

# The Effectiveness of Traditional Game Therapy in Improving Social Skills in Elementary School Students 060952 Medan Labuhan District

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## Abstract

Social skills are very important for the development of elementary school children. Traditional play therapy offers an alternative method for education that has the potential to improve social skills through group interaction and real-life experiences. This is different from the conventional approach which often centers on academic aspects. The aim of this research is to evaluate how effective traditional game therapy is in improving children's social skills at State Elementary School 060952 Kec. Medan Labuhan and compare it with more conventional methods. The research method was an experimental design used for this research with a control group. Children at State Elementary School 060952 District. Medan Labuhan is divided into two groups. The experimental group received traditional play therapy, while the control group carried out routine activities. Data were collected through teacher observations, assessments, and social skills questionnaires before and after six weeks of intervention. The results of the paired t test analysis showed a significant difference between the experimental class' pre-test and post-test scores ( $t = 5.68, p < 0.01$ ) and the control class. The paired t test showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ( $t = 1.12, p > 0.05$ ) indicates that, compared with the control group, the experimental group showed significant improvements in social skills. Communication, cooperation and conflict resolution show improvement. These results indicate that traditional play therapy is effective in improving the social skills of children at State Elementary School 060952 Kec. Medan Labuhan. According to this research, traditional play therapy can be included in the school curriculum as a tool to improve social skills in a comprehensive and enjoyable way.

**Keywords:** *Traditional play therapy, social skills, elementary school children, therapy methods, children's education.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social abilities are very important for children's development, especially at elementary school (SD) age. Children's academic and social success is greatly influenced by their ability to interact and communicate well, as well as manage emotions and conflict. Although formal education provides a solid academic foundation, there is a need for a broader approach to teaching children social skills (1). However, as technology advances, many children prefer playing with digital devices rather than playing with their peers face to face. This can cause children's social abilities to decrease (2). One of the studies conducted by Beyens, I., et al. (2020) - "Social Media Use and Adolescents' Well-Being: Developing a Typology of Person-Specific Effect Profiles states that the specific effects of social media use on adolescents' social well-being. This study shows that excessive social media use can have a negative impact on certain social skills, especially the ability to empathize and communicate well face-to-face.

Traditional games, which are part of a community's cultural heritage, have great potential as a therapeutic tool to improve social skills. It involves interacting with others, solving problems, and working together in a fun and participative environment. Children not only enjoy traditional games

such as jump rope, hide and seek, and congklak, but also have the opportunity to learn social skills through hands-on experience(3). Traditional games, which involve direct interaction between players, can be an effective tool for improving children's social skills. However, not much research has been thoroughly conducted on the use of traditional play therapy to improve children's social skills in elementary schools (4). This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the extent to which traditional play therapy can help improve children's social skills and how this compares to conventional methods.

**This researcher's problem formulation is:**

1. Does traditional play therapy succeed in improving the social skills of children in elementary school?
2. How do the quality of the social skills of children who receive traditional play therapy compare to children who do not?
3. In this situation, what components influence the effectiveness of traditional play therapy?

**The research objectives are to:**

1. Determine how effective traditional play therapy is in improving the social skills of elementary school children.
2. Make a comparison between the group that received therapy and the control group that did not receive therapy.
3. Provide data-based suggestions on how traditional play therapy can be applied in educational settings.

**Benefits of research**

This research is expected to provide valuable insight into:

1. The possibility of traditional play therapy as an effective technique for improving children's social skills.
2. How traditional play therapy can be used in educational curricula and child development programs.
3. Increased academic literature on play-based social interventions and innovative teaching approaches.

***THEORETICAL REVIEW***

**Social Skills in Elementary School Age Children**

Social abilities that enable a person to interact well with other people in various situations are known as social skills. The social skills possessed by elementary school age children include following rules, resolving conflicts in a healthy way, working together in groups, and communicating clearly. At this age, cultivating good social skills is essential to help children succeed at school and in everyday life(5).

A set of behaviors that enable a person to interact positively with others is called social skills. Social skills consist of elements such as self-control, empathy, communication, and cooperation. Social skills are essential for building healthy relationships with peers at elementary school age and are the basis for interpersonal skills in adulthood(6).

Additionally, children's academic achievement and emotional well-being are influenced by their social skills. Children who have good social skills adapt more easily to the school environment, have positive relationships with teachers and friends, and show better academic achievement (5).

**Traditional Games as a Media for Social Skills Development**

Traditional games such as hide and seek, gobak sodor, congklak, and Bentengan involve intense social relationships between players. Children are taught to communicate well, respect the rules, compete healthily, and work together in this game. Children learn to control their emotions, understand other people's perspectives, and solve social problems in a constructive way through this game (7).

### **Play Therapy in Child Development**

Play is used in play therapy as a way to help children talk about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a safe and supportive environment (8). Children can learn a variety of skills, including social skills, that are important for their development through play.

Children have the opportunity to try on different social roles, learn social rules, and work together. Games help children improve their social skills because they allow them to internalize cultural and social norms (9).

### **Traditional Games as a Therapeutic Tool**

Traditional games have deep cultural values and are often created to be played in groups, which naturally encourages social interaction. For example, games such as "Engklek", "Congklak", and "Hide and Seek" require physical skills in addition to communication, strategy, and teamwork (10). Studies show that traditional games can help people learn social skills. Traditional games teach children to work together, respect rules, and create effective communication strategies (7). Children also learn important social skills, such as handling disputes and solving problems in groups, through these games.

### **Effectiveness of Traditional Play Therapy in Improving Social Skills**

Studies have been conducted to find out how effective traditional games are in improving children's social skills. Children who receive traditional play therapy show significant improvements in their social skills, especially in cooperation and communication (11). Traditional games played regularly can help children build stronger social relationships and interact with their peers (12). According to previous research conducted by Darwish, A.A. & Hassan, M.E. (2020) "Traditional Games and Their Impact on Children's Cognitive and Social Development" that traditional games can improve children's cognitive development, such as problem solving abilities, strategic thinking, and creativity. In addition, children who are involved in traditional games show increased ability to interact socially and form better relationships with peers.

Traditional games can increase pro-social behavior and reduce aggressive behavior in children. This research shows that traditional games improve social skills and can be used as an intervention method to overcome behavioral problems (13)

### **Social Development Theory**

Social development theory states that social interaction is very important for children's cognitive and emotional development. Social learning occurs during interactions with others, where children learn through communication, observation, and imitation. Traditional games provide children with a rich social context in which they can improve these abilities (14).

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach and uses an experimental design. The students involved in the research were students in grades II and III in two randomly selected elementary schools. For eight weeks, the experimental group will participate in traditional play therapy twice a week. Special interventions will not be carried out in the interim control group (15). The Social Skills Assessment System (SSRS), which has been adapted and tested for use in Indonesia, is used to measure children's social skills. The t test will be used to analyze the data to see the social skills scores before and after the intervention between the experimental group and the control group (16).

### Population and Sample

The population in this study were elementary school children in grades II and III. With a total sample of 60 children who were divided into two groups (30 children in the experimental group and 30 children in the control group). Samples were taken using random sampling techniques from classes II and III.

### Research Design:

The design of this research is experimental with a control group. And the duration of implementation in the field is 8 weeks with a frequency of two sessions per week. The instruments used are social skills questionnaires, classroom observations, teacher assessments.

### Data Collection Instrument

- Social Skills Questionnaire: A scale used by parents or educators to assess elements of social skills such as communication, cooperation, and self-control.
- Observation: Notes made about a child's social interactions in a social context such as at school or elsewhere.
- Teacher Assessment: Assessment provided by the teacher regarding changes in the child's social behavior during and after the intervention.

### Trial Procedures

#### 1. Preparation

- Composing the Research Team: Forming the research team
- Ethical Approval: Obtain permission from parents and school.

#### 2. Initial Measurement (Pre-Test)

- Instruments: Tools used include social skills questionnaires, observations of social interactions, and teacher evaluations
- Procedure: collect baseline data from both groups before intervention to assess social skills.

#### 3. Implementation of Intervention

- Duration: eight weeks, with two traditional play therapy sessions each week
- Content: the session uses a variety of pre-selected traditional games and involves activities aimed at improving social skills such as cooperation, communication and self-control.
- Supervision: ensuring that the implementation of the game remains consistent and gets support from the facilitator.

#### 4. Final Measurement (Post-Test)

- Instruments: Tools used include social skills questionnaires, observations of social interactions, and teacher evaluations.

- Procedure: data collection occurs after the intervention period to evaluate changes in social skills.

## 5. Data Analysis

- Statistical Method: Comparing pre-test and post-test results between the experimental group and the control group.
- Analysis: Determine significant differences in social skills improvement between the two groups via t test or ANOVA.

## 6. Evaluation and Adjustment

- Process Assessment: Evaluate play therapy methods to uncover problems or challenges.
- Adjustments: Based on feedback and evaluation results, change therapy methods or content if necessary.

## Analysis Data

The results of the experimental and control groups should be compared with the results of the post-test. To find out how effective therapy is, use descriptive and inferential statistics.

## Data Analysis Steps

### 1. Data Preparation

#### Data collection

- Questionnaire: Collect questionnaires that have been filled in by participants and teachers.
- Observation: Collect observation notes and reports from researchers or teachers.
- Assessment: Collect social skills assessment data from the pre-test and post-test.

### 2. Data Description

#### a. Descriptive Statistics

- Calculating the Average: Calculate the average of the social skills scores for the pre-test and post-test.
- Calculating Variance and Standard Deviation: Analyze variance and standard deviation to understand the distribution of data.
- Frequency: Calculate the frequency and percentage change in social behavior from observations

#### b. Group Comparison

- Experimental vs. Experimental Group Control: Compare changes in social skills scores between the experimental group and the control group.
- Statistical Tests: Use statistical tests such as paired t tests (for changes within groups) or independent t tests (for comparisons between groups) to determine the significance of differences.

#### c. Change Analysis

- Pre-Test vs. Post-Test: Compare the pre-test and post-test results for the experimental and control groups.
- Significance Test: Perform a significance test (e.g., t test or ANOVA) to assess whether there are significant changes in social skills after therapy.

### 3. Qualitative Analysis

#### a. Observation Analysis

- Categorization: Categorize and analyze observation notes to identify patterns in social behavior.

- Themes: Identify themes or categories that emerge from observations, such as increasing positive interactions or managing conflict.
- b. Interviews and Feedback
- Coding: Code interview transcripts to identify key themes in parent and teacher feedback.
  - Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis to identify patterns or trends in feedback regarding changes in children's social skills.

#### 4. Data Integration

- a. Quantitative and Qualitative Integration
- Cross-Check: Compare results from quantitative analysis (such as questionnaire scores) with findings from qualitative analysis (such as interviews and observations) to get a more comprehensive picture.
  - Triangulation: Use triangulation to ensure that findings from multiple data sources are consistent and mutually supportive.
- b. Interpretation of Results
- Analyze the results to determine whether traditional play therapy was successful in improving children's social skills compared to the control group.

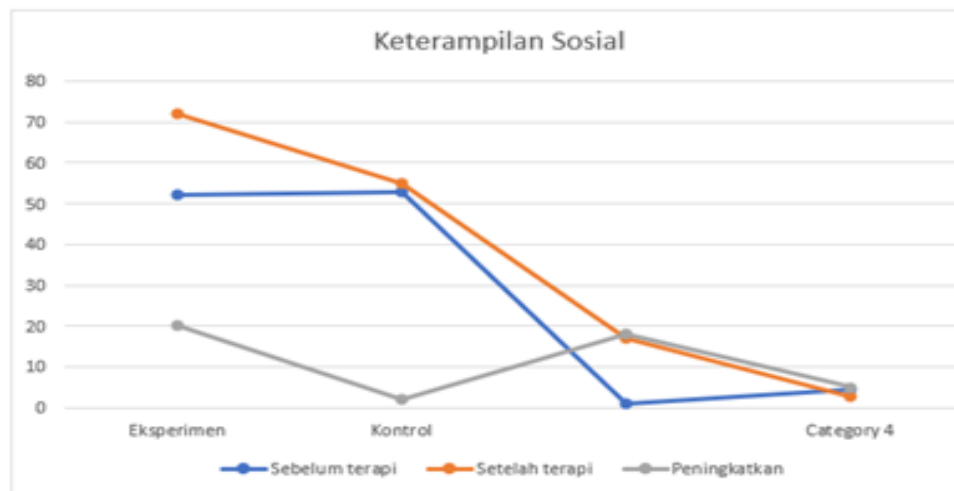
### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that there was a significant increase in social skills in the experimental group compared to the control group. Children who engage in traditional play therapy show improvements in the ability to work together, communicate with peers, and better manage conflict. In addition, they also showed an increase in respect for rules and the ability to delay gratification, which are important aspects of self-control.

#### 1. Social Skills Questionnaire

- a. Social Skills Score
- Experimental Group:  
The Pre-Test carried out obtained an average score of 52 (100 scale) and after the treatment was carried out, the Post-Test was given again and obtained an average score of 72 (100 scale) and experienced an increase of 20 points. The paired t test shows with a p value: 0.001, a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ( $t = 5.68, p < 0.01$ )
  - Control Group:  
The Pre-Test carried out obtained an average score of 53 (scale 100) and after the treatment was carried out the Post-Test was given again and obtained an average score of 55 (scale 100) and experienced an increase of 2 points. Paired t test shows a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ( $t = 1.12, p > 0.05$ )
- b. Interpretation
- Compared with the control group, children in the experimental group showed significant improvements in social skills after traditional play therapy was administered.
- c. Based on the results of the validity correlation coefficient on item number one, it is known that  $r_{count} = 0.4187$  at a significance level = 5%, it is known that  $r_{table} = 0.361$ . From these results it can be seen that  $r_{count}$  is greater than  $r_{table}$  or  $0.4187 > 0.361$  and it can be concluded that item number one on the student social skills questionnaire is declared valid and can be used in data collection. To test reliability, the alpha formula is used: From the calculation,  $r_{11}$  is 1.0264 with  $N = 30$  and consultation = 5%, the price is  $r_{table} = 0.361$ , because  $r_{11} (1.0264) > r_{table} (0.361)$ , the calculation is reliable.





**Chart 1. Social Skills**

## 2. Observation of Social Interactions

### a. Behavior Change

- **Experimental Group:**  
The frequency of Positive Interactions has increased by 35% (from 20 positive interactions per week to 27 interactions). Conflict Management saw a 25% reduction in the number of conflict incidents (from 12 incidents per week to 9 incidents).
- **Control Group:**  
The frequency of Positive Interactions has increased by 5% (from 21 positive interactions per week to 22 interactions). Conflict Management saw a 5% reduction in the number of conflict incidents (from 11 incidents per week to 10 incidents).

### b. Interpretation

Compared with the control group, children in the experimental group showed improvements in conflict management and positive interactions.

## 3. Assessment by Teacher

### a. Reported Changes

- **Experimental Group:**  
Communication Skills improved by 40% (from 3.5 to 5.0 on a scale of 1-7). Collaboration also increased by 30% (from 3.0 to 3.9 on a scale of 1-5).
- **Control Group:**  
Communication Skills improved by only 5% (from 3.6 to 3.8 on a scale of 1-7). Meanwhile, cooperation increased by only 2% (from 3.1 to 3.2 on a scale of 1-5).

### b. Interpretation

Changes reported by teachers showed that, compared with the control group, the experimental group had better communication and collaboration skills.

## Discussion

**a. Improved Social Skills:** The trial results showed that traditional play therapy was effective in improving the social skills of children in the experimental group compared to the control group. Children get better scores for social skills, less conflict, and positive feedback from parents and teachers.

**b. Intervention Effectiveness:** The intervention was shown to be effective for eight weeks and was carried out twice a week. Traditional games used in therapy give children the opportunity to develop social skills in a fun and supportive environment.

**c. Practical Implications:** The results suggest that traditional play therapy can be incorporated into elementary school curricula as an additional way to help children improve their social skills. Children's social skills can be strengthened, as well as interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being.

**d. Limitations:** Limitations include small sample size and limited duration of intervention. To verify these findings and explore long-term effects, studies are needed with longer samples and time.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The trial results show that traditional play therapy is effective in improving the social skills of elementary school children. The program helps children manage their emotions and work together, and parents and teachers support it. Further research could expand our understanding of the long-term benefits and use of traditional play therapy in education.

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