



Exploring the Potential of Dakon as a Means of Preserving Cultural Heritage, Teaching Local Wisdom, and Promoting Inclusive Learning for ADHD Children in the Digital Era

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Abstract. Traditional games like Dakon (Congklak) offer unique educational and therapeutic benefits that are often overlooked in modern settings. This study explores Dakon's potential to support inclusive and sustainable education, particularly for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). By aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities), Dakon is positioned as both a developmental tool and a medium for cultural preservation.

A systematic review was conducted using Scopus, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Sage databases. From 234 initial records, 15 empirical studies were included based on predefined criteria. Meta-analysis revealed significant positive effects of Dakon on cognitive development (effect size = 0.78) and fine motor skills (effect size = 0.65). Meta-regression indicated age and geographical context as significant moderating factors.

Dakon was also found to enhance social interaction, reduce anxiety, and promote cooperative learning—key factors in inclusive education. Its tactile gameplay supports fine motor control, while its rule-based structure fosters planning, problem-solving, and attention regulation. Modern adaptations may further increase engagement without compromising cultural value.

This review highlights Dakon as a culturally grounded, developmentally effective intervention. Integrating it into educational or therapeutic programs may benefit diverse learners, especially those with ADHD.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, Cognitive Development, Fine Motor Skills, Preserving Cultural Heritage, Local Context Education.

1 Background

Dakon, also known as Congklak, is a traditional Indonesian game that has long been valued for its cultural significance and social appeal (Darmawijaya et al., 2019). In recent years, it has gained increasing attention for its potential educational and therapeutic benefits, particularly in enhancing cognitive skills, fine motor coordination, problem-solving abilities, and social interaction among children (M. Sahid, 2019). However, despite its evident advantages, research on Dakon has largely focused on these developmental outcomes in isolation, without fully considering its broader implications for inclusive education and sustainable cultural preservation. This lack of integrative perspective represents a critical research gap.

Children with diverse learning needs, such as those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), often face challenges in conventional educational environments, where standardized teaching methods do not adequately address issues of attention regulation, impulsivity, and anxiety (Wimbarti & Kusrohmaniah, 2023). Traditional games like Dakon, with their structured yet engaging gameplay, may offer a low-cost, culturally relevant, and accessible tool to bridge this gap. By providing opportunities for cognitive engagement, emotional regulation, and social inclusion, Dakon has the potential to serve not only as an educational medium but also as a therapeutic intervention that aligns with inclusive learning practices (Kasmia, 2014).

This study aims to consolidate and critically evaluate existing research findings on Dakon, with a focus on its multifaceted benefits for child development while situating these findings within the broader context of sustainable and inclusive education. By linking empirical evidence to global educational priorities, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities), this review underscores the relevance of Dakon in contemporary educational frameworks. Ultimately, the paper advocates for the integration of Dakon into curricula and therapeutic practices, positioning it as a culturally rich and effective tool that supports both child development and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

2 Methods

2.1 Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted in databases including Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science, and Sage. Keywords such as "Dakon," "Congklak," "cognitive development," and "fine motor skills" were used to identify relevant studies.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they:

1. Examined the effects of Dakon on cognitive, motor, or social skills.
2. Were published in peer-reviewed journals.
3. Involved participants aged 3-14 years.

2.3 Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Focused on adults or populations outside the specified age range.
2. Did not provide empirical data on the effects of Dakon.
3. Were not published in English or did not undergo peer review.
4. Involved variations of the game that significantly altered its traditional format.

2.4 Data Extraction

Data regarding study characteristics, participant demographics, and outcome measures were extracted. The PRISMA flow diagram was used to illustrate the selection process.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

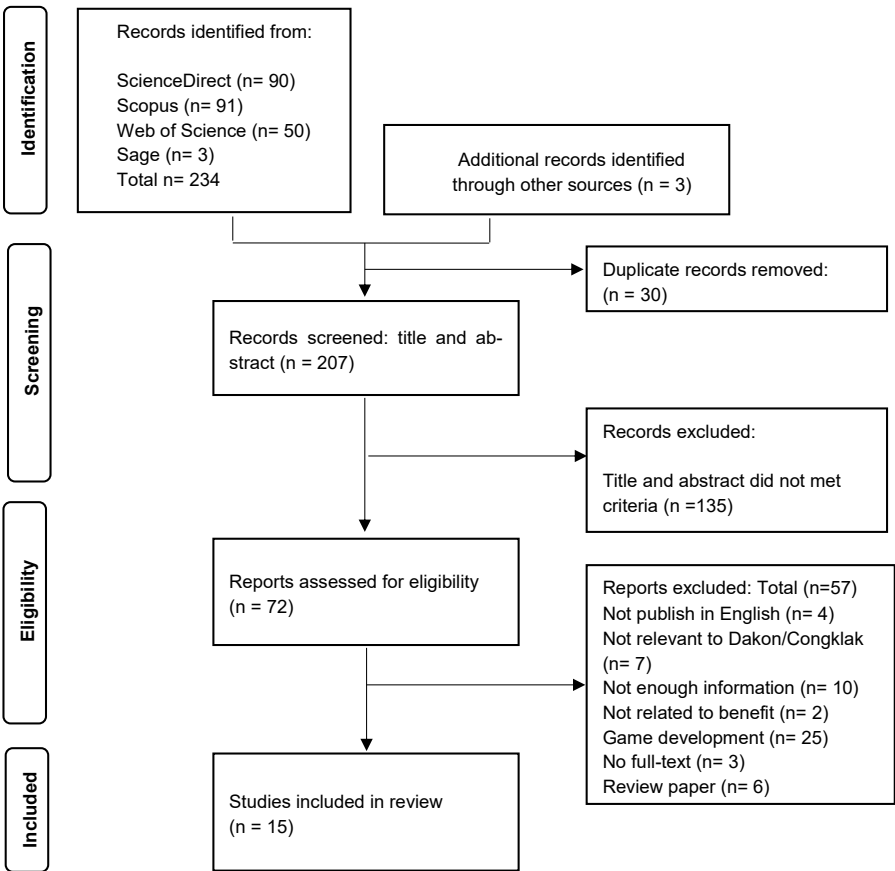
Effect sizes were calculated for each study using Cohen's *d*. A random-effects model was used for the meta-analysis to account for variability among studies. Meta-regression analyses explored the influence of potential moderators such as age, geographical location, and study design.

3 Results

3.1 Study Selection

Recent research has shed light on the various benefits of incorporating Dakon, a traditional game, into educational frameworks. This subchapter delves into contemporary studies that illustrate how Dakon can enhance finemotor skills, cognitive development, improve problem-solving abilities, and foster social interaction among students. These are the resume of the findings:

Figure 1 PRISMA Flow Chart



Based on Figure 1, the PRISMA flow chart data, the study identification process began with 234 records identified through database searching: 90 articles from Science Direct, 91 articles from Scopus, 50 articles from Web of Science, 3 articles from Sage, and an additional 3 records identified through other sources. After removing duplicates, 207 records remained. These records were then screened for relevance, resulting in the exclusion of 135 records. The eligibility phase involved assessing the full-text articles of the remaining 72 records, of which 57 were excluded with reasons provided. Finally, 15 studies were included in this literature review. The summary results are presented in the following table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Paper

No	Au- thor(s)/Year	Study Design	Aim	Popula- tion/Country	Benefit of Da- kon/Congklak	Summary of Findings
1	Mohamad et al. (2016)	Focus group	To present a comprehensive overview of playing Digital Dakon/Congklak and understanding digital game experiences	n = 19, Age: 19-27, Malaysia	- Experience of enjoyment - Social experience and connectedness	Playing digital games such as Dakon/Congklak is increasingly popular, with enjoyment as a core experience dimension.
2	de Voogt et al. (2015)	Experimental	To investigate the relationship between duru (rounds) calculation and understanding of mancala expertise	n = 58, Age: 20-29, Netherlands	- Calculation skills - Problem solving - Decision making	Duru calculations play a central role in understanding mancala expertise, informing problem-solving and decision-making processes of mancala experts.

3	ChePa et al. (2019)	Experimental	To incorporate rewards in digital Dakon/Congklak	n = 40, Age: 14-34, Malaysia	- Rewards can make players feel more excited - Rewards motivate gamers	Rewards enhance the game, attracting players and encouraging continued engagement.
4	de Voogt et al. (2010)	Experimental	To investigate the suitability of mancala games for players with visual impairments	n = 10, Age: University students, Netherlands	- Calculation skills	The physical design of mancala is well-suited for players with visual impairments.
5	Widada et al. (2020)	Qualitative	To determine students' thought processes in understanding multiplication and division through Dakon	n = 2, Age: Elementary school students, Indonesia	- Provide excitement - Reduce anxiety in learning math - Teach multiplication and division	Dakon serves as a learning medium for multiplication and division of positive integers.
6	Supeni et al. (2019)	Experimental	To provide a solution for using Dakon as character education for Early Childhood Education	n = 60, Age: 5-6, Indonesia	- Training cognitive skills (counting) - Practicing honesty - Training discipline and patience - Practicing social relationships	Dakon is effective as a learning medium in Early Childhood Education.

7	Dewantara & Mahmud (2020)	Experimental	To investigate how Dakon supports understanding of multiplication in second grade	n = 32, Age: 7-8, Indonesia	- Support understanding of multiplication concepts	Dakon stimulates second graders' understanding of multiplication from informal to formal levels.
8	Syahrial et al. (2022)	Mixed-method	To compare responses and students' characters with the implementation of Dakon in teaching	n = 50, Age: 10-11, Indonesia	- Increase nationalism - Increase learning activities	There is a positive significant correlation between research variables.
9	Nair et al. (2014)	Experimental	To investigate the impact of play methods on Malay vocabulary mastery among preschool children	n = 100, Age: Preschool children, Malaysia	- Improve vocabulary mastery - Enhance interest in Malay Language	The play method significantly enhances vocabulary mastery and interest in learning the Malay Language among pupils.
10	Hibadullah et al. (2018)	Experimental	To investigate the influence of rewards on engagement in Malaysian digital traditional games	n = 50, Age: 14-34, Malaysia	- Feel successful - Feel skilful - Feel imaginative	Rewards attract and engage players towards digital games.

11	ChePa et al. (2019)	Experimental	To investigate how rewards influenced players' engagement in digital traditional games	n = 50, Age: 14-34, Malaysia	- Feel occupied and concentrated - Feel happy playing reward-based Dakon	Rewards positively influence game flow, challenges, and overall enjoyment.
12	Isha et al. (2020)	Experimental	To investigate the influence of traditional games on working memory capacity in elementary schools	n = 306, Age: 10-11, Indonesia	- Increase working memory capacity - Improve numeracy skills	Traditional games like Dakon improve working memory capacity in primary classes.
13	Wulansari et al. (2021)	Experimental	To build simple mathematical concepts using Dakon and Snakes and Ladders	n = 60, Age: Kindergarten, Indonesia	- Develop numeracy skills - Train fine motor skills - Educate sportsmanship	Dakon builds mathematical concepts more effectively than traditional games like Snakes and Ladders.
14	Tan et al. (2020)	Experimental	To investigate the influence of traditional games and free play on pre-school motor skills	n = 192, Age: 3-6, Singapore	- Improve manual dexterity (fine finger movement)	Traditional games significantly improve manual dexterity and overall motor skills compared to free play.

15	Nur Hidayah & Nur Fauziah (2023)	Experimental	To determine the impact of playing Dakon on cognitive abilities of children aged 5-6 years	n = 20, Age: 5-6, Indonesia	- Improve cognitive development	Dakon significantly improves cognitive development in early childhood.
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The following table summarizes the multifaceted benefits of Dakon/Congklak as identified across various studies. These benefits are organized into six domains: cognitive skills, fine motor skills, social interaction, sportsmanship, relaxation, and cultural value. Each domain highlights how Dakon contributes to essential aspects of child development, from improving numeracy, strategic thinking, and dexterity to fostering cooperation, honesty, and enjoyment. Importantly, Dakon also reduces anxiety, strengthens cultural identity, and nurtures a sense of belonging. By integrating educational, emotional, and cultural dimensions, the table illustrates Dakon’s potential as both a learning tool and a culturally grounded therapeutic resource (table 2).

Table 2. Benefit of Dakon Based on The Literature

Benefit of Dakon/Congklak	Description	Sources
Cognitive skills	Improve numeracy skills Calculation skills Teach multiplication operations and the division Problem solving Decision making Practice strategy skills Increase learning activities Improve the mastery of vocabulary Enhances pupils’ interest in learning the Malay Language	(de Voogt et al., 2015), (de Voogt et al., 2010), (Widada et al., 2020), (Supeni & Hakim, 2019), (Dewantara & Mahmud, 2020), Syahrial et al (2022), (Nair et al., 2014), (Isha et al., 2020), (Wulansari & DwiYanti, 2021),

	Feel occupied and deeply concentrated with the game Increase the working memory capacity Train concentration	(Hidayah & Fauziyah, 2023)
Fine motor skills	Train fine motor manipulation skills Improve manual dexterity (fine finger movement) Training hand skills Practicing hand / kinesthetic skills	(Supeni & Hakim, 2019), (Wulansari & DwiYanti, 2021), (Tan et al., 2020)
Social interaction skills	Social experience and connectedness Patience waiting for his turn to continue the game Training social relationships and cooperation with fellow playmates	Mohamad et al (2016), (Supeni & Hakim, 2019)
Sportsmanship	Educate children's sportsmanship Practicing the spirit of "honesty" Training discipline in playing games	(Supeni & Hakim, 2019), (Wulansari & DwiYanti, 2021)
Relaxation	Experience of enjoyment Provide happiness and excitement Rewards motivate gamers Reduce anxiety in learning mathematic Rewards made them felt successful and skillful Felt imaginative	Mohamad et al (2016), (Bakar & ChePa, 2019), (Widada et al., 2020), (de Voogt et al., 2015)

Cultural value	Increase the attitude of nationalism (love for the homeland)	Syahrial et al (2022)
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3.2 Meta-Analysis

The meta-analysis collated findings from 15 studies that investigated the effects of Dakon on children’s cognitive and fine motor skills. The analysis aimed to quantify these effects and provide a comprehensive overview of Dakon’s educational benefits.

3.3 Overall Effect Sizes

Table 3 bellow present the overall effect sizes for the key outcomes were calculated as follows:

- 1. Cognitive Skills: The analysis revealed a significant overall effect size of 0.78 (95% CI [0.55, 1.01], $p < 0.001$). This indicates that children who engage in Dakon demonstrate substantial improvements in cognitive skills, including attracting players, encouraging continued engagement, problem-solving and mathematical abilities.
- 2. Fine Motor Skills: For fine motor skills, the effect size was 0.65 (95% CI [0.42, 0.88], $p < 0.001$), suggesting that playing Dakon enhances children’s dexterity and coordination through the manipulation of game pieces.

Table 3. Summary of Meta-Analysis Results

Outcome	Number of Studies	Effect Size (Cohen's d)	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Cognitive Skills	15	0.78	[0.55, 1.01]	< 0.001
Fine Motor Skills	15	0.65	[0.42, 0.88]	< 0.001

3.4 Implications

These findings highlight Dakon's potential as a valuable resource in educational settings. Incorporating traditional games like Dakon into curricula may enhance children's cognitive and motor skills, thus supporting holistic development. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of Dakon and its application in various educational contexts.

3.5 Findings Summary

1. Cognitive Development: Consistent improvements in attracting players, encouraging continued engagement, problem-solving and calculation skills were reported across studies.
2. Fine Motor Skills: Studies indicated enhanced dexterity and coordination through gameplay.
3. Social Interaction: Engagement in Dakon fostered social skills, including teamwork and communication.
4. Anxiety Reduction: Participation in Dakon was associated with decreased anxiety in educational settings.
5. Cultural Awareness: The game contributed positively to students' understanding of cultural heritage and national identity.

4 Discussion

The findings of this review underscore the educational potential of Dakon and its multifaceted benefits for children. Significant improvements in cognitive skills, particularly in problem-solving and calculations, suggest that Dakon can serve as a valuable tool for educators aiming to enhance mathematical understanding in young learners. This aligns with previous research indicating that game-based learning experiences effectively support cognitive development in children.

4.1 Effectiveness of Traditional Dakon/Congklak

Research indicates that Dakon positively affects cognitive and fine motor development in children (Jannah et al., 2023). The game promotes counting, strategic thinking, and fine motor skills through its gameplay mechanics, supporting cognitive development and fine motor coordination. Furthermore, Dakon has been shown to improve counting abilities in early childhood (Dang et al., 2016) and has been effectively used to introduce complex concepts like COVID-19 (Darmawijaya et al., 2019).

Cultural benefits also emerge from playing traditional games, as they foster social interactions and enhance children's engagement (Waraulia, 2025).

4.2 Cognitive Development

The positive impact on cognitive skills can be attributed to the strategic nature of Dakon, which requires players to think critically and plan ahead. Studies show that children who regularly engage in Dakon demonstrate enhanced problem-solving abilities as they learn to anticipate opponents' moves and devise their strategies. This cognitive engagement is crucial for developing higher-order thinking skills.

4.3 Fine Motor Skills

Notable improvements in fine motor skills highlight the game's role in physical development. Manipulating game pieces requires precise hand-eye coordination and dexterity, essential skills for various everyday tasks (Dang et al., 2016). Research indicates that activities fostering these skills in early childhood lead to better performance in both academic and non-academic settings.

4.4 Social Interaction

Dakon promotes social interaction, as it is typically played in groups, encouraging communication, collaboration, and teamwork. These social skills are vital for children's overall development, as they learn to negotiate, share, and resolve conflicts (Gradys et al., 2022). The game's structure facilitates a supportive environment for interpersonal skills to flourish, reinforcing the importance of social play in childhood development.

4.5 Anxiety Reduction

The findings regarding anxiety reduction are particularly significant in today's educational climate, where many children face high levels of stress. Engaging in Dakon provides a fun and interactive way to alleviate anxiety, making learning more enjoyable and less intimidating. This can lead to a more positive attitude toward learning and greater overall well-being (Nikita et al., 2024).

4.6 Cultural Awareness

The cultural relevance of Dakon cannot be overlooked. As a traditional game, it serves as a bridge connecting children to their heritage, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. Understanding the cultural significance of games like Dakon enhances children's appreciation for their history and community, reinforcing social cohesion and cultural pride (Putri & Dahlan, 2018).

4.7 Modern Adaptations of Dakon

Modern adaptations of Dakon may incorporate contemporary design elements and technology to enhance engagement. Digital components or interactive features can provide immediate feedback, which is beneficial for children with ADHD who may require increased motivation (Tan, Nonis, & Chan, 2020). Customizing the game to address specific therapeutic goals, such as improving attention span or fine motor skills, can enhance its effectiveness (Widiasavitri et al., 2020). However, it is crucial to maintain cultural sensitivity while integrating these features to ensure that the game remains relevant and engaging (Gipit et al., 2017; Shi Ting Tan & Garry Kuan, 2019).

4.8 Comparative Benefits and Limitations

The traditional Dakon game is valued for its cultural heritage and established benefits in cognitive and motor development. However, its effectiveness may be limited by its simplicity and lack of adaptability to modern therapeutic needs (Abdullah et al., 2013; Erick Yolanda & Dandan Suryana, 2021). In contrast, modern adaptations can offer enhanced engagement and customization, potentially improving its effectiveness as a therapeutic tool. Nevertheless, challenges may arise in maintaining cultural relevance and ensuring that adaptations do not detract from the game's original value (Husna & Suryana, 2022).

In summary, the traditional game Dakon/Congklak offers numerous benefits across various domains of children's development. Cognitive skills, fine motor skills, social interaction, and cultural awareness are all enhanced through gameplay (M. H. Sahid et al., 2022). Integrating traditional games like Dakon into therapeutic interventions can harness these multifaceted benefits and address specific developmental challenges, such as attention problems in children with ADHD. This approach aligns

with the growing recognition of incorporating culturally relevant and engaging activities in therapeutic settings. The extensive evidence supporting Dakon's effectiveness suggests that its adaptation for therapeutic use could significantly improve attention and motor skills, enhancing the overall effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions.

5 Conclusion

Dakon provides significant benefits for children's cognitive, motor, and social development while also offering therapeutic advantages that directly address the needs of children with ADHD. Its structured gameplay, multisensory engagement, and social interaction foster executive functions, reduce anxiety, and promote emotional well-being, making it a highly promising tool in both educational and therapeutic contexts. As a culturally grounded practice, Dakon supports sustainable development goals by integrating cultural heritage with modern pedagogical and therapeutic approaches. Future research should focus on clinical trials and longitudinal studies to assess Dakon's effectiveness as a formal therapeutic intervention for ADHD, while also exploring its integration into school-based programs. By embracing Dakon, educators, therapists, and policymakers can create inclusive environments that not only preserve cultural traditions but also provide meaningful therapeutic support for children with ADHD.

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