

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL GAMES AS A MEDIA TO STRENGTHEN THE AKHLAK OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** This study aims to determine the effectiveness of integrating traditional games as a medium to strengthen the noble akhlak of senior high school students. The dimensions of noble akhlak refer to the Pancasila Student Profile, including the dimensions of religious akhlak, personal akhlak, interpersonal akhlak, environmental akhlak, and national akhlak. This study uses a mixed-method with an Explanatory Sequential Design where quantitative studies are used as a reference to deepen the process through qualitative studies. Quantitative data collection techniques used questionnaires, while qualitative data collection techniques used semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and learning document analysis. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using descriptive quantitative analysis, and the significance of pretest and posttest differences was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. Qualitative data analysis used the Miles & Huberman interactive model, which was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This study quantitatively showed an increase in the average pretest and posttest scores for all dimensions, albeit within a small range. The learning intervention provided significant, uneven changes across all akhlak dimensions. Based on the qualitative studies, the results also demonstrated effectiveness in strengthening akhlak, particularly in the dimension of akhlak toward others, as it improved the quality of interactions between students and fostered meaningful learning experiences relevant to local culture. This research requires further research, particularly on the development of more accurate instrument evaluation with more complex learning designs and systemic support for sustainable implementation.

**Keywords:** akhlak; deep learning; traditional games

## I. INTRODUCTION

Character education and student moral development are key themes in the dynamic, challenging, and unpredictable global education agenda (Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023; Hanifa & Aryanti, 2025). In this context, character building is an essential strategy to protect the younger generation from the negative impacts of the rapid flow of information and often uncontrolled technological developments. The struggle for information supremacy in the digital space not only influences mindsets but also shapes public opinion, triggers polarization, and increases the risk of spreading hoaxes, which negatively impact social cohesion (Pramono & Hanita, 2021). Within the framework of national education, character building aligns with the educational goal of developing individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble morals, with resilient personalities. Learning models need to be adapted, and methods such as role models, conversations, stories, and habits can be applied to empower students' character (Kwangmuang et al., 2021; Istiharoh & Indartono, 2019).

Learning innovations for character building in the context of Indonesian education are supported by National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 and Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 (Heriansyah, 2018; Muhammad, 2020). Although this concept has been well-accommodated, its implementation in the field has not been optimal. Research showing that

assessments of student attitudes and behavior are often merely formalities without meaningful follow-up, cognitive aspects are more dominant in determining learning completeness, limited resources, and the negative impact of mass media (Muhammad, 2020). This is reinforced by an academic study by the Ministry of Education that the causes of the low quality of education in Indonesia are teachers' lack of the flexibility to help students achieve minimum competencies and more focused on pursuing material (Wahyudin et al., 2024).

The urgency of empowering noble morals is increasingly crucial as the phenomenon of moral decline among adolescents becomes increasingly prevalent. Cases such as violence, promiscuity, brawls, bullying, intolerance, and other juvenile delinquency are increasingly being encountered, raising concerns in the world of education. According to the National Crime Information Center (Pusiknas) of the Indonesian National Police, in the period of January 1- February 20, 2025, four forms of crimes involving children were recorded as reported: theft with a total of 437 children reported, abuse and assault with 460 children, drug abuse with

349 children, and fights between school and university students with 7 children (Polri, 2025). Data on cases of violence from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) in 2025 shows that 13.6% of the 24,021 cases of violence were perpetrated by perpetrators aged

13-17 years (SIMFONI-PPA, n.d.). This situation is also exacerbated by the massive interaction of adolescents on social media which has the potential to cause mental health disorders such as internet addiction, suicide, self-harm, cyberbullying, depression, and low self-esteem (Juliansen et al., 2024). Other findings indicate that negative content spread on social media leads to pornography addiction, online harassment, sexual abuse, character assassination, hate speech, and intolerance (Sukmayadi et al., 2025; Ni'mah & Mufid, 2025; Yasmin et al., 2025). This data serves as a wake-up call for the education sector to design transformative learning that emphasizes moral, social, and emotional aspects. This study offers a pedagogical innovation integrated with traditional games to strengthen students' character, particularly in the akhlak aspect. The definition of akhlak refers to a person's inherent character or disposition that can be recognized in their spontaneous actions (Kamal & Ghani, 2014). The dimensions of noble akhlak highlighted in this study refer to the Pancasila Student Profile framework, which consists of five elements: religious akhlak, personal morality, interpersonal akhlak, environmental akhlak, and national akhlak (BSKAP, 2022; Ayu et al., 2024). The learning approach utilized in this study is immersive learning integrated with traditional games. Immersive learning is relevant for character building because it is a transformative approach that provides a comprehensive framework for restructuring learning practices, influencing well-being and equity (Fullan & Quinn, 2020). Implementing this model can be an alternative to character education, a systematic and comprehensive approach to optimizing students' moral values, such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect, both personally and interpersonally (Birhan et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). The integration of traditional games can enrich learning environments with moral and social values,

creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences.

Several studies have shown that Game-based Learning (GBL) is effective in improving motivation and learning outcomes (Videnovik et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2020). However, these studies have not comprehensively examined the integration of immersive learning approaches with traditional games as a medium for character building. Studies on integrating traditional games by Winardy and Septiana (2023) and Tri Atmaji (2019) demonstrate the potential for moral and social values within a local cultural context. However, these studies have not examined their effectiveness within deep learning framework with the principles namely mindful, meaningful, and joyful (Dewi et al., 2025; Suyanto et al., 2025).

This study fills this gap by investigating the effectiveness of integrating traditional games with deep learning approach in Sociology learning to strengthen students' noble akhlak dimensions according to the Pancasila Student Profile as a response to the increasingly complex moral challenges of adolescents in the digital era. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of integrating traditional games as a medium to strengthen the noble akhlak of high school students. The hypothesis development in this study is to test whether there is a difference in noble morals between the pretest and posttest

the concept of Creswell (2015). The quantitative study served as a reference for deepening the process through qualitative studies. This design was chosen based on the research objectives to be achieved comprehensively. Effectiveness is not only measured numerically but also to understand the learning experience and dynamics of the learning intervention process more comprehensively. The quantitative study phase conducted experiments by intervening in learning scenarios within deep learning framework that integrates traditional games to strengthen noble akhlak. The qualitative phase is conducted by having a case study in the experimental class to describe the dynamics of the learning process.

The scope of this research covers innovations in Sociology learning in high schools with the research object being students' noble akhlak. The learning scenario is prepared through a teaching module compiled using the learning framework recommended by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia. The main design includes the dimensions of the graduate profile; learning principles; learning experiences; and learning frameworks such as the learning environment, the use of digital technology, and partnerships (Suyanto, et al., 2025). The integration of traditional games is used as a medium to implement the principles of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning and provides a learning experience of understanding, applying, and reflecting (Dewi, et al., 2025; Suyanto, et al., 2025). This module was first discussed with two expert lecturers and one Sociology teacher at the research site. The experimental material was "Social Harmony," with the learning outcome being "Students are able to apply the principle of equality within social differences to create a harmonious and integrative multicultural society." The selection of this sociology learning course is relevant to the research objectives because sociology studies provide an understanding of moral formation, which is not only seen as a personal responsibility but also as a result of the established social structure (Walker, 2024). The learning intervention was facilitated by a researcher who also works as a sociology teacher. The noble morals of this study refer to the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, detailed in the following table.

Table 1. Dimensions Of Noble Akhlak (Ayu, Et Al., 2024)

Dimensions	Indicators
Religious Akhlak	Obedience in performing religious duties in accordance with one's religion. Behaving in accordance with religious teachings, such as honesty, justice, and compassion.
Personal Akhlak	Speaking and behaving politely both at school and in everyday life. The ability to take good care of oneself.
Interpersonal Akhlak	Respecting differences, including ethnicity, religion, race, and culture. Listening to and understanding the feelings and needs of others.
Environmental Akhlak	Efforts to protect the environment, both inside and outside the school environment.
National Akhlak	Understanding the roles and responsibilities as Indonesian citizens

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method approach because it is suitable for answering the research questions. This approach allows for the comprehensive development of the research topic to explain the quantitative data results in more detail through qualitative data (Creswell, 2015). The research design used was an Explanatory Sequential Design, adopting The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Cibinong, Bogor Regency, West Java, from May to August 2025. The location was selected based on the availability of Sociology electives in grade XI and the school's commitment to strengthening character education. The study population included all 432 grade XI students at SMA Negeri 2 Cibinong. Sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of classes that provide sociology electives. The research sample consisted of three classes, namely class XI F with 36 students, class XI G1 with 37 students, and class XI G2 with 36 students. The interview informants for this study involved six students representing each class as key informants (IK), three homeroom teachers, and the vice principal of curriculum as additional informants (G).

Quantitative data collection used a Likert-type questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study was a published one because it has a very high validity coefficient of 0.95 and a reliability level of 95% (Ayu et al., 2024). Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and analysis of learning documents.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using descriptive quantitative analysis to determine the difference in noble akhlak scores before and after the implementation of the learning model. The significance test for differences between the pretest and posttest was conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test using the R studio program. Qualitative data analysis used the Miles & Huberman interactive model, which was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2013). Triangulation of methods and sources was applied to increase the validity and credibility of the data.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative stage of this research is to measure students' noble akhlak through a pretest and posttest. The dimensions of noble akhlak assessed include religious akhlak, personal akhlak, interpersonal akhlak, environmental akhlak, and national akhlak. The results of the pretest-posttest on one sample group consisting of three study groups of grade XI with a total of 109 Sociology students at SMA Negeri 2 Cibinong are presented in the Figure 1. Based on the heatmap comparing the pretest-posttest averages, it appears that all akhlak dimensions experienced improvements, although some remained unchanged. National akhlak ( $\Delta = 0.13$ ) and Personal akhlak ( $\Delta = 0.12$ ) were the dimensions that experienced the greatest improvements. Meanwhile, the interpersonal akhlak dimension, although not experiencing an increase ( $\Delta = 0.00$ ), had the highest score (4.69). This heatmap generally confirms that the learning intervention has a positive impact on student akhlak, namely maintaining and strengthening each akhlak dimension.

The distribution of pretest and posttest data for each dimension of noble character was also analyzed to identify the patterns of data dispersion and tendencies toward normality. This analysis employed Pretest Histograms and Posttest QQ Plots for each dimension. The example of this distribution is in the Figure 2.

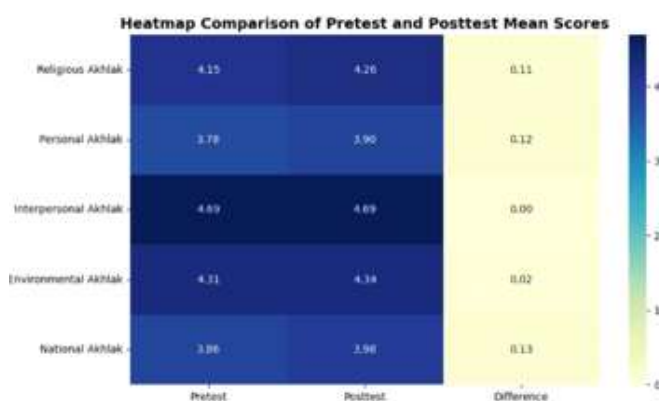


Figure 1. Heatmap Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores

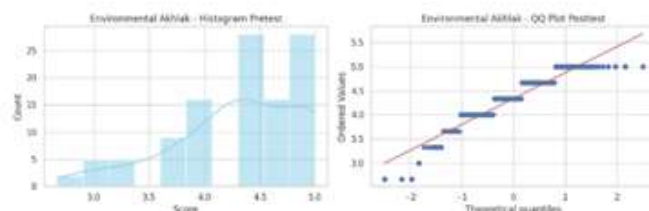


Figure.2 Pretest Histogram and Posttest QQ Plot for Environmental Akhlak

Based on the data above, It exhibit non-normal distributions (as indicated by the histograms and QQ plots). Therefore, the appropriate test to measure the significance of the differences is the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, which is non-parametric and suitable for paired data. The results of this test are presented in the table II.

The results of the significance test with the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test of the Religious Akhlak dimension has the same median pretest and posttest value of 4.25. The Wilcoxon test results show a value of  $W = 1354$ , with  $Z = 4.969$  and  $p\text{-value} = 0.05134$ , which means that the difference is not significant ( $p \geq 0.05$ ). The effect size  $r$  value of 0.476 indicates a moderate effect. These results overall indicate that the dimensions of students' religious akhlak did not change after treatment or intervention was given.

The median pretest score for the personal akhlak dimension was 3.75 and increased to 4 in the posttest. The Wilcoxon test results showed a  $W$  value of 1262.5, with  $Z = 5.245$  and a  $p\text{-value}$  of 0.02745, indicating a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ). The effect size  $r$  value of 0.502 indicates a large effect. Overall, these results indicate that students' personal akhlak dimension improved after the intervention.

In the dimension of Interpersonal Akhlak, the median pretest score was 4.67 and increased to 4.83 in the posttest. The

Wilcoxon test results showed a value of  $W = 1138.5$ , with  $Z = 5.62$  and  $p\text{-value} = 0.42221$ , which means that the difference is not significant ( $p \geq 0.05$ ). The effect size  $r$  value of  $0.538$  indicates a large effect. Although not significant, these results indicate that the dimension of interpersonal akhlak increased after the intervention was given.

The median pretest score for the Environmental Akhlak was similar to the posttest score, which was  $4.33$ . The Wilcoxon test showed a  $W$  value of  $1417$ , with  $Z = 4.778$  and a  $p\text{-value}$  of  $0.66695$ , indicating that the difference was not significant ( $p \geq 0.05$ ). The effect size  $r$  value of  $0.458$  indicated a moderate effect. Overall, these results indicate that students' environmental akhlak dimension did not change after the intervention.

Table 1. Results Of The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Dimensions	Median_P re	Median_P ost	W	Z_ Score	P_Value	Effect_r	Interpretation
Religious Akhlak	4.25	4.25	1354.0	4.969	0.05134	0.476	Not significant
Personal Akhlak	3.75	4.00	1262.5	5.245	0.02745	0.502	Significant
Interpersonal Akhlak	4.67	4.83	1138.5	5.620	0.42221	0.538	Not significant
Environmental Akhlak	4.33	4.33	1417.0	4.778	0.66695	0.458	Not significant
National Akhlak	4.00	4.00	1078.0	5.803	0.02060	0.556	Significant

The median pretest score for the National Akhlak dimension was  $4$  and increased to  $4$  in the posttest. The Wilcoxon test showed a  $W$  value of  $1078$ , with  $Z = 5.803$  and a  $p\text{-value}$  of  $0.0206$ , indicating a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ). The effect size  $r$  value of  $0.556$  indicates a large effect. Overall, these results indicate that the national akhlak dimension of students did not change after the treatment or intervention was given. really worked hard, and many people participated enthusiastically, especially when it was accompanied by traditional games.]” (IK4)

“Kita selain have fun, kita juga ada kayak ngobrol strategi. Menambah solidaritas dengan main game. Misalnya main Benteng itu ngasah banget solidaritas kita karena harus tahu strategi. [Besides having fun, we also have conversations about strategy. We build solidarity by playing games. For example, playing Benteng really sharpens our solidarity because we need to know strategy.]” (IK6). These testimonies demonstrate that traditional games are a learning medium that aligns with the principles of deep learning, namely mindful. The quantitative results of this study indicate that the learning intervention had a significant, uneven impact across all dimensions. This can be identified as a ceiling effect. This finding aligns with the concept of the ceiling effect described by Šimkovic & Träuble (2019), which states that instruments lose sensitivity to detect small changes that occur when scores approach the upper limit of the scale. This condition occurs because there is a “bunching of scores near the upper point,” resulting in reduced data variation, weakened observation scores, and a tendency for the mean difference to appear zero even though latent changes have

actually occurred (Šimkovic & Träuble, 2019). In the context of learning oriented toward behavior and moral values, students who have reached the highest baseline tend to experience a learning plateau (Gauvreau et al., 2019). This is not because students are not learning, but rather that progress is seen in strategies, not scores.

Qualitatively, students' learning experiences through traditional games are recognized as enjoyable and capable of building togetherness, solidarity, harmony, and an inclusive learning climate.

“Permainan ini membantu untuk kerjasama dan menjadi lebih solid. [This game helps foster cooperation and build solidarity.]” (IK2)

“...melalui permainan tradisional itu kita bisa semakin

berbaur satu sama lain dan juga bisa meningkatkan rasa kerjasama di antara satu sama lain, Ibu. Kegiatan yang mendorong banget itu ketika kita bersama-sama memainkan permainannya di lapangan. [...through traditional games, we can bond more with each other and also foster a sense of cooperation, Ma'am. The most encouraging activity is when we play the games together on the field.]” (IK3)

“Waktu aksi nyata itu benar-benar semuanya bekerja, juga banyak yang antusias mengikuti, apalagi dibarengi dengan permainan tradisional. [During the actual action, everyone

These experiences were reinforced by the homeroom teacher, who noted the students' camaraderie after playing traditional games.

“Nah sekarang dengan adanya pembelajaran kayak gitu, jadi anak-anak itu tahu sifat satu sama lain, jadi mereka mau berdekatan, mau bermain satu sama lain. [Now, with this kind of learning, the children know each other's personalities, so they want to be close and play with each other.]” (G1) “Nah itu pas banget, cocok banget untuk menggerakkan siswa

XI G1 yang kebanyakan malas bergerak. [That's perfect, perfect for motivating the 11th graders in G1, who are often reluctant to move.]” (G2)

“Cocok kalau buat G2, karena memang anak-anaknya aktif, senengnya dibawa keluar dan diajak bermain. Mereka excited untuk itu. [It's perfect for G2, because they're active kids and love being taken outside and playing. They're excited about it.]” (G3)

Based on student reflections, the integration of traditional games into learning provided memorable experiences of togetherness, nostalgia for childhood games, the discovery of

positive values of traditional games, and joyful learning experiences through direct practice. Learning activities are considered to build team cohesion, create a more lively learning atmosphere, and generate positive interactions that rarely occur in theoretical classroom learning. Some students even said that these activities became core memories that combine elements of learning, culture, and personal memories. The qualitative findings of this study showed that students experienced progress in managing emotions, such as learning to accept defeat, avoid conflict, and demonstrate sportsmanship. This progress is a personal aspect that supports the quantitative findings on the Personal Akhlak dimension, which experienced an increase.

These findings align with the concept of deep learning, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when students interact in authentic contexts, solve real-life problems, and engage in collaborations that require moral decision-making (Fullan et al., 2018). Traditional games provide a natural space for students to address conflict, strategize together, and encourage them to practice the values of honesty, sportsmanship, cooperation, and self-control. These findings emphasize that the intervention is not only effective in the interpersonal akhlak dimension but also in the personal akhlak dimension. The integration of traditional games into sociology learning demonstrates that this learning can strengthen moral agency through social awareness and can be designed by providing informal interaction activities based on local culture that effectively shape social solidarity and students' collective moral identity (Walker, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2025). The results of interviews in this study indicate that traditional games can create an egalitarian social space that blurs boundaries between friendship groups, strengthens empathy, and builds a sense of togetherness.

The religious akhlak dimension after the intervention quantitatively showed an increase in scores, although not very large. Students mentioned the teacher's consistency in reminding students to pray and the real-action project scenario to encourage students to worship effectively fostered religious discipline at school. For example, "...yang kalah harus mengajak teman sholat ya... [...the one who was lost has to invite a friend to pray, okay...]" (IK5)", another said "Ibu kan setiap selesai pembelajaran selalu mengajak teman-teman yang muslim buat ke masjid untuk sholat dan saya lihat jadi banyak yang sholat. [Every time after class, Mom always invites Muslim friends to go to the mosque to pray, and I see that many pray.] (IK4)". This is in line with the concept of deep learning, which emphasizes the transformation of learning supported by power from below (teachers and students) (Fullan et al., 2018).

The learning intervention was limited in the environmental akhlak dimension because activities were more episodic in relation to students' concrete actions. Students' and groups' attention was more focused on collaboration and discipline. Logistical constraints, such as game equipment and time, limited the space for exploring ecological issues, resulting in a less robust impact on environmental awareness than in the social domain. This aligns with the small increase in quantitative scores. Meanwhile, national akhlak was fostered through two learning activities. First, the inclusion of

traditional games as a source of cultural pride, which was later adopted by the Student Council (OSIS) as a class meeting competition (IK3). Second, there was greater appreciation for activities that foster nationalism, such as flag ceremonies. Both provide qualitative explanations for the small but consistent increase in civic morality.

The deep learning approach emphasizes student-centered learning through collaboration, creativity, and real-world experiences, helping them connect with the world, think critically, collaborate, empathize with others, and be prepared to face the major challenges of global change in unpredictable directions (Fullan & Quinn, 2020, Fullan et al., 2019). Traditional games provide a natural climate for group dynamics, as students acknowledged in interviews as

"pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dan membuat kami lebih dekat satu sama lain. [fun learning and bringing us closer together.] (IK3)". In this regard, a study in Turkey found that traditional games play a role in teaching universal values such as hedonism, competitive task achievement, power, virtue, self-direction, conformity, stimulation, security, and the universality of tradition (Aypay, 2016). In the context of sociology learning, the integration of traditional games can strengthen the creation of social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness and management, social relationship awareness and skills, and responsible decision-making in order to realize student well-being (Hanifa & Wilodati, 2024). Overall, this study shows that traditional games are effectively implemented as a medium to strengthen the noble akhlak of high school students. Although the quantitative results do not show significant numerical changes, qualitatively they demonstrate effectiveness in the learning process, creating contextual, in-depth, and meaningful situations that foster students' internal motivation to be creative, think critically, and solve problems (Suyanto et al., 2025). The study's findings offer implementable learning and support the realization of quality education for all. This research deserves further development as a local culture-based character-building strategy that upholds the spirit of "Think globally, Act locally." However, this research requires more accurate evaluation instruments, a more complex learning design, and systemic support for sustainable implementation.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study quantitatively shows an increase in the average pretest and posttest scores across all dimensions, albeit within a small range. The learning intervention provided significant, uneven changes across all akhlak dimensions. Based on the qualitative analysis, it also demonstrated effectiveness in strengthening morals, particularly in the interpersonal akhlak dimension, as it improved the quality of interactions between students and fostered meaningful, culturally relevant learning experiences. Qualitative results demonstrated substantive changes in the aspects of cooperation, empathy, sportsmanship, discipline, and social closeness among students. The integration of traditional games created a fun, inclusive learning environment and encouraged the development of moral values through direct experience. All of these results

demonstrate that traditional games are an effective medium for strengthening the noble akhlak of high school students. Overall, this study confirms that character education rooted in local culture can strengthen students' character and equip them for global interaction. This research has implications for the need to incorporate local wisdom into innovative learning designs and contribute to strengthening students' character.

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