



## The Integration of the Traditional Game *Engklek* in Stimulating Literacy Skills in Children Aged 5–6 Years

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### ABSTRACT

Literacy is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development, serving as a foundation for future educational stages. However, challenges in teaching literacy often arise due to unengaging methods that are not aligned with children's developmental stages. This study aims to explore how the integration of the traditional Indonesian game *Engklek* can serve as a medium to stimulate literacy among children aged 5–6 years. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was employed, involving participatory observation and in-depth interviews with teachers and children aged 5–6 years. The findings indicate that *Engklek* increases children's interest and motivation in learning to recognize letters and words through active and enjoyable experiences. Children more easily recall letter shapes and vocabulary through the physical activities embedded in the game. Additionally, social interaction during the gameplay supports the development of communication skills and self-confidence. This study concludes that the traditional game *Engklek* can be adapted as an effective method for stimulating early childhood literacy, offering a creative and culturally relevant alternative to conventional learning methods.

Keywords: Traditional Game *Engklek*, Literacy Stimulation, Early Childhood Literacy.

### ABSTRAK

Literasi keaksaraan merupakan dasar penting dalam perkembangan anak usia dini sebagai bekal untuk jenjang pendidikan selanjutnya. Namun, tantangan dalam pengajaran keaksaraan sering muncul akibat metode yang kurang menarik dan tidak sesuai dengan tahap perkembangan anak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana integrasi permainan tradisional *Engklek* dapat berfungsi sebagai media untuk merangsang literasi anak usia 5-6 tahun. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, melibatkan observasi partisipatif dan wawancara mendalam dengan guru serta anak usia 5-6 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan *Engklek* dapat meningkatkan minat dan motivasi anak dalam belajar mengenal huruf dan kata dengan cara yang aktif dan menyenangkan. Anak-anak lebih mudah mengingat bentuk huruf dan kosakata melalui aktivitas fisik yang terintegrasi dalam permainan tersebut. Selain itu, interaksi sosial selama permainan juga mendukung perkembangan komunikasi dan kepercayaan diri anak. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa permainan tradisional *Engklek* dapat diadaptasi sebagai metode efektif untuk merangsang literasi anak usia dini, menawarkan alternatif pembelajaran yang kreatif dan sesuai dengan budaya lokal.

Kata Kunci: Permainan Tradisional *Engklek*, Stimulasi Literasi, Keaksaraan Anak Usia Dini.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country endowed with a rich and diverse array of flora and fauna. In addition, this tropical nation is widely known for its culture, traditions, and customs that have gained international recognition. One of the traditional treasures owned by the Indonesian people is traditional games. Almost every region in Indonesia has its own variety of traditional games, such as *petak umpet* (hide and seek), *cublak-cublak suweng*, and *gobak sodor*. These games, besides being engaging and fun to play, also contain positive values relevant to everyday life (Yulita, 2017). Some of these values include fostering teamwork, togetherness, mutual cooperation, and respect for others (Suryawan, 2020).

Traditional games in Indonesia are numerous, innovative, creative, and diverse. However, despite this abundance, some of these games are becoming increasingly difficult to trace, and some have even become extinct. This phenomenon is attributed to the changing times, where traditional games are rarely played and are often unknown to the younger generation. Consequently, traditional games are being abandoned and gradually forgotten by children (Febrianty & Nugrahanta, 2021; Sari, 2025).

Traditional games represent a vital part of local cultural heritage, not only serving as entertainment but also carrying educational value. Amidst rapid technological advancement and the dominance of digital games, the existence of traditional games is becoming increasingly marginalized, including in early childhood education settings (Nolan & McBride, 2014; Rahman et al., 2025). In fact, traditional games such as *Engklek* hold great potential to be integrated into learning processes, particularly in stimulating early literacy skills in children. Early literacy defined as the ability to recognize letters, read, and write is essential to be nurtured from an early age as it forms the foundation for future educational development (Sevima, 2020). In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful learning, integrating traditional games with literacy content offers a contextual and enjoyable learning solution (Fajriyah, 2018).

Early literacy in young children refers to the fundamental ability to recognize, understand, and meaningfully use linguistic symbols such as letters, words, and sounds in everyday life (Ismawati et al., 2023). This literacy is not limited to formal reading and writing but also includes children's ability to communicate, identify letter shapes, comprehend simple stories, and show interest in books or other texts (Sevima, 2020). At the early childhood stage, literacy develops naturally through direct experiences, social interactions, and a language-rich environment (Haryanti et al., 2020).

However, in practice, literacy learning approaches are still predominantly conventional, focusing on letter and word recognition in a rigid manner that often fails to attract children's interest (Hayati et al., 2021). This presents a significant challenge for early childhood educators to design learning methods aligned with the developmental characteristics of young children, who thrive in play-based learning environments (Apriyani et al., 2021). *Engklek*, a traditional game that involves motor skills and can be modified to include literacy elements, presents an opportunity to create an active and enjoyable learning experience (Rozana et al., 2020). Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at Al Hidayah Kindergarten Tangkil 02, Blitar Regency, the integration of

traditional play with literacy stimulation represents an innovative approach worthy of further exploration.

Based on the aforementioned phenomena, several underlying issues can be identified, including: (1) the lack of diverse and engaging literacy learning methods appropriate to the developmental needs of young children; (2) the limited utilization of traditional games as educational learning media; and (3) the absence of a structured model for implementing the *Engklek* game to stimulate literacy in children aged 5–6 years. From these identified problems, the research question formulated in this study is: How can the *Engklek* traditional game be integrated into early literacy stimulation for children aged 5–6 years? This question aims to explore how the implementation of the *Engklek* game can serve as a meaningful, effective, and enjoyable tool for literacy learning among young children.

Research conducted by Ardiansyah et al. (2023) revealed that implementing traditional games with 35 children in Kampung Batu Lubang Pantai through pre- and post-tests (comprising 75 items to measure learning outcomes) resulted in a 40% improvement in reading and writing literacy, and a 34% improvement in numeracy skills. These gains also contributed to improved proficiency in using proper Indonesian language. This finding is consistent with (Budiarti, 2022), who stated that the implementation of traditional games based on the STEAM approach (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) is highly effective in introducing literacy to early childhood learners. This approach successfully fosters children's interest in literacy by making the process playful and engaging. Children were enthusiastic when engaging in letter-guessing games using media and songs.

Further findings also show that early reading literacy development at TK Nurul Aulia, Depok, can be facilitated through the *Engklek* game. This traditional game, implemented in Group A at TK Nurul Aulia, proved to be a fun and effective method for introducing reading concepts. Moreover, the involvement of people around the children during the game enhanced their motivation and comprehension of the literacy messages embedded in the activity. Beyond language development, the *Engklek* game can also stimulate other developmental aspects, including moral and religious values, motor skills, arts, social-emotional development, and cognitive growth (Rohayati & Budiarti, 2022).

The objective of this study is to describe and analyze the process of integrating the traditional game *Engklek* in stimulating early literacy skills in children aged 5–6 years at Al Hidayah Kindergarten Tangkil 02, Blitar Regency. Employing a qualitative approach, this research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the planning, implementation, and children's responses to literacy learning through traditional games, and to serve as a reference for early childhood educators in developing culturally relevant learning innovations (Darmawati & Widyasari, 2022).

In conclusion, the study titled “The Integration of the Traditional *Engklek* Game in Stimulating Early Literacy in Children Aged 5–6 Years” is highly relevant in addressing the need for contextual, engaging, and developmentally appropriate literacy learning approaches. The *Engklek* game, rich in cultural values and motor activities, when combined with basic literacy elements such as letter, syllable, and word recognition, is believed to provide meaningful learning experiences for young children.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the integration process of the traditional *Engklek* game in stimulating literacy skills among children aged 5–6 years. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the characteristics of research that seeks to explore phenomena in a natural, in-depth, and contextual manner within early childhood learning environments (Hardani et al., 2020). The study does not intend to measure variables quantitatively, but rather to understand the meaning and processes that occur in literacy learning practices based on traditional games.

Data collection was conducted using several methods: (1) participatory observation to directly observe the implementation of learning activities using the *Engklek* game, including teacher-child interactions during the activity; (2) in-depth interviews with classroom teachers, the principal, and several parents to gain insights into their perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of integrating the *Engklek* game into literacy learning; and (3) documentation in the form of activity photographs, teacher notes, daily lesson plans (RPPH), and children's work as supporting field data (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

The data sources in this study consisted of the primary subjects, namely early childhood education (ECE) teachers implementing learning activities using the *Engklek* game and children aged 5–6 years at TK Al Hidayah Tangkil 02, Blitar Regency. The types of data used were both primary and secondary. Primary data were obtained directly through observations and interviews, while secondary data were gathered from teaching documents, supporting literature, and relevant activity documentation.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved filtering relevant information from the observations and interviews (Harahap, 2020). The reduced data were then presented in a descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation of the emerging meanings by the researcher. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting verification continuously throughout the research process to ensure that the findings were valid and reflected actual conditions in the field.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of the *Engklek* game with literacy activities at Al Hidayah Tangkil 02 Kindergarten was carried out by combining physical play and language development activities. The aim was to make the process of recognizing letters, reading syllables, and forming simple words more interesting and suitable for the characteristics of early childhood, which is characterized by active movement. Teachers modified the *Engklek* board by writing vowels and consonants on each square so that the game board not only functions as a motor activity medium but also as an interactive literacy learning tool.

In practice, teachers show picture cards to children, who are then asked to jump to the *Engklek* square containing the first letter of the picture. For example, when the teacher shows a picture of an “apple,” the child will jump to the square with the letter A. After that, the child continues jumping to the next squares to form syllables or simple words as directed by the teacher. This process helps children understand the relationship between letter symbols, sounds, and word meanings through fun and challenging activities.

This activity indirectly combines several aspects of child development at once. By jumping on the *Engklek* board, children hone their gross motor skills, while the process of recognizing letters and words involves cognitive and language skills. In addition, children also learn to cooperate, wait their turn, and obey the rules of the game, thereby supporting their social-emotional development. Thus, literacy learning integrated with the *Engklek* game becomes more mindful, meaningful, and joyful, as well as relevant to the learning needs of early childhood.

The results of the study indicate that the integration of the traditional *Engklek* game into literacy learning activities at TK Al Hidayah Tangkil 02 has had a positive impact on children's motivation and engagement in the learning process. Based on direct observations conducted over three sessions, it was evident that the children were more enthusiastic and active when learning to recognize letters, read syllables, and construct simple words through the use of a modified *Engklek* game board.

The teacher adapted the *Engklek* grid by writing vowel and consonant letters in each square. The children were then instructed to jump to the square corresponding to the initial letter of the image shown by the teacher. This activity simultaneously stimulated both physical and cognitive engagement. It not only involved gross motor movements but also supported the development of letter recognition, syllable formation, and word identification based on visual prompts. The children appeared more engaged and demonstrated quicker letter recognition compared to conventional learning methods, which tend to be more passive. The following are the results of the observation of children's engagement in the *Engklek* game in developing early literacy skills:

**Table 1. Observation Result of Children's Engagement in the *Engklek* Game**

No	Name	Participation	Letter Mastery	Description
1	Azka Putra	Active	Good	Able to mention letters
2	Arrayyan	Very active	Very good	Able to from words
3	Chandra P	Moderate	Moderate	Requires reinforcement of syllables
4	Farzana Az.	Active	Good	Beginning to recognize initial letters
5	M. Rafaeyza	Very active	Very good	Independently initiates play
6	M. Arsyia	Active	Good	Identifying words with the same initial
7	Nurrohmah	Active	Good	Able to mention letters
8	Seif Rafardhan	Very active	Very good	Able to identify vocabulary
9	Tunjung K	Moderate	Moderate	Reinforcement between letters b and d
10	Vristia A	Very active	Very good	Composing stories based on pictures

Interviews conducted with classroom teachers revealed that prior to the use of the *Engklek* game, children tended to be passive and easily bored during literacy learning sessions that employed lecture-based methods or worksheets. The teacher stated: "*When they were usually taught using books or worksheets, the children would quickly become bored. But after using this letter-based Engklek game, they became enthusiastic and memorized the letters more quickly.*" (Interview, May 2, 2025). In addition, the teacher also felt supported by this method, as it is simple, cost-effective, and can be conducted outdoors in a more enjoyable environment. The results of



an interview with the principal reinforced the teacher’s statement, indicating that this play-based approach aligns with the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which emphasizes that learning should be enjoyable, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate for children.

Documentation in the form of activity photographs and lesson plan records (RPP) demonstrated that the integration of the *Engklek* game into literacy instruction was carried out in a systematic and well-planned manner. One of the lesson plans dated April 24, 2025, listed the learning objectives as follows: children were expected to be able to identify vowel letters, distinguish between initial and final syllables, and construct simple words with the aid of pictures. In practice, these activities were divided into several sessions, such as “Letter Jump,” “Guess the Word in the *Engklek* Box,” and “Jump and Arrange a Short Story.” These activities successfully created interactive and enjoyable literacy experiences for the children. Documentation of the children’s work also indicated an improvement in their ability to independently construct simple words.

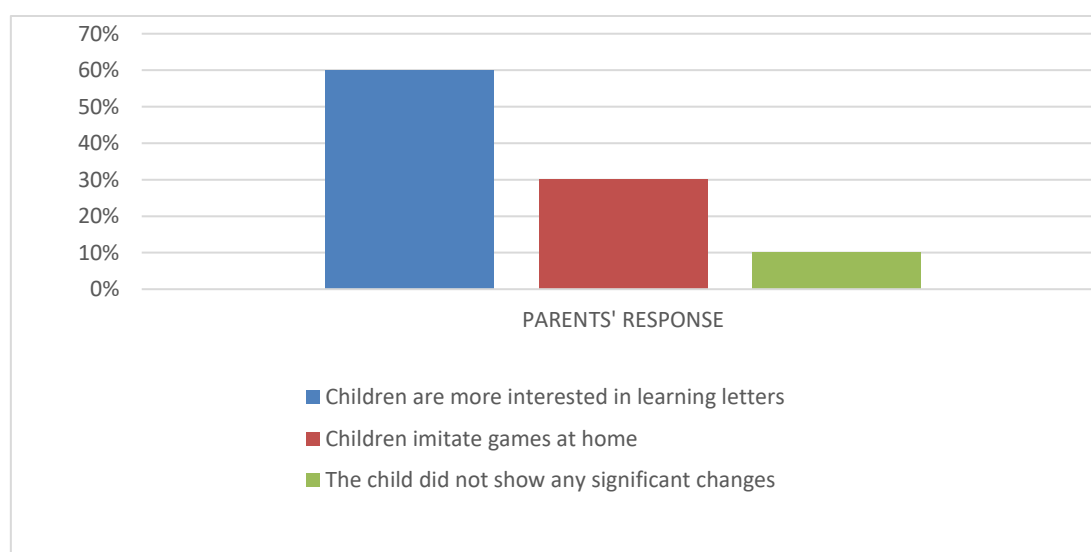
**Tabel 2. Children’s Written Work Results**

Name	Written Work	Skill Demonstrated
Azka Putra	Writing “MAMA”	Constructing simple words
Arrayyan	Arranging “S-A-P-I”	Reading letters by syllables
Chandra P	Identifying the syllable “BU-”	Syllable reinforcement
Farzana Az.	Identifying <i>Kucing</i> and <i>Kumbang</i>	Identifying words with the same initial letter
M. Rafaeyza	Finding an image with the initial letter A (Apple)	Constructing simple sentences from images
M. Arsyia	Arranging “B-A-Y-I”	Reading letters by syllables
Nurrohmah	Writing “OBAT”	Constructing words beginning with vowel sounds
Seif Rafardhan	Arranging consonants in “JA-RI”	Developing phonological awareness
Tunjung K	Identifying the word “ <i>das</i> ?”	Reinforcement of the letters b and d
Vristia A.	Finding a picture of <i>obat</i>	Constructing simple sentences from identified images



**Figure 1. A child is Playing the *Engklek* Game and Arranging Words According to the Colors of the *Engklek* Board They Step On**

Additional data were obtained through a simple questionnaire distributed to 10 parents to assess changes in their children's interest in literacy learning at home. Based on the results, 80% of respondents reported that their children began to spell and recognize letters more frequently at home after the implementation of the literacy-based *Engklek* activity. One parent wrote: *"Now my child likes to play with letters at home. He writes letters on the ground and pretends to jump like he does at school."* These findings support the idea that meaningful play experiences through traditional games at school can positively influence children's learning behaviors at home and strengthen the internalization of literacy skills in an enjoyable manner.



**Figure 2. Parents' Responses to the Development of Children's Literacy Skills**

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the results of (Budiarti, 2022)), (Rahnang et al., 2023), (Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019), and (Ünal Gezer, 2021) which suggest that modified traditional games can serve as effective tools to stimulate early literacy skills in young children. By involving motor, linguistic, and social aspects, the *Engklek* game not only enhances children's ability to recognize letters and words but also helps build their self-confidence and enjoyment in learning (Miratunnisah, 2024; Syahril et al., 2022). The implications of this study highlight the importance of providing early childhood educators with training in designing culturally-based play media as an alternative, enjoyable, and contextual literacy learning strategy. In the future, this model may be further developed and tested in various early childhood education institutions, with approaches adapted to the needs and characteristics of children in different regions.

One parent said, *"Now my child likes to play with letters at home. He writes letters on the ground and pretends to jump like he does at school."* Similar findings were also expressed by another parent who said, *"My child often asks me to play hopscotch while saying the letters. At first I was confused, but it turns out that this is what he does at school."* In fact, another parent added, *"My child used to have a hard time learning to read, but now he is more enthusiastic because he learns while playing."*

From these parents' statements, it is clear that meaningful play experiences at school not only impact children's engagement during learning but also influence their learning

behavior at home (LaForett & Mendez, 2019; Lehl et al., 2020; Lin & Li, 2019). Children begin to replicate enjoyable literacy activities within the family context, such as playing hopscotch with letters, inviting parents to join in, and reciting letters while moving. This shows that integrating traditional games such as *Engklek* into literacy learning can strengthen the process of internalizing literacy in a natural and enjoyable way. In addition, family involvement in children's learning activities has increased because they see learning as a fun activity, not a burden. Thus, schools and families can support each other in fostering reading interest and literacy skills in early childhood.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the integration of the traditional *Engklek* game into the learning activities at TK Al Hidayah Tangkil 02, Blitar Regency, has a positive impact on stimulating literacy development in children aged 5–6 years. The *Engklek* game, modified to include letters, syllables, and phonological activities, has proven effective in increasing children's interest in recognizing and using letters and words in a more enjoyable way. This activity stimulates not only cognitive and language development but also supports gross motor, social, and emotional development in an integrated manner. Children were observed to be more enthusiastic and engaged in the learning process, as the approach used aligns with the learning characteristics of early childhood—namely, through play.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the essential role of teachers in designing culturally contextualized learning experiences. Support from both the school and parents also emerged as a key factor in the success of the program. Therefore, the integration of traditional games like *Engklek* can serve as an effective literacy learning strategy in early childhood education settings, while simultaneously contributing to the preservation of local culture. The study recommends that teachers be provided with training and practical guidelines for developing literacy-based play media to ensure its optimal and sustainable implementation.

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