




Utilization of The Traditional Game “Engklek” to Stimulate the Development of Children Aged 3-6 Years

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Abstract. In early childhood age, children can learn and make connections with the knowledge obtained from their environment. These abilities were achieved optimally through play activities so that playing becomes the hallmark of children’s development. Due to social distancing during the pandemic play activities became very limited, and mostly facilitated by devices only. In this post-pandemic period, it is the role of parents and teachers to provide back stimulants through physical games. The traditional game Engklek can be used as an alternative to help early childhood cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor development. This qualitative study involving 10 early childhood children (3-6 years) in Tangerang focused on two research questions: 1) Why playing Engklek could be an alternative stimulant for early childhood children? 2) How Engklek could stimulate the development of early childhood children? This study used several instruments, namely: children observation sheets, environmental observation sheets, and interview guidelines. The result of children’s observations shows that the Engklek sufficiently stimulates the development of early childhood children in cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor domains. Also, through interviews, it was found that parents’ perceptions of this game were positive because Engklek was considered well-known to all parents, low cost, and could be done anywhere.

Keywords: Early Childhood Development, Traditional Games, Engklek, Post-pandemic.

1 Introduction

The results of research and literature studies prove that children aged 3-6 years experience rapid growth and can affect development in the future [1][2]. Therefore, this age is often considered to be the golden period or golden age. Because it is so critical, experts provide recommendations to early childhood practitioners to continue to provide stimulation at this age so that children's development can develop optimally. How to provide stimulation to early childhood must be oriented towards the goal of developing the basic potential of children by considering the needs at each stage of their development and learning [3][4].

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Various efforts have been made by early childhood practitioners, such as counseling, mentoring, and direct intervention so that children have good stimulation. Playing has been a basic essential need in their daily world or "children work" [5] [6][7] Playing activities are considered enjoyable and provide a feeling of happiness [8][7] and increase the formation of brain structures that can stimulate executive functions that allow children to learn to pursue goals. Through play activities, children can also learn 21st century skills, namely problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and creativity [9].

Outdoor games have more advantages and accommodate more stimulation of sensory, motor, cognitive, social, and linguistic abilities [9]. Unfortunately, outdoor game activities have stopped since the Indonesian's government established Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in early 2020 to suppress the transmission and spread of infection due to Covid-19. Small-sized houses have limitations in providing space for children's activities such as running, jumping, throwing, and jumping [10] (Papalia, et al, 2009, p 265). Furthermore, children's relationships while doing activities are also limited. As a result, the needs in the motor and social-emotional areas become less fulfilled. Although this policy was considered the right decision to stop the transmission of Covid-19 to humans, other impacts occurred in various sectors including children development.

In mid-2022, the government encouraged schools throughout Indonesia to hold 100% face-to-face learning. This policy became fresh air for teachers, students, and parents to recover learning loss in children during the PSBB period. Children can return to school, play, and meet their peers. Along with learning activities at school, parents can provide more support to children for losing time in outdoor play activities during their growth period. According to Pebryawan [11] one form of activity that supports children's development is playing traditional games. Traditional games could also be a counterbalance for children to reduce screen time which is more focused on the cognitive area, rather than the social area.

Engklek is one of the traditional games, parents may choose to recover learning loss during the pandemic. Because it is cost-effective, simple, and very flexible to be played anywhere, the Engklek game is considered beneficial for children's development. The advantages of playing Engklek are developing motor skills [12]; [13], cognitive skills [12]; [14]; training self-control ([15]), social and science knowledge [16], creativity and intelligence of children [11].

Research on early childhood children in one kindergarten school [17] showed that the utilization of Engklek has satisfying results in children's gross motor skills development. It is found that the kindergarten teachers were encouraged by the result to set clear play-based learning goals through the Engklek game, yet still in the motor development area. Other studies using the Engklek game for learning conducted by Astutik [18] in the context of primary education and Rukmana [19] with 5-6-year-old participants focused on children's character building which is more in the socio-emotional development area. From several studies mentioned above, it is evident that there has been a lack of specific research focused on all areas (cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor) of early childhood development. However, investigating the Engklek utilization in play-based learning settings for early childhood children is

crucial for their development pathway. Therefore, there is still a lack of research on Engklek” utilization in all areas (cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor) of early childhood development. Hence, this study aims to holistically analyze all areas (cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor) of early childhood development through the utilization of the Engklek game.

This research focuses on the two following questions: 1) Why playing Engklek could be an alternative stimulant for early childhood children? and 2) How Engklek could stimulate the development of early childhood children? Thus, this study aims to explore the utilization of Engklek for early childhood children in light of three areas of early childhood development (cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor) in the post-pandemic period.

1.1 Motor Development

Motor development is divided into two areas, namely gross motor and fine motor. Gross motor skills are skills to balance or combine upper-body and lower-body movements to be balanced movements. Fine motor skills are the skill of mastering the fingers with the hands [20]. Motor development can develop in children 3-6 years through running, jumping, passing, and throwing [21], winding walks, and jumping on one leg [4].

Motor development that can be stimulated through the traditional Engklek game is jumping using one leg, balancing the body so as not to fall, and throwing the *gacok* [14]. In this study, the focus of observation was on the ability of young children to jump using one foot.

1.2 Cognitive Development

According to Piaget cognitive development in early childhood (3-6 years) is in the concrete pre-operational development. This can be seen in representational or symbolic activities [20]. One of early childhood cognitive development based on Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014 [22] includes symbolic thinking, which includes the ability to recognize-say-use the concept of numbers, recognize letters, and be able to represent various objects and their imagination in the form of images. In addition, in the concrete pre-operational stage children begin to develop logical abilities and shift egocentric thinking and inability through social and collaborating environments [4].

Through traditional Engklek games, early childhood children can recognize number symbols sequentially and build square and triangular spaces to build literacy skills [4]. It is found several cognitive activities in the traditional Engklek game such as recognizing the symbols of numbers, sorting them, and constructing spaces. In this study, the Engklek model used was the shape of a plane, while the focus of observation was the children's ability to recognize and sort numbers when they jumped using one leg.

1.3 Social-Emotional Development

Social-emotional development is about how to develop children's ability to understand and regulate emotions which is the key to emotional development in early childhood. This ability is very influential in controlling children's behavior in social environments [21]. According to Erikson, the focus of this development at the age of 3-6 years old is the formation of autonomy and initiative. The initiative can be shown by being determined and independent to act on their own. If this part is not fulfilled, then the child can cultivate feelings of guilt which take a part to form a conscience [4].

Initiatives in early childhood encourage them to be skillful at doing something so that lots of ideas, great energy, and enthusiasm are used in exploring the world around them [6]). The ability to express oneself authentically is crucial for nurturing one's initiative [6]. The desire to try becomes the initial form of initiative. When you try and succeed, you can grow confident, secure, and self-assured [5] and self-worth [4]. This self-worth will be the basis for children to have competencies that will be used when they enter school age. Initiatives will also encourage them to contribute socially, for example by collaborating to achieve common goals [4]. For this reason, activities for children of this age can be designed by involving adults or peers to foster initiative and work together to complete tasks or goals together socially [5]. The Engklek game can be used as a tool to train children to cooperate with peers and practice social coordination. In this game, children can play according to a mutual agreement and remind each other about the rules agreed [23]

2 Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method that aims to understand, describe, develop, and find something [16] that humans as research subjects [24]. The research subjects were 10 early childhood children with an age range of 3-6 years who live in the Karawaci area, Banten Province. Data collection is done through observation and interviews. Observations were made twice, namely, environmental observations before the playing time and observations during Engklek games. Interviews were conducted with parents before and after the children participated in the activity. The results of all data are analyzed and presented descriptively.

Observation activities in this study used passive observation techniques where researchers made observations but did not join in the activities. The observation instrument (rubric) used was compiled based on a comprehensive literature study on early childhood development. Ten children played the Engklek game after being given the example. The observation was executed by the researchers by giving a checklist.

The indicators measured in motor development is the ability to jump using one leg, in cognitive development is the ability to recognize and sort number symbols, and in social-emotional development cooperation and prosocial skill. The evaluation of each development using four criteria: BSB = Very Good Development; BSH = Growing as Expected; MB = Starting to Develop and BB = Not Yet Developed [25].

Furthermore, the researchers conducted interviews with parents to see whether the Engklek game could be an alternative stimulant for early childhood in the post-pandemic period in the home environment and to see how parents' responses to the traditional Engklek game a stimulant for early childhood development could be. As the results are obtained, the analysis is carried out through 3 steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing a conclusion [12]. The steps carried out in this study can be described as follows:

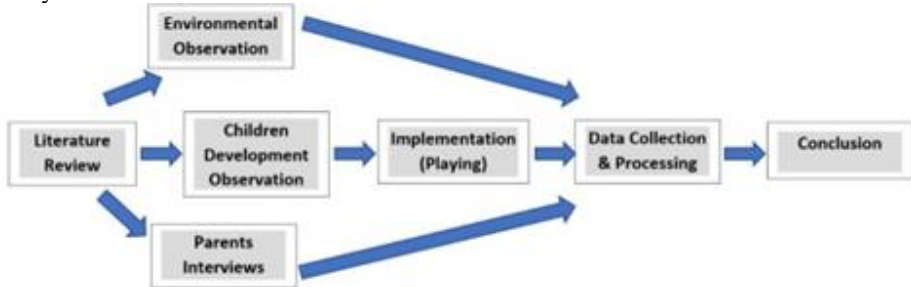


Fig. 1. Research Flow

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Observation.

Prior to the observation a *Gacok* was prepared. It was made of stone coated with paper so it would be safe for children’s hand skin. A large room (indoor) was also provided so that the children could move freely in a spacious area.



Fig. 2. Traditional Game "Engklek"

After all the tools and facilities preparation, 10 early childhood-aged children gathered with their parents in the room. Before starting the game, the researcher approached the children by inviting them to sing together and enter the Engklek game area. Children are introduced to the rules and explained how to play (game modeling). Before the game began, children were asked to line up and wait their turn. Each child is allowed to try 2-3 times until they can throw the *Gacok* according to the order of the numbers on the box. They jump on one leg according to the sequence of numbers on the Engklek model.

The following table is the demographic data of all participants:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Research Subjects

No	Age	Gender
Child 1	3	F
Child 2	4	M
Child 3	5	F
Child 4	5	M
Child 5	5	M
Child 6	5	M
Child 7	6	F
Child 8	6	F
Child 9	6	F
Child 10	6	M

While the children were playing the game, observations were made and documented using the instruments developed in advance. The results obtained are as follows:

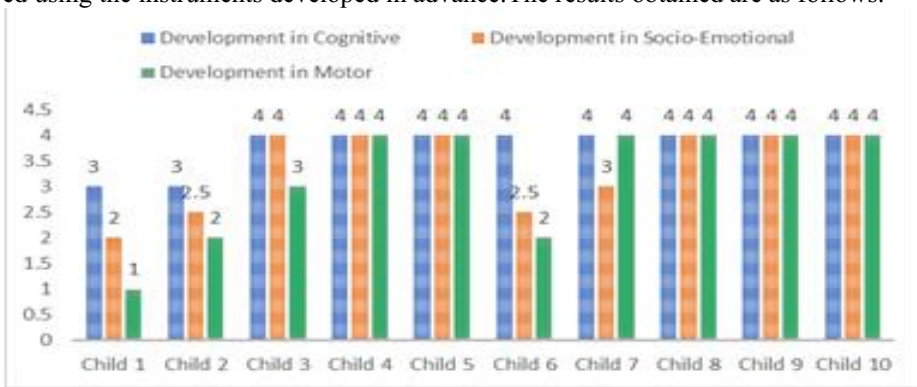


Fig. 3. Development Results in Cognitive, Socio-Emotional, and Motor

3.2 Motor Development

Based on the description in Figure 4 above, in general, it describes that as children get older, the skills of using the upper body and lower body are getting more mature [8]. The findings show that children aged 5-6 years on average are more skilled and mature in using their gross motor skills compared to children aged 3-4 years. This finding is also in line with the findings of other studies [12] and [24] that playing Engklek can grow and develop motor skills.

The following figure is the result obtained from direct observation of motor development:

The following are the results obtained from direct observation of motor development in children aged 3-6 years:

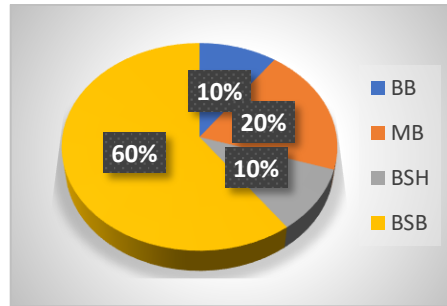


Fig. 4. Motor Development Result.

Based on the information on the results above, there are 10% of children are in the not-yet-developed stage (BB), 20% are in the starting-to-develop stage (MB), 10% are growing as expected (BSH) and 60% are found developed very good (BSB).



Fig. 5. A Child Jumping Using One leg

Furthermore, the findings indicate that boys jump farther than girls and that boys can throw *gacok* farther than girls. The implication is supposed to be the failure of the girls to finish the game. In contrast, the findings in this study show that the boys failed to finish the Engklek game more often than the girls, the boys were also easily breaking the rules because their foot often hit the line in the box when they try to land on one foot. So there is a possibility that playing Engklek for early-childhood-aged boys is a difficult game [26]. Meanwhile, even though the girls were doing the jumps and throw a little weak, in fine motor movements, girls were found more skilled because they were perfectly able to pick up the *gacok* by using their fingers. Observation also found that the *gacok* taken by girls did not fall and touch the line [8]. The findings eventually explained the reason why the Engklek game is more popular for girls than boys [11], simply because the game is more controllable by the girls. In addition, it was found that a spacious and adequate room supports children to move freely. It was found that the children happily do other activities outside the game area when they wait their turn to play Engklek, such as jumping, rolling, running, crawling, spinning, screaming, holding hands with peers, etc. This confirms experts' statement that early-childhood-aged child have has a lot of energy requires a wide and safe space so that motor development can be optimally developed [6]

3.3 Cognitive Development.

The following are the results obtained from direct observation of cognitive development in children aged 3-6 years:

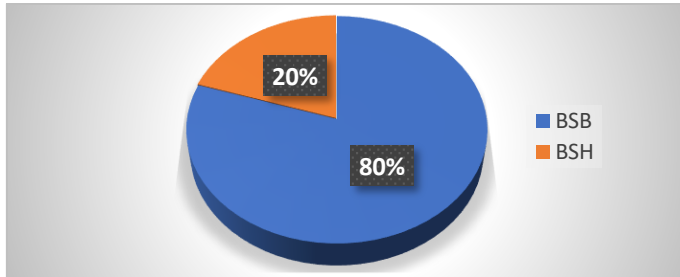


Fig. 6. Cognitive Development Result.

Based on the results above, there are 80% of children in a very-good-developed position (BSB). Another 20% are about to develop as expected (BSH). This indicates that early childhood-aged children are familiar with number symbols and can sort them properly. Even though some of them are already able to sort numbers up to 20, recognizing number symbols sequentially from 1-10 is the focus of this research.

Based on the description in Figure 4 above mentioned, the results show that 3-4-year-old children are in a position of developed-as-expected (BSH) and 5-6-year-old children are in a very-well-developed position (BSB). This shows that they can recognize and sequence number symbols [8] to build literacy skills from an early age [4]. These results concluded that the traditional Engklek game can be a stimulant of cognitive development in children aged 3-6 years.

3.4 Social-emotional Development

Cooperation.

The following are the results obtained from direct observation of cooperation in children aged 3-6 years old:

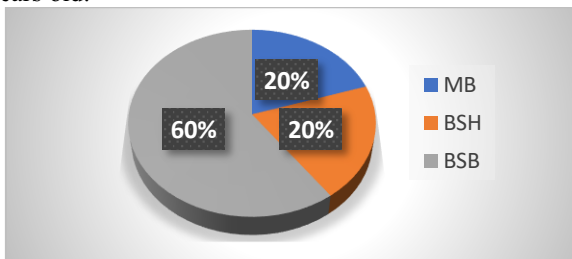


Fig. 7. Cooperation- Social-emotional Development Result.

This result indicates that early childhood-aged children are able to work together with peers through the Engklek game played by more than 2 people [11]. The attitude

measured in this collaboration is the attitude of being willing to take turns. This attitude is important for children as it can foster the practice of collaborating work from their early years. [6] to develop one skill out of several 21st-century skills.

Based on observations, 20% of children showed that they were starting to develop (MB) the skill, 20% were developing according to expectations (BSH), and the remaining 60% were developing very well (BSB). The results of this study are similar to the conclusions of Kustiyam’s in 2017 which states that playing Engklek can be a stimulant for cooperative attitudes in early childhood [27]. Furthermore, based on Figure 4, the development of maturity for cooperation in a very good developing position is dominated by children aged 5-6 years (60%), who are shown by willing to line up and wait for their turn to play.

Other findings show that there are 2 children aged 3 and 5 years who are starting to develop (MB) and 1 child aged 6 years who are developing as expected (BSH). This indicates the uniqueness of each individual [8]; [6]; [28]. It is marked with difficulty waiting their turn and tend to the force play first. Yet, this is still reasonable category due to egocentric behaviour that occurs the in development stage of children aged 3-6 years. By continuing to provide similar conditioning and interaction with peers, children will be able to work together well in the future. Early-childhood-aged needs to get used to collaborating with their peers to shift egocentric thinking through an attitude of cooperation [8].

Apart from that, it was observed that some of the children joined or grouped based on gender. Boys tend to hang out with boys, where they do activities together such as running, and chasing each other, and when others are having trouble following the rules of the game they help directly which can be seen as a form of cooperation. The same thing happened to the group of girls. These find implies that good forms of cooperation seem to occur in children of the same sex. Another observation is that the success of girls is proven to grow confident, secure, self-assured, and self-worth. This is marked by a sense of pride that is expressed through shouting, jumping, and happiness while playing or finishing the game.

Social coordination.

The following are the results obtained from direct observation of social coordination in children aged 3-6 years:

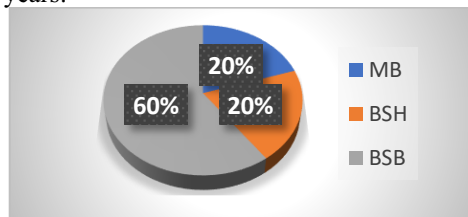


Fig. 8. Social coordination - Social-emotional Development Result.

The figure shows that 60% of early childhood have shown good social coordination behaviour, namely developing very well (BSB), 20% are in a position to develop according to expectations (BSH) and 20% are in a position starting to develop (MB).

The findings in this study show that the children have the ability to perform joint activities with peers according to a mutual agreement and remind each other about the agreement. The findings also indicate that the older children are more skillful in social coordination. As explained in the cooperation section, children who are more skillful at playing Engklek games will give guidance to children who are not skillful yet.

To introduce how to play the Engklek game, number symbols are needed, especially for early childhood children who have never played it before. The introduction of the number symbol in the Engklek game is combined with the rules used in the game, where players not just throw the *gacok* at the box they want, but to the box in number sequence. Numbers become symbols for children to determine the direction of throwing the *gacok* and jumping on the box correctly. In this process, children need guidance from adults and peers who have a higher level of understanding or skills than other children [8][9], therefore children with low skill levels can learn through instructions to throw the *gacok* and jump to the box according to the number symbols. Children whose skills are lacking can see, hear and practice games so that their skill abilities increase. By doing so, the way of social coordination can be done since from early childhood age in Engklek games by practicing scaffolding in the form of guidance from children who have more abilities to children who have fewer abilities.

Based on the findings above, stimulation of social coordination in children aged 3-4 years requires more guidance from peers aged 6 years to be able to participate in games compared to children aged 5-6 years. This is in line with another study [8] which states that children will be more skillful when they are at the end of the preschool period. Forms of social coordination can be seen when they pay attention to one another. For example, if some do not follow the rules or their feet are lifted to touch the floor when taking a jack, or their hands touch a line or jump that is not in the order of the boxes, then other children will give their response emphatically. A child who always said "Oh, the *gacok* is thrown in the wrong box, please try again..." is a 6-year-old child. This assertion makes unskilled children, namely children aged 3-4 years, repeat the game. They became very enthusiastic and tried to improve their abilities.

In addition, the preference for having a gender-based group of children shows that they understand and recognize identity based on gender and build friendships between peers [8]. This shows that there is a child's awareness of the Oedipus complex during the age stage of 3-6 years by imitating the role of the father or mother[4]. Based on the results of the observations above, it can be concluded that the traditional Engklek game can be used as a stimulant for cooperation and social coordination in children aged 3-6 years.

3.5 Interview

Interviews were successfully carried out by researchers with 7 parents. Based on the interviews, it was found that 100% of the parents are familiar with the Engklek game because they played it during their childhood age. Parents also mentioned that they did observation as well and found that children do not encounter significant obstacles when playing "Engklek," able to follow the rules where they have to throw *Gacok*

according to the numbers, use one leg to hop, and also demonstrate good social behavior while playing. Therefore, the parents supported that Engklek games were able to stimulate children's development, including motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

In addition, the findings showed that they also saw how their children played with their peers cheerily, in contrast to the habit as a result of the PSBB policy where children have to play more individualistically at home. During the pandemic, toys that children use such as Lego, crayons, dolls, toy cars, bicycles, etc. rarely practice peer-to-peer relationships. The social aspect that becomes the strength of the Engklek game makes it possible and encouraged to be played in their neighborhood in the post-pandemic period.

Another finding of interviews was that parents and toys are unable to help the children overcome their boredom. Consequently, parents often relieve children from boredom and keep them calm while parents do work from home (WFH) by giving them gadgets. Most parents provide an average limit of screen time of 1-2 hours per day. However, three parents stated that their children were obsessed and it was difficult to let them go. The following are some excerpts from the conversation during the interview:

"The game of Engklek is more traditional fun because it involves body movements of the legs and arms"

"The game is indeed an appropriate method for learning in a fun way, regardless of the type of game"

"Children are more active in moving and socializing compared to playing with gadgets. Children can also practice emotional intelligence through socialization with their peers."

"Children will be happier if they play with friends around the house.."

4 Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion above, this study concludes that Engklek games can be used as an alternative to stimulate early childhood children to develop motor, cognitive, and social-emotional abilities. In the motor area, children are stimulated to jump using one leg (gross motor), in cognitive development children are stimulated to recognize and sort numbers (1-10), and in socio-emotional development children are stimulated to be able to work with others by having good communication and collaboration. The interview results show the potential of Engklek to be used again in this post-pandemic era to support the healthy development of early childhood children. Also, positive results from parents interviews reflect the potential of using Engklek in kindergarten classrooms more intentionally to achieve significant learning objectives. Teachers are recommended to set clear learning goals for three areas (cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor) of early childhood development. Furthermore, the findings can be a good start to designing play-based learning activities using Engklek. Therefore, Engklek can be utilized more extensively formally in school and informally in our society. This traditional game hopefully will affect the way early childhood children grow holistically and more positively in this post-pandemic era.

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