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## Traditional games as a tool for improving psychosocial development: a comparative study of structured and progressive learning models

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Pressure in the school environment, academic demands, and high social expectations often increase the vulnerability of children and adolescents to psychosocial problems. Bad interactions, such as bullying or social isolation, can contribute to their mental state and hinder their social engagement. **Research Objectives:** The aim is to determine the difference in the influence of a deliberately structured psychosocial learning model and a deliberately structured progressive learning model through traditional games on psychosocial development. **Methods:** This research used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-only control group design with a model of more than one experimental group and sample selection using a purposive sampling technique. The sample of this study was 60 fifth-grade students from a public elementary school. The instrument in this research was a questionnaire developed by students at the Wesleyan University Graduate School, namely the Class 7 Students' Psychosocial Adjustment Needs Questionnaire, with data analysis techniques using the t-test. **Findings/Results:** Psychosocial learning models that are deliberately structured progressively through traditional games can influence psychosocial development, as well as psychosocial learning models that are deliberately structured can influence psychosocial development. **Conclusion:** There is a significant difference between the deliberately structured psychosocial learning model and the progressive version in terms of elementary students' psychosocial development. The progressive model gives continuous stimulation and better support for psychosocial formation because it builds on what has already been learnt. Teachers are encouraged to use more collaborative, contextual approaches to enhance students' social-emotional engagement. Future research should explore different regions or cultures and incorporate mixed methods for a deeper understanding of student experiences

**Keywords:** Psychosocial; traditional games and sports; progressive; intentionally structured

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychosocial, which is the relationship between social relationships and one's mental health, is a concern in several countries (Mak et al., 2023). Child suicide is an important issue that needs to be addressed, in line with WHO data which says more than 700,000 people die by suicide every year throughout the world and suicide is the fourth cause of death among the 15-29 year age group (World Health Organization, 2021). Lack of

environmental attention to the mental well-being of children and adolescents will lead to mental health effects that may persist throughout life and even reduce the capacity for socioeconomic productivity (Kirkbride et al., 2024). These psychosocial problems, if not addressed immediately, can hinder students' daily functioning and worsen children's mental health (Karki et al., 2019). According to Ayodeji et al. (2022) psychosocial problems of adolescents at higher secondary levels and the findings suggest that students face more problems related to educational and emotional aspects. In line with the results of the study of Emeljanovas et al. (2023) reported due to busy schedules, new atmosphere, exams, personal relationships with teachers, fellow students plus growing up, most students face several psychosocial problems such as stress, depression, anxiety, and lack of interest. It requires the role of schools to overcome psychosocial problems in children and adolescents.

Research results Xiu et al. (2022) in China show that mental health problems among students are around 41.8%, with details of 43.3% men and 40.2% women. The most common mental health problems that occur are due to academic stress, namely around 58.9%. Higher grades, physical illness, chronic constipation, alcohol consumption, involvement in sexual behaviour, living on campus, and living in a nonurban area with a single parent were significantly more likely to have mental health problems. The results of a literature review study conducted by Dessauvage et al. (2022) aimed to determine the prevalence of mental health problems in six ASEAN countries, namely Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, identify determinants of mental health, report prevalence data based on standard screening instruments of 335 articles and only 108 eligible for full text analysis to 34 inclusion in the review yielded a median point rate of 29.4% depression, 42.4% anxiety, 16.4% stress and 7% to 8% student suicide. Meanwhile, suicide in Europe accounts for 1.4% of the total number of deaths and accounts for six of the ten countries with the highest suicide rates internationally (Pompili et al., 2020). In Norway an increase in the prevalence of self-harm from 4.1% to 16.2% occurred from 2002 to 2017/2018. This increase was relatively greater for girls than for boys (Tørmoen et al., 2020). However, mental health disorders are relatively high in Scandinavian countries (Finland, 21%; Iceland, 19%; and Norway, 18%, in 2015) and the lowest in Eastern Europe (Romania, 8%; Bulgaria, 9%; Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia, Croatia, and Hungary, all 10%) (Begum et al., 2020). Similarly, in America 22% of high school students reported having seriously considered suicide in the past year. This percentage is highest among females (30%), American Indians/Alaska Natives (27%), and lesbian, gay, or bisexual teens (45%) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

The education unit is an institution that is formal to informal in the education process. Building education units is carried out by the government and the private sector, with the aim of providing teaching, managing, and educating students, through the guidance provided by educators. This is in line with the expression Merdeka.com (2020) that the purpose of establishing an education unit is to assist in the development of students, both from academics, self-potential, behaviour, psychology, morals, to character. One of the tasks of the community in the education unit environment is to shape character and help develop the potential that exists in children. However, what is currently an obstacle, especially in elementary schools, is the behavior of many students who are hampered by the development of potential and in the formation of student character, namely students who experience problems that cannot be resolved alone, including psychosocial disorders (Evi, 2020).

Structured physical activity according to [Bean & Forneris \(2016\)](#) is more effective in teaching life skills and produces good results when compared to unstructured exercise programmes. According to another study [Martín-Rodríguez et al., \(2024\)](#) physical activity does not necessarily affect psychosocial development, and it can occur when players interact with each other in ways that contribute to their psychological development or when players engage in non-structured behaviours.

Physical activities that can be a deliberately structured programme are traditional games and sports activities. Traditional games and sports can enhance the experience of movement and interaction in sports related to everyday life, such as sportsmanship, interacting with others, and developing teamwork ([Irmansyah et al., 2020](#); [Naufal & Maksum, 2024](#)). Traditional games and sports also have a role in the areas of motor skills, language, cognitive function, social-emotional development, and self-care of participants to a certain extent ([Riadi & Lestari, 2021](#); [Suhra et al., 2020](#)) Furthermore, moral influences are cooperation, honesty, responsibility, hard work, discipline, self-confidence and tolerance ([Arfanda et al., 2023](#)). The social influence generated by traditional games is to establish social relationships and comfort ([Arfanda et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, the researcher intends to implement traditional games into the research that will be carried out.

Previous research emphasised more on physical and myological aspects, and used sports that were familiar to children ([Ginanjar et al., 2023](#)). However, this research tends to ignore physical performance, the context is different ([Millar et al., 2021](#); [Moy et al., 2019](#); [Ribas et al., 2023](#)). This research adopted the principle concept for integrating life skills teaching into golf practice in Canada ([Kendellen et al., 2016](#)). This has become an idea for researchers to replace life skills with psychosocial and replace golf with traditional games. In the context of researchers implementing a structured traditional games and sports program for psychosocial development, it is a programme that uses traditional games and sports as a vehicle to provide experiences that promote Indonesian culture, national character values, self-discovery and teach participants life skills in life. in a deliberate and systematic way.

Therefore, this research aims to explain the differences between different influence approaches and how successful the use of traditional sports or games is for psychosocial development. Additionally, this study answers the following research questions: How to affect the difference between the intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports, which integrates psychosocial components, compared to the intentionally structured psychosocial progressive model group through traditional games and sports? The authors assume that the research to be carried out has quality and influence in efforts to increase the value of learning and education, especially in psychosocial development, especially in children.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The method in this study is a quasi-experimental method, using an experimental design of more than one experimental group. The use of the experimental method is based on the purpose of the research to test the temporary conjecture in the study conducted to explore the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable ([Sereyath, 2024](#)). This research design is an initial test-final test-only control group design with two levels of variation of the independent variable. Research design with a design model with more than one experimental group, with the aim of measuring psychosocial at the beginning of the study before treatment and at the end after treatment.

**Research Participants**

The sampling technique is a purposive sampling technique. The study sample was 60 students from the fifth grade of a public elementary school who had never participated in traditional games (29 boys and 31 girls). The age of the sample ranged from 10 to 12 years with a mean age of 11.5. Students from two sports classes with 2 hours per week and a total of 28 hours during the study. All students took a questionnaire in the first week, and they took a second questionnaire after completing their class at the 15th meeting.

**Research Procedures**

The flow of research carried out by the author focuses on considering research problems that occur in general at the global, national, and regional levels, especially in areas where researchers carry out their daily activities, then conducting surveys and identifying the results to determine the population and sample. After that, the researcher determined the method and research design that would be carried out on the two groups, then carried out a pre-test to describe the initial condition of the sample before being given treatment; after that, the researcher began implementing it. treatment for 14 meetings, then a posttest was carried out. The next stage was processing and analysing the data obtained so that it reached the final stage, namely drawing conclusions from the research results. The following is an illustration of the flow of research procedures that the author carried out in Figure 1.

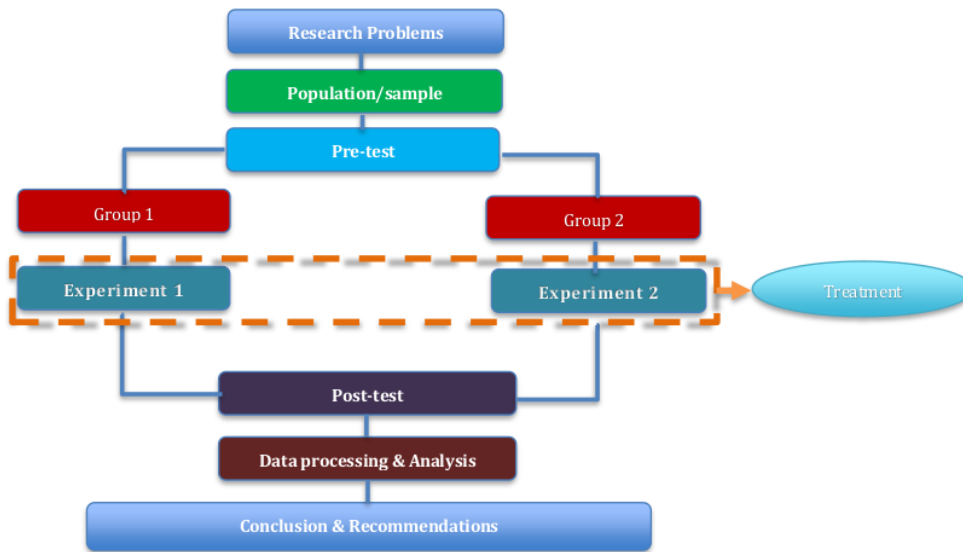
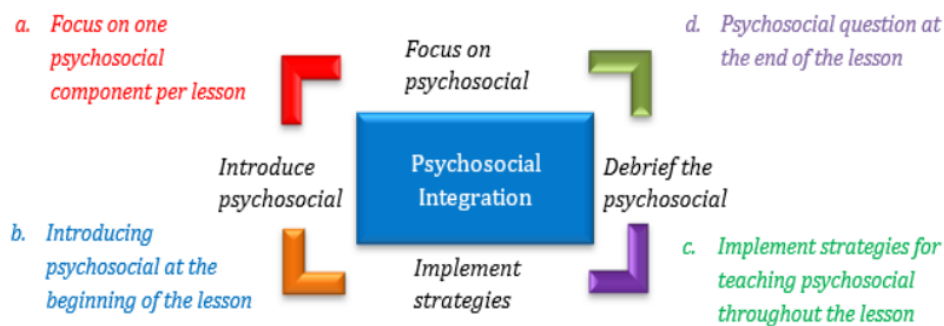


Figure 1. Research Procedure

**Intervention/Treatment**

The research programme adopted from (Kendellen et al., 2016), contains four principles for teaching life skills. Four guiding principles were created to assist educators in integrating life skills instruction into the practice of golf in Canada. Meanwhile, in this research, researchers replaced life skills with psychosocial skills and replaced golf with traditional games.



**Figure 2. Psychosocial Programme Integration**

Researchers design learning programmes using these four guiding principles in physical activities or other sports, including traditional games. Because the focus of this research is traditional games, the researcher used traditional game activities as a substitute for golf. The four teaching principles are illustrated in Figure 2.

In principle, in the intentionally structured psychosocial process, both groups receive the same treatment, namely referring to the four teaching principles as in illustration Figure 2; however, in the progressive group, the integration of psychosocial indicators after two meetings were increased by one psychosocial indicator; more details are listed in Figure 2.

The research programme is designed to involve students in various types of traditional games that are specifically selected and arranged to promote psychosocial development, which can be seen in Table 2. Through this programme, students were involved in games that are carried out periodically and structured with guidance and supervision from researchers. Each activity in this program was monitored and evaluated to see the resulting impact on the psychosocial aspects that want to be developed.

**Table 2. Research Treatment of Both Groups**

Types of Traditional Games	Intervention Research Program	
	Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Program	Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Program
Congklak	Social Cognitive	Social Cognitive
Damdas 16 Batu	Social Cognitive	Social Cognitive
Egrang	Social Emotional	Social Cognitive dan Social Emotional
Bakiak	Social Emotional	Social Cognitive dan Social Emotional
Gobak Sodor	Social	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional dan Social
Bentengan	Social	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional dan Social
Ular Tangga	Teachers Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social dan Teachers Relationship
Lompat Tali	Teachers Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social dan Teachers Relationship
Salam Sabrang	Peers Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship dan Peers Relationship
Boy-boyan	Peers Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship dan Peers Relationship

Types of Traditional Games	Intervention Research Program	
	Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Program	Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Program
Engklek	Parents Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship, Peers Relationship dan Parents Relationship
Papancakan	Parents Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship, Peers Relationship dan Parents Relationship
Bedil Jepret	Siblings Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship, Peers Relationship, Parents Relationship dan Siblings Relationship
Kucing Tikus	Siblings Relationship	Social Cognitive, Social Emotional, Social, Teachers Relationship, Peers Relationship, Parents Relationship dan Siblings Relationship

**Data Measurement**

The instrument used was a psychosocial instrument adapted from (Pineda, 2019). The questionnaire instrument was developed by students from the Wesleyan University Graduate School, namely the Questionnaire on Psychosocial Adjustment Needs of Grade 7 Students. The assessment scale is divided into three parts, which are explained as follows:

- Part I - Socio-demographic profile of respondents
- Part II - Psychosocial adjustment needs
- Part III - Psychosocial adjustment needs from social relationships

Part I contains 5 multiple-choice demographic questions. Part II contains questions regarding psychosocial adjustment needs in cognitive, emotional, and social aspects, each consisting of 10 items. Part III contains questions regarding respondents' social relationships, including teachers, peers, parents, and siblings, each consisting of 10 items with a reliability level of 0.956 and validity of 0.51.

**Data Analysis**

Data processing for this study used the independent sample t-test because the data in this study was normally distributed and had homogeneous data variants, based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality test and the Levenetest for data homogeneity test. Data processing in this research was assisted by SPSS v.23 for Windows software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

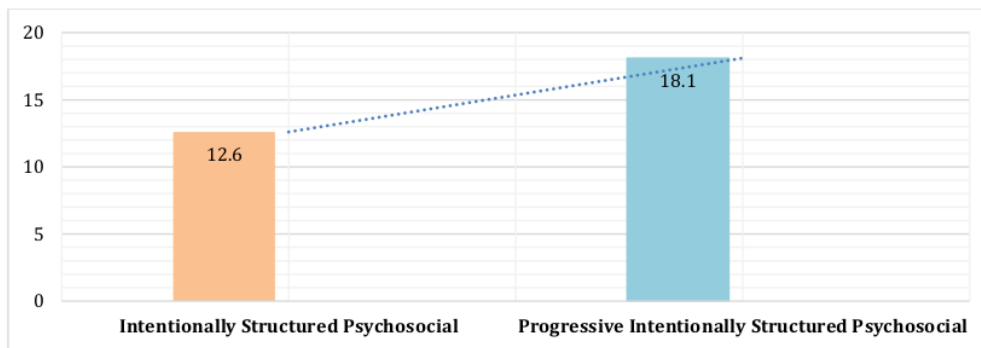
Results of research conducted on fifth-grade students of state elementary schools. The data used are based on the results of the initial test and the final test. The results of the data calculation of the average value and standard deviation are presented in the following Table 3:

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Psychosocial Variable

Groups	Mean			Standard Deviation	
	Pretest	Posttest	Enhancement	Pretest	Posttest
Treatment Intentionally Structured Psychosocial	193.150	205.794	12.644	5.68	6.22

Treatment Progressive					
Intentionally Structured	194.080	212.182	18.102	10.526	7.602
Psychosocial					

Based on table 3, it can be seen that the mean value and standard deviation of the initial and posttest results on the intentionally structured psychosocial model and the progressive intentionally structured psychosocial model indicate changes in scores. The results of the average value on psychosocial variables obtained by the initial test results of 193.150 and the final test results of 205.794 show that there is a difference or difference in value of 12.644; this difference indicates that the average value of the research group from the initial test to the posttest has increased. This means that the treatment of the intentionally structured psychosocial model has an impact on psychosocial. As for the results of the average value on psychosocial variables, the initial test results were 194.080, and the final test results were 212.182. From these results, there is a difference of 18.102 points; the difference shows that the average value of the research group from the initial test to the posttest has increased. Referring to table 3, if the difference in score increase is depicted as shown in the following picture:



**Graph 1. Difference in Score Improvement**

According to the bar diagram image above, the increase in the Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial score is greater than that of the Intentionally Structured Psychosocial. From these results, there is a difference of 5.5 points in scores; this difference shows that the Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial group is better.

Data normality testing is carried out on all research data because the data are used for data analysis using the t-test, so it is very important to calculate whether the data are normal or not. Normality distribution testing uses the Lilliefors test ( $L_0$ ) at the real level ( $\alpha$ ). Test of normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test at the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

**Table 4. Normality Test Output Results**

Groups	Sig. Value	
	Initial Test	Posttest
Intentionally Structured	.112	.168
Progressive Intentionally Structured	.051	.829

Based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, it can be concluded that in the experimental group, the intentionally structured psychosocial model indicates a probability value or significance value above 0.05. From the decision-making guidelines, if the sig. value is greater than 0.05 (sig. > 0.05), then the data are normally distributed, thereby that the data for psychosocial variables in the intentionally structured psychosocial model are normally

distributed, and the experimental progressive intentionally structured psychosocial model indicates a probability value or significance value above 0.05, and based on the decision-making guidelines, if the sig. value is greater than 0.05 (sig. > 0.5), then the data are normally distributed, thus that the data for psychosocial variables in the progressive intentionally structured psychosocial group are normally distributed.

**Table 5. Results of Homogeneity Test for Psychosocial Variable**

Groups	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Intentionally Structured	1.155	1	48	.288
Progressive Intentionally Structured	3.971	1	48	.052

For the intentionally structured psychosocial model group and the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model group on psychosocial improvement. The homogeneity test results indicate that the probability value (P) for the three groups has a sig. value greater than 0.05. Based on the decision criteria, the sig. value is greater than 0.05, thus the results of the homogeneity test can be concluded that the data are included in the homogeneous category or have the same variant.

Hypothesis testing is carried out to justify the hypothesis that the authors propose based on the formulation of the problem. The statistical approach used for testing the hypothesis is the difference test mean of the two groups using one-way ANOVA. However, before observing the difference between the two means, the researchers conducted a paired sample t-test, which aims to determine the psychosocial development in both the intentionally structured psychosocial and the progressively intentionally structured psychosocial experimental groups.

**Table 6. Results of Paired Samples Test Output**

Groups	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Intentionally Structured Psychosocial	7.453	24	.000
Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial	9.875	24	.000

Based on the results of the paired samples test calculation, the intentionally structured psychosocial model experimental group, namely the intentionally structured psychosocial model research group through traditional games and sports, obtained a significance value (sig.) of 0.000 less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ), in accordance with the decision-making criteria,  $H_0$  is rejected, meaning that there is an effect of the intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on psychosocial development in elementary school students. Likewise, based on the results of the t-test calculation in the intentionally structured psychosocial model experimental group, the t-count value is 7.453, which is greater than the t-table value at the significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05 with degrees of freedom (dk) = n-k obtained at 2.068 ( $7.453 > 2.068$ ). Thus  $H_0$  is rejected, which means that there is a significant effect of the intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on psychosocial development in elementary school students. This is also the case in the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial experimental group, namely the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model research group through traditional games and sports. The significance value (sig.) of 0.000 is greater than 0.05 ( $0.000 > 0.05$ ); in accordance with the decision-making criteria,  $H_0$  is rejected, meaning that there is an effect of the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on psychosocial development in elementary school students. Likewise, based on the results of the t-test calculation, the t-count value is 9.875, which is smaller

than the t-table value at the significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05 with the degree of freedom (dk) = n-k obtained at 2.068 (9.875 > 2.068). Thus H0 is rejected, which means that there is an effect of the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on psychosocial development in elementary school students.

**Table 7. Results of Output Independent Sample Test of Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Group and Progressive Intentionally Structured Psychosocial Experiment**

Gain Score (Difference between initial test - final test)	F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Equal variance assumed			2.185	48	0.034
Equal variance not assumed	.391	.535	2.185	47.71	0.034

Based on the results of the SPSS output, the sig (2-tailed) value of 0.034 is smaller than 0.05 (0.034 < 0.05). Based on the results of the SPSS output and decision-making criteria, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected, or there is a difference between the intentionally structured psychosocial model group and the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model experimental group on psychosocial development in elementary school students. After being processed using the t-test, the tcount of 2.185 > ttable of 2.01, meaning that there is a significant difference in influence between the intentionally structured psychosocial model group and the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial model experimental group on psychosocial development in elementary school students.

The research objectives are in accordance, namely (1) to find out and test whether there is a significant effect between the intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on the psychosocial development of elementary school students; (2) to find out and test whether there is a significant effect between the progressive intentionally structured psychosocial model through traditional games and sports on the psychosocial development of elementary school students; (3) to find out whether there is a difference in the effects between the intentionally structured experimental model and the progressive intentionally structured model experimental group on psychosocial development in elementary school students. The results of this research reveal that the intentionally structured psychosocial learning model through traditional games and sports can affect psychosocial development, as well as the progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial learning model can affect psychosocial development. As listed in Table 2, it can be seen that the mean value in the intentionally structured psychosocial group is 12.6439, while the mean of the progressive intentionally structured psychosocial group is 18.1024, meaning that there is a difference of 5.4585, where the progressive intentionally structured psychosocial group effect size is greater.

The concept of progressive, intentionally structured psychosocial learning models through traditional games and sports focuses on the idea that such activities can be intentionally designed to foster positive youth development (PYD) and improve life skills, such as social competence, emotional regulation, and teamwork. Studies show that structured sports programs, when thoughtfully designed, can help participants—especially youth—develop key psychosocial skills that lead to overall better social behaviour and reduced antisocial tendencies (Yulianto & Hendrayana, 2022).

For example, traditional games like Gobak Sodor have been used as interventions to improve social behaviours and reduce antisocial tendencies by providing a structured environment where participants learn cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution (Nur et al., 2020). Additionally, integrating life skills such as goal-setting, communication, and leadership into sports curricula has been shown to have significant effects on personal development (Luchoro-Parrilla et al., 2024).

The results of this analysis are in accordance with the results of previous studies that the progressive learning approach is better than the conventional learning approach (Fayek et al., 2020; Prasetyarini et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). This happens because progressive learning uses an intentionally structured curriculum to allow students to approach concepts and content from various perspectives, thereby deepening their conceptual understanding of a subject (Mannion, 2022). Meanwhile, the classical group is a learning group that delivers material without using intentionally structured approaches to stimulate students. The intentionally structured group is carried out in the learning process by going through four steps of approach or stimulation from the beginning of learning, the middle of learning and the end of learning but does not lead to progress or aim towards improving the current situation.

This happens because in the psychosocial experimental group which is deliberately structured progressively in its learning process, apart from the four principles of psychosocial teaching which are integrated in a deliberately structured manner, in the experimental group which is deliberately structured progressively the teaching approach applies interdisciplinary teaching integration to increase the role of students in the educational experience (Florungco & Caballes, 2022; Tippett & Lee, 2019). In addition, the implementation of progressive intentionally structured interventions also requires close communication, not only with the students themselves but also with other important people such as guardians or parents (Nyhus et al., 2023).

Experiences that are relevant and meaningful to students are very likely to have a permanent effect on those who experience them. The point of the statement is that each student will get the benefit and opportunity to build and apply the psychosocial needed fully in daily life through activities that provide stimulus to analyze and explore that will provide experience for students. Positive adolescent development is affected by psychological factors such as experience, family support, and community involvement (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). This implies that the progressive, intentionally structured learning model through traditional games and sports activities with an organised, continuous, and repetitive programme can encourage positive student development so as to hone the psychosocial development of students. Therefore, these models emphasise that intentionality is important. Simply participating in games or sports does not automatically produce psychosocial benefits; coaches and educators must intentionally design activities that instill learning outcomes related to emotional and social skills. Further studies can be conducted in different regions or cultures to find out whether traditional games and progressive learning models have the same effectiveness in other cultural environments, with a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the traditional game-based learning model has a significant impact on students' experience. The variety of traditional games provided is able to evoke students' social attitudes while providing learning experiences that train thinking skills, teamwork, goal setting, and the need for psychosocial adjustment in social relationships. This study focuses on comparing the effects of the structured psychosocial learning model and the progressive psychosocial model through traditional games on the psychosocial development of elementary school students. As a result, the progressive psychosocial learning model is more effective because it provides continuous stimulus through repetition of material, thus helping students in the formation of a deeper psychosocial.

However, this study has limitations, such as variations in student characteristics (personality, initial social skills, and cultural background) that may affect responses, as well as data collection methods that are only questionnaire-based without in-depth interviews or direct observation. In the future, similar research needs to be conducted in different regions or cultures with a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) to gain more comprehensive insights. Practically, this study makes a significant contribution to educators and educational institutions in designing engaging and effective game-based psychosocial development programs, as well as promoting a more inclusive and fun curriculum for students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that we have no competing interests with any group or individual.

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PAGE 1

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PAGE 3

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PAGE 4

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PAGE 5

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PAGE 6

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PAGE 7

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PAGE 8

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PAGE 9

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PAGE 10

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PAGE 11

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PAGE 12

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PAGE 13

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PAGE 14

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