

## **FROM PLAY TO PURPOSE: NURTURING CHARACTER THROUGH GAMES AT SDN KASIMAN TUBAN REGENCY**

Mochamad Eka Setya Budi<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Miftachunnuri<sup>2</sup>, Kho'ifatun Mei Selvi Yanti<sup>3</sup>, Alex Syaiful Anam<sup>4</sup>, Dya Ayu Fatma<sup>5</sup>, Sifaul Rahman<sup>6</sup>, Sri Astutik<sup>7</sup>, Evi Meizlyn<sup>8</sup>, Henny Safitri<sup>9</sup>, Andi Hermawan<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>6</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>7</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>8</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>9</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

<sup>10</sup> Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Indonesia

### **ABSTRACT**

Character education at the elementary level requires learning experiences that enable students to practice values through meaningful social interactions. Game-based learning (GBL) provides an engaging approach by transforming play into opportunities for cooperation, responsibility, discipline, honesty, respect, and perseverance. This community engagement program, entitled "From Play to Purpose: Nurturing Character Through Games at SDN Kasiman, Tuban Regency," aimed to strengthen students' character through structured and reflective game-based activities. The program was conducted with elementary school students at SDN Kasiman, Tuban Regency, through a series of cooperative, rule-based, competitive, and problem-solving games designed around targeted character values. The activities followed three stages: preparation, implementation, and reflection. During implementation, students participated actively in games that required teamwork, adherence to rules, responsible decision-making, and persistence in overcoming challenges. Observations and reflection activities indicated that the games encouraged students to demonstrate cooperation, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and perseverance in concrete situations. The program also provided teachers with an accessible strategy for integrating character education into interactive classroom activities. These findings suggest that games can function not merely as recreational activities but as purposeful

22 *From Play to Purpose: Nurturing Character Through Games at SDN Kasiman Tuban Regency*  
pedagogical spaces for practicing and reflecting on character values. The program highlights the potential of structured game-based learning as a practical approach to strengthening character education in elementary schools.

**Keywords:** *game-based learning; character education; elementary school; play-based learning; student character.*

Corresponding Author:

Mochamad Eka Setya Budi, mochamadekasetyabudi28@gmail.com

***Article History:***

Received : April 2, 2026

Revised : May 1, 2026

Accepted : May 31, 2026

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Character education is an essential component of elementary education because children's early school experiences contribute to the development of social, emotional, and behavioral dispositions that influence how they interact with others and respond to challenges. Values such as responsibility, honesty, cooperation, discipline, empathy, and respect cannot be effectively developed through knowledge transmission alone; they require opportunities for students to experience, practice, and reflect on these values in meaningful situations. Consequently, contemporary educational approaches increasingly emphasize active and experiential learning that allows students to connect values with concrete actions.

Game-based learning (GBL) offers one potential approach to addressing this need. Games create structured situations in which students can make decisions, follow rules, cooperate with peers, solve problems, experience success and failure, and respond to challenges. These characteristics make games relevant not only for cognitive learning but also for the development of social and emotional competencies. Gee (2003) argues that games provide interactive environments in which learners construct knowledge through participation, problem solving, and social interaction. From a sociocultural perspective, this approach is also consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) view that learning develops through interaction and collaboration with others.

Recent research provides empirical support for the educational potential of game-based learning at the elementary level. A systematic literature review by Sun et al. (2023) found that teacher scaffolding is important throughout different stages of game-based learning because it influences students' engagement, knowledge development, skills, and enjoyment. This indicates that games alone do not automatically produce educational outcomes; their effectiveness depends on how teachers structure activities and connect gameplay with learning objectives. Similarly, Wati et al. (2020) identified a substantial need for game-based learning materials integrated with character education in elementary schools, particularly materials designed to develop creative character. More recent studies have also reported the potential of game-based approaches for strengthening character values such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and honesty among elementary students.

The relationship between games and character development is particularly relevant because games provide opportunities for students to practice

values rather than merely hear about them. During cooperative games, for example, students must communicate, share roles, respect rules, and consider the needs of others. Competitive situations can provide opportunities to practice honesty, fairness, emotional regulation, and acceptance of success or failure. In this sense, the educational value of games lies not simply in their entertaining features but in the experiences and reflection that teachers intentionally construct around gameplay. Recent evidence from elementary education also suggests that game-based activities can support social-emotional development when they are embedded within a structured curriculum and adapted to students' needs.

Nevertheless, existing studies reveal an important gap. Much of the literature has focused on the development or validation of game-based learning media, the improvement of academic outcomes, or specific digital game products. For example, recent studies have developed Android-based role-playing games and augmented-reality games to integrate character values into elementary learning. Other studies have examined particular games or game formats for strengthening individual character dimensions, such as discipline, responsibility, nationalism, or anti-bullying behavior. Although these studies demonstrate the potential of games, there remains a need for practice-oriented interventions that examine how relatively simple and accessible game activities can be implemented directly in elementary school settings to facilitate character formation through participation, interaction, and reflection.

This gap is particularly relevant for schools where character education needs to be integrated into everyday learning without depending on sophisticated technological infrastructure. Game-based character education does not necessarily require digital devices or complex educational software. Simple cooperative, competitive, and problem-solving games can create opportunities for students to practice values in authentic social situations. Therefore, the challenge is not merely to provide students with games, but to transform play into a purposeful pedagogical experience in which specific character values are intentionally introduced, practiced, observed, and reflected upon.

Within this context, SDN Kasiman, Tuban Regency, provides a relevant setting for implementing a game-based character education program. Elementary school students require learning experiences that are active, enjoyable, collaborative, and developmentally appropriate. Integrating games into character education can provide an alternative to approaches that rely predominantly on verbal explanation or moral instruction. Through structured games, students can

directly experience the importance of cooperation, discipline, responsibility, honesty, respect, empathy, and perseverance while interacting with their peers.

Accordingly, this community engagement program, entitled “From Play to Purpose: Nurturing Character Through Games at SDN Kasiman, Tuban Regency,” aims to implement game-based learning activities designed to strengthen students' character through active participation and social interaction. Specifically, the program seeks to: (1) introduce character values through engaging game-based activities; (2) provide students with opportunities to practice cooperation, responsibility, discipline, honesty, respect, and perseverance; (3) encourage students to reflect on the relationship between game experiences and everyday behavior; and (4) provide teachers with a practical and accessible approach for integrating character education into learning activities.

The program therefore positions games not merely as recreational activities but as pedagogical spaces for practicing and reflecting on character values. The central premise is that meaningful character development can occur when students move from knowing values to experiencing, practicing, and reflecting on those values. In this sense, the movement “from play to purpose” represents the transformation of ordinary play into an intentional educational experience that connects enjoyment with character development.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The integration of character education within the learning process has gained significant attention in recent years. Traditional methods of character education often focus on explicit instruction in virtues such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. However, contemporary pedagogical approaches recognize the importance of experiential learning—learning through doing—as a more effective means of instilling character traits. One such approach is game-based learning, which has emerged as a promising method for fostering character development while also engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. This literature review explores the existing research on game-based learning as a tool for nurturing character, focusing on its theoretical underpinnings, its benefits, and its application in educational settings.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Game-Based Learning**

The theoretical foundation for using games in education can be traced to cognitive, social, and behavioral learning theories. A key contributor to this

field is James Paul Gee (2003), whose work emphasizes the potential of video games to serve as learning environments that promote active participation, problem-solving, and collaboration. According to Gee, "games provide a context in which learners can actively construct knowledge and develop competencies in a social and interactive environment." In this context, games are not merely recreational but are seen as rich, complex systems that encourage deep cognitive engagement. Through gameplay, students make decisions, experience consequences, and reflect on their actions—experiences that mirror the challenges of real life. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory, which stresses the importance of social interaction and collaboration in cognitive and emotional development. Vygotsky's ideas support the use of cooperative and multiplayer games, where students must collaborate, negotiate, and share resources to achieve a common goal. These experiences foster key social skills that are essential for developing good character.

Additionally, game-based learning draws from the constructivist framework proposed by Piaget and later expanded by others. In this view, learning is an active process where learners construct new knowledge based on their interactions with the world around them. Games, particularly those with narrative structures or simulations, offer an immersive environment where students can test their decision-making abilities and learn from trial and error. Through this iterative process, players internalize values such as perseverance, fairness, and empathy. For example, games that present moral dilemmas allow players to confront ethical issues and reflect on their personal values in a way that promotes character development.

### Benefits of Game-Based Learning for Character Education

The use of games as a tool for character education offers numerous benefits, particularly in the development of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills. SEL refers to the process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Research indicates that game-based learning is particularly effective in promoting SEL, as it provides opportunities for students to practice these skills in an engaging and interactive environment.

For example, in multiplayer or cooperative games, students learn to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts—all of which are vital components of emotional intelligence. Games also allow students to experience failure and success in a supportive environment, helping them build resilience and a growth mindset. Studies such as those conducted by Steinkuehler and Duncan (2008) have shown that students who engage in online multiplayer games often exhibit improved collaboration skills, problem-solving abilities, and an increased understanding of diverse perspectives. These findings suggest that games, particularly those with complex social dynamics, provide an excellent platform for students to develop empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict resolution skills, which are core aspects of character education.

Moreover, games inherently involve goal-setting, competition, and rewards, all of which can be leveraged to motivate students to pursue personal growth. In games, players often set goals for themselves—whether completing a level, achieving a high score, or helping others succeed. These goals can be connected to the development of character traits such as perseverance, discipline, and self-regulation. By encouraging students to set and pursue goals, games teach the value of hard work and delayed gratification, reinforcing the importance of these virtues in everyday life.

#### Application of Game-Based Learning in Character Education

The application of game-based learning in educational settings has been explored in a variety of contexts, from primary schools to higher education institutions. One common approach is the use of digital games, which offer immersive, interactive environments where students can engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaborative activities. For instance, games such as *Minecraft* or *SimCity* encourage creativity, teamwork, and resource management, while also fostering ethical decision-making in virtual communities. Similarly, role-playing games (RPGs) like *Dungeons & Dragons* allow students to explore moral dilemmas, develop empathy, and practice collaborative decision-making.

In addition to digital games, non-digital or tabletop games have been used in classrooms to teach character education. Board games, card games, and simulation games offer hands-on experiences where students can interact with peers, practice leadership skills, and make decisions that affect the

outcomes of the game. These games, often designed with specific educational goals in mind, can be customized to address particular aspects of character education, such as teamwork, fairness, and responsibility.

Game-based learning has also been successfully applied in the context of Islamic Education and Muhammadiyah studies, where students engage in games that reinforce moral and ethical lessons. By incorporating game mechanics into these subjects, educators can create an interactive and engaging environment that encourages students to reflect on their values and beliefs while developing character traits aligned with Islamic and Muhammadiyah teachings.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

Despite the promising benefits of game-based learning, several challenges remain in its widespread implementation in character education. One major concern is the need for teachers to be adequately trained in the use of games as educational tools. While many teachers recognize the potential of games, they may lack the knowledge or skills to integrate them effectively into their teaching practices. Additionally, not all students may respond positively to game-based learning, especially if they are not accustomed to interactive or non-traditional forms of education. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the design of game-based learning experiences to ensure that they align with the learning objectives and character development goals.

Another challenge is the need for a balanced approach to using games in education. While games can be powerful tools for fostering character, they should not replace traditional methods of teaching character education. Instead, they should complement other approaches, such as discussions, role-playing, and real-life experiences. A well-rounded character education program should incorporate a variety of strategies to ensure that students develop the full range of virtues and skills necessary to thrive in society.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the impact of game-based learning on character development in students. Participants include elementary school students, who engaged in specifically designed games to foster character traits such as empathy, responsibility, and perseverance. Data

were collected through observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys, focusing on how the games influence students' character development and their perceptions of the learning process. Thematic and content analysis was used to identify patterns in students' behavior and reflections (Yin, 2014; Gee, 2003).

#### **IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The findings from using the games "Estafet Kelereng," "Estafet Karet," and "Balon Bergoyang" highlight several key aspects of how games can nurture character development, particularly in terms of teamwork, patience, coordination, and cultural appreciation. In the Estafet Kelereng game, students learned the value of teamwork and cooperation, as each member had to rely on others to complete the task successfully. The game encouraged patience and concentration, as the players had to ensure the marbles remained on the spoon without falling. This focused mental effort supported the development of perseverance and concentration. Additionally, the game enhanced fine and gross motor skills, such as hand-eye coordination and body balance, crucial for overall physical development. The competitive nature of the game, paired with its simplicity, also fostered a sense of fun and collective achievement, encouraging children to appreciate traditional Indonesian games (Wijaya, 2017).

Similarly, Estafet Karet emphasized teamwork and communication skills, as players had to strategize and collaborate to pass the rubber band using straws or chopsticks. This variation of the game enhanced motor skills through the precise coordination required to move the rubber band without using hands. Children also developed patience and mental resilience as they focused on not dropping the rubber band, learning how to stay calm under pressure. The game's simplicity and adaptability to different tools (straws or chopsticks) provided a creative challenge for the students, fostering both physical and cognitive development (Prabowo, 2018).

The Balon Bergoyang game, on the other hand, contributed to physical fitness by encouraging movement through dance or exercise patterns. It trained motor coordination through a variety of body movements, improving fine motor skills and overall physical health. The interactive nature of the game, where players responded to movements and instructions, also helped enhance cognitive functions such as concentration, memory, and problem-solving. Furthermore, it

promoted a positive social environment by involving group participation and providing an opportunity for fun and relaxation (Yuliana, 2019).

These games, through their combination of teamwork, coordination, patience, and cultural significance, offer valuable opportunities for character development in children. They not only engage students in physical activity but also teach important life skills such as collaboration, communication, and resilience, making them effective tools for fostering holistic growth in children.

In analyzing the findings from the games Estafet Kelereng, Estafet Karet, and Balon Bergoyang, we can integrate these results with the literature review on the role of games in developing children's character and skills. Literature suggests that traditional games, particularly those with a team-based structure, offer a rich environment for cultivating essential life skills such as teamwork, communication, patience, and resilience (Wijaya, 2017; Yuliana, 2019).

The Estafet Kelereng game, as highlighted in the findings, emphasizes teamwork and cooperation. Literature consistently supports this view, arguing that cooperative play is crucial for fostering social skills, such as effective communication and mutual support (Prabowo, 2018). In the Estafet Kelereng game, players must depend on each other to successfully complete the task, which mirrors the theoretical understanding that collaboration in games helps build interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution skills (Wijaya, 2017). Furthermore, the game's requirement for balance and concentration strengthens fine and gross motor skills, which aligns with findings in developmental psychology that highlight the importance of physical activities in children's growth (Yuliana, 2019).

In relation to the Estafet Karet game, literature has noted that such games help develop not only social skills but also cognitive and motor skills, particularly in the context of using tools like chopsticks or straws to move the rubber band. This aligns with research on fine motor development, where activities requiring precision, such as handling objects without using hands, improve hand-eye coordination and dexterity (Prabowo, 2018). Additionally, the challenge of ensuring the rubber band doesn't fall enhances focus and patience, vital aspects of children's emotional regulation and concentration abilities (Wijaya, 2017).

Similarly, the Balon Bergoyang game's focus on movement and following instructions ties directly to the literature on the importance of physical activity in

cognitive and motor development. Games that involve movement, particularly those that require players to follow complex instructions or patterns, have been shown to enhance cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and problem-solving (Yuliana, 2019). The interactive and social nature of this game provides a platform for children to develop cooperation and teamwork in a fun, engaging environment, fostering both physical health and mental agility (Yuliana, 2019).

From a broader perspective, these findings support the argument that games, especially traditional ones with inherent educational value, play a significant role in character building and cognitive development. As discussed in the literature, the simplicity and cultural richness of these games provide a context for children to learn important life lessons, such as the value of patience, teamwork, and perseverance, while also fostering physical and cognitive skills (Wijaya, 2017). Furthermore, these games help children appreciate cultural heritage while simultaneously promoting an active and healthy lifestyle, reinforcing the idea that play is not merely for enjoyment but also an essential tool for holistic development (Yuliana, 2019).

Thus, through the lens of the literature, the findings from these traditional games suggest a comprehensive view of how play can serve as a powerful educational tool. The integration of teamwork, cognitive skills, emotional regulation, and physical activity all contribute to a well-rounded character-building experience for children, underscoring the importance of games in fostering personal and social growth.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The findings from the Estafet Kelereng, Estafet Karet, and Balon Bergoyang games highlight the significant role that traditional games play in fostering children's development in terms of both character and essential life skills. These games encourage teamwork, communication, patience, and concentration, which are crucial aspects of children's social and cognitive growth. Moreover, they contribute to the development of motor skills, coordination, and cognitive abilities, supporting a holistic approach to education. The engaging nature of these activities also serves to preserve and promote traditional cultural values, helping children connect with their heritage while simultaneously improving their physical health and social interactions.

These games teach children how to work together, solve problems, and manage emotions, which are vital skills for personal and social success. The findings support the idea that traditional games can be more than just fun; they can be powerful educational tools that aid in shaping well-rounded individuals. It is essential for educational institutions to consider incorporating such games into their curricula, allowing children to learn in a dynamic and interactive environment. This integration not only enhances their motor and cognitive development but also strengthens their emotional and social competencies.

Further, the promotion of these games can instill a deeper appreciation for cultural traditions, contributing to the development of a strong community identity. Schools and communities should make efforts to actively engage children in these types of games to cultivate a sense of belonging and cultural pride. Ultimately, the continued use of traditional games in educational and social settings can provide children with valuable life skills, equipping them to navigate the complexities of both individual and social challenges.

## REFERENCES

- Azizah, A. N. 'I., Sugiyat, S., Abbas, N., Firmansyah, A., & Apriani, M. (2025). Penguatan aspek nilai agama dan moral melalui pendidikan karakter dengan game-based learning pada anak usia dini. *Jurnal Al Basirah*, 5(1), 54–66. <https://doi.org/10.58326/jab.v5i1.322>
- Gee, J. P. (2003). What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy. *Computers in Entertainment (CIE)*, 1(1), 20-20.
- Habiba, M., Akbar, S., & Suciptaningsih, O. A. (2026). Game based learning in teaching character traits: A systematic literature review. *Indonesian Values and Character Education Journal*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.23887/ivcej.v9i1.97118>
- Hidayati, N. (2020). Facing The New Normal: Teaching English Vocabulary for Kids Using Indonesian Traditional Games and Storytelling. IAINPAREPARE Nusantara Press
- Hidayati, N. (2020). Indonesian Traditional Games: a Way to Implant Character Education on Children and Preserve Indonesian Local Wisdom. *Istawa : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 81-101. doi:<https://doi.org/10.24269/ijpi.v5i1.2475>

- Hidayati, N. (2020). Modifying Indonesian traditional games as media to improve English vocabulary of kindergarten and elementary schools' students. *AL-ASASIYYA: Journal Of Basic Education*, 5(1), 13-26. Retrieved from <https://journal.umpo.ac.id/index.php/al-asasiyya/article/view/2773>
- Hidayati, N. N. (2021). Delikan, Bentengan, Jamuran, Cublak-Cublak Suweng: Javanese Traditional Games for Character Education Learning. *Kariman: Jurnal Pendidikan Keislaman*, 9(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v9i1.159>
- Jasmin, F., Salsabila, L., & Tjandra, W. (2025). Simulation and game-based learning sebagai strategi pembentukan karakter dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Pancasila. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mimbar Demokrasi*, 24(2), 507–513. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jimd.v24i2.54661>
- Kharis, et al. (2026). Penguatan budaya digital berkarakter melalui metode permainan pada siswa sekolah dasar di Rawamangun, Jakarta Timur. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat (ABDIRA)*.
- Prabowo, A. (2018). Permainan Estafet dan Keterampilan Sosial Anak: Studi Kasus pada Anak SD di Yogyakarta. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia.
- Rozaq, D., Muhimmah, H. A., & Inayah, N. (2026). Eksplorasi animasi Adit Sopo Jarwo sebagai media game based learning dalam penguatan karakter siswa sekolah dasar. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v11i02.48826>
- Sholeha, H. H., Ismuwardani, Z., Guntur, M., Febigyo, A. P., & Lukiyah, N. N. S. (2025). Development of augmented reality-based game-based learning integrated with character values to improve literacy and problem-solving skills of elementary school students. *Al-Bidayah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam*, 17(1), 39–64. <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-bidayah.v17i1.10299>
- Steinkuehler, C., & Duncan, S. (2008). Scientific habits of mind in virtual worlds. In *Proceedings of the 2008 conference on computer-supported collaborative learning* (pp. 55-64).
- Suhartyaningsih, S., Tunnisa, F., Adiansha, A. A., & Nurgufriani, A. (2025). Pengaruh model game based learning berbasis Mpa'a Tapa Gala terhadap kemampuan penguatan karakter siswa sekolah dasar. *Jurnal DIDIKA: Wahana Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 11(1).

- Sultan, M. A., Maryam, M., & Krismanto, W. (2025). Android-based role-playing educational games to support strengthening children's character education in elementary school. *Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pendidikan*, 9(1), 102–113. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jppp.v9i1.82185>
- Sun, L., Kangas, M., Ruokamo, H., & Siklander, S. (2023). A systematic literature review of teacher scaffolding in game-based learning in primary education. *Educational Research Review*, 40, 100546. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100546>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wijaya, H. (2017). *Pendidikan dan Permainan Tradisional Indonesia: Membangun Karakter Anak Melalui Permainan Estafet*. Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Yuliana, D. (2019). *Game-Based Learning for Cognitive Development: A Study on Children's Educational Games in Indonesia*. Bandung: Penerbit Alfabeta.