

# **A Study on the Need to Integrate Historical Traditional Games into Modern Education Curricula to Promote Cultural Awareness(Based in Matara Education Zone)**

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## **1. Introduction**

Deeply connected to local traditions in Sri Lanka, historical traditional games reflect the cultural heritage and social practices of the communities (Fernando, 2019). Accordingly, these games, which include traditional activities passed down from generation to generation, provide a rich understanding of a culture's values, norms, and historical experiences. However, studies have also shown that traditional games play a crucial role in cultural preservation by providing tangible links to historical traditions (Silva, 2021). Thus, the objective of this research is to investigate how integrating historical traditional games into the modern education curriculum can enhance cultural awareness among students in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, for this research topic, data and information were obtained from the Matara Education Zone. Historical traditional games are an integral part of Sri Lankan heritage, demonstrating cultural values, social norms, and community ties. Accordingly, this research aims to investigate how the integration of traditional games into the curriculum can enhance cultural awareness among students. The research problem focuses on the cultural degradation experienced by the younger generations of Sri Lanka, who are heavily influenced by globalized and digital cultures, leading to the gradual erosion of traditional cultural practices. However, this study aims to address this literature gap by proposing the structural integration of traditional games into the school educational curriculum, thereby instilling a deeper understanding and appreciation of Sri Lankan cultural heritage among students.

## **2. Methodology**

The research adopted a qualitative methodology to explore the integration of historical traditional games into the modern education curriculum. The methodology involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 20 educators, curriculum developers, 10 cultural experts, and 20 students in the Matara Education Zone for data collection. Accordingly, purposive sampling will be used to select participants who have significant experience or interest in cultural education and traditional games. In addition, observation sessions were conducted in schools to observe current engagement with cultural activities. Accordingly, the collected data will be analyzed thematically, identifying key patterns and themes related to cultural awareness, pedagogical impact, and potential for curriculum integration. Thus, the thematic data analysis of this study on the integration of historical traditional games into the modern education curriculum revealed five main themes. The themes were identified as cultural preservation, educational engagement, social integration, academic improvement, and implementation challenges. Accordingly, the participants emphasized that traditional games play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage by ensuring that.

## **3. Results and discussion**

Based on the Matara education region, important facts were uncovered about the need to include historical traditional games in the modern education curriculum. Accordingly, it became clear, firstly, that there is considerable interest among educators and students in including traditional games in the curriculum as a means of preserving cultural heritage. Participants also reported that traditional games improved social skills, teamwork and community participation among students. Research by Garca and Martnez (2021) supports

the idea that traditional sports improve social skills and teamwork. Accordingly, they noted that games that emphasize community participation help students develop empathy, emotional regulation, and social cohesion. Incorporating such elements into education can provide students with a more holistic learning experience that encompasses emotional intelligence as well as academic skills. Additionally, observations of educators and student activities revealed that students who engage in cultural activities demonstrate higher levels of cultural awareness and appreciation. Accordingly, integrating traditional folk games into the curriculum is considered a practical and effective way to make learning more engaging and enjoyable. Other studies have found that integrating cultural elements, such as traditional games, into lessons can help students gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage. For example, findings by Yildirm (2023) showed that students who engaged in culturally embedded games were more interested and motivated in subjects such as history and geography because these games connected abstract concepts with tangible, lived experiences. Thus, it was observed that integrating traditional games into the curriculum has a positive effect on students' academic performance. A study by Lee and Chen (2023) further emphasized the experiential learning benefits of traditional games; and provide an explanation. Using games as an educational tool increases students' engagement and willingness to participate in classroom activities. This is consistent with the current study's observation that traditional games make learning more interactive and enjoyable, which in turn has positive effects on students' academic performance. However, traditional folk games serve as effective tools for teaching health, physical education, and other subjects in the school curriculum. Mathematical principles, for example, can be taught through counting and strategy games, and historical events can be recreated through role-playing games. Accordingly, this finding underscores the need for incorporating traditional games into education to enhance academic learning by providing an essential, experiential approach. Although there are many benefits, the study also identified some challenges in integrating historical traditional games into the curriculum. Educators pointed to the lack of resources, including adequate materials and trained personnel, as a significant barrier. In addition, the rigid structure of the current curriculum leaves little room for the inclusion of non-traditional activities. Accordingly, teachers stated that successful implementation of these games requires extensive support, including professional development and curriculum flexibility. However, addressing these challenges is critical for effectively integrating traditional games into educational practices. Accordingly, integrating historical traditional games into the modern education curriculum has the potential to significantly enhance students' cultural awareness, engagement, social skills, and academic performance. The findings of this study highlight the multiple benefits of incorporating traditional sports into the school environment. By preserving cultural heritage and making learning more interactive and fun, these games can contribute to a more complete and engaging educational experience. However, the practical challenges identified in this research cannot be ignored. In order to successfully integrate historical traditional games into the curriculum, there must be a concerted effort to address both the lack of resources and curriculum rigidity. Accordingly, policymakers and educational leaders should recognize the value of these cultural assets and provide the necessary support to incorporate them into the educational framework. This includes investing in teacher training, developing flexible curricula and ensuring that schools have access to the materials and resources they need. Accordingly, the research concludes that policy support, resource allocation, and teacher training are needed to successfully integrate traditional games into the curriculum. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the inclusion of cultural elements in education and provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers aiming to preserve cultural heritage and enhance the quality of education.

#### 4. Conclusion

Research reveals that adding historical traditional games to the modern education curriculum can significantly enhance students' cultural awareness, participation, social skills, and academic performance. Accordingly, this study highlights the strong interest among educators and students in preserving cultural heritage through traditional games. It not only improves teamwork and community participation but also social skills. Thus, the observations showed that students who engaged in cultural activities exhibited a higher value for their heritage. Moreover, traditional games offer effective ways to teach a variety of subjects, including health, physical education, and mathematical principles. However, research has also identified several challenges, such as insufficient resources, insufficiently trained personnel, and a rigid curriculum structure that limits the inclusion of nontraditional activities. Accordingly, educators emphasized that successful integration requires extensive support; including professional development and curricular flexibility. Policymakers and educational leaders must recognize the cultural value of these games and commit to providing the necessary support, such as investing in teacher training and developing flexible curricula. This research underscores the need to allocate resources to overcome practical challenges and successfully integrate sports into the traditional education framework. By doing so, schools can create a more interactive and enriching learning environment that preserves cultural heritage while enhancing educational quality. Overall, this study contributes valuable insights and practical recommendations for educators and policy makers, and ultimately concludes that integrating cultural elements into the curriculum fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of Sri Lankan cultural heritage among students.

#### 5. Keywords

Cultural Awareness, Cultural Heritage Preservation, Curriculum Integration, Traditional Games

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