



TRADITIONAL GAMES AND INDIGENOUS SPORTS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES: THEIR RELEVANCE IN MODERN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Aditya Kumar

ABSTRACT

Indigenous sports and traditional games are examined in the perspective of modern PE. Native American sports like Kabaddi and Kho-Kho have long promoted physical fitness, communal togetherness, and cultural preservation. Urbanization, poor institutional support, and modern sports have all contributed to its gradual decline. To gather descriptive and analytical data, researchers surveyed 77 students, professors, and tribe members using mixed approaches. A blend of random and careful selection ensured variation. Data was collected via structured interviews, questionnaires, and village elder conversations, supported by books, journals, and official publications. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically using frequency distribution, mean, median, percentage, and standard deviation, whereas qualitative data was conceptualized. Indigenous games were recognizable to 80.5% of individuals, and over 50% indicated they played them frequently or occasionally, showing they're strongly imprinted in people's minds. Fitness (71.4%), cultural preservation (64.9%), intellectual advancement (62.3%), and social cohesion (54.5%) were listed as positives. Contemporary sports' popularity (67.5%), limited classroom space (59.7%), and government money (50.6%), were important challenges. Indigenous games should be taught in K-12 and higher education, according to 68% of respondents. According to the research, indigenous sports must be resurrected via community initiatives, legislative support, and curriculum inclusion to conserve cultural heritage and promote holistic education.

Keywords: Indigenous sports, Tribal communities, Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Physical education

INTRODUCTION

Indian rural and tribal communities have a long and illustrious cultural past that includes indigenous games and ancient forms of athletic competition. In addition to being a means of passing the time, they are also a representation of the norms, habits, and beliefs that are prevalent within the society. The games have been passed down from one generation to the next because they have been maintained via oral tradition, which has enabled them to be passed down and preserved. These games are deeply connected to the local environment, seasonal events, and communal rituals by virtue of their interconnectedness. The diversity of India's indigenous games is reflected in the variety of games that are played in different regions of the country. Kabaddi in Tamil Nadu and Punjab and kho-kho in Maharashtra are two examples of sports that started in rural regions but have now blossomed into major spectator events all around the globe. Indigenous games are able to adapt to changing circumstances while yet maintaining their cultural identity, as seen by the fact that they have endured throughout the course of time.

Relevance of Indigenous Sports in Modern Physical Education

It is a significant challenge for physical education in the modern era to provide equal opportunities for all individuals and to find a middle ground between active and inactive lifestyles. Formal training, facilities that are on the cutting edge of technology, and expensive equipment are all essential components of contemporary sports. On the other hand, Native American games are able to thrive despite the fact that they have limited resources, are actively involved in the community, and have adapted to particular geographical places [2]. This is the reason why they are such an excellent tool for physical education, especially in populations that are underserved, such as rural and tribal communities. The development of character attributes such as discipline, respect for one's cultural heritage, cooperation, and collaboration are all fostered via participation in indigenous games. Indigenous games do more than just increase physical abilities. The objectives of modern physical education include not only the development of physical fitness but also the development of mental toughness and the cultivation of good social and emotional characteristics. This is completely in line with those objectives.

Case Examples: Kho-Kho and Kabaddi

Kho-Kho

The ability to think quickly, dexterity, and strategy are all necessary components for success in the game of kho-kho. In the game, which is played on a rectangular field, there are players who take part in both attacking and defending positions. To be successful, competitors need to be quick on their feet, intelligent, and fluid. Participating in this game helps improve a variety of talents, including mental acuity, motor skills, agility, and endurance. When viewed from the perspective of physical education, kho-kho is beneficial for improving cardiovascular health, increased leg strength, and concentration [3]. Due to the fact that it is open to participation from both males and females, it is a sport that is both adaptive and friendly for schools.

Kabaddi

The indigenous sport of kabaddi is another well-known activity that requires a combination of physical skill, mental sharpness, and strategic thinking. The origins of this sport may be traced back to rural India, where it is played by approaching the area of the opposing side while holding one's breath. Having mental fortitude, the capacity to do anaerobic exercises, and amazing control over one's breathing are all required. Kabaddi is an excellent approach to develop abilities in coordination and collaboration, as well as stamina for both aerobic and anaerobic activity [4]. Kabaddi game is also a wonderful way to increase stamina. The popularity it has achieved in the Pro Kabaddi League and the Asian Games has propelled it to the forefront of worldwide recognition. In addition to this, it is an excellent method for children to become interested in sports in a manner that is not just technologically sophisticated but also culturally relevant.

Cultural and Educational Significance

When it comes to indigenous peoples, athletic competition is about a great deal more than just being physically strong. Young people from rural and indigenous communities are able to feel more linked to their history and identity because to the assistance that they provide in a world when everything is

changing so rapidly. Not only do these activities assist students in strengthening their bodies, but they also assist schools in maintaining the vitality and health of their cultures. There is a major role that traditional sports play in indigenous communities in terms of creating unity, settling problems, and developing collaboration among members of the group [5]. By offering a more fair way of participation in organized sports, indigenous athletics may be able to assist in the process of closing the achievement gap that exists between children living in urban and rural areas. Due to the fact that these sports do not need expensive equipment, participation in them helps to level the playing field and reduce economic and social gaps.

Revitalizing Indigenous Games in the 21st Century

The modern world is characterized by a pervasive prevalence of sedentary lifestyles, online gaming, and digital entertainment. As a result, childhood obesity, anxiety, and disorders connected to lifestyle choices are all on the rise among young people. When seen from this perspective, the resurrection of indigenous games provides an alternative that is not only inexpensive but also fun and culturally acceptable. When games like kho-kho and kabaddi are reintroduced back into schools and community events, they not only inspire people to be physically active, but they also develop a feeling of shared history and culture, and they bring people of all ages closer together [6]. There has also been a growing recognition among legislators and educators of the relevance of this. It is largely due to the efforts of Khelo India and other similar projects that indigenous games have been made accessible to a broader audience. By officially incorporating indigenous games into training modules, competitions, and international events, it is clear that indigenous games have the potential to be rejuvenated and made effective as cultural and educational tools.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine, within the framework of contemporary physical education, tribal populations' knowledge, involvement, and perceived advantages of traditional games and indigenous sports.
2. To determine the obstacles to indigenous games' survival and provide solutions for incorporating them into community initiatives and educational curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to get a deeper comprehension of the ways in which indigenous sports and traditional games are incorporated into the landscape of modern physical education, this study employs a research style that blends descriptive and analytical approaches. Because of the meticulously planned approach, the objectives of the research have been successfully accomplished. The participants in the research include students who participate in or observe indigenous sports, as well as members of indigenous communities and teachers of physical education. Within this community, a total of 77 individuals were selected to participate in the survey by a mix of random and purposeful selection means [7]. In order to guarantee that there was a balanced representation of gender, age, and educational background, this was done. The primary information was acquired via the use of a structured questionnaire that had both closed- and open-ended questions about familiarity, engagement, benefits, downsides, and suggestions for adding traditional games into the physical education curriculum.

In addition, we conducted interviews with community elders and teachers, as well as casual conversations with them, in order to get a deeper comprehension of the cultural practices and beliefs that are often linked with these games. Secondary data collection includes academic publications, books, and government reports on issues such as indigenous sports, tribal culture, and physical education regulations. These topics were the focus of the collection. When we were analyzing the data, we used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In order to evaluate the quantitative data, we decided to make use of statistical techniques such as percentages, means, medians, and standard deviations [8]. Graphs and tables were created in order to simplify the meaning of the findings and make them more accessible. The process of cross-tabulation analysis was also used in order to evaluate the correlations that existed between the variables of awareness, participation, and opinion. via the use of theme analysis, the qualitative data that was gathered via interviews and group discussions was able to shed light on the cultural and societal aspects that were at play.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This study aimed to evaluate the role, relevance, and application of indigenous sports and traditional games that are practiced by indigenous populations. The research was conducted within the context of current physical education. Through the use of a standardized questionnaire, primary data was collected from 77 respondents, representing a diverse range of ages, genders, and backgrounds [9]. This objective was successfully accomplished successfully. For the purpose of analyzing the responses, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. These statistics included frequency distribution, percentage analysis, mean, median, and standard deviation.

Table 1: Awareness of Traditional Games

Awareness	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
Yes	62	80.5
No	15	19.5
Total	77	100

Most of the respondents (80.5%) reported knowing about traditional games, while only 19.5% disagreed [10]. This means that traditional games are still alive in the cultural memory of communities and people are aware of them.

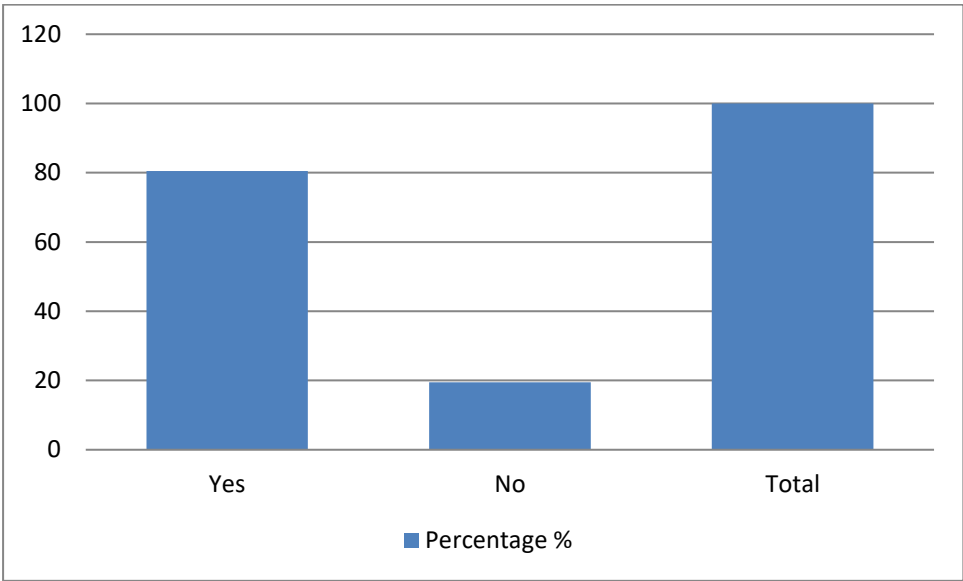


Figure 1. Awareness of Traditional Games

Table 2: Participation in Traditional Games

Participation Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
Frequently	18	23.4
Sometimes	26	33.8
Rarely	20	26.0
Never	13	16.8
Total	77	100

Statistical Analysis (Likert scale: 1 = Never, 4 = Frequently):

- Mean = 2.64
- Median = 3 (Sometimes)
- S.D. = 1.05

About one-third of the respondents (33.8%) play traditional sports occasionally while 23.4% participate regularly. The mean value (2.64) and median (3) indicate that the level of participation is moderate [11]. This indicates that traditional sports have not completely disappeared but regular practice has decreased.

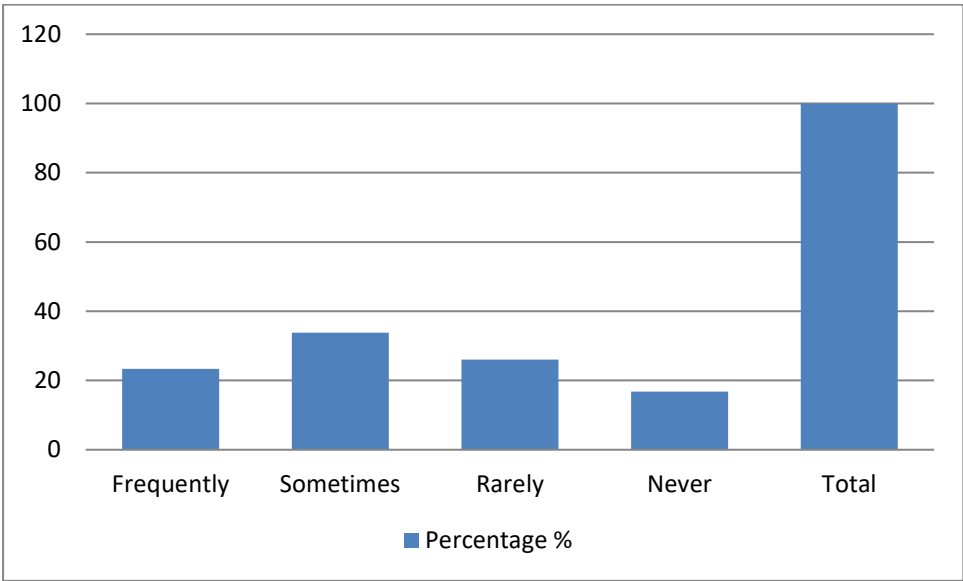


Figure 2. Participation in Traditional Games

Table 3: Perceived Benefits of Indigenous Games

Benefits	Frequency (f)	Percentage % (out of 77)
Physical Fitness	55	71.4
Mental Development	48	62.3
Social Cohesion	42	54.5
Preservation of Culture	50	64.9
Low-cost Accessibility	36	46.7

According to the respondents, the biggest benefits of traditional sports are physical health (71.4%) and cultural preservation (64.9%). Mental development (62.3%) and social integration (54.5%) are also considered important benefits [12]. This makes it clear that traditional sports are not only physical activity but also carriers of social and cultural values.

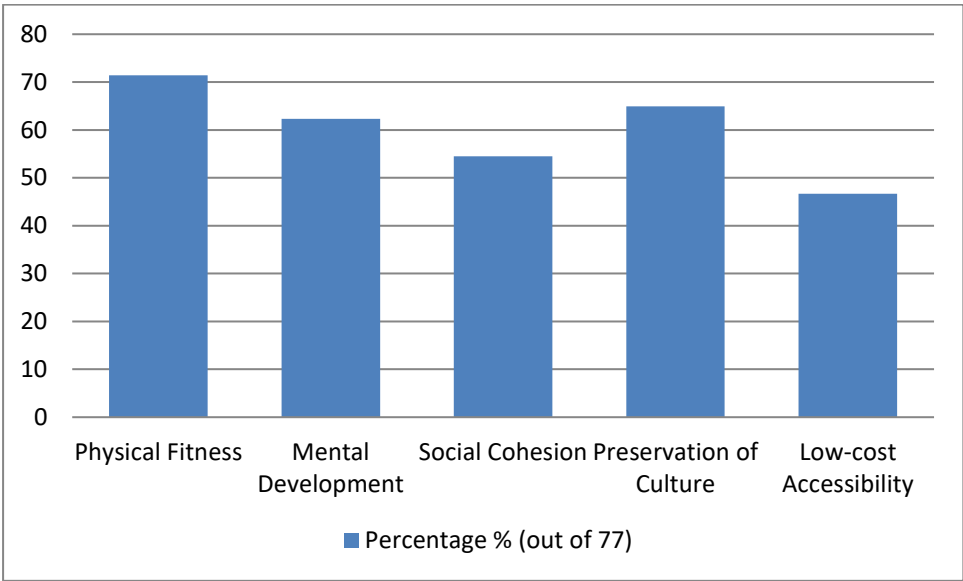


Figure 3. Perceived Benefits of Indigenous Games

Table 4: Opinion on Including Traditional Games in Curriculum

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
Strongly Agree (5)	20	26.0
Agree (4)	32	41.6
Neutral (3)	14	18.2
Disagree (2)	7	9.1
Strongly Disagree (1)	4	5.2
Total	77	100

Statistical Analysis:

- Mean = 3.74
- Median = 4 (Agree)
- S.D. = 1.12

68% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that traditional sports should be included in the school/college curriculum [13]. The mean value (3.74) and the median (4) prove that there is strong support in favour of reintroducing these sports at the educational level.

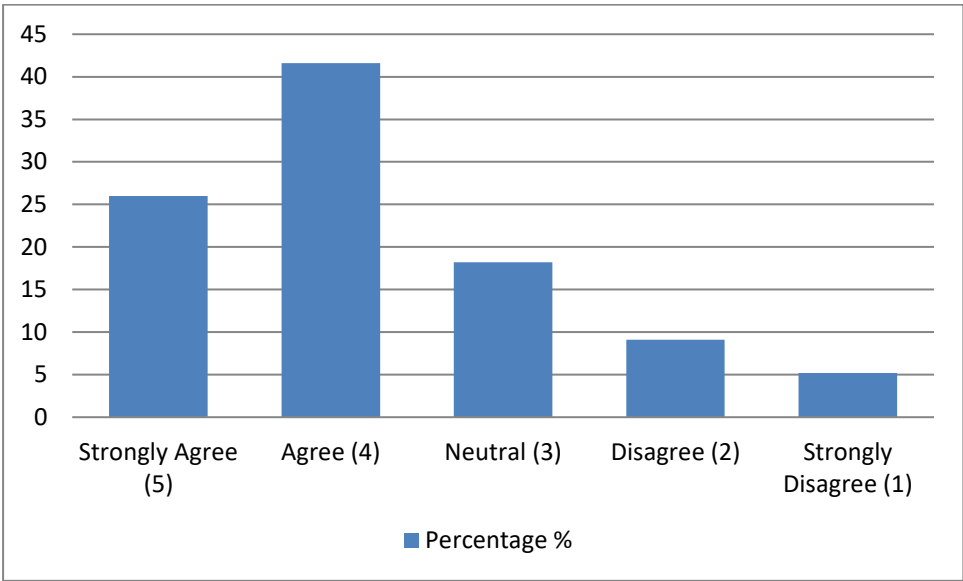


Figure 4. Opinion on Including Traditional Games in Curriculum

Table 5: Challenges for Decline of Traditional Games

Challenges	Frequency (f)	Percentage % (out of 77)
Modern Sports Domination	52	67.5
Lack of Curriculum	46	59.7
Urbanization	41	53.2
Lack of Govt. Support	39	50.6

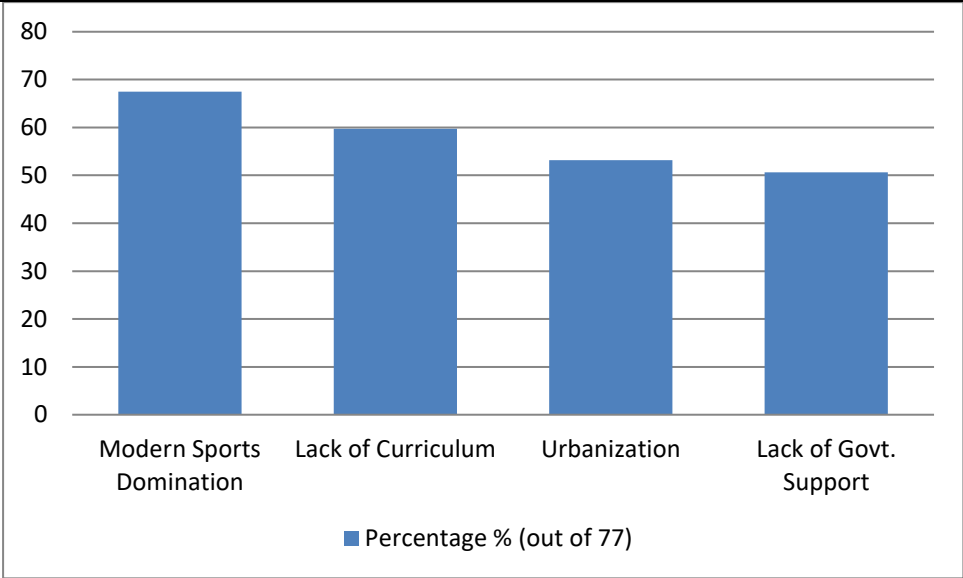
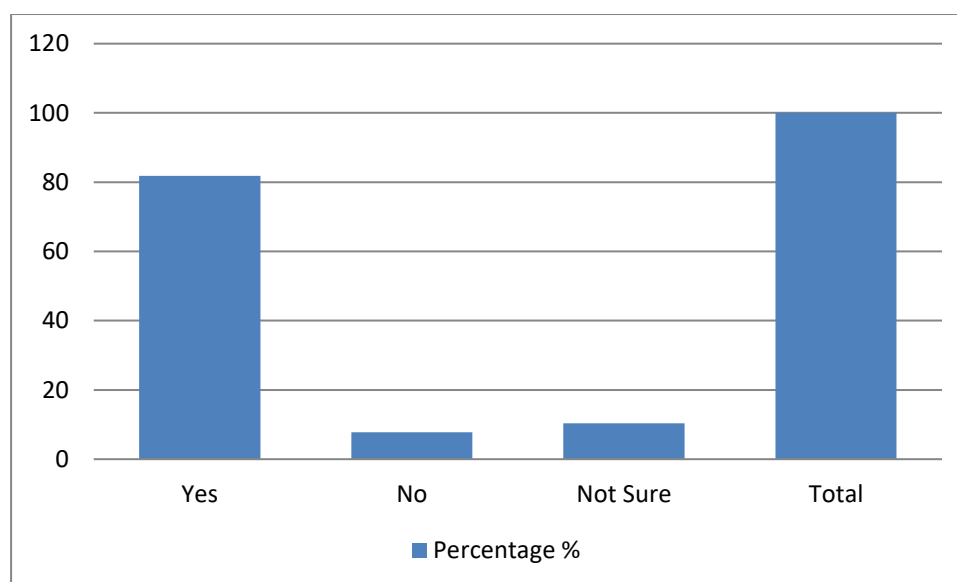


Figure 5. Challenges for Decline of Traditional Games**Table 6: Future Promotion (Government/NGO Role)**

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
Yes	63	81.8
No	6	7.8
Not Sure	8	10.4
Total	77	100

81.8% of the respondents believe that the government and NGOs should take concrete steps towards reviving traditional sports [14]. Only 7.8% disagree. This means that there is a strong demand for policy and institutional support for the revival of traditional sports in the society.

**Figure 6. Future Promotion (Government/NGO Role)**

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

During the course of this study, seventy-seven participants were asked about their perspectives on the subject of indigenous sports and traditional games, as well as their position in modern physical education. According to the findings of the study, these activities have the potential to help preserve cultures, bring people together, and teach them important life skills. According to the figures on participation, over 56 percent of individuals said that they participated in traditional games on a regular basis, while 44 percent stated that they did so sometimes [15-18]. This suggests that traditional games continue to have cultural significance and recreational value for indigenous communities, despite the fact that there are modern alternatives available. As seen by the relatively high participation rate, these games continue to have a role as community-based physical activities. It was established that the level of awareness was rather high,

with around 61% of the participants admitting that they were familiar with the rules and the various types of traditional sports. However, more than forty percent of people who participated in the study said that they did not know much about the subject matter [19]. This demonstrates how indigenous knowledge is being lost over the course of time as a consequence of industrialization and insufficient recording. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it underscores the crucial necessity to systematically promote and incorporate traditional games into educational and community service activities.

In response to a question regarding the benefits of traditional sports, 68 percent of respondents said that they contribute to physical fitness, mental health, and the development of community. The mean score indicated that respondents were leaning toward recognizing the numerous benefits, while the standard deviation demonstrated that replies were in accord with one another [20-22]. Our findings are consistent with the findings of other studies that have emphasized the overall advantages of indigenous sports in terms of fostering self-control, collaboration, and stamina. The challenges, on the other hand, emerged as a substantial source of concern. Problems such as diminishing community engagement, poor government recognition, and inadequate infrastructure were mentioned by about half of the people who took part in the study. The fact that these challenges were highlighted the most often in replies to the median score makes it abundantly evident that measures at the policy level and the allocation of resources are required to solve them in order to guarantee that promotion will be maintained over time. The opinions on curriculum integration provided further support for this plan [23].

Approximately 72 percent of respondents were in favor of bringing traditional games into current physical education curricula, which is a significant amount of support. Together with the high mean, the fact that there was a very little amount of variation in responses suggested that there was widespread consensus about this issue. This result adds validity to the concept that physical education programs would be able to do a double job by officially acknowledging cultural heritage and implementing it into the curriculum. The use of cross-tabulation analysis allowed for the discovery of many significant correlations. People who had a greater understanding of the matter were more inclined to contribute to the discussion and were more likely to advocate for the inclusion of the topic in the curriculum, in contrast to those who had a lesser understanding of the matter [24]. In addition, when the findings were split down according to age and gender, it was found that younger respondents had a greater interest in resurrecting indigenous sports, whilst older respondents were more concerned with conserving cultural traditions. It is clear from these statistics that people's perceptions of classic games are directly influenced by their level of knowledge as well as their demographics.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this study, traditional games and indigenous sports of indigenous tribes continue to play a significant role in the efforts of tribal cultures to promote physical fitness, cultural identity, and social cohesion. In accordance with the results, the vast majority of respondents continue to be acquainted with and interested in indigenous games such as Kho-Kho and Kabaddi. On the other hand, regular participation has decreased for a variety of reasons, including urbanization, a lack of institutional support, and the predominance of modern sports. In spite of these challenges, participants recognized the many benefits of indigenous games, including the favorable impact they have on health (both mental and physical), the preservation of cultural traditions, and the promotion of social cohesiveness. Importantly,

the research suggested that traditional games have to be included into the physical education programs that are currently being offered. This would bring traditional activities back to life and enhance physical education programs by making them more accessible, culturally acceptable, and environmentally sustainable, according to almost 68% of the individuals who took part in the investigation. Additional evidence is provided by the results, which indicate that indigenous sports need legislative interventions, official support, and the active engagement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to ensure their systematic resuscitation and promotion. Games played by indigenous peoples are not outmoded; rather, they are abundant cultural resources that have the potential to significantly promote contemporary holistic education and fitness programs that are responsible for the environment. By recreating and institutionalizing these historic games, society may be able to accomplish two goals at once: it may preserve the cultural heritage of the past while simultaneously encouraging future generations to lead lifestyles that are healthier and more active.

REFERENCES

1. Singh, R., & Yadav, P. (2021). Indigenous games of India: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 21(3), 1204–1211.
2. Bandyopadhyay, K. (2019). Physical education and the significance of traditional sports in India. *International Journal of Sports Science*, 9(2), 56–63.
3. Rao, S. (2020). Reviving traditional Indian games: Pathways to cultural sustainability and fitness. *Indian Journal of Physical Education*, 15(4), 88–95.
4. Chaudhary, A. (2022). Physiological benefits of Kabaddi: Traditional sport in modern times. *Journal of Sports Health and Fitness*, 11(2), 45–52.
5. Deo, M. (2018). Cultural dimensions of tribal indigenous sports in India. *Tribal Studies Review*, 14(1), 67–78.
6. Dodoo, S. (2022). Traditional games: Socialization and culture in Kabylie. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.98929>
7. Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.
8. Glakas, B. A. (1991). Teaching cooperative skills through games. *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 62(7), 28–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.1991.10609857>
9. Haq, M. Z., Maqbool, A., & Munir, S. (2020). The childhood's traditional games and physical fitness of rural, urban, and private school girls: A case study of Bahawalpur City, Pakistan. *Corpus ID: 212714987*.
10. Huizinga, J. (1955). *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Beacon Press.
11. Kam, M., Mathur, A., Kumar, A., & Canny, J. (2009). Designing digital games for rural children: A study of traditional village games in India. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human*

Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2009) (pp. 31–39). ACM Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/1518701.1518707>

12. Nagpal, B., Bathina, L., & Das, S. (2019). Redesign of Indian games: A case study of traditional Indian games Gilli Danda (Tip Cat) and Gatte ka Khel (Game of Five Stones). In A. Chakrabarti (Ed.), *Research into design for a connected world: Proceedings of ICoRD 2019* (pp. 689–701). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-5974-3_60
13. Oliveira, V. A. de, Silva, A. F. F. da, Alcócer, J. C. A., Domingos, L. T., Pinto, O. R. de O., Ribeiro, L. P. D., Ferreira, M. N. A., Lima, A. O., Fonseca, A. M. da, Muniz, K. R. de A., & Santos, M. J. C. dos. (2020). The math teacher's look on the use of Mancala as a pedagogical tool. *International Journal of Development Research*, 10(2), 33921–33925. <https://www.journalijdr.com>
14. Owusu, P., & Addo, A. O. (2023). Alikoto: Mathematics instruction and cultural games in Ghana. *Cogent Education*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2207045>
15. Pesce, C., Masci, I., Marchetti, R., Vazou, S., Sääkslahti, A., & Tomporowski, P. D. (2016). Deliberate play and preparation jointly benefit motor and cognitive development: Mediated and moderated effects. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 349. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00349>
16. Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children* (M. Cook, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Co. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11494-000>
17. Prabavathy, M., & Sivaranjani, R. (2023). Utilizing traditional game Pallanguzhi as a tool to enhance the basic arithmetic skill of children with mathematical difficulties. *Journal for Re Attach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 6(10s2), 1117–1129. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374741495>
18. Prastowo, A. (2018). Traditional Javanese games as a local wisdom-based learning strategy to foster global skills in MI/SD. *JMIE (Journal of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Education)*. <https://doi.org/10.32934/JMIE.V2I1.55>
19. Rabillas, A. R., Kilag, O. K. T., Cañete, N. A., Trazona, M. S., Calope, M. L. L., & Kilag, J. N. (2023). Elementary math learning through Piaget's cognitive development stages. *Excellencia: International Multidisciplinary Journal of Education*, 6(2), 202–210. <https://risejournals.org/index.php/imjrise/article/view/678>
20. Safitri, T., Affandi, L. H., & Zain, M. I. (2022). Character education values in traditional Sasak games in Babussalam Village, Gerung, West Lombok. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendas: Primary Education Journal*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.29303/pendas.v3i1.1071>
21. Sámano, M. A. (2023). The game of Go as a support in the development of cognitive skills. *Journal of Go Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.62578/316760>

22. Santos, A. O., Oliveira, C. R., & Junior, D. G. (2020). Mancala family games in mathematics teaching in the early years of elementary school: Origins, contexts, and applications. *Itinerarius Reflectionis*, 16(2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.5216/rir.v16i2.58278>
23. Sari, D. A., & Kurniawan, D. (2024). The importance of introducing traditional games in instilling character and cultural values. *JIMAD: Jurnal Ilmiah Mutiara Pendidikan*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.61404/jimad.v2i1.182>
24. Tantarto, D. D., & Hertoery, D. A. (2020). The role of space in sustaining children's traditional games. *ARTEKS: Jurnal Teknik Arsitektur*, 5(3), 359–372. <https://doi.org/10.30822/arteks.v5i3.504>