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Cultivating Integrity through Ethnopedagogy: The Implementation of Cublak Suweng Traditional Game in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Instilling integrity in early childhood is often hindered by cognitive limitations in understanding abstract concepts and psychological barriers such as the fear of negative consequences. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing ethnopedagogy through the traditional game *Cublak Suweng* in fostering honesty among children aged 5–6 years. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research involved seven children in an Islamic-based kindergarten. Data were collected through participatory observation, interviews, and documentation across four intervention sessions. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the mechanics of the *Cublak Suweng* game successfully deconstruct children's emotional barriers by creating a safe space when making mistakes. Furthermore, democratic social interaction within the game encourages a transition in children's morality from the heteronomous phase toward autonomous consciousness. The study concludes that ethnopedagogy based on local wisdom is more effective than conventional lecture methods in internalizing honesty values spontaneously; therefore, early childhood educators are encouraged to integrate traditional games into character education curricula as a contextual and affective learning method.

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education, Cublak Suweng, Ethnopedagogy, Honesty, Integrity.*

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Introduction

Early childhood education is a fundamental phase in character building and the formation of an individual's moral foundation (Hasanah & Fajri, 2022). Within the age range of 5-6 years, children are in a sensitive period where the stimulation of moral development and religious values becomes crucial (Islami et al., 2024). One of the most fundamental yet challenging character values to instill is honesty. Honesty is not merely the alignment between words and actions but a form of self-integrity that determines a child's social quality in the future (Dewi et al., 2025) . However, field realities in Class B2 of the study site indicate that instilling honesty often faces obstacles; data showed that children tend to remain silent or are reluctant to admit mistakes due to fear. This is further manifested in cheating on peers' tasks and an inability to wait for turns, indicating that conventional oral advice has not reached the child's internal consciousness.

In this context, the ethnopedagogy approach offers an innovative solution through the utilization of local wisdom in the educational process. Ethnopedagogy views cultural practices, including traditional games, as learning media rich in noble values relevant to children's developmental needs (Muzakkir, 2021). Recent studies have explored ethnopedagogy in various contexts, such as utilizing traditional games to improve motor skills or general social-emotional development (Solikah, 2020)(Rahayu et al., 2024; Solikah, 2020). However, most existing research focuses on the "how-to" of the game rather than the deep psychological transition of morality during play. For instance, while some studies highlight Cublak Suweng for its rhythmic benefits,

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there is a lack of focus on how its "secret-keeping" mechanics specifically deconstruct the fear of consequences in honesty education.

This research fills the gap by specifically examining the implementation of Cublak Suweng as a tool for transitioning children from heteronomous morality (obeying rules due to fear of authority) to autonomous morality (honesty based on internal awareness). Unlike previous studies that treat traditional games as mere physical ice-breakers, this study positions Cublak Suweng as a social simulation that trains integrity through a "safe space" mechanism (Hardianto et al., 2025). The novelty lies in the systematic analysis of how the game's lyrics and guessing mechanics demand honesty without intimidatory pressure, providing a localized and affective alternative to conventional character education methods.

Previous studies have extensively explored the benefits of traditional games in character education. Research by Miskiyah et al. (2025) indicates that traditional games are generally effective in enhancing children's social skills. However, most of these studies tend to focus more on motor and cognitive aspects (Hidayati & Lestari, 2021). Despite these contributions, there remains a gap in the literature in explaining the mechanisms through which such games specifically intervene in children's moral development (Alotaibi, 2024). The majority of studies are limited to the stage of cultural introduction, without providing an in-depth analysis of how traditional gameplay rules can deconstruct children's fear of being honest. The state of the art of this study lies in the systematic integration of ethnopedagogical concepts with the observation of specific honest behaviors in children aged 5–6 years within a small group context (seven children). This approach enables a more in-depth and personalized analysis of each behavioral change that emerges during the learning process.

Previous studies have extensively explored the benefits of traditional games in character education. Research by Miskiyah et al. (2025) indicates that traditional games are generally effective in enhancing children's social skills. However, these contributions primarily emphasize observable motor coordination and basic cognitive rule-following, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of the internal moral transitions (Borghesi & Cipresso, 2026). This focus on external performance overlooks the underlying psychological mechanisms required to navigate moral dilemmas, such as the tension between honesty and the fear of consequences (Zhao & Yan, 2025). Consequently, there remains a lack of literature explaining how traditional gameplay specifically intervenes in a child's internal moral development. Most existing studies are limited to the stage of cultural introduction or physical engagement, without providing an in-depth analysis of how traditional gameplay rules—such as the secret-keeping mechanics in *Cublak Suweng*—can actively deconstruct children's fear of being honest. The state of the art of this study lies in bridging this gap by systematically integrating ethnopedagogical concepts with the observation of specific honest behaviors. By focusing on a small group context (seven children), this approach enables a granular and personalized analysis of the transition from fear-based compliance to genuine integrity during the learning process.

The urgency of this study is driven by the need for character education models that are both enjoyable and grounded in local cultural values. Compared to other traditional games such as *engklek* (great for motor skills) or *dakon* (focused on mathematical logic), *Cublak Suweng* possesses unique structural characteristics in the roles of "Pak Empong" and "Suweng," that are specifically tailored for moral internalization. These roles create a unique psychological "safe space" for children by shifting the focus from individual failure to collective play. Unlike games that impose immediate "out" penalties for errors, *Cublak Suweng* utilizes a guessing mechanism where the "consequence" of being caught is simply a transition in the game's cycle, accompanied by rhythmic chanting. This atmosphere deconstructs the child's fear of negative judgment, allowing them to practice honesty and trust without the anxiety of harsh repercussions. Philosophically, the game functions as a social simulation where keeping the *suweng* (the secret/trust) becomes a shared responsibility, fostering an environment where moral agency is developed through joy rather than intimidation.

Within this mechanism, situations of being "caught" or making an incorrect guess are not constructed as failures that lead to punishment, but rather as moments of peak excitement and shared laughter. This psychological transformation trains children to be courage in honesty expression by neutralizing the "threat perception" typically associated with making a mistake. When the game recontextualizes an error as a humorous and social event, it lowers the child's cortisol-driven defensive response, allowing them to prioritize the social contract of the game over the instinct to self-protect through lying. Consequently, children feel safe to admit the truth about the *suweng's* location because the social cost of honesty has been removed and replaced with collective playfulness. This specific transition—where the absence of punitive consequences fosters a voluntary commitment to truth—is a unique contribution that remains underexplored in previous ethnopedagogical studies.

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Previous research on character values in early childhood has generally focused on developing socio-emotional skills through storytelling methods or routine habituation (Rahayu et al., 2024). However, a fundamental gap persists in current educational practices: teachers frequently rely on conventional lecturing or verbal instructions that children find monotonous, ultimately failing to resonate with their deeper moral consciousness (Susanti et al., 2024). Psychologically, such approaches are ineffective as children aged 5–6 years are in the stage of heteronomous morality (Piaget), where obedience is driven by the fear of punishment rather than internal awareness. Consequently, there is a pressing need for ethnopedagogical media capable of transforming abstract concepts of honesty into concrete, engaging experiences through the *Cublak Suweng* game.

The novelty of this research lies in its ethnopedagogical approach, which positions the *Cublak Suweng* game not merely as a form of entertainment, but as a sophisticated social simulation instrument. Unlike previous studies that predominantly relied on questionnaires or teacher-reported assessments, this study offers a unique contribution by documenting children's spontaneous behaviors in high-stakes situations, In the context of early childhood, "high-stakes" refers to the peak moments of the game where a child faces significant social pressure and the risk of "exposure" in front of their peers. Specifically when a child must disclose the location of the '*suweng*' (pebble/substitute object). they experience genuine moral pressure; they must choose between the instinct to protect their secret through deception to maintain their "winning" position or adhering to the game's integrity by revealing the truth. This moment serves as a miniature moral dilemma where the child's reputation and role within the peer group are at stake. The findings are expected to serve as a prototype for early childhood educators in integrating local wisdom into evidence-based character development curricula.

Moral development in children aged 5-6 is at a crucial transition from an orientation of "fear of punishment" toward an orientation of "understanding rules." Theoretically, honesty is a form of integrity where an individual aligns feelings, words, and actions with reality without manipulation or deceit for personal gain(Ilmia et al., 2023). Fundamentally, it is a conscious decision to remain authentic and preserve the purity of information without the interference of lies that distort the truth for one-sided interests. Ethnopedagogy emerges as a theoretical framework that integrates local wisdom into the educational process to humanize the child (Muzakkir, 2021). In this context, *Cublak Suweng* functions as a social laboratory where game rules serve as a fair authority, allowing children to learn that honesty is a prerequisite for a sustainable and enjoyable game for all parties involved(Jais et al., 2022).

The objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of implementing ethnopedagogy through the Cublak Suweng game in instilling honesty in children aged 5-6 years. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the literature regarding the use of ethnopedagogy as an effective and engaging character-building method for early childhood. In the realm of practical learning, the findings provide a guideline for ECE teachers in designing character-building scenarios capable of triggering spontaneous honesty without causing boredom. Furthermore, on a broader scale, this study contributes to educational policy by encouraging the reintegration of local wisdom into the ECE curriculum as a preventive solution to the moral degradation challenges often encountered in early childhood.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The selection of this design aims to describe and analyze in depth how the values of local wisdom within the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game are internalized by children in their natural environment. The primary focus of the research is the interaction between children and the game rules, which reflect the value of honesty as part of ethnopedagogical practices in schools (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The research subjects consisted of seven children aged 5–6 years at Cordova Islamic School Kindergarten, selected through a purposive sampling technique based on preliminary observations of classroom moral behavior. Data collection was conducted via participant observation across four sessions, each lasting 35 minutes, in March 2026. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer, recording children’s spontaneous behaviors using a structured observation sheet covering three primary indicators: adherence to rules, honest disclosure while holding the object, and transparency in the role of '*Pak Empong*'.

Data were comprehensively collected through three primary instruments: Participant Observation: Conducted to directly record indicators of children's honest behavior, such as the ability to follow rules, admitting mistakes, and maintaining integrity (not cheating) during play. Interviews: Carried out with the classroom teacher to map the children's baseline behavior and to evaluate the impact of the game on the internalization of honesty values. Documentation: The researcher gathered systematic field notes and other supporting documents to strengthen the observational findings.

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To ensure the quality of data, the structured observation sheet underwent Expert Judgment validation by experts in ethnopedagogy early childhood education. Reliability was maintained through prolonged engagement and triangulation of sources, comparing observational data with interview results and field documentation to ensure consistency in findings.

The research procedures were implemented through the following systematic stages: (1) Pre-field Stage: Conducting baseline behavior observations and initial interviews with the classroom teacher to identify existing honesty-related challenges in Class B. (2) Implementation Stage: Integrating the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game into learning activities. During this process, the researcher observed ethnopedagogical aspects, such as the understanding of rules and song lyrics, alongside honesty values, such as the willingness to admit defeat. (3) Evaluation Stage: Conducting final interviews and reflections with the classroom teacher to draw conclusions from the field findings.

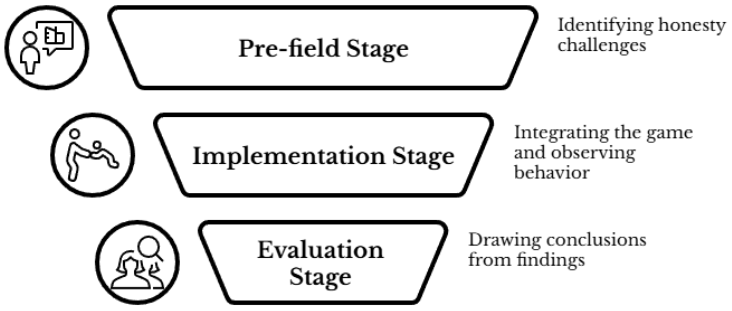


Figure 1. Research Procedures

Data analysis in this study refers to the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: (1) Data Collection: The researcher gathered data comprehensively through three primary instruments: Participant Observation, Interviews, and Documentation. (2) Data Condensation: The researcher summarizes, selects, and simplifies essential data from behavioral observation sheets and interview results regarding children's honesty. At this stage, data are transformed to strengthen the focus on emerging ethnopedagogical phenomena. (3) Data Display: The selected data are presented in the form of descriptive tables and concise narratives to systematically observe patterns of change in children's behavior. This display facilitates the researcher's understanding of the dynamic relationship between game rules and spontaneous honest behavior. (4) Drawing and Verifying Conclusions: The researcher formulates conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the *Cublak Suweng* game in instilling honesty values based on observed spontaneous behavioral evidence. These conclusions are then re-verified against field data to ensure the objectivity of the research findings.

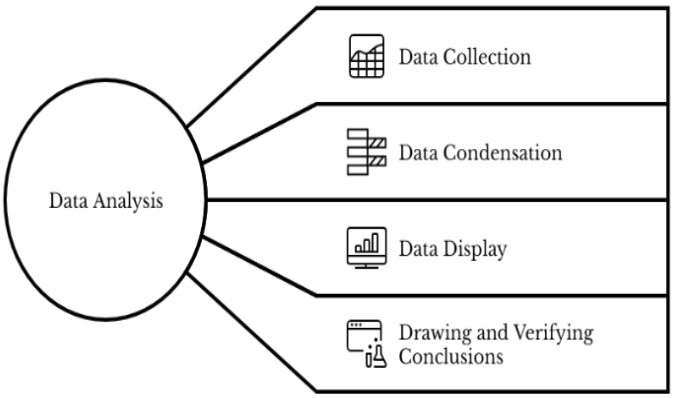


Figure 2. Data Analysis Technique

Result and Discussion

Result

The results of this study describe the transformation of children's behavior through the ethnopedagogical practice of the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game. The data are presented comparatively to demonstrate the dynamics of honesty value development among the research subjects.

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Initial Overview of Children's Honest Behavior

Based on preliminary observations conducted in Class B, it was found that the children still exhibited dishonest behavior in daily activities. The most frequent issue observed was the children's tendency to remain silent or refuse to admit mistakes due to fear. Additionally, the researcher identified instances of cheating during tasks and an inability to queue or wait for their turn.

Table 1. Observation Notes of Children's Behavior in Daily Activities

Observed Aspect	Field Findings	Researcher's Notes
Attitude when making mistakes	Children preferred to remain silent or refused to admit mistakes that disadvantaged their peers.	Presence of fear regarding negative consequences when speaking truthfully.
Attitude toward others' rights	Frequent incidents of squabbling over stationery, such as erasers and pencils, among children.	Children did not yet fully grasp the concept of queuing and respecting peers' property.
Honesty in tasks	Several children were found cheating on their peers' work.	Honesty had not yet become an internal consciousness in completing independent tasks.
Response to teacher inquiries	Some children were willing to answer, but became withdrawn when questions related to their mistakes.	Oral advice or lecturing methods were ineffective in changing this behavior.

Implementation of Ethnopedagogy through Cublak Suweng

During the implementation of the activities, the researcher focused observations on how the mechanics of this traditional game were received as a medium for cultural learning and an instrument for character building.

Table 2. Analysis of the Ethnopedagogy Implementation Process

Observed Aspect	Field Findings	Ethnopedagogical Analysis
Cultural Response	Children were highly enthusiastic in following the song lyrics and game movements.	Traditional media effectively reduced boredom and increased engagement compared to conventional lecture methods.
Rule Adaptation	There was an initial scramble for the role of "Pak Empong," which subsided after guidance.	A process of social negotiation occurred where children suppressed their egos for the sake of gameplay continuity.
Spontaneous Honesty	Children acted honestly when holding the "*suweng*" without manipulation.	The game created a "safe space" where being "caught" was seen as a transition in play rather than a punishable failure.
Sportsmanship	Children were able to accept defeat when their guesses were incorrect.	The rhythmic and collective nature of the game transformed the fear of making mistakes into a shared, enjoyable experience.



Image 1. Practicing the Cublak Suweng traditional game as an ethnopedagogical implementation.

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Transformation Outcomes: Post-Intervention Behavioral Changes

To demonstrate the actual transformation, the following data compares the children's behavior before and after the four-session ethnopedagogical intervention.

Table 3. Comparative Data of Behavioral Transformation

Indicators of Honesty	Pre-Intervention (Baseline)	Post-Intervention (Outcomes)
Admitting Mistakes	2 out of 7 children (Silent/Fearful)	6 out of 7 children (Open/Spontaneous)
Rule Adherence	Frequent cheating to win during tasks.	Voluntary adherence to keep the game flowing.
Peer Trust	Suspicious and protective of personal items.	High trust; children shared the 'suweng' role fairly.
Moral Driver	External (Fear of teacher's anger).	Internal (Desire for social play continuity).

Forms of Honest Behavior Observed During Gameplay

Based on observations, honesty values emerged naturally. Children practiced integrity not because they were coerced, but to ensure the game remained enjoyable.

Table 4. List of Honest Behaviors Identified During the Research

Observed Aspect	Emerging Behavior in Children	Underlying Reason for Children's Actions
Attitude when making mistakes	Children openly admitted when they were the ones holding the *suweng*.	Children were no longer afraid because being "caught" was perceived as part of the fun, not a major error.
Adherence to rules	Children remained quiet and followed the game rules without attempting to cheat.	Children realized that cheating would make the game less enjoyable and could cause it to stop.
Social interaction	Children took the initiative to invite their peers to play *Cublak Suweng* independently during recess.	Honesty had begun to manifest as a new habit within their social playgroups at school.



Image 2. Children's self-initiated play of Cublak Suweng during recess

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant shift from heteronomous morality (obedience driven by fear of authority) toward autonomous morality**.** This shift was evident when the children disclosed the location of the '*suweng*' due to an inherent awareness of maintaining social harmony with their peers. This proves that an engaging ethnopedagogical environment is more effective in cultivating internal control than mere verbal instructions.

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Discussion

Transformation of Honest Behavior: Deconstructing Fear Toward the Internalization of Moral Consciousness

An in-depth analysis of the research data indicates a paradigm shift in the behavior of children aged 5–6 years in Class B, moving from a state of "coerced honesty" toward "conscious honesty." In preliminary observations, the low level of honesty values characterized by a tendency to remain silent or refuse to admit mistakes was deeply rooted in psychological factors, specifically the fear of negative consequences. From a developmental psychology perspective, this phenomenon indicates that children were at the stage of heteronomous morality, where rules are perceived as rigid and imposed by external authorities (teachers), with the threat of punishment serving as the primary behavioral control (Juliana et al., 2025).

A fundamental gap was identified in the inability of conventional methods, such as lectures and oral advice, to reach the child's affective domain. One-way verbal instructions tend to make children feel cognitively pressured, leading to a self-defense mechanism in the form of denial or dishonesty to protect themselves from negative judgment (Dwi & Saragi, 2025). This is further supported by the findings that cheating behaviors and impatience in queuing represent a failure in the internalization of integrity values during independent activities (Aristin et al., 2023).

The implementation of ethnopedagogy through the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game serves as an intervention instrument that deconstructs these emotional barriers through several detailed mechanisms: (a) Creation of a Safe Space through Social Simulation : In this game, the status of being "wrong" (being guessed while holding the *suweng*) undergoes a redefinition of meaning. While in academic activities a mistake might trigger shame, in *Cublak Suweng*, making a mistake or being caught becomes the climax of the game's excitement. This reduction of intimidatory pressure allows children to admit their position openly without psychological burden, which theoretically constitutes the initial step in the formation of integrity (Rahma et al., 2024). (b) Honesty as a Functional Prerequisite : Children begin to understand empirically that honesty is not merely a teacher's command, but an absolute requirement for the game to proceed fairly and enjoyably. The awareness that cheating will disrupt the group's harmony encourages children to align their feelings, words, and actions with reality, avoiding manipulation for one-sided interests (Safitri & Dewantoro, 2025). (c) Transition Toward Autonomous Awareness : The data show a behavioral shift from being withdrawn to spontaneously admitting the position of the *suweng*. This transformation indicates that honesty has begun to shift from mere external compliance to a conscious decision based on mutually enjoyable game rules (Rahma et al., 2024). At this stage in ECE, children develop self-confidence through play initiatives supported by parents and educators, transforming external obedience into internal motivation to follow enjoyable rules without excessive guilt (Susanti et al., 2024).

These findings are consistent with the research by Hanifa et al., (2025), which highlights the unique roles of 'Pak Empong' and 'Suweng' as media for internalizing values of trust. However, this study provides greater depth by demonstrating that such transformations occur in real-time through experience-based learning within a small-group context. The systematic integration of ethnopedagogical concepts (Muzakkir, 2021) with field practices proves that the noble values of local wisdom are capable of "humanizing" children through methods that align with their developmental characteristics.

The successful implementation of *Cublak Suweng* in constructing integrity lies in the pivotal role of '*Pak Empong*.' Observations indicate that this role creates a low-stress risk simulation. When the child acting as *Pak Empong* guesses incorrectly, there are no negative consequences; instead, the mistake is met with cheers and laughter. This positive psychological state reduces the child's anxiety regarding honesty (Benoit & Gabola, 2021). Consequently, honesty is no longer perceived as a burden but rather as a vital component of a joyful 'social contract' within the peer group (Nasution & Agustia, 2025).

Cublak Suweng as an Ethnopedagogical Laboratory and the Internalization of Integrity

The results of this study reinforce Solikah (2020) findings regarding the influence of *Cublak Suweng* on socio-emotional aspects; however, this research goes further by specifying integrity as the primary outcome. Contrary to the prevailing view that character education must be conducted formally, these findings align with Safitri & Dewantoro (2025), who emphasize the importance of learning environments that correspond to the child's stage of moral development.

The novelty of this research asserts that ethnopedagogy through traditional Javanese games is not merely a form of cultural preservation, but a preventive method against dishonest behavior in early childhood. Within the ethnopedagogical framework, local wisdom serves as an educational instrument to humanize children through noble values instilled in a subtle and contextual manner (Nugroho et al., 2026). Based on field findings,

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the structure of this game creates a condition where honesty is no longer an abstract moral command, but an organic functional prerequisite for achieving a shared goal: the collective joy of play (Damayanti et al., 2022).

An in-depth analysis of the interaction mechanisms within this game reveals critical dimensions in the formation of a child's integrity:

a) Internalization of Values through the Symbolism of 'Pak Empong' and 'Suweng' : The role of 'Pak Empong' as the guesser and the other players as concealers of the *suweng* creates a dynamic of "trust vs. manipulation." Philosophically, this process trains children to uphold a mandate; when a child is caught holding the object, they are challenged to align reality with their admission (Cholimah, 2023). This proves that honesty is a form of integrity aligning feelings, words, and actions without distorting information for personal gain (Yuliantini et al., 2025).

b) Social Negotiation and Ego Regulation : In the initial stages, obstacles were identified in the form of squabbling over the "Pak Empong" role. However, through fair game mechanics, children were compelled to engage in social negotiation and learn to suppress their egos for the sake of collective activity. Traditional games have been shown to enhance children's social development, including cooperation, communication, and self-regulation, which aligns with the idea that ethnopedagogical play creates a dynamic socio-emotional learning environment (Riadi & Lestari, 2021).

c) Boredom Reduction through Cultural Aesthetics : The children's high enthusiasm for the song lyrics and game movements proves that traditional media effectively reduce cognitive barriers and boredom (Çinar & Hassani, 2026). Unlike oral advice, which often causes children to "withdraw" when criticized (Nurannisa et al., 2023), the play atmosphere creates a joyful learning space where honest behavior emerges spontaneously without the fear of teacher judgment (Norhikmah et al., 2022).

d) Sportsmanship as a Manifestation of Empirical Honesty : The research results show that children are able to accept defeat gracefully when their guesses are wrong or when they are caught holding the *suweng*. This ability to admit defeat without cheating indicates that children are beginning to understand that "truth" and "agreed-upon rules" hold higher authority than the mere desire to win (Mina & Farida, 2025). Traditional games have been reported to cultivate sportsmanship, including honesty, respect for rules, and graceful acceptance of defeat, which aligns with the interpretation of sportsmanship as a manifestation of empirical honesty (Hananingsih et al., 2024)

This study significantly reinforces the perspective of Muzakkir (2021), which asserts that an ethnopedagogical approach serves as both a medium for preserving local wisdom and a highly relevant instrument for character education. While previous research by Hasni & Karmiyati, (2024) tended to focus on children's socio-emotional stimulation, this study successfully fills the gap by highlighting the causal relationship between the mechanics of the *Cublak Suweng* game and spontaneous honest behavior.

Substantively, *Cublak Suweng* acts as an "integrity laboratory" where children learn that honesty is the key to remaining accepted within their social environment (Anggraini & Wahyuni, 2021). This is supported by research indicating that the *Cublak-Cublak Suweng* game specifically helps train and develop religious and moral values in children aged 4-6 years, teaching them to behave well, be honest, polite, tolerant, and cooperative (Wandik & Widyanto, 2026) The observed changes where children began taking the initiative to invite their peers to play honestly even during recess demonstrate that honesty has begun to manifest as a new habit (habituation) within their school play culture. This reaffirms that learning based on local culture offers innovative and preventive solutions in forming an individual's moral foundation starting from the fundamental phase (Akmalia et al., 2023).

1. Beyond Conventional Methods: The Effectiveness of Play as a Dynamic Pedagogical Strategy

The findings of this study confirm a significant discrepancy between the effectiveness of conventional methods (lectures and oral advice) and the ethnopedagogical method based on traditional games in internalizing the value of honesty. Based on observations during the initial cycle, the dominant conventional method applied in Class B namely one-way verbal instructions, proved unable to transcend low-level cognitive stages. While children might be able to memorize the definition of "honesty," they failed to manifest it in real actions because the method did not deeply engage the child's affective domain.

In this context, the *Cublak Suweng* game is proven to transcend the boundaries of conventional methods through several detailed psycho-pedagogical mechanisms:

a) Deconstruction of Authority Hierarchy toward Peer-Group Social Contracts : In conventional methods, children tend to be honest due to external control from the teacher as an authority figure (Nurida & Setyawati, 2025). This creates a condition of "pseudo-honesty" that is prone to collapse when supervision is

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absent (Abdullah Isa, 2023). Conversely, in *Cublak Suweng*, the game rules function as a "social contract" mutually agreed upon by peers (Hardianto et al., 2025). Honesty becomes a functional prerequisite for the game to proceed fairly and enjoyably, because fair competition requires children to uphold shared rules and preserve the integrity of the play situation (Liu et al., 2023). This phenomenon indicates a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, where children in Class B began to demonstrate a stable honest character; such neural and behavioral representations of honesty are crucial because they predict an individual's willingness to trust and cooperate in subsequent social encounters(Bellucci & Molter, 2019) . Reduction of the Affective Filter through Joyful Learning : Conventional methods often create a rigid formal atmosphere, which psychologically increases a child's "affective filter" or self-defense mechanism. When children feel they are being "taught" or "judged" on their morality, a tendency to lie for self-protection emerges out of fear of reprimand (Darmanus & Purwanti, 2022). In contrast, the aesthetics of *Cublak Suweng* through rhythmic lyrics and synchronized hand movementsare able to reduce such tension. In a positive emotional state (joy), the internalization of honesty values occurs subliminally. This aligns with the argument by Miskiyah et al. (2025) that traditional games effectively enhance socio-emotional skills because of their inclusive nature and ability to minimize psychological pressure.

b) Visualization of Abstract Concepts through Experience-Based Learning : According to Piaget's theory, the primary issue with lecture-based methods for children aged 5-6 is that they are too abstract for the concrete operational stage of development (Hayat et al., 2024). Through the *Cublak Suweng* intervention, these abstract concepts are concretized through the act of holding the *suweng* (a physical object) and admitting its position when guessed. The transformation from "knowing the good" to "doing the good" occurs because children directly experience the consequences of their honesty (e.g., becoming the next guesser) (Hayat et al., 2024). This emphasis on direct experience reinforces findings by Hanifa et al., (2025), stating that local wisdom provides a real-world laboratory for children's moral education.

c) Boredom Mitigation and Enhanced Engagement : Research data indicate that conventional methods can only sustain a child's attention for a short duration (Sukron et al., 2025), which often triggers cheating or disruptive behavior as a form of distraction. In contrast, *Cublak Suweng* demands total engagement hysically, cognitively, and emotionally. This active involvement leaves no room for dishonest behavior, as every child has an active role responsible for the game's flow. Increased engagement is the key reason why this ethnopedagogical intervention is more effective than the routine moral advice typically given in the morning, which children often ignore (Kristanto et al., 2024).

d) Integrating traditional games as a primary method is not merely an effort toward cultural nostalgia, but a pedagogical innovation responsive to the socio-cultural characteristics of Indonesian children (Pertiwi et al., 2025). This finding is supported by Sani Susanti et al. (2024) regarding the importance of adaptive pedagogy, where teachers must transform from mere advisors into facilitators of meaningful moral experiences (Panjaitan & Hafizzah, 2025).

Transformation of Honest Behavior: Deconstructing Fear Toward the Internalization of Moral Consciousness

Analysis of the research data indicates a paradigm shift in the behavior of children aged 5–6 years in Class B, moving from a state of "coerced honesty" toward "conscious honesty." In the initial (pre-intervention) condition, the low level of honesty values marked by a tendency to remain silent or deny mistakes was deeply rooted in psychological factors, specifically the fear of negative consequences (Baroroh, 2024). From a moral development perspective, this indicates that the children were in the stage of heteronomous morality, where rules are perceived as rigid and imposed by external authority (the teacher), with the threat of punishment serving as the primary behavioral control (Juliana et al., 2025).

The implementation of ethnopedagogy through the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game successfully deconstructed these emotional barriers by creating a safe space. Within this game, the status of being "wrong" (being guessed while holding the *suweng*) undergoes a redefinition of meaning; the mistake actually becomes the aesthetic climax and the highlight of the game's excitement. This reduction of intimidatory pressure allows children to admit their position openly without psychological burden. As asserted by Hanifa et al.,(2025), honesty in this context is a conscious decision to maintain the purity of information without manipulation. This transformation from fear to spontaneous awareness proves that moral values are more effectively internalized when children feel safe and emotionally engaged in their activities (Martins et al., 2021).

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Cublak Suweng as an Ethnopedagogical and Integrity Laboratory

In this study, *Cublak Suweng* is perceived not merely as a physical activity but as a socio-moral laboratory. Theoretically, ethnopedagogy views cultural practices as educational media that "humanize" children through noble values (Muzakkir, 2021). The game's structure, involving the role of '*Pak Empong*' and the concealers of the object, creates a real-world simulation of mandates and trust.

Field data indicate that children began to understand empirically that honesty is an absolute prerequisite for the game to remain fair. Any manipulation in hiding the *suweng* would disrupt group harmony. This process of social negotiation trains children to align their feelings, words, and actions with reality(Bahtiar et al., 2024). The advantage of *Cublak Suweng* over other methods lies in its ability to provide experience-based learning. This aligns with findings by Miskiyah et al.(2025), stating that traditional games are highly effective in enhancing children's socio-emotional skills due to their interactive and collective nature.

Beyond Conventional Methods: The Effectiveness of Play as a Pedagogical Strategy

This research underscores the failure of conventional methods, such as lectures, in reaching the moral consciousness of early childhood. Abstract oral instructions are difficult for children in the concrete operational stage to comprehend (Mutmainna et al., 2025). Conversely, the play method through ethnopedagogy offers a dynamic and joyful learning approach.

Conventional methods often create "pseudo-honesty" that only appears under teacher supervision. However, in *Cublak Suweng*, honesty emerges from a "social contract" among peers. Children obey the rules not out of fear of the teacher, but out of respect for the play agreement (Miskiyah et al., 2025). This effectiveness supports the argument by Sani Susanti (2024) regarding the importance of pedagogy that is adaptive to children's characteristics. By involving physical (hand movements), cognitive (guessing strategies), and affective (honesty in admitting the object's position) aspects, this game provides character stimulation that is far more comprehensive than repetitive and monotonous oral advice.

Integration of Culture and Character: Synergy of Moral Identity in ECE

The integration of cultural values through traditional games is a crucial strategy in building a child's moral identity from an early age (Karoso et al., 2025). Character education rooted in local wisdom provides a sense of familiarity, making the instilled value of honesty feel contextual and relevant to the child's socio-cultural life. This implementation demonstrates that ethnopedagogy is not merely about preserving tradition, but serves as an instrument to build a fortress of integrity amidst the challenges of moral degradation (Priyanto et al., 2025).

The consistent behavioral changes in Class B children following the intervention prove that cultural integration is capable of creating a robust habituation mechanism. The honesty values practiced in *Cublak Suweng* tend to be more enduring because the children perceive them as an integral part of their group identity. Substantially, this research provides a recommendation that character education in Early Childhood Education (ECE) will achieve maximum success when implemented through processes rooted in the living values of the surrounding environment transforming rigid moral concepts into vibrant and enjoyable cultural behaviors.

Research Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study has several limitations regarding the generalizability of its findings, as it focuses on a single case study involving seven subjects in a specific urban setting. Cultural nuances in different regions may influence children's engagement levels with the *Cublak Suweng* game differently. Furthermore, the four-session intervention duration documented spontaneous behavioral shifts but cannot guarantee the longitudinal stability of honesty internalization. Additionally, potential interpretative bias in participant observation remains, despite rigorous data triangulation.

Future research should expand the sample scale using a mixed-methods approach across diverse geographical locations to validate these findings cross-culturally. Longitudinal studies are highly recommended to track the consistency of integrity values in activities beyond the gaming context. Comparative research between *Cublak Suweng* and other regional traditional games could further identify which specific gameplay mechanics most effectively deconstruct fear-based barriers to honesty. Lastly, developing "hybrid ethnopedagogy" by integrating physical play with digital media may offer a relevant innovation for character education curricula in the modern era.

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Conclusion

This study concludes that ethnopedagogy through the *Cublak Suweng* traditional game is highly effective in instilling honesty by facilitating a transition from heteronomous morality to autonomous awareness in early childhood. The core findings demonstrate that the game's mechanics, particularly the role of "Pak Empong," successfully establish a psychological "safe space" where mistakes are recontextualized as enjoyable elements of play rather than punishable failures. Quantitative evidence substantiates this effectiveness: prior to the intervention, only 28% (2 out of 7 children) demonstrated spontaneous honesty, whereas this figure rose significantly to 85% (6 out of 7 children) following the intervention sessions. This dynamic effectively dismantles the psychological barriers that typically prevent children from practicing integrity. Compared to conventional instructional methods, the integration of local cultural values proves superior as it aligns seamlessly with the nature of play and the socio-emotional developmental stages of young children.

Based on these results, it is recommended that early childhood educators integrate *Cublak Suweng* into the daily character education curriculum, particularly during circle time, as an affective learning method that transcends mere verbal instruction. Furthermore, institutional support in the form of ethnopedagogical guidebooks is essential to assist teachers in identifying and facilitating moral dilemma moments during gameplay. For future research, it is suggested to adopt a longitudinal approach to verify the long-term stability of these internalized values and to explore the implementation of this model in broader cultural contexts or with larger sample sizes to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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