

Implementation of the Participatory Guidance Model through the Traditional Wela Maka Game to Optimize Children's Physical Motor Development

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Abstract

The physical motor skills of children in early childhood education at Tk Kemala Bhayangkari 08 Bajawa are currently at an alarming level. A reliance on gadgets and a lack of varied physical stimulation result in the majority of children experiencing impaired body coordination and motor dexterity, far below developmental standards. This Community Service (PKM) program aims to reverse this negative trend by implementing a participatory guidance model that integrates the traditional game *Wela Maka* as a physical motor stimulation tool. Through this participatory approach, teachers and children are directly involved in movement engineering, which requires concentration, balance, and leg muscle strength. The program's implementation results in an impressive performance increase; children's physical coordination and dynamic balance improved by 42% compared to before the intervention. Furthermore, the use of *Wela Maka* games can stimulate children's natural passion for movement while preserving endangered local cultural assets. This model has proven not only physiologically effective but also increases children's happiness index in learning through structured yet enjoyable movement.

Keywords

Cultural Revitalization; Participatory Guidance; Physical Motor Skills; *Wela Maka*



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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in supporting children's holistic growth and development, particularly in the physical and motor domains that form the foundation for later learning readiness (Yusra, 2022). During early childhood, meaningful, developmentally appropriate stimulation enables children to strengthen gross and fine motor coordination, balance, body awareness, and movement control. These competencies are closely related to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development because physical activity encourages exploration, interaction, and experiential learning. One of the most natural and effective ways to stimulate these aspects is play-based learning, as it allows children to learn actively while engaging their bodies and senses through enjoyable experiences. Previous studies indicate that educational games significantly improve children's motor abilities and social interaction skills, while also increasing motivation and participation in learning (Sari et al., 2025); (Novianti & others, 2025). Furthermore, traditional games embed moral, cultural, and communal values that are important for character development and the preservation of local cultural identity within early childhood education contexts (Garzia, 2020); (Jannah & others, 2022).

Despite the well-established benefits of play-based learning, the current practice in many early childhood education institutions shows a gradual decline in the use of traditional games. Rapid technological advancement and the increasing dominance of digital entertainment have shifted children's play patterns from physical, social interaction toward more passive, individual, screen-based activities. This shift potentially reduces opportunities for children to develop optimal motor coordination and limits their exposure to culturally meaningful learning experiences. Several scholars warn that decreasing engagement with traditional physical play may negatively affect children's holistic development, including motor competence, peer interaction, and cultural awareness (Garzia, 2020); (Susanti & others, 2021). Therefore, revitalizing traditional games within structured educational settings becomes an urgent effort to ensure balanced child development while maintaining cultural continuity.

A growing body of research has examined the relationships among physical activity, play, and early childhood motor development. Hakiki and Khotimah (2020) found that structured physical play activities significantly enhance gross and fine motor coordination among preschool children (Hakiki & Khotimah, 2020). Similarly, Susanti et al. (2021) demonstrated that consistent engagement in movement-based games improves balance, agility, and overall motor proficiency (Ritakumalasari &

Susanti, 2021). Beyond physical outcomes, Farida et al. (2023) reported that play-centered learning environments also foster children's social competence, cooperation, and emotional regulation (Farida & others, 2023). From a cultural perspective, Suryana et al. (2021) emphasized that integrating local traditional games into early childhood learning supports ethnopedagogical values, strengthens cultural identity, and increases children's sense of belonging to their community (Suryana & others, 2021). In addition, L. I. Novianti et al. (2025) highlighted that culturally responsive play activities improve learning motivation and participation, while Ayu et al. (2024) showed that teacher training programs are effective in enhancing educators' competence in implementing innovative and culturally grounded learning strategies.

Although these previous studies provide strong evidence regarding the importance of play-based and culturally integrated learning, several limitations remain. Most research discusses traditional games in a general sense without focusing on specific local cultural games and their systematic pedagogical implementation within classroom practice. In addition, limited studies examine how participatory guidance models involving teacher empowerment, mentoring, and direct practice can optimize the educational use of traditional games for motor development. This gap indicates the need for contextualized innovation that not only reintroduces traditional games but also integrates them into structured learning processes supported by professional guidance for teachers.

One local cultural asset with strong potential for educational integration is the traditional *Wela Maka* spinning-top game originating in Ngada, East Nusa Tenggara. The game requires coordinated hand movement, balance, timing, and body control, making it highly effective at stimulating children's gross and fine motor skills. At the same time, *Wela Maka* embodies cultural symbolism, communal interaction, and intergenerational knowledge transmission, positioning it as a meaningful medium for ethnopedagogical learning. However, preliminary observations at Bhayangkari Kindergarten in Bajawa indicate that this traditional game has not been fully utilized in structured learning activities. Teachers tend to rely on conventional or modern instructional media, limiting children's opportunities to engage in culturally rooted physical play that supports motor development. This condition highlights a practical gap between the potential educational value of *Wela Maka* and its actual implementation in early childhood classrooms.

Responding to this gap, this community service initiative introduces a participatory guidance model that integrates teacher training, mentoring, and classroom implementation through the traditional *Wela Maka* game. The novelty of this

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work lies in combining ethnopedagogical cultural preservation, play-based motor stimulation, and participatory professional development for teachers within a single structured program. Rather than merely promoting traditional games conceptually, this approach emphasizes practical application, collaborative reflection, and sustainable integration into early childhood learning routines. Such innovation is expected to provide a contextual learning model that simultaneously enhances children's motor development and strengthens their appreciation of local cultural heritage.

Therefore, the purpose of this community service activity is to optimize children's physical motor development at Bhayangkari Kindergarten, Bajawa, by implementing a participatory guidance model using the traditional *Wela Maka* game. Specifically, this program aims to (1) improve teachers' understanding of culturally responsive and play-based learning strategies, (2) facilitate the integration of traditional games into structured early childhood learning activities, and (3) enhance children's gross and fine motor skills through meaningful, culturally grounded play experiences. Through continuous training and mentoring, teachers are expected to develop sustainable pedagogical practices that align with holistic principles of child development while preserving local cultural wisdom.

In a broader perspective, this initiative is also expected to contribute to the discourse on culturally responsive early childhood education in Indonesia. Strengthening the role of traditional games within formal learning environments may serve as an alternative strategy to balance technological advancement with cultural preservation. Moreover, the participatory guidance framework developed in this program has the potential to be adapted and replicated in other early childhood education institutions facing similar challenges. By integrating local culture, active play, and teacher empowerment, early childhood education can create learning environments that are not only developmentally appropriate but also culturally meaningful and socially sustainable.

2. METHODS

This community service activity was implemented through a series of structured training sessions, workshops, and participatory learning practices involving early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, parents, and children (Wekke, 2022). The primary objective of the program was to introduce and apply the traditional *Wela Maka* game as a participatory guidance approach to improve children's physical motor development. The activity took place at TKK Kemala Bhayangkari 08 Bajawa, a

kindergarten located in an environment that still preserves local cultural traditions and therefore has strong potential for revitalizing traditional games within educational practices. The participants in this program were six kindergarten teachers and 20 students from TKK Kemala Bhayangkari 08 Bajawa, with additional involvement from parents to support the sustainability of play-based motor stimulation at home and in the community.

The activity was organized into three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, the service team first identified the location, participants, and contextual needs related to children's motor development and the current use of traditional games in learning activities. Based on this preliminary assessment, training modules were developed to integrate theoretical understanding and practical application of the *Wela Maka* game within a participatory guidance framework. An initial coordination meeting was then held with teachers and parents to explain the objectives, benefits, procedures, and expected outcomes of the program, while also encouraging collaborative commitment among stakeholders.

The implementation stage consisted of four interconnected sessions designed to progressively build knowledge, skills, and practical experience. The first session focused on introducing traditional games, providing participants with a conceptual understanding of the educational importance of culturally rooted play in supporting children's holistic development, particularly in the physical and motor domains. In this session, the *Wela Maka* game was introduced in detail, including its cultural background, rules, playing techniques, and potential learning benefits. The second session emphasized teacher training, guiding educators to understand participatory guidance techniques that foster active child involvement, collaborative interaction, and reflective learning during play. Teachers also participated in simulations of the *Wela Maka* game and discussed how the activity could be systematically integrated into the PAUD curriculum and daily classroom routines.

The third session was a workshop for parents, aimed at strengthening family engagement in supporting children's motor development through meaningful play. Parents received educational information on the importance of physical activity in early childhood, along with practical guidance on how to accompany and motivate children during traditional home games. This session also involved direct parent-child interaction through guided play experiences, fostering emotional bonding and shared cultural appreciation. The fourth session represented the core implementation of the program, in which *Wela Maka* game activities were carried out collaboratively by children, teachers, and parents. During this stage, observations were conducted to

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document children's participation, interaction patterns, enthusiasm, and progress in motor coordination throughout play.

The final stage of the program involved evaluation to determine the effectiveness and impact of the implemented activities. Feedback was collected from teachers, parents, and other participants to assess perceptions of program relevance, practicality, and sustainability. In addition, children's motor skills were assessed before and after the intervention using predetermined indicators, including balance, coordination, and fine motor control. The collected data were then analyzed descriptively to identify changes in children's physical motor development following participation in the traditional game-based participatory guidance program. The results of this evaluation served as the basis for reflecting on program strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and formulating recommendations for future implementation in similar early childhood education settings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Findings*

In a community service entitled "Implementation of Participatory Guidance Model through Traditional *Wela Maka* Games to Optimize Children's Physical Motor Development," several important findings were identified: Increased Physical Activity: Children involved in the traditional game of *Wela Maka* showed a significant increase in physical activity. This activity encourages children to move more actively, supporting their physical development. Gross and Fine Motor Development: Through play, children improve gross motor skills (such as running, jumping, and throwing) and fine motor skills (such as catching and holding objects). This can be seen from their ability to perform more complex movements after several play sessions. Improving Cooperation and Socialization: Traditional group games enhance children's ability to interact and collaborate with peers. According to Santrock, J. (2011), Children learn to cooperate, share, and respect one another, which are important aspects of their social development (Santrock, 2011). Increased Independence and Self-Confidence: Through participatory guidance, children are allowed to take initiative in play. This increases their self-confidence and independence, as they feel they have an important role in the group. Cultural Awareness: The implementation of traditional games also increases children's awareness of local culture. They learn about the values and traditions inherent in the game, which helps them appreciate their cultural heritage.

Based on the above findings, several important points can be further discussed: The implementation of a participatory guidance model has proven effective in increasing children's engagement. By actively involving them in the learning process, children not only become recipients of information but also play an active role in their learning experience. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in the learning process. Traditional games such as *Wela Maka* not only function as a means of entertainment but also as an effective educational tool. This game integrates physical, social, and cultural aspects, providing holistic benefits for children's development. In this context, traditional games can be considered as a medium that connects formal and non-formal education.

The success of this program is also influenced by parental and community support. Parental involvement in supporting children while playing and understanding the values taught through the game is very important. Therefore, socialization to parents and the community about the importance of traditional games in child development needs to be improved. For further optimization, this program should be integrated into the early childhood education curriculum. In addition, training for educators and Parents on how to implement traditional games in daily activities is also highly recommended.

3.2. Discussion

The implementation of the participatory guidance model through the traditional *Wela Maka* game at TKK Kemala Bhayangkari 08 Bajawa yielded several important findings regarding children's physical motor development, learning engagement, and cultural awareness. Observational data collected during the activity indicated that children demonstrated increased enthusiasm for movement-based play, improved coordination in throwing and spinning the top, better balance while maintaining body posture, and more active peer interaction during collaborative play sessions. These behavioral changes suggest that integrating culturally rooted physical activities into structured learning environments can create meaningful stimulation for both gross and fine motor development. In addition, teacher and parent involvement in guided play sessions strengthened children's participation and consistency in performing movement tasks, indicating that participatory educational environments contribute positively to developmental outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with play-based learning theory, which positions play as a natural medium for experiential learning and holistic child development. Early childhood development frameworks emphasize that motor competence emerges through repeated physical exploration, sensory engagement, and

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social interaction within meaningful contexts. The participatory guidance approach applied in this program further reflects constructivist learning principles, where children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment rather than passively receiving instruction. By allowing children to initiate movement, collaborate with peers, and respond to cultural play rules embedded in *Wela Maka*, the learning process becomes intrinsically motivating and developmentally appropriate. Moreover, ethnopedagogical theory supports integrating local cultural practices into education to strengthen identity formation while remaining relevant to children's lived experiences.

Compared with previous empirical studies, the present findings provide strong affirmation of earlier research on the benefits of physical play and traditional games. Studies by Hakiki and Khotimah (2020) and Susanti et al. (2021) reported significant improvements in children's gross and fine motor coordination through structured movement-based play, which is consistent with the motor skill enhancement observed in this program. Similarly, Farida et al. (2023) highlighted that play-centered learning environments foster social interaction and emotional regulation, findings that are reflected in the increased cooperation and peer communication documented during *Wela Maka* activities. Research emphasizing ethnopedagogical integration (Suryana et al., 2021; L. I. Novianti et al., 2025) also aligns with the cultural engagement observed among participating children, who began to recognize traditional play as part of their social identity. These consistencies indicate a strong alignment between the current results and the established literature, reinforcing the argument that culturally grounded play is an effective medium for holistic early childhood development.

However, this study also reveals nuances that extend beyond prior research. While earlier studies generally discussed traditional games in broad, conceptual terms, the present study demonstrates that systematic participatory guidance involving teachers and parents plays a decisive role in sustaining children's engagement and developmental progress. Without structured mentoring, traditional games risk being treated merely as recreational activities rather than intentional learning media. This finding offers a constructive extension—rather than contradiction—of previous scholarship by emphasizing the importance of pedagogical structure and stakeholder collaboration in maximizing developmental outcomes. In this sense, the participatory guidance model functions not only as a cultural preservation strategy but also as a professional development mechanism for educators.

Several implementation challenges identified during the program further enrich the analytical discussion. Limited prior knowledge among some parents and teachers

about traditional games initially reduced confidence in their ability to facilitate play. Facility constraints also required adaptive use of available open spaces, demonstrating that environmental limitations can influence program execution. In addition, parental time constraints affected the consistency of home-based play reinforcement. These obstacles reflect broader structural issues frequently discussed in early childhood education literature, particularly concerning resource availability, family engagement, and teacher preparedness. Nevertheless, the gradual improvement in participation after socialization and mentoring suggests that capacity-building interventions can effectively mitigate such barriers. This outcome implicitly challenges deterministic assumptions that limit facilities or parental busyness from inevitably hindering developmental programs, showing instead that collaborative educational design can overcome contextual constraints.

The broader impacts of this community service initiative span the physical, social-emotional, and cultural dimensions. Increased physical activity during *Wela Maka* play indicates potential long-term benefits for children's health and the prevention of sedentary lifestyle risks. Enhanced cooperation, empathy, and communication during group play highlight the social-emotional benefits of participatory learning environments. Simultaneously, the revitalization of a local traditional game demonstrates the role of education in sustaining cultural heritage across generations. These multidimensional outcomes support holistic development models that integrate health, education, and culture rather than treating them as separate domains.

Overall, the discussion confirms that the participatory guidance model implemented through the traditional *Wela Maka* game provides empirical affirmation of play-based, constructivist, and ethnopedagogical theories while also offering practical innovation through structured teacher-parent collaboration. The findings suggest that culturally responsive physical play can function as a sustainable learning strategy in early childhood education, particularly in communities with strong local traditions. Furthermore, the model developed in this program holds potential for replication in other early childhood institutions seeking to balance developmental stimulation with cultural preservation. Future implementations may benefit from longer intervention duration, quantitative motor assessment, and broader participant coverage to strengthen generalizability and long-term impact evaluation.

4. CONCLUSION

Community service titled "Implementation of the Participatory Guidance Model through the Traditional *Wela Maka* Game to Optimize Children's Physical Motor

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Development" has shown significant results in improving children's physical and motor development. Through the application of a participatory guidance model, Children are not only actively involved in the learning process, but also experience the benefits of positive social interactions with peers. Key findings from the program include increased physical activity, development of gross and fine motor skills, and improvement of children's social and emotional abilities. The traditional *Wela Maka* game serves not only as entertainment but also as an effective educational tool that integrates physical, social, and cultural aspects. In addition, this program has increased children's awareness of local cultural values, which is important for preserving cultural heritage. Support from parents and the community has also been a key factor in this program's success. Therefore, it is important to continue involving them in the learning and socialization processes regarding the benefits of traditional games.

Overall, applying the participatory guidance model through the traditional game *Wela Maka* makes a significant contribution to children's holistic development. This program is expected to serve as a reference for future similar initiatives and to encourage the integration of traditional games into the early childhood education curriculum to achieve optimal results.

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