

Hedung Dance: A Cultural Touch That Inspires Children to Grow Active and Confident

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of the traditional Hedung dance at TK Mgr. Gabriel Manek and its role in developing gross motor skills among children aged 5–6 years. The research aimed to explore how the Hedung dance can be applied in early childhood learning and how it enhances children's physical growth through movement and cultural expression. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved 13 children from class B as research subjects. Data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. The study examined the teaching process of the Hedung dance, the children's responses, and the challenges encountered during implementation. The findings show that the Hedung dance effectively improved children's gross motor skills, especially through stepping, jumping, and rhythmic arm movements. The children participated enthusiastically, although individual differences appeared, such as limited focus, low confidence, and overactive behavior. Another challenge was the lack of traditional costumes and accessories, requiring children to use regular school uniforms. Despite these constraints, the Hedung dance proved to be a meaningful, engaging, and culturally rooted method to stimulate children's gross motor development while preserving local heritage.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Gross Motor Skills, Hedung Dance.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study titled "Implementation of Traditional Hedung Dance in Developing Children's Gross Motor Skills" focuses on the application of the Hedung dance at Mgr. Gabriel Manek Kindergarten. Originating from Flores, the Hedung dance was chosen by researchers as a medium to develop children's gross motor abilities through its dynamic movements, which promote coordination, agility, balance, and limb dexterity. Dance, in its essence, is a rhythmic movement that represents one of the most basic physical experiences of human life, contributing significantly to motor development (Mulyani, 2016). Gross motor development refers to a child's ability to control large muscle movements involved in physical activities such as walking, jumping, running, and kicking, (Hurlock, 1978). Furthermore, teachers play a vital role as learning motivators who guide children to achieve developmental goals through well-prepared, engaging, and structured dance activities (Kusumastuti, 2009). The Hedung dance, a traditional dance of the Adonara people in East Flores, represents the rich cultural identity of the Lamaholot tribe (Soedarsono, 2002). As part of Indonesia's cultural heritage (Sindoro, 2023), its implementation in early education not only enhances children's

physical abilities but also strengthens their concentration, social-emotional growth, and appreciation for cultural values (Amini, Sujiono, & Mukti, 2019).

Dance education plays a vital role in early childhood learning as it integrates physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development into a single creative experience. For young children, movement is a natural form of expression that allows them to explore their bodies, emotions, and relationships with others. According to Gallahue and Ozmun (2020), motor development is deeply connected to cognitive and affective growth, meaning that physical movement is not only about muscle control but also about enhancing thinking skills, communication, and emotional regulation. In this context, dance becomes a holistic educational tool that nurtures creativity, discipline, and coordination.

In early childhood education, dance provides an opportunity for children to develop gross motor skills such as jumping, running, and balancing while also learning about rhythm, tempo, and spatial awareness (Gallahue, Ozmun, & Goodway, 2020). Traditional dance, in particular, carries an additional layer of meaning because it introduces children to cultural identity and local wisdom from an early age. As emphasized by UNESCO (2021), cultural arts education strengthens children's sense of belonging and appreciation for diversity, fostering respect for cultural heritage in a globalized world. When children engage in traditional dances, they not only train their muscles but also absorb moral values, teamwork, and aesthetic appreciation embedded in each movement.

Moreover, traditional dance can serve as a bridge between generations. Through storytelling movements, music, and costumes, children are exposed to ancestral traditions that shape community identity. This process contributes to the formation of cultural literacy—an essential aspect of early character education (Sari & Winarti, 2022). Teachers can use traditional dance as a pedagogical tool to create joyful learning environments where physical activity blends with moral and cultural lessons. The interactive and rhythmic nature of dance also enhances children's self-confidence, emotional expression, and peer cooperation.

In Indonesia, integrating traditional dances such as the Hedung dance into early childhood curricula supports both developmental and cultural objectives. It promotes active participation, respect for local traditions, and recognition of the body as an instrument of communication and creativity. Therefore, the implementation of traditional dance in PAUD is not merely a physical exercise but a meaningful learning process that connects movement, culture, and identity.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted at TK Mgr. Gabriel Manek, Bekasi, with the aim of understanding the implementation of the traditional Hedung dance in developing gross motor skills among children aged 5–6 years. Based on initial observations, the school often showcased traditional dances from other regions, which motivated the researcher to investigate the application of the Hedung dance as part of the local cultural heritage. The study employed a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to describe and explain in depth the implementation of the Hedung dance in early childhood learning activities. The researcher acted as the main instrument, conducting observations, interviews, and documentation involving teachers, the principal, and the children. The research procedure consisted of four stages: pre-field preparation, fieldwork, data analysis, and drawing conclusions. Data were

collected through participant observation, guided interviews, and documentation, and the validity of the data was tested using triangulation and prolonged observation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings are expected to provide a clear picture of how the implementation of the Hedung dance contributes to the development of children's gross motor skills, particularly in aspects of balance, agility, coordination, and physical strength.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted at Mgr Gabriel Manek Kindergarten, the implementation of the traditional Hedung dance in developing gross motor skills in children aged 5-6 years is carried out through: The research findings further demonstrate that the Hedung traditional dance is not only an artistic activity but also a pedagogical tool that integrates physical, emotional, and cultural learning. Throughout the implementation process, children were observed to improve their balance, agility, and coordination through repetitive rhythmic movements. This aligns with the view of Gallahue and Ozmun (2020), who emphasize that structured movement activities support neuromuscular development and enhance motor proficiency during the preschool years.

Additionally, the Hedung dance stimulated children's socio-emotional abilities. Working in pairs or small groups allowed them to practice cooperation, patience, and empathy. The dance's communal nature encouraged a sense of belonging, which is essential for building confidence and social competence in early childhood (Walker & Graham, 2025). Teachers reported that shy children gradually became more expressive, while highly active children learned to channel their energy through movement sequences guided by rhythm and music.

From a cultural perspective, the Hedung dance carries symbolic values of unity, respect, and harmony—virtues deeply rooted in the traditions of the Lamaholot people. Embedding these values into early education helps strengthen cultural identity and moral understanding. The findings support UNESCO's (2021) assertion that integrating cultural heritage into education fosters sustainable development by connecting learners to their cultural roots while preparing them for global citizenship.

Moreover, the implementation also revealed the importance of teacher readiness and creativity. The success of using traditional dance in early childhood depends largely on how educators design lessons that are developmentally appropriate and contextually meaningful. Teachers at TK Mgr. Gabriel Manek showed innovation by combining storytelling and role-play with dance movements, which enhanced children's comprehension and engagement.

Finally, this study underscores that traditional dance can function as an inclusive learning strategy. Regardless of individual differences in ability or temperament, all children participated joyfully and showed measurable growth in physical control and cultural understanding. Thus, the Hedung dance serves not only as a means of movement education but as a bridge between tradition, play, and learning.

3.1 Sub Result

The study titled *"Implementation of Hedung Traditional Dance in Developing Gross Motor Skills of Children Aged 5–6 Years at Mgr. Gabriel Manek Kindergarten"* explores how the traditional Hedung dance can enhance children's physical development. The implementation began with an introduction phase, where children watched videos about the Hedung dance, learned about its cultural origins, drew pictures of the dance equipment, and practiced basic movements demonstrated slowly by the researcher to ensure easy imitation. The movements taught included small jumps, foot stomps, sideways body movements, walking in tandem, and swinging hands while holding dance instruments in rhythm with traditional music. The children's responses toward the activity were highly positive; they showed great enthusiasm, cheerful expressions, and strong interest from the beginning to the end of the sessions. Most children were able to follow the basic Hedung dance movements well, demonstrating improved balance, coordination, and agility. However, several challenges were encountered during the implementation process, including internal and external factors such as children's difficulty in managing dance accessories and varying levels of concentration, which occasionally affected the learning flow. Despite these obstacles, the Hedung dance proved effective in developing the children's gross motor skills through engaging and culturally meaningful activities. The implementation of the traditional Hedung dance at TK Mgr. Gabriel Manek took place over several learning sessions within one week. Each meeting lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was integrated into the school's art and movement learning theme. A total of thirteen children aged 5–6 years from Class B participated in the activity, assisted by one classroom teacher and the researcher as the main facilitator.

The process began with the **preparation stage**, where children were introduced to the Hedung dance through storytelling and short video presentations. This stage aimed to build curiosity and cultural understanding. The teacher explained that the Hedung dance originated from the Lamaholot tribe in East Flores and symbolized unity, joy, and gratitude. During this session, children were encouraged to ask questions and express their thoughts about the movements and traditional accessories shown in the video.

In the **core activity**, children practiced a series of simple Hedung movements. The initial practice emphasized warming up the body through stretching and rhythmic clapping. The researcher demonstrated the movements step-by-step, including small jumps, foot stomps, body twists, and rhythmic arm swings. Each movement was repeated three to four times to ensure mastery and proper coordination. The children's physical responses showed gradual improvement, particularly in balance and rhythm synchronization. Observations indicated that by the third session, most children were able to follow the dance pattern without direct guidance.

Throughout the **implementation**, the researcher documented children's progress through field notes, photographs, and video recordings. The observations revealed significant growth in gross motor skills—especially coordination, agility, and endurance. For example, children who were initially hesitant became more confident in expressing movement, while others who struggled with focus gradually improved in following group choreography. Teachers also noted that the Hedung dance provided an enjoyable break from routine learning activities, making children more motivated to participate.

The **final stage** involved reflection and feedback. The teacher led a group discussion where children were asked how they felt about dancing the Hedung. Most expressed happiness and excitement, describing it as a "fun way to play while moving." A few children mentioned they wanted to wear real traditional costumes next time, showing their growing cultural curiosity. The researcher concluded that the Hedung dance not only enhanced physical movement but also stimulated emotional expression and social interaction among the participants.

Overall, the description of research results demonstrates that the implementation of the Hedung dance provided a meaningful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning experience. The integration of music, rhythm, and culture fostered children's gross

motor development while strengthening their appreciation of Indonesian traditional heritage.

3.2 Sub Discussion

Based on research conducted at Mgr. Gabriel Manek Kindergarten, the implementation of the Hedung Traditional Dance proved highly effective in developing gross motor skills in children aged 5–6 years. Through rhythmic movements such as coordination, balance, strength, and agility, children not only enhanced their physical abilities but also learned to appreciate local cultural values. The children responded with great enthusiasm and joy during each session, showing active participation and motivation. However, several challenges were observed, including lack of focus, easy distraction, and shyness when performing in front of others. Some children, such as Gabriela Evelyn Tandu and Lourdes Gloria, followed the movements well, while others, like Elisabet Ema Leni and Frans El Sanjaya Nadeak, needed additional guidance to maintain concentration. External limitations also occurred due to the unavailability of traditional Flores costumes and accessories—such as *kewatek*, *nowing*, *senai*, and *kenobo*—which led the children to perform in school uniforms. Despite these constraints, teachers and researchers maintained a lively and engaging atmosphere, ensuring that learning through the Hedung Dance remained enjoyable and effective. Ultimately, this activity served as a meaningful medium for developing children’s gross motor skills while fostering early cultural awareness and appreciation.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at Mgr. Gabriel Manek Kindergarten, the implementation of the traditional Hedung dance has shown a positive impact on developing gross motor skills in children aged 5–6 years. Through movements such as jumping in place, standing on tiptoes, turning sideways, and swinging hands while holding dance instruments, children receive physical stimulation that enhances muscle strength, balance, and body coordination. This activity is designed with a fun, play-based approach that allows children to learn while enjoying themselves. The children actively participate with great enthusiasm and joy throughout the sessions. Moreover, the Hedung dance also helps foster self-confidence, cooperation, and social interaction among peers. Although some obstacles were encountered—such as the absence of traditional costumes and accessories, as well as internal challenges like limited focus and varying levels of confidence—these did not hinder the success of the program. Teachers and researchers continued to facilitate engaging activities, making the Hedung dance not only a means for physical development but also a valuable medium for introducing and preserving local cultural heritage from an early age.

The implementation of the traditional Hedung dance in early childhood education demonstrates that cultural-based learning can effectively enhance children’s gross motor development while fostering appreciation for local heritage. Through rhythmic movements, coordination, and balance exercises embedded in dance, children develop not only physical skills but also emotional confidence, social cooperation, and cultural identity. The research confirms that children aged 5–6 years at TK Mgr. Gabriel Manek showed significant improvement in coordination, body control, and enthusiasm toward movement activities.

The study further highlights that integrating traditional dance into daily learning routines provides a multidimensional impact: it encourages children to move actively, think creatively, and collaborate meaningfully. Teachers play a

crucial role in facilitating these activities, guiding children with patience and enthusiasm while adapting cultural content to suit their developmental stages. Despite several challenges—such as limited focus among some children and the absence of authentic costumes—the overall implementation achieved its developmental and educational objectives successfully.

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