate purity). These games encourage children to cultivate calmness, patience, and affection, qualities deeply embedded in Islamic moral education (*akhlaq*).⁶² Furthermore, games that promote honesty—such as *dhelikan* (hide and seek)—foster the value of *amanah* (trustworthiness), a key trait of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.⁶³ This value is essential for spiritual character formation from an early age, as emphasized in QS. At-Tahrim [66]:6, which underscores the family's role as a moral and spiritual guardian.⁶⁴

3.3.2. Moral Education through Play: Taqwa, Patience, and Social Etiquette

Games such as *gobag sodor* or *ular naga panjang* teach cooperation, taking turns, and adherence to rules. These values reflect Islamic *akhlaq*-based education, particularly in fostering proper manners (*adab*) in social interaction—such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). Through play, children learn self-control, respect for rules, and emotional regulation in both winning and losing. A hadith of the Prophet states that Rasulullah SAW paid close attention to children's play as part of *tarbiyah*. He allowed Hasan and Husayn to play near him—even during prayer—

⁶² H. Haerul and B. M. A. H. Al-Nil, "The Role of the Teacher in Instilling Tawhid-Based Education in Students in the Perspective of the Qur'an," *Journal of Islamic Education and Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 34–45.

⁶³ S. Purnama et al., "The Concept of Fitrah for Children in Ibn Katsir's Qur'an Exegesis: A Pedagogical Implication in Early Childhood Islamic Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2020): 79–104, doi:10.14421/jpi.2020.91.79-104.

⁶⁴ The Qur'an, *The Noble Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, n.d.).

demonstrating that play with educational and respectful content holds a meaningful place in Islam.⁶⁵

3.3.3. The Holistic Dimensions of Play and the Concept of *Tarbiyah Islamiyah*

Islamic education does not solely focus on cognitive aspects but also encompasses the development of physical, spiritual, social, and moral dimensions.⁶⁶ This is reflected in QS. Luqman [31]:13–19, where Luqman advises his son on *tawhid*, prayer, moral conduct, patience, and humility. Games such as *cak ingkling* (gross motor skills and balance), *bekelan* (precision and concentration), or pretend cooking (*main masak-masakan*, for responsibility and social roles) can be contextualized within *tarbiyah jasadiyah* (physical), *fikriyyah* (intellectual), and *nafsiyyah* (spiritual) development. By incorporating Islamic narratives—such as prophetic stories, short supplications (*du'a*), or simple dhikr practices—children's games can be reconstructed into integrative tools of Islamic education.⁶⁷

3.3.4. Children's Games and the Concept of *Ibadah* in the Framework of Fitrah-based Play

Islam views every child as born upon *fitrah*.⁶⁸ In this context, play is a natural activity that must be guided toward becoming a form of *ibadah* (worship). Hence, traditional games aligned with Islamic values can become acts of social *ibadah* (*mu'amalah*) if performed with sincere intention and without neglecting obligations.⁶⁹ Traditional games that instill care, empathy, and cooperation may serve as mediums for habituating noble character (*ta'dib*). This aligns with Islamic education approaches based on love (*rahmah*) and exemplary modeling (*uswah hasanah*).⁷⁰

3.3.5. Traditional Play as a Medium for Contextualizing Islamic Cultural Values

Manuscripts such as *Serat Rarya Saraya* and *Dolanan ing Klaten* demonstrate that children's games are often accompanied by folklore, rhymes, or songs containing ethical and spiritual messages. Through wise adaptation, these narratives can be aligned or substituted with Islamic stories from the Qur'an, Hadith, or the lives of the Prophet and his companions. This allows the enrichment of play content with religious meaning, while maintaining its cultural relevance and local identity.⁷¹

4. Discussion

This study found that ancient Javanese children's games documented in six classical manuscripts—*Serat Centhini*, *Javanische Kinderspielen*, *Serat Rarya Saraya*, *Javaansche Meisjesspielen en Kinderliedjes*, KBG 926–928, and *Dolanan ing Klaten*—serve purposes far beyond mere entertainment. These traditional games contain educational values that reflect a holistic early childhood education (ECE) approach, encompassing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual domains. Games such as *cak ingkling*,

⁶⁵ Nasirudin Nasirudin, Musthofa Musthofa, and A. Kunaepi, "Friendly Education: Prophet Muhammad's Interactions with Children," *Journal of Integrated Elementary Education* 1, no. 169–182 (5AD).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Najwan Saada, "Educating for Global Citizenship in Religious Education: Islamic Perspective," *International Journal of Educational Development* 103 (2023): 102894, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102894>.

⁶⁸ M. I. I. Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī (Hadith No. 1292)*, n.d., <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1292>.

⁶⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1980).

⁷⁰ Nasirudin, Musthofa, and Kunaepi, "Friendly Education: Prophet Muhammad's Interactions with Children."

⁷¹ I. A. Yusuf, "Integrating Islamic Values in Early Childhood Education: Opportunities and Challenges," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 1, no. 1 (2013): 55–67, doi:10.15408/tjems.v1i1.1262.

gobag sodor, and *jethungan* (Serat Centhini) enhance gross motor skills, sportsmanship, and cooperation. Meanwhile, *dhakon*, *bekelan*, and *dhelikan* (Javanische Kinderspielen) develop logic, strategic planning, and fine motor precision. Emotional and aesthetic dimensions are clearly reflected in songs like *sluku-sluku bathok* and *jamuran*, which also function as media for cultural identity reinforcement and affective expression.

These findings align with the study by Ayu & Sari, which demonstrates that traditional games foster empathy and conflict resolution in early childhood.⁷² They also support the research of Savitri et al., which reveals that Serat Centhini contains moral narratives essential for character formation.⁷³ The spiritual dimension of these games is further reinforced by Sriana & Anwar, who confirm that traditional children's songs can be a medium for cultivating spirituality in children.⁷⁴ Moreover, the gender-based classification found in KBG 926–928⁷⁵ reflects early introduction to social roles and cultural identity, supporting Ashar et al. in their claim that traditional games contribute to cultural identity formation.⁷⁶ Additionally, the semiotic approach to reading the symbolic structure of games, as developed by Yuniasih, affirms that classical Javanese children's games carry complex cosmological and ethical messages.⁷⁷

In comparison to the study by Hendrowibowo et al. that examined *engklek* and *jamuran* in an elementary school in Yogyakarta, this research expands the context to classical manuscript sources while deepening the understanding of character values such as honesty and responsibility.⁷⁸ While Sari et al. found moral values in Serat Centhini, they did not explore the holistic educational potential of the games.⁷⁹ Sriana & Anwar showed that Betawi children's songs support emotional and spiritual growth—comparable to *sluku-sluku bathok*—though their context and sources differ.⁸⁰ The findings of Ayu & Sari further support the development of empathy and social-emotional skills through traditional games.⁸¹

Yuniasih with the present study's finding that classical Javanese children's games embed symbolic structures of social and cosmological significance and in mathematic learning.⁸² Gul developed a culturally specific pedagogical model in Kashmiri ECE that parallels this context, showing how traditional play can enhance holistic child

⁷² Dinar Ayu and Mirunggan Sari, "The Role Of Traditional Games In Improving Early Childhood Social Skills," *Majority Science Journal (MJS)* 3, no. 1 (2025): 21–29, doi:10.61942/msj.v3i1.303.

⁷³ Intan Dewi Savitri et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis to Uncover Women Strategies in Navigating Domestic Oppression in Serat Centhini the Ist Volume," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 12, no. 1 (December 31, 2025): 2469452, doi:10.1080/23311983.2025.2469452.

⁷⁴ Sriana Sriana and Saiful Anwar, "Embedding Religious Character Education through Karawitan in Children," *Journal of Diversity in Learning* 3, no. 1 (2023): 297–304.

⁷⁵ Moens, KBG 926–928: *Jongenspelen, Meisjesspelen, Kaart-En Dobbelspelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Groningen*.

⁷⁶ Ashar Ashar et al., "Early Childhood Social-Emotional Development Through Traditional Games in Learning at Mutiara Integrated Islamic Kindergarten Makassar," *Journal of Research and Multidisciplinary* 7, no. 2 (2024): 876–85, doi:10.23947/2334-8496-2025-13-1-83-95.

⁷⁷ Ririn Yuniasih, "Exploring Materialities in Children's Games: Revisiting the Javanese Philosophy of Laku in Seeking Knowledge," *Policy Futures in Education*, August 2, 2023, 14782103231193060, doi:10.1177/14782103231193061.

⁷⁸ Lorensius Hendrowibowo et al., "The Use of Traditional Games to Implement Character Education Policy in Kindergarten," *The Journal of Educational Development* 6, no. 3 (2018): 380–88.

⁷⁹ Savitri et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis to Uncover Women Strategies in Navigating Domestic Oppression in Serat Centhini the Ist Volume."

⁸⁰ Sriana and Anwar, "Embedding Religious Character Education through Karawitan in Children."

⁸¹ Ayu and Sari, "The Role Of Traditional Games In Improving Early Childhood Social Skills."

⁸² Yuniasih, "Exploring Materialities in Children's Games: Revisiting the Javanese Philosophy of Laku in Seeking Knowledge."

development.⁸³ However, the key difference lies in the data source—this study draws on classical Javanese manuscripts, not contemporary practice. Anggraini et al. highlights a lack of implementation strategies in formal contexts, which could be addressed by adapting classical manuscript-based curricula.⁸⁴ Ashar et al. also emphasize the importance of emotional regulation and cultural identity through traditional games, which resonates with this study's focus on emotional and social values.⁸⁵ Furthermore, integrating play into ECE curricula aligns with local culture-based pedagogical models such as those developed in Kashmir, where traditional games serve as effective tools for cultivating community values and independence.⁸⁶

The findings suggest that ancient Javanese children's games function as a form of micro-curriculum for holistic education. The integration of spiritual dimensions emerges from the religio-cultural context of *Serat Centhini*.⁸⁷ Social-emotional learning is embedded in group games like *gobag sodor* and *ular naga panjang*.⁸⁸ Music and narrative embedded in traditional songs reinforce memory and generational identity, producing dual pedagogical effects—musical and moral.⁸⁹ Therefore, this study confirms that Javanese children's games, as documented in classical manuscripts, can be developed into a micro-curriculum for ECE that addresses not only cognitive development but also contextual, participatory, and culturally rooted character formation.

These findings are significant in demonstrating the potential to streamline locally based ECE in ways that remain culturally relevant. However, interpretation must remain cautious. Adapting these games into modern ECE contexts requires further empirical validation and sensitivity to changing times and social settings.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to identify the forms of Javanese children's traditional games (*dolanan*) documented in six classical manuscripts and to analyze their educational values within the context of holistic early childhood education. The findings indicate that traditional games such as *cak ingkling*, *dhakon*, *gobag sodor*, and traditional songs like *sluku-sluku bathok* are not merely forms of entertainment, but are rich in social, moral, spiritual, and cognitive meanings that align with contemporary ECE principles. These findings imply the importance of integrating *dolanan* into culturally based ECE curricula as a strategy for fostering children's character and identity through contextual and participatory play-based learning approaches. However, this study is limited to literature-based analysis and has not yet examined the effectiveness of implementation in contemporary educational settings, nor does it comprehensively reflect the cultural diversity of the Indonesian archipelago. Therefore, further research is recommended in the form of intervention studies using *dolanan* derived from classical manuscripts, the development

⁸³ Showkeen Bilal and Ahmad Gul, "Designing a Culture-Specific Pedagogy Model for Early Childhood Care and Education (3-6 Years): Integrating Traditional Games for Holistic Child Development," *INQUIRY: An Educational Journal* 41, no. 2 (2024): 1–7.

⁸⁴ Natalia Desy Anggraeni, Kisyani Laksono, and Didik Nurhadi, "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Tradisi: Etnopuitika Dalam Lagu Dolanan," *Indonesian Research Journal on Education* 5, no. 1 SE-Articles (January 6, 2025): 164 – 172, doi:10.31004/irje.v5i1.1926.

⁸⁵ Ashar et al., "Early Childhood Social-Emotional Development Through Traditional Games in Learning at Mutiara Integrated Islamic Kindergarten Makassar."

⁸⁶ Bilal and Gul, "Designing a Culture-Specific Pedagogy Model for Early Childhood Care and Education (3-6 Years): Integrating Traditional Games for Holistic Child Development."

⁸⁷ V, *Serat Centhini Jilid II*.

⁸⁸ Mangonprawiro, *Dolanan Ing Klaten*.

⁸⁹ Overbeck, *Javaansche Meisjesspelen En Kinderliedjes*.

of integrative thematic curricula, and the active involvement of local communities to ensure the relevance and sustainability of cultural heritage utilization in early childhood education.

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